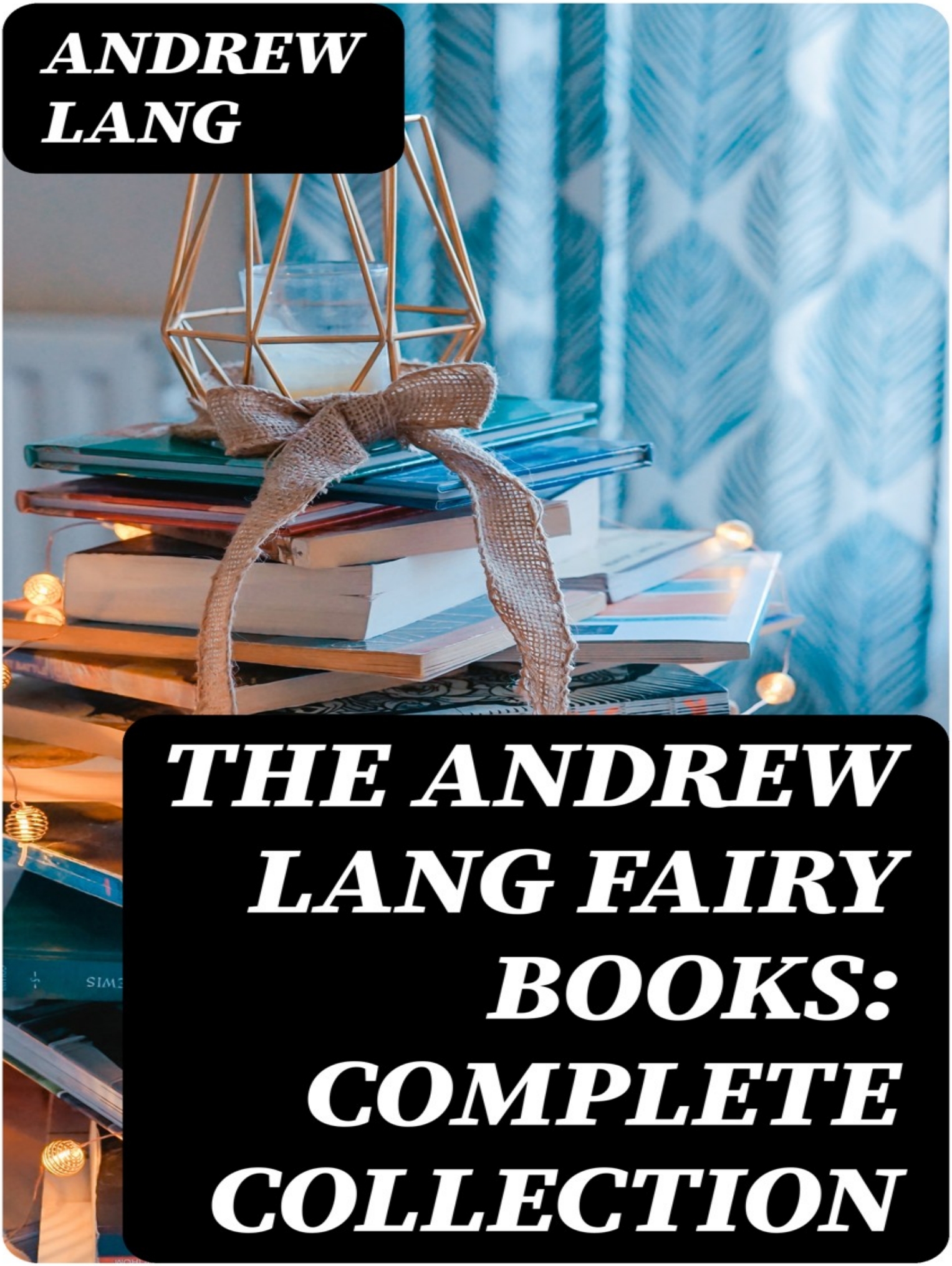
ANDREW LANG



THE ANDREW LANG FAIRY BOOKS: COMPLETE COLLECTION

Andrew Lang

The Andrew Lang Fairy Books: Complete Collection

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THE BRONZE RING

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Once upon a time in a certain country there lived a king whose palace was surrounded by a spacious garden. But, though the gardeners were many and the soil was good, this garden yielded neither flowers nor fruits, not even grass or shady trees.

The King was in despair about it, when a wise old man said to him:

“Your gardeners do not understand their business: but what can you expect of men whose fathers were cobblers and carpenters? How should they have learned to cultivate your garden?”

“You are quite right,” cried the King.

“Therefore,” continued the old man, “you should send for a gardener whose father and grandfather have been gardeners before him, and very soon your garden will be full of green grass and gay flowers, and you will enjoy its delicious fruit.”

So the King sent messengers to every town, village, and hamlet in his dominions, to look for a gardener whose forefathers had been gardeners also, and after forty days one was found.

“Come with us and be gardener to the King,” they said to him.

“How can I go to the King,” said the gardener, “a poor wretch like me?”

“That is of no consequence,” they answered. “Here are new clothes for you and your family.”

“But I owe money to several people.”

“We will pay your debts,” they said.

So the gardener allowed himself to be persuaded, and went away with the messengers, taking his wife and his son with him; and the King, delighted to have found a real gardener, entrusted him with the care of his garden. The man found no difficulty in making the royal garden produce flowers and fruit, and at the end of a year the park was not like the same place, and the King showered gifts upon his new servant.

The gardener, as you have heard already, had a son, who was a very handsome young man, with most agreeable manners, and every day he carried the best fruit of the garden to the King, and all the prettiest flowers to his daughter. Now this princess was wonderfully pretty and was just sixteen years old, and the King was beginning to think it was time that she should be married.

“My dear child,” said he, “you are of an age to take a husband, therefore I am thinking of marrying you to the son of my prime minister.

“Father,” replied the Princess, “I will never marry the son of the minister.”

“Why not?” asked the King.

“Because I love the gardener’s son,” answered the Princess.

On hearing this the King was at first very angry, and then he wept and sighed, and declared that such a husband was not worthy of his daughter; but the young Princess was not to be turned from her resolution to marry the gardener’s son.

Then the King consulted his ministers. “This is what you must do,” they said. “To get rid of the gardener you must send both suitors to a very distant country, and the one who returns first shall marry your daughter.”

The King followed this advice, and the minister’s son was presented with a splendid horse and a purse full of gold pieces, while the gardener’s son had only an old lame horse and a purse full of copper money, and every one thought he would never come back from his journey.

The day before they started the Princess met her lover and said to him:

“Be brave, and remember always that I love you. Take this purse full of jewels and make the best use you can of them for love of me, and come back quickly and demand my hand.”

The two suitors left the town together, but the minister’s son went off at a gallop on his good horse, and very soon was lost to sight behind the most distant hills. He traveled on for some days, and presently reached a fountain beside which an old woman all in rags sat upon a stone.

“Good-day to you, young traveler,” said she.

But the minister’s son made no reply.

“Have pity upon me, traveler,” she said again. “I am dying of hunger, as you see, and three days have I been here and no one has given me anything.”

“Let me alone, old witch,” cried the young man; “I can do nothing for you,” and so saying he went on his way.

That same evening the gardener’s son rode up to the fountain upon his lame gray horse.

“Good-day to you, young traveler,” said the beggar-woman.

“Good-day, good woman,” answered he.

“Young traveler, have pity upon me.”

“Take my purse, good woman,” said he, “and mount behind me, for your legs can’t be very strong.”

The old woman didn’t wait to be asked twice, but mounted behind him, and in this style they reached the chief city of a powerful kingdom. The minister’s son was lodged in a grand inn, the gardener’s son and the old woman dismounted at the inn for beggars.

The next day the gardener’s son heard a great noise in the street, and the King’s heralds passed, blowing all kinds of instruments, and crying:

“The King, our master, is old and infirm. He will give a great reward to whoever will cure him and give him back the strength of his youth.”

Then the old beggar-woman said to her benefactor:

“This is what you must do to obtain the reward which the King promises. Go out of the town by the south gate, and there you will find three little dogs of different colors; the first will be white, the second black, the third red. You must kill them and then burn them separately, and gather up the ashes. Put the ashes of each dog into a bag of its own color, then go before the door of the palace and cry out, ‘A celebrated physician has come from Janina in Albania. He alone can cure the King and give him back the strength of his youth.’ The King’s physicians will say, This is an impostor, and not a learned man,’ and they will make all sorts of difficulties, but you will overcome them all at last, and will present yourself before the sick King. You must then demand as much wood as three mules can carry, and a great cauldron, and must shut yourself up in a room with the Sultan, and when the cauldron boils you must throw him into it, and there leave him until his flesh is completely separated from his bones. Then arrange the bones in their proper places, and throw over them the ashes out of the three bags. The King will come back to life, and will be just as he was when he was twenty years old. For your reward you must

demand the bronze ring which has the power to grant you everything you desire. Go, my son, and do not forget any of my instructions."

The young man followed the old beggar-woman's directions. On going out of the town he found the white, red, and black dogs, and killed and burnt them, gathering the ashes in three bags. Then he ran to the palace and cried:

"A celebrated physician has just come from Janina in Albania. He alone can cure the King and give him back the strength of his youth."

The King's physicians at first laughed at the unknown wayfarer, but the Sultan ordered that the stranger should be admitted. They brought the cauldron and the loads of wood, and very soon the King was boiling away. Toward mid-day the gardener's son arranged the bones in their places, and he had hardly scattered the ashes over them before the old King revived, to find himself once more young and hearty.

"How can I reward you, my benefactor?" he cried. "Will you take half my treasures?"

"No," said the gardener's son.

"My daughter's hand?"

"*No*."

"Take half my kingdom."

"No. Give me only the bronze ring which can instantly grant me anything I wish for."

"Alas!" said the King, "I set great store by that marvelous ring; nevertheless, you shall have it." And he gave it to him.

The gardener's son went back to say good-by to the old beggar-woman; then he said to the bronze ring:

"Prepare a splendid ship in which I may continue my journey. Let the hull be of fine gold, the masts of silver, the sails of brocade; let the crew consist of twelve young men of noble appearance, dressed like kings. St. Nicholas will be at the helm. As to the cargo, let it be diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and carbuncles."

And immediately a ship appeared upon the sea which resembled in every particular the description given by the gardener's son, and, stepping on board, he continued his journey. Presently he arrived at a great town and established himself in a wonderful palace. After several days he met his rival, the minister's son, who had spent all his money and was reduced

to the disagreeable employment of a carrier of dust and rubbish. The gardener's son said to him:

"What is your name, what is your family, and from what country do you come?"

"I am the son of the prime minister of a great nation, and yet see what a degrading occupation I am reduced to."

"Listen to me; though I don't know anything more about you, I am willing to help you. I will give you a ship to take you back to your own country upon one condition."

"Whatever it may be, I accept it willingly."

"Follow me to my palace."

The minister's son followed the rich stranger, whom he had not recognized. When they reached the palace the gardener's son made a sign to his slaves, who completely undressed the new-comer.

"Make this ring red-hot," commanded the master, "and mark the man with it upon his back."

The slaves obeyed him.

"Now, young man," said the rich stranger, "I am going to give you a vessel which will take you back to your own country."

And, going out, he took the bronze ring and said:

"Bronze ring, obey thy master. Prepare me a ship of which the half-rotten timbers shall be painted black, let the sails be in rags, and the sailors infirm and sickly. One shall have lost a leg, another an arm, the third shall be a hunchback, another lame or club-footed or blind, and most of them shall be ugly and covered with scars. Go, and let my orders be executed."

The minister's son embarked in this old vessel, and thanks to favorable winds, at length reached his own country. In spite of the pitiable condition in which he returned they received him joyfully.

"I am the first to come back," said he to the King; now fulfil your promise, and give me the princess in marriage.

So they at once began to prepare for the wedding festivities. As to the poor princess, she was sorrowful and angry enough about it.

The next morning, at daybreak, a wonderful ship with every sail set came to anchor before the town. The King happened at that moment to be at the palace window.

“What strange ship is this,” he cried, “that has a golden hull, silver masts, and silken sails, and who are the young men like princes who man it? And do I not see St. Nicholas at the helm? Go at once and invite the captain of the ship to come to the palace.”

His servants obeyed him, and very soon in came an enchantingly handsome young prince, dressed in rich silk, ornamented with pearls and diamonds.

“Young man,” said the King, “you are welcome, whoever you may be. Do me the favor to be my guest as long as you remain in my capital.”

“Many thanks, sire,” replied the captain, “I accept your offer.”

“My daughter is about to be married,” said the King; “will you give her away?”

“I shall be charmed, sire.”

Soon after came the Princess and her betrothed.

“Why, how is this?” cried the young captain; “would you marry this charming princess to such a man as that?”

“But he is my prime minister’s son!”

“What does that matter? I cannot give your daughter away. The man she is betrothed to is one of my servants.”

“Your servant?”

“Without doubt. I met him in a distant town reduced to carrying away dust and rubbish from the houses. I had pity on him and engaged him as one of my servants.”

“It is impossible!” cried the King.

“Do you wish me to prove what I say? This young man returned in a vessel which I fitted out for him, an unseaworthy ship with a black battered hull, and the sailors were infirm and crippled.”

“It is quite true,” said the King.

“It is false,” cried the minister’s son. “I do not know this man!”

“Sire,” said the young captain, “order your daughter’s betrothed to be stripped, and see if the mark of my ring is not branded upon his back.”

The King was about to give this order, when the minister’s son, to save himself from such an indignity, admitted that the story was true.

“And now, sire,” said the young captain, “do you not recognize me?”

“I recognize you,” said the Princess; “you are the gardener’s son whom I have always loved, and it is you I wish to marry.”

“Young man, you shall be my son-in-law,” cried the King. “The marriage festivities are already begun, so you shall marry my daughter this very day.”

And so that very day the gardener’s son married the beautiful Princess.

Several months passed. The young couple were as happy as the day was long, and the King was more and more pleased with himself for having secured such a son-in-law.

But, presently, the captain of the golden ship found it necessary to take a long voyage, and after embracing his wife tenderly he embarked.

Now in the outskirts of the capital there lived an old man, who had spent his life in studying black arts—alchemy, astrology, magic, and enchantment. This man found out that the gardener’s son had only succeeded in marrying the Princess by the help of the genii who obeyed the bronze ring.

“I will have that ring,” said he to himself. So he went down to the sea-shore and caught some little red fishes. Really, they were quite wonderfully pretty. Then he came back, and, passing before the Princess’s window, he began to cry out:

“Who wants some pretty little red fishes?”

The Princess heard him, and sent out one of her slaves, who said to the old peddler:

“What will you take for your fish?”

“A bronze ring.”

“A bronze ring, old simpleton! And where shall I find one?”

“Under the cushion in the Princess’s room.”

The slave went back to her mistress.

“The old madman will take neither gold nor silver,” said she.

“What does he want then?”

“A bronze ring that is hidden under a cushion.”

“Find the ring and give it to him,” said the Princess.

And at last the slave found the bronze ring, which the captain of the golden ship had accidentally left behind and carried it to the man, who made off with it instantly.

Hardly had he reached his own house when, taking the ring, he said, “Bronze ring, obey thy master. I desire that the golden ship shall turn to

black wood, and the crew to hideous negroes; that St. Nicholas shall leave the helm and that the only cargo shall be black cats."

And the genii of the bronze ring obeyed him.

Finding himself upon the sea in this miserable condition, the young captain understood that some one must have stolen the bronze ring from him, and he lamented his misfortune loudly; but that did him no good.

"Alas!" he said to himself, "whoever has taken my ring has probably taken my dear wife also. What good will it do me to go back to my own country?" And he sailed about from island to island, and from shore to shore, believing that wherever he went everybody was laughing at him, and very soon his poverty was so great that he and his crew and the poor black cats had nothing to eat but herbs and roots. After wandering about a long time he reached an island inhabited by mice. The captain landed upon the shore and began to explore the country. There were mice everywhere, and nothing but mice. Some of the black cats had followed him, and, not having been fed for several days, they were fearfully hungry, and made terrible havoc among the mice.

Then the queen of the mice held a council.

"These cats will eat every one of us," she said, "if the captain of the ship does not shut the ferocious animals up. Let us send a deputation to him of the bravest among us."

Several mice offered themselves for this mission and set out to find the young captain.

"Captain," said they, "go away quickly from our island, or we shall perish, every mouse of us."

"Willingly," replied the young captain, "upon one condition. That is that you shall first bring me back a bronze ring which some clever magician has stolen from me. If you do not do this I will land all my cats upon your island, and you shall be exterminated."

The mice withdrew in great dismay. "What is to be done?" said the Queen. "How can we find this bronze ring?" She held a new council, calling in mice from every quarter of the globe, but nobody knew where the bronze ring was. Suddenly three mice arrived from a very distant country. One was blind, the second lame, and the third had her ears cropped.

“Ho, ho, ho!” said the new-comers. “We come from a far distant country.”

“Do you know where the bronze ring is which the genii obey?”

“Ho, ho, ho! we know; an old sorcerer has taken possession of it, and now he keeps it in his pocket by day and in his mouth by night.”

“Go and take it from him, and come back as soon as possible.”

So the three mice made themselves a boat and set sail for the magician’s country. When they reached the capital they landed and ran to the palace, leaving only the blind mouse on the shore to take care of the boat. Then they waited till it was night. The wicked old man lay down in bed and put the bronze ring into his mouth, and very soon he was asleep.

“Now, what shall we do?” said the two little animals to each other.

The mouse with the cropped ears found a lamp full of oil and a bottle full of pepper. So she dipped her tail first in the oil and then in the pepper, and held it to the sorcerer’s nose.

“Atisha! atisha!” sneezed the old man, but he did not wake, and the shock made the bronze ring jump out of his mouth. Quick as thought the lame mouse snatched up the precious talisman and carried it off to the boat.

Imagine the despair of the magician when he awoke and the bronze ring was nowhere to be found!

But by that time our three mice had set sail with their prize. A favoring breeze was carrying them toward the island where the queen of the mice was awaiting them. Naturally they began to talk about the bronze ring.

“Which of us deserves the most credit?” they cried all at once.

“I do,” said the blind mouse, “for without my watchfulness our boat would have drifted away to the open sea.”

“No, indeed,” cried the mouse with the cropped ears; “the credit is mine. Did I not cause the ring to jump out of the man’s mouth?”

“No, it is mine,” cried the lame one, “for I ran off with the ring.”

And from high words they soon came to blows, and, alas! when the quarrel was fiercest the bronze ring fell into the sea.

“How are we to face our queen,” said the three mice “when by our folly we have lost the talisman and condemned our people to be utterly exterminated? We cannot go back to our country; let us land on this desert

island and there end our miserable lives.” No sooner said than done. The boat reached the island, and the mice landed.

The blind mouse was speedily deserted by her two sisters, who went off to hunt flies, but as she wandered sadly along the shore she found a dead fish, and was eating it, when she felt something very hard. At her cries the other two mice ran up.

“It is the bronze ring! It is the talisman!” they cried joyfully, and, getting into their boat again, they soon reached the mouse island. It was time they did, for the captain was just going to land his cargo of cats, when a deputation of mice brought him the precious bronze ring.

“Bronze ring,” commanded the young man, “obey thy master. Let my ship appear as it was before.”

Immediately the genii of the ring set to work, and the old black vessel became once more the wonderful golden ship with sails of brocade; the handsome sailors ran to the silver masts and the silken ropes, and very soon they set sail for the capital.

Ah! how merrily the sailors sang as they flew over the glassy sea!

At last the port was reached.

The captain landed and ran to the palace, where he found the wicked old man asleep. The Princess clasped her husband in a long embrace. The magician tried to escape, but he was seized and bound with strong cords.

The next day the sorcerer, tied to the tail of a savage mule loaded with nuts, was broken into as many pieces as there were nuts upon the mule’s back.[1]

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1. Traditions Populaires de l’Asie Mineure. Carnoy et Nicolaides. Paris: Maisonneuve, 1889.

PRINCE HYACINTH AND THE DEAR LITTLE PRINCESS

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Once upon a time there lived a king who was deeply in love with a princess, but she could not marry anyone, because she was under an enchantment. So the King set out to seek a fairy, and asked what he could do to win the Princess's love. The Fairy said to him:

"You know that the Princess has a great cat which she is very fond of. Whoever is clever enough to tread on that cat's tail is the man she is destined to marry."

The King said to himself that this would not be very difficult, and he left the Fairy, determined to grind the cat's tail to powder rather than not tread on it at all.

You may imagine that it was not long before he went to see the Princess, and puss, as usual, marched in before him, arching his back. The King took a long step, and quite thought he had the tail under his foot, but the cat turned round so sharply that he only trod on air. And so it went on for eight days, till the King began to think that this fatal tail must be full of quicksilver—it was never still for a moment.

At last, however, he was lucky enough to come upon puss fast asleep and with his tail conveniently spread out. So the King, without losing a moment, set his foot upon it heavily.

With one terrific yell the cat sprang up and instantly changed into a tall man, who, fixing his angry eyes upon the King, said:

"You shall marry the Princess because you have been able to break the enchantment, but I will have my revenge. You shall have a son, who will never be happy until he finds out that his nose is too long, and if you ever tell anyone what I have just said to you, you shall vanish away instantly, and no one shall ever see you or hear of you again."

Though the King was horribly afraid of the enchanter, he could not help laughing at this threat.

“If my son has such a long nose as that,” he said to himself, “he must always see it or feel it; at least, if he is not blind or without hands.”

But, as the enchanter had vanished, he did not waste any more time in thinking, but went to seek the Princess, who very soon consented to marry him. But after all, they had not been married very long when the King died, and the Queen had nothing left to care for but her little son, who was called Hyacinth. The little Prince had large blue eyes, the prettiest eyes in the world, and a sweet little mouth, but, alas! his nose was so enormous that it covered half his face. The Queen was inconsolable when she saw this great nose, but her ladies assured her that it was not really as large as it looked; that it was a Roman nose, and you had only to open any history to see that every hero has a large nose. The Queen, who was devoted to her baby, was pleased with what they told her, and when she looked at Hyacinth again, his nose certainly did not seem to her *quite* so large.

The Prince was brought up with great care; and, as soon as he could speak, they told him all sorts of dreadful stories about people who had short noses. No one was allowed to come near him whose nose did not more or less resemble his own, and the courtiers, to get into favor with the Queen, took to pulling their babies’ noses several times every day to make them grow long. But, do what they would, they were nothing by comparison with the Prince’s.

When he grew sensible he learned history; and whenever any great prince or beautiful princess was spoken of, his teachers took care to tell him that they had long noses.

His room was hung with pictures, all of people with very large noses; and the Prince grew up so convinced that a long nose was a great beauty, that he would not on any account have had his own a single inch shorter!

When his twentieth birthday was passed the Queen thought it was time that he should be married, so she commanded that the portraits of several princesses should be brought for him to see, and among the others was a picture of the Dear Little Princess!

Now, she was the daughter of a great king, and would some day possess several kingdoms herself; but Prince Hyacinth had not a thought to spare for anything of that sort, he was so much struck with her beauty. The Princess, whom he thought quite charming, had, however, a little saucy nose, which, in her face, was the prettiest thing possible, but it was a cause

of great embarrassment to the courtiers, who had got into such a habit of laughing at little noses that they sometimes found themselves laughing at hers before they had time to think; but this did not do at all before the Prince, who quite failed to see the joke, and actually banished two of his courtiers who had dared to mention disrespectfully the Dear Little Princess's tiny nose!

The others, taking warning from this, learned to think twice before they spoke, and one even went so far as to tell the Prince that, though it was quite true that no man could be worth anything unless he had a long nose, still, a woman's beauty was a different thing; and he knew a learned man who understood Greek and had read in some old manuscripts that the beautiful Cleopatra herself had a "tip-tilted" nose!

The Prince made him a splendid present as a reward for this good news, and at once sent ambassadors to ask the Dear Little Princess in marriage. The King, her father, gave his consent; and Prince Hyacinth, who, in his anxiety to see the Princess, had gone three leagues to meet her was just advancing to kiss her hand when, to the horror of all who stood by, the enchanter appeared as suddenly as a flash of lightning, and, snatching up the Dear Little Princess, whirled her away out of their sight!

The Prince was left quite unconsolable, and declared that nothing should induce him to go back to his kingdom until he had found her again, and refusing to allow any of his courtiers to follow him, he mounted his horse and rode sadly away, letting the animal choose his own path.

So it happened that he came presently to a great plain, across which he rode all day long without seeing a single house, and horse and rider were terribly hungry, when, as the night fell, the Prince caught sight of a light, which seemed to shine from a cavern.

He rode up to it, and saw a little old woman, who appeared to be at least a hundred years old.

She put on her spectacles to look at Prince Hyacinth, but it was quite a long time before she could fix them securely because her nose was so very short.

The Prince and the Fairy (for that was who she was) had no sooner looked at one another than they went into fits of laughter, and cried at the same moment, "Oh, what a funny nose!"

“Not so funny as your own,” said Prince Hyacinth to the Fairy; “but, madam, I beg you to leave the consideration of our noses—such as they are—and to be good enough to give me something to eat, for I am starving, and so is my poor horse.”

“With all my heart,” said the Fairy. “Though your nose is so ridiculous you are, nevertheless, the son of my best friend. I loved your father as if he had been my brother. Now *he* had a very handsome nose!”

“And pray what does mine lack?” said the Prince.

“Oh! it doesn’t *lack* anything,” replied the Fairy. “On the contrary quite, there is only too much of it. But never mind, one may be a very worthy man though his nose is too long. I was telling you that I was your father’s friend; he often came to see me in the old times, and you must know that I was very pretty in those days; at least, he used to say so. I should like to tell you of a conversation we had the last time I ever saw him.”

“Indeed,” said the Prince, “when I have supped it will give me the greatest pleasure to hear it; but consider, madam, I beg of you, that I have had nothing to eat to-day.”

“The poor boy is right,” said the Fairy; “I was forgetting. Come in, then, and I will give you some supper, and while you are eating I can tell you my story in a very few words—for I don’t like endless tales myself. Too long a tongue is worse than too long a nose, and I remember when I was young that I was so much admired for not being a great chatterer. They used to tell the Queen, my mother, that it was so. For though you see what I am now, I was the daughter of a great king. My father——”

“Your father, I dare say, got something to eat when he was hungry!” interrupted the Prince.

“Oh! certainly,” answered the Fairy, “and you also shall have supper directly. I only just wanted to tell you——”

“But I really cannot listen to anything until I have had something to eat,” cried the Prince, who was getting quite angry; but then, remembering that he had better be polite as he much needed the Fairy’s help, he added:

“I know that in the pleasure of listening to you I should quite forget my own hunger; but my horse, who cannot hear you, must really be fed!”

The Fairy was very much flattered by this compliment, and said, calling to her servants:

“You shall not wait another minute, you are so polite, and in spite of the enormous size of your nose you are really very agreeable.”

“Plague take the old lady! How she does go on about my nose!” said the Prince to himself. “One would almost think that mine had taken all the extra length that hers lacks! If I were not so hungry I would soon have done with this chatterpie who thinks she talks very little! How stupid people are not to see their own faults! That comes of being a princess: she has been spoiled by flatterers, who have made her believe that she is quite a moderate talker!”

Meanwhile the servants were putting the supper on the table, and the prince was much amused to hear the Fairy who asked them a thousand questions simply for the pleasure of hearing herself speak; especially he noticed one maid who, no matter what was being said, always contrived to praise her mistress’s wisdom.

“Well!” he thought, as he ate his supper, “I’m very glad I came here. This just shows me how sensible I have been in never listening to flatterers. People of that sort praise us to our faces without shame, and hide our faults or change them into virtues. For my part I never will be taken in by them. I know my own defects, I hope.”

Poor Prince Hyacinth! He really believed what he said, and hadn’t an idea that the people who had praised his nose were laughing at him, just as the Fairy’s maid was laughing at her; for the Prince had seen her laugh slyly when she could do so without the Fairy’s noticing her.

However, he said nothing, and presently, when his hunger began to be appeased, the Fairy said:

“My dear Prince, might I beg you to move a little more that way, for your nose casts such a shadow that I really cannot see what I have on my plate. Ah! thanks. Now let us speak of your father. When I went to his Court he was only a little boy, but that is forty years ago, and I have been in this desolate place ever since. Tell me what goes on nowadays; are the ladies as fond of amusement as ever? In my time one saw them at parties, theatres, balls, and promenades every day. Dear me! *what* a long nose you have! I cannot get used to it!”

“Really, madam,” said the Prince, “I wish you would leave off mentioning my nose. It cannot matter to you what it is like. I am quite

satisfied with it, and have no wish to have it shorter. One must take what is given one."

"Now you are angry with me, my poor Hyacinth," said the Fairy, "and I assure you that I didn't mean to vex you; on the contrary, I wished to do you a service. However, though I really cannot help your nose being a shock to me, I will try not to say anything about it. I will even try to think that you have an ordinary nose. To tell the truth, it would make three reasonable ones."

The Prince, who was no longer hungry, grew so impatient at the Fairy's continual remarks about his nose that at last he threw himself upon his horse and rode hastily away. But wherever he came in his journeyings he thought the people were mad, for they all talked of his nose, and yet he could not bring himself to admit that it was too long, he had been so used all his life to hear it called handsome.

The old Fairy, who wished to make him happy, at last hit upon a plan. She shut the Dear Little Princess up in a palace of crystal, and put this palace down where the Prince would not fail to find it. His joy at seeing the Princess again was extreme, and he set to work with all his might to try to break her prison; but in spite of all his efforts he failed utterly. In despair he thought at least that he would try to get near enough to speak to the Dear Little Princess, who, on her part, stretched out her hand that he might kiss it; but turn which way he might, he never could raise it to his lips, for his long nose always prevented it. For the first time he realized how long it really was, and exclaimed:

"Well, it must be admitted that my nose *is* too long!"

In an instant the crystal prison flew into a thousand splinters, and the old Fairy, taking the Dear Little Princess by the hand, said to the Prince:

"Now, say if you are not very much obliged to me. Much good it was for me to talk to you about your nose! You would never have found out how extraordinary it was if it hadn't hindered you from doing what you wanted to. You see how self-love keeps us from knowing our own defects of mind and body. Our reason tries in vain to show them to us; we refuse to see them till we find them in the way of our interests."

Prince Hyacinth, whose nose was now just like anyone's else, did not fail to profit by the lesson he had received. He married the Dear Little

Princess, and they lived happily ever after.[2]

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2. Le Prince Desir et la Princesse Mignonne. Par Madame Leprince de Beaumont.

EAST OF THE SUN AND WEST OF THE MOON

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Once upon a time there was a poor husbandman who had many children and little to give them in the way either of food or clothing. They were all pretty, but the prettiest of all was the youngest daughter, who was so beautiful that there were no bounds to her beauty.

So once—it was late on a Thursday evening in autumn, and wild weather outside, terribly dark, and raining so heavily and blowing so hard that the walls of the cottage shook again—they were all sitting together by the fireside, each of them busy with something or other, when suddenly some one rapped three times against the window-pane. The man went out to see what could be the matter, and when he got out there stood a great big white bear.

"Good-evening to you," said the White Bear.

"Good-evening," said the man.

"Will you give me your youngest daughter?" said the White Bear; "if you will, you shall be as rich as you are now poor."

Truly the man would have had no objection to be rich, but he thought to himself: "I must first ask my daughter about this," so he went in and told them that there was a great white bear outside who had faithfully promised to make them all rich if he might but have the youngest daughter.

She said no, and would not hear of it; so the man went out again, and settled with the White Bear that he should come again next Thursday evening, and get her answer. Then the man persuaded her, and talked so much to her about the wealth that they would have, and what a good thing it would be for herself, that at last she made up her mind to go, and washed and mended all her rags, made herself as smart as she could, and held herself in readiness to set out. Little enough had she to take away with her.

Next Thursday evening the White Bear came to fetch her. She seated herself on his back with her bundle, and thus they departed. When they had

gone a great part of the way, the White Bear said: “Are you afraid?”

“No, that I am not,” said she.

“Keep tight hold of my fur, and then there is no danger,” said he.

And thus she rode far, far away, until they came to a great mountain. Then the White Bear knocked on it, and a door opened, and they went into a castle where there were many brilliantly lighted rooms which shone with gold and silver, likewise a large hall in which there was a well-spread table, and it was so magnificent that it would be hard to make anyone understand how splendid it was. The White Bear gave her a silver bell, and told her that when she needed anything she had but to ring this bell, and what she wanted would appear. So after she had eaten, and night was drawing near, she grew sleepy after her journey, and thought she would like to go to bed. She rang the bell, and scarcely had she touched it before she found herself in a chamber where a bed stood ready made for her, which was as pretty as anyone could wish to sleep in. It had pillows of silk, and curtains of silk fringed with gold, and everything that was in the room was of gold or silver, but when she had lain down and put out the light a man came and lay down beside her, and behold it was the White Bear, who cast off the form of a beast during the night. She never saw him, however, for he always came after she had put out her light, and went away before daylight appeared.

So all went well and happily for a time, but then she began to be very sad and sorrowful, for all day long she had to go about alone; and she did so wish to go home to her father and mother and brothers and sisters. Then the White Bear asked what it was that she wanted, and she told him that it was so dull there in the mountain, and that she had to go about all alone, and that in her parents’ house at home there were all her brothers and sisters, and it was because she could not go to them that she was so sorrowful.

“There might be a cure for that,” said the White Bear, “if you would but promise me never to talk with your mother alone, but only when the others are there too; for she will take hold of your hand,” he said, “and will want to lead you into a room to talk with you alone; but that you must by no means do, or you will bring great misery on both of us.”

So one Sunday the White Bear came and said that they could now set out to see her father and mother, and they journeyed thither, she sitting on

his back, and they went a long, long way, and it took a long, long time; but at last they came to a large white farmhouse, and her brothers and sisters were running about outside it, playing, and it was so pretty that it was a pleasure to look at it.

"Your parents dwell here now," said the White Bear; "but do not forget what I said to you, or you will do much harm both to yourself and me."

"No, indeed," said she, "I shall never forget;" and as soon as she was at home the White Bear turned round and went back again.

There were such rejoicings when she went in to her parents that it seemed as if they would never come to an end. Everyone thought that he could never be sufficiently grateful to her for all she had done for them all. Now they had everything that they wanted, and everything was as good as it could be. They all asked her how she was getting on where she was. All was well with her too, she said; and she had everything that she could want. What other answers she gave I cannot say, but I am pretty sure that they did not learn much from her. But in the afternoon, after they had dined at midday, all happened just as the White Bear had said. Her mother wanted to talk with her alone in her own chamber. But she remembered what the White Bear had said, and would on no account go. "What we have to say can be said at any time," she answered. But somehow or other her mother at last persuaded her, and she was forced to tell the whole story. So she told how every night a man came and lay down beside her when the lights were all put out, and how she never saw him, because he always went away before it grew light in the morning, and how she continually went about in sadness, thinking how happy she would be if she could but see him, and how all day long she had to go about alone, and it was so dull and solitary. "Oh!" cried the mother, in horror, "you are very likely sleeping with a troll! But I will teach you a way to see him. You shall have a bit of one of my candles, which you can take away with you hidden in your breast. Look at him with that when he is asleep, but take care not to let any tallow drop upon him."

So she took the candle, and hid it in her breast, and when evening drew near the White Bear came to fetch her away. When they had gone some distance on their way, the White Bear asked her if everything had not happened just as he had foretold, and she could not but own that it had. "Then, if you have done what your mother wished," said he, "you have

brought great misery on both of us." "No," she said, "I have not done anything at all." So when she had reached home and had gone to bed it was just the same as it had been before, and a man came and lay down beside her, and late at night, when she could hear that he was sleeping, she got up and kindled a light, lit her candle, let her light shine on him, and saw him, and he was the handsomest prince that eyes had ever beheld, and she loved him so much that it seemed to her that she must die if she did not kiss him that very moment. So she did kiss him; but while she was doing it she let three drops of hot tallow fall upon his shirt, and he awoke. "What have you done now?" said he; "you have brought misery on both of us. If you had but held out for the space of one year I should have been free. I have a step-mother who has bewitched me so that I am a white bear by day and a man by night; but now all is at an end between you and me, and I must leave you, and go to her. She lives in a castle which lies east of the sun and west of the moon, and there too is a princess with a nose which is three ells long, and she now is the one whom I must marry."

She wept and lamented, but all in vain, for go he must. Then she asked him if she could not go with him. But no, that could not be. "Can you tell me the way then, and I will seek you—that I may surely be allowed to do!"

"Yes, you may do that," said he; "but there is no way thither. It lies east of the sun and west of the moon, and never would you find your way there."

When she awoke in the morning both the Prince and the castle were gone, and she was lying on a small green patch in the midst of a dark, thick wood. By her side lay the self-same bundle of rags which she had brought with her from her own home. So when she had rubbed the sleep out of her eyes, and wept till she was weary, she set out on her way, and thus she walked for many and many a long day, until at last she came to a great mountain. Outside it an aged woman was sitting, playing with a golden apple. The girl asked her if she knew the way to the Prince who lived with his stepmother in the castle which lay east of the sun and west of the moon, and who was to marry a princess with a nose which was three ells long. "How do you happen to know about him?" inquired the old woman; "maybe you are she who ought to have had him." "Yes, indeed, I am," she said. "So it is you, then?" said the old woman; "I know nothing about him but that he dwells in a castle which is east of the sun and west

of the moon. You will be a long time in getting to it, if ever you get to it at all; but you shall have the loan of my horse, and then you can ride on it to an old woman who is a neighbor of mine: perhaps she can tell you about him. When you have got there you must just strike the horse beneath the left ear and bid it go home again; but you may take the golden apple with you."

So the girl seated herself on the horse, and rode for a long, long way, and at last she came to the mountain, where an aged woman was sitting outside with a gold carding-comb. The girl asked her if she knew the way to the castle which lay east of the sun and west of the moon; but she said what the first old woman had said: "I know nothing about it, but that it is east of the sun and west of the moon, and that you will be a long time in getting to it, if ever you get there at all; but you shall have the loan of my horse to an old woman who lives the nearest to me: perhaps she may know where the castle is, and when you have got to her you may just strike the horse beneath the left ear and bid it go home again." Then she gave her the gold carding-comb, for it might, perhaps, be of use to her, she said.

So the girl seated herself on the horse, and rode a wearisome long way onward again, and after a very long time she came to a great mountain, where an aged woman was sitting, spinning at a golden spinning-wheel. Of this woman, too, she inquired if she knew the way to the Prince, and where to find the castle which lay east of the sun and west of the moon. But it was only the same thing once again. "Maybe it was you who should have had the Prince," said the old woman. "Yes, indeed, I should have been the one," said the girl. But this old crone knew the way no better than the others—it was east of the sun and west of the moon, she knew that, "and you will be a long time in getting to it, if ever you get to it at all," she said; "but you may have the loan of my horse, and I think you had better ride to the East Wind, and ask him: perhaps he may know where the castle is, and will blow you thither. But when you have got to him you must just strike the horse beneath the left ear, and he will come home again." And then she gave her the golden spinning-wheel, saying: "Perhaps you may find that you have a use for it."

The girl had to ride for a great many days, and for a long and wearisome time, before she got there; but at last she did arrive, and then she asked the East Wind if he could tell her the way to the Prince who

dwelt east of the sun and west of the moon. “Well,” said the East Wind, “I have heard tell of the Prince, and of his castle, but I do not know the way to it, for I have never blown so far; but, if you like, I will go with you to my brother the West Wind: he may know that, for he is much stronger than I am. You may sit on my back, and then I can carry you there.” So she seated herself on his back, and they did go so swiftly! When they got there, the East Wind went in and said that the girl whom he had brought was the one who ought to have had the Prince up at the castle which lay east of the sun and west of the moon, and that now she was traveling about to find him again, so he had come there with her, and would like to hear if the West Wind knew whereabout the castle was. “No,” said the West Wind; “so far as that have I never blown; but if you like I will go with you to the South Wind, for he is much stronger than either of us, and he has roamed far and wide, and perhaps he can tell you what you want to know. You may seat yourself on my back, and then I will carry you to him.”.

So she did this, and journeyed to the South Wind, neither was she very long on the way. When they had got there, the West Wind asked him if he could tell her the way to the castle that lay east of the sun and west of the moon, for she was the girl who ought to marry the Prince who lived there. “Oh, indeed!” said the South Wind, “is that she? Well,” said he, “I have wandered about a great deal in my time, and in all kinds of places, but I have never blown so far as that. If you like, however, I will go with you to my brother, the North Wind; he is the oldest and strongest of all of us, and if he does not know where it is no one in the whole world will be able to tell you. You may sit upon my back, and then I will carry you there.” So she seated herself on his back, and off he went from his house in great haste, and they were not long on the way. When they came near the North Wind’s dwelling, he was so wild and frantic that they felt cold gusts a long while before they got there. “What do you want?” he roared out from afar, and they froze as they heard. Said the South Wind: “It is I, and this is she who should have had the Prince who lives in the castle which lies east of the sun and west of the moon. And now she wishes to ask you if you have ever been there, and can tell her the way, for she would gladly find him again.”

“Yes,” said the North Wind, “I know where it is. I once blew an aspen leaf there, but I was so tired that for many days afterward I was not able to

blow at all. However, if you really are anxious to go there, and are not afraid to go with me, I will take you on my back, and try if I can blow you there."

"Get there I must," said she; "and if there is any way of going I will; and I have no fear, no matter how fast you go."

"Very well then," said the North Wind; "but you must sleep here to-night, for if we are ever to get there we must have the day before us."

The North Wind woke her betimes next morning, and puffed himself up, and made himself so big and so strong that it was frightful to see him, and away they went, high up through the air, as if they would not stop until they had reached the very end of the world. Down below there was such a storm! It blew down woods and houses, and when they were above the sea the ships were wrecked by hundreds. And thus they tore on and on, and a long time went by, and then yet more time passed, and still they were above the sea, and the North Wind grew tired, and more tired, and at last so utterly weary that he was scarcely able to blow any longer, and he sank and sank, lower and lower, until at last he went so low that the waves dashed against the heels of the poor girl he was carrying. "Art thou afraid?" said the North Wind. "I have no fear," said she; and it was true. But they were not very, very far from land, and there was just enough strength left in the North Wind to enable him to throw her on to the shore, immediately under the windows of a castle which lay east of the sun and west of the moon; but then he was so weary and worn out that he was forced to rest for several days before he could go to his own home again.

Next morning she sat down beneath the walls of the castle to play with the golden apple, and the first person she saw was the maiden with the long nose, who was to have the Prince. "How much do you want for that gold apple of yours, girl?" said she, opening the window. "It can't be bought either for gold or money," answered the girl. "If it cannot be bought either for gold or money, what will buy it? You may say what you please," said the Princess.

"Well, if I may go to the Prince who is here, and be with him to-night, you shall have it," said the girl who had come with the North Wind. "You may do that," said the Princess, for she had made up her mind what she would do. So the Princess got the golden apple, but when the girl went up to the Prince's apartment that night he was asleep, for the Princess had so

contrived it. The poor girl called to him, and shook him, and between whiles she wept; but she could not wake him. In the morning, as soon as day dawned, in came the Princess with the long nose, and drove her out again. In the daytime she sat down once more beneath the windows of the castle, and began to card with her golden carding-comb; and then all happened as it had happened before. The Princess asked her what she wanted for it, and she replied that it was not for sale, either for gold or money, but that if she could get leave to go to the Prince, and be with him during the night, she should have it. But when she went up to the Prince's room he was again asleep, and, let her call him, or shake him, or weep as she would, he still slept on, and she could not put any life in him. When daylight came in the morning, the Princess with the long nose came too, and once more drove her away. When day had quite come, the girl seated herself under the castle windows, to spin with her golden spinning-wheel, and the Princess with the long nose wanted to have that also. So she opened the window, and asked what she would take for it. The girl said what she had said on each of the former occasions—that it was not for sale either for gold or for money, but if she could get leave to go to the Prince who lived there, and be with him during the night, she should have it.

"Yes," said the Princess, "I will gladly consent to that."

But in that place there were some Christian folk who had been carried off, and they had been sitting in the chamber which was next to that of the Prince, and had heard how a woman had been in there who had wept and called on him two nights running, and they told the Prince of this. So that evening, when the Princess came once more with her sleeping-drink, he pretended to drink, but threw it away behind him, for he suspected that it was a sleeping-drink. So, when the girl went into the Prince's room this time he was awake, and she had to tell him how she had come there. "You have come just in time," said the Prince, "for I should have been married to-morrow; but I will not have the long-nosed Princess, and you alone can save me. I will say that I want to see what my bride can do, and bid her wash the shirt which has the three drops of tallow on it. This she will consent to do, for she does not know that it is you who let them fall on it; but no one can wash them out but one born of Christian folk: it cannot be done by one of a pack of trolls; and then I will say that no one shall ever be my bride but the woman who can do this, and I know that you can."

There was great joy and gladness between them all that night, but the next day, when the wedding was to take place, the Prince said, “I must see what my bride can do.” “That you may do,” said the stepmother.

“I have a fine shirt which I want to wear as my wedding shirt, but three drops of tallow have got upon it which I want to have washed off, and I have vowed to marry no one but the woman who is able to do it. If she cannot do that, she is not worth having.”

Well, that was a very small matter, they thought, and agreed to do it. The Princess with the long nose began to wash as well as she could, but, the more she washed and rubbed, the larger the spots grew. “Ah! you can’t wash at all,” said the old troll-hag, who was her mother. “Give it to me.” But she too had not had the shirt very long in her hands before it looked worse still, and, the more she washed it and rubbed it, the larger and blacker grew the spots.

So the other trolls had to come and wash, but, the more they did, the blacker and uglier grew the shirt, until at length it was as black as if it had been up the chimney. “Oh,” cried the Prince, “not one of you is good for anything at all! There is a beggar-girl sitting outside the window, and I’ll be bound that she can wash better than any of you! Come in, you girl there!” he cried. So she came in. “Can you wash this shirt clean?” he cried. “Oh! I don’t know,” she said; “but I will try.” And no sooner had she taken the shirt and dipped it in the water than it was white as driven snow, and even whiter than that. “I will marry you,” said the Prince.

Then the old troll-hag flew into such a rage that she burst, and the Princess with the long nose and all the little trolls must have burst too, for they have never been heard of since. The Prince and his bride set free all the Christian folk who were imprisoned there, and took away with them all the gold and silver that they could carry, and moved far away from the castle which lay east of the sun and west of the moon.[3]

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3. Asbjornsen and Moe.

THE YELLOW DWARF

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Once upon a time there lived a queen who had been the mother of a great many children, and of them all only one daughter was left. But then *she* was worth at least a thousand.

Her mother, who, since the death of the King, her father, had nothing in the world she cared for so much as this little Princess, was so terribly afraid of losing her that she quite spoiled her, and never tried to correct any of her faults. The consequence was that this little person, who was as pretty as possible, and was one day to wear a crown, grew up so proud and so much in love with her own beauty that she despised everyone else in the world.

The Queen, her mother, by her caresses and flatteries, helped to make her believe that there was nothing too good for her. She was dressed almost always in the prettiest frocks, as a fairy, or as a queen going out to hunt, and the ladies of the Court followed her dressed as forest fairies.

And to make her more vain than ever the Queen caused her portrait to be taken by the cleverest painters and sent it to several neighboring kings with whom she was very friendly.

When they saw this portrait they fell in love with the Princess—every one of them, but upon each it had a different effect. One fell ill, one went quite crazy, and a few of the luckiest set off to see her as soon as possible, but these poor princes became her slaves the moment they set eyes on her.

Never has there been a gayer Court. Twenty delightful kings did everything they could think of to make themselves agreeable, and after having spent ever so much money in giving a single entertainment thought themselves very lucky if the Princess said “That’s pretty.”

All this admiration vastly pleased the Queen. Not a day passed but she received seven or eight thousand sonnets, and as many elegies, madrigals, and songs, which were sent her by all the poets in the world. All the prose and the poetry that was written just then was about Bellissima—for that was the Princess’s name—and all the bonfires that they had were made of

these verses, which crackled and sparkled better than any other sort of wood.

Bellissima was already fifteen years old, and every one of the Princes wished to marry her, but not one dared to say so. How could they when they knew that any of them might have cut off his head five or six times a day just to please her, and she would have thought it a mere trifle, so little did she care? You may imagine how hard-hearted her lovers thought her; and the Queen, who wished to see her married, did not know how to persuade her to think of it seriously.

“Bellissima,” she said, “I do wish you would not be so proud. What makes you despise all these nice kings? I wish you to marry one of them, and you do not try to please me.”

“I am so happy,” Bellissima answered: “do leave me in peace, madam. I don’t want to care for anyone.”

“But you would be very happy with any of these Princes,” said the Queen, “and I shall be very angry if you fall in love with anyone who is not worthy of you.”

But the Princess thought so much of herself that she did not consider any one of her lovers clever or handsome enough for her; and her mother, who was getting really angry at her determination not to be married, began to wish that she had not allowed her to have her own way so much.

At last, not knowing what else to do, she resolved to consult a certain witch who was called “The Fairy of the Desert.” Now this was very difficult to do, as she was guarded by some terrible lions; but happily the Queen had heard a long time before that whoever wanted to pass these lions safely must throw to them a cake made of millet flour, sugar-candy, and crocodile’s eggs. This cake she prepared with her own hands, and putting it in a little basket, she set out to seek the Fairy. But as she was not used to walking far, she soon felt very tired and sat down at the foot of a tree to rest, and presently fell fast asleep. When she awoke she was dismayed to find her basket empty. The cake was all gone! and, to make matters worse, at that moment she heard the roaring of the great lions, who had found out that she was near and were coming to look for her.

“What shall I do?” she cried; “I shall be eaten up,” and being too frightened to run a single step, she began to cry, and leaned against the tree under which she had been asleep.

Just then she heard some one say: “H’m, h’m!”

She looked all round her, and then up the tree, and there she saw a little tiny man, who was eating oranges.

“Oh! Queen,” said he, “I know you very well, and I know how much afraid you are of the lions; and you are quite right too, for they have eaten many other people: and what can you expect, as you have not any cake to give them?”

“I must make up my mind to die,” said the poor Queen. “Alas! I should not care so much if only my dear daughter were married.”

“Oh! you have a daughter,” cried the Yellow Dwarf (who was so called because he *was* a dwarf and had such a yellow face, and lived in the orange tree). “I’m really glad to hear that, for I’ve been looking for a wife all over the world. Now, if you will promise that she shall marry me, not one of the lions, tigers, or bears shall touch you.”

The Queen looked at him and was almost as much afraid of his ugly little face as she had been of the lions before, so that she could not speak a word.

“What! you hesitate, madam,” cried the Dwarf. “You must be very fond of being eaten up alive.”

And, as he spoke, the Queen saw the lions, which were running down a hill toward them.

Each one had two heads, eight feet, and four rows of teeth, and their skins were as hard as turtle shells, and were bright red.

At this dreadful sight, the poor Queen, who was trembling like a dove when it sees a hawk, cried out as loud as she could, “Oh! dear Mr. Dwarf, Bellissima shall marry you.”

“Oh, indeed!” said he disdainfully. “Bellissima is pretty enough, but I don’t particularly want to marry her—you can keep her.”

“Oh! noble sir,” said the Queen in great distress, “do not refuse her. She is the most charming Princess in the world.”

“Oh! well,” he replied, “out of charity I will take her; but be sure and don’t forget that she is mine.”

As he spoke a little door opened in the trunk of the orange tree, in rushed the Queen, only just in time, and the door shut with a bang in the faces of the lions.

The Queen was so confused that at first she did not notice another little door in the orange tree, but presently it opened and she found herself in a field of thistles and nettles. It was encircled by a muddy ditch, and a little further on was a tiny thatched cottage, out of which came the Yellow Dwarf with a very jaunty air. He wore wooden shoes and a little yellow coat, and as he had no hair and very long ears he looked altogether a shocking little object.

"I am delighted," said he to the Queen, "that, as you are to be my mother-in-law, you should see the little house in which your Bellissima will live with me. With these thistles and nettles she can feed a donkey which she can ride whenever she likes; under this humble roof no weather can hurt her; she will drink the water of this brook and eat frogs—which grow very fat about here; and then she will have me always with her, handsome, agreeable, and gay as you see me now. For if her shadow stays by her more closely than I do I shall be surprised."

The unhappy Queen, seeing all at once what a miserable life her daughter would have with this Dwarf could not bear the idea, and fell down insensible without saying a word.

When she revived she found to her great surprise that she was lying in her own bed at home, and, what was more, that she had on the loveliest lace night cap that she had ever seen in her life. At first she thought that all her adventures, the terrible lions, and her promise to the Yellow Dwarf that he should marry Bellissima, must have been a dream, but there was the new cap with its beautiful ribbon and lace to remind her that it was all true, which made her so unhappy that she could neither eat, drink, nor sleep for thinking of it.

The Princess, who, in spite of her wilfulness, really loved her mother with all her heart, was much grieved when she saw her looking so sad, and often asked her what was the matter; but the Queen, who didn't want her to find out the truth, only said that she was ill, or that one of her neighbors was threatening to make war against her. Bellissima knew quite well that something was being hidden from her—and that neither of these was the real reason of the Queen's uneasiness. So she made up her mind that she would go and consult the Fairy of the Desert about it, especially as she had often heard how wise she was, and she thought that at the same time she

might ask her advice as to whether it would be as well to be married, or not.

So, with great care, she made some of the proper cake to pacify the lions, and one night went up to her room very early, pretending that she was going to bed; but instead of that, she wrapped herself in a long white veil, and went down a secret staircase, and set off all by herself to find the Witch.

But when she got as far as the same fatal orange tree, and saw it covered with flowers and fruit, she stopped and began to gather some of the oranges—and then, putting down her basket, she sat down to eat them. But when it was time to go on again the basket had disappeared and, though she looked everywhere, not a trace of it could she find. The more she hunted for it, the more frightened she got, and at last she began to cry. Then all at once she saw before her the Yellow Dwarf.

"What's the matter with you, my pretty one?" said he. "What are you crying about?"

"Alas!" she answered; "no wonder that I am crying, seeing that I have lost the basket of cake that was to help me to get safely to the cave of the Fairy of the Desert."

"And what do you want with her, pretty one?" said the little monster, "for I am a friend of hers, and, for the matter of that, I am quite as clever as she is."

"The Queen, my mother," replied the Princess, "has lately fallen into such deep sadness that I fear that she will die; and I am afraid that perhaps I am the cause of it, for she very much wishes me to be married, and I must tell you truly that as yet I have not found anyone I consider worthy to be my husband. So for all these reasons I wished to talk to the Fairy."

"Do not give yourself any further trouble, Princess," answered the Dwarf. "I can tell you all you want to know better than she could. The Queen, your mother, has promised you in marriage——"

"Has promised *me!*" interrupted the Princess. "Oh! no. I'm sure she has not. She would have told me if she had. I am too much interested in the matter for her to promise anything without my consent—you must be mistaken."

"Beautiful Princess," cried the Dwarf suddenly, throwing himself on his knees before her, "I flatter myself that you will not be displeased at her

choice when I tell you that it is to *me* she has promised the happiness of marrying you."

"You!" cried Bellissima, starting back. "My mother wishes me to marry you! How can you be so silly as to think of such a thing?"

"Oh! it isn't that I care much to have that honor," cried the Dwarf angrily; "but here are the lions coming; they'll eat you up in three mouthfuls, and there will be an end of you and your pride."

And, indeed, at that moment the poor Princess heard their dreadful howls coming nearer and nearer.

"What shall I do?" she cried. "Must all my happy days come to an end like this?"

The malicious Dwarf looked at her and began to laugh spitefully. "At least," said he, "you have the satisfaction of dying unmarried. A lovely Princess like you must surely prefer to die rather than be the wife of a poor little dwarf like myself."

"Oh, don't be angry with me," cried the Princess, clasping her hands. "I'd rather marry all the dwarfs in the world than die in this horrible way."

"Look at me well, Princess, before you give me your word," said he. "I don't want you to promise me in a hurry."

"Oh!" cried she, "the lions are coming. I have looked at you enough. I am so frightened. Save me this minute, or I shall die of terror."

Indeed, as she spoke she fell down insensible, and when she recovered she found herself in her own little bed at home; how she got there she could not tell, but she was dressed in the most beautiful lace and ribbons, and on her finger was a little ring, made of a single red hair, which fitted so tightly that, try as she might, she could not get it off.

When the Princess saw all these things, and remembered what had happened, she, too, fell into the deepest sadness, which surprised and alarmed the whole Court, and the Queen more than anyone else. A hundred times she asked Bellissima if anything was the matter with her; but she always said that there was nothing.

At last the chief men of the kingdom, anxious to see their Princess married, sent to the Queen to beg her to choose a husband for her as soon as possible. She replied that nothing would please her better, but that her daughter seemed so unwilling to marry, and she recommended them to go and talk to the Princess about it themselves so this they at once did. Now

Bellissima was much less proud since her adventure with the Yellow Dwarf, and she could not think of a better way of getting rid of the little monster than to marry some powerful king, therefore she replied to their request much more favorably than they had hoped, saying that, though she was very happy as she was, still, to please them, she would consent to marry the King of the Gold Mines. Now he was a very handsome and powerful Prince, who had been in love with the Princess for years, but had not thought that she would ever care about him at all. You can easily imagine how delighted he was when he heard the news, and how angry it made all the other kings to lose for ever the hope of marrying the Princess; but, after all, Bellissima could not have married twenty kings—indeed, she had found it quite difficult enough to choose one, for her vanity made her believe that there was nobody in the world who was worthy of her.

Preparations were begun at once for the grandest wedding that had ever been held at the palace. The King of the Gold Mines sent such immense sums of money that the whole sea was covered with the ships that brought it. Messengers were sent to all the gayest and most refined Courts, particularly to the Court of France, to seek out everything rare and precious to adorn the Princess, although her beauty was so perfect that nothing she wore could make her look prettier. At least that is what the King of the Gold Mines thought, and he was never happy unless he was with her.

As for the Princess, the more she saw of the King the more she liked him; he was so generous, so handsome and clever, that at last she was almost as much in love with him as he was with her. How happy they were as they wandered about in the beautiful gardens together, sometimes listening to sweet music! And the King used to write songs for Bellissima. This is one that she liked very much:

In the forest all is gay
When my Princess walks that way.
All the blossoms then are found
Downward fluttering to the ground,
Hoping she may tread on them.
And bright flowers on slender stem
Gaze up at her as she passes

Brushing lightly through the grasses.
Oh! my Princess, birds above
Echo back our songs of love,
As through this enchanted land
Blithe we wander, hand in hand.

They really were as happy as the day was long. All the King's unsuccessful rivals had gone home in despair. They said good-by to the Princess so sadly that she could not help being sorry for them.

"Ah! madam," the King of the Gold Mines said to her "how is this? Why do you waste your pity on these princes, who love you so much that all their trouble would be well repaid by a single smile from you?"

"I should be sorry," answered Bellissima, "if you had not noticed how much I pitied these princes who were leaving me for ever; but for you, sire, it is very different: you have every reason to be pleased with me, but they are going sorrowfully away, so you must not grudge them my compassion."

The King of the Gold Mines was quite overcome by the Princess's good-natured way of taking his interference, and, throwing himself at her feet, he kissed her hand a thousand times and begged her to forgive him.

At last the happy day came. Everything was ready for Bellissima's wedding. The trumpets sounded, all the streets of the town were hung with flags and strewn with flowers, and the people ran in crowds to the great square before the palace. The Queen was so overjoyed that she had hardly been able to sleep at all, and she got up before it was light to give the necessary orders and to choose the jewels that the Princess was to wear. These were nothing less than diamonds, even to her shoes, which were covered with them, and her dress of silver brocade was embroidered with a dozen of the sun's rays. You may imagine how much these had cost; but then nothing could have been more brilliant, except the beauty of the Princess! Upon her head she wore a splendid crown, her lovely hair waved nearly to her feet, and her stately figure could easily be distinguished among all the ladies who attended her.

The King of the Gold Mines was not less noble and splendid; it was easy to see by his face how happy he was, and everyone who went near him returned loaded with presents, for all round the great banqueting hall

had been arranged a thousand barrels full of gold, and numberless bags made of velvet embroidered with pearls and filled with money, each one containing at least a hundred thousand gold pieces, which were given away to everyone who liked to hold out his hand, which numbers of people hastened to do, you may be sure—indeed, some found this by far the most amusing part of the wedding festivities.

The Queen and the Princess were just ready to set out with the King when they saw, advancing toward them from the end of the long gallery, two great basilisks, dragging after them a very badly made box; behind them came a tall old woman, whose ugliness was even more surprising than her extreme old age. She wore a ruff of black taffeta, a red velvet hood, and a farthingale all in rags, and she leaned heavily upon a crutch. This strange old woman, without saying a single word, hobbled three times round the gallery, followed by the basilisks, then stopping in the middle, and brandishing her crutch threateningly, she cried:

“Ho, ho, Queen! Ho, ho, Princess! Do you think you are going to break with impunity the promise that you made to my friend the Yellow Dwarf? I am the Fairy of the Desert; without the Yellow Dwarf and his orange tree my great lions would soon have eaten you up, I can tell you, and in Fairyland we do not suffer ourselves to be insulted like this. Make up your minds at once what you will do, for I vow that you shall marry the Yellow Dwarf. If you don’t, may I burn my crutch!”

“Ah! Princess,” said the Queen, weeping, “what is this that I hear? What have you promised?”

“Ah! my mother,” replied Bellissima sadly, “what did *you* promise, yourself?”

The King of the Gold Mines, indignant at being kept from his happiness by this wicked old woman, went up to her, and threatening her with his sword, said:

“Get away out of my country at once, and for ever, miserable creature, lest I take your life, and so rid myself of your malice.”

He had hardly spoken these words when the lid of the box fell back on the floor with a terrible noise, and to their horror out sprang the Yellow Dwarf, mounted upon a great Spanish cat. “Rash youth!” he cried, rushing between the Fairy of the Desert and the King. “Dare to lay a finger upon this illustrious Fairy! Your quarrel is with me only. I am your enemy and

your rival. That faithless Princess who would have married you is promised to me. See if she has not upon her finger a ring made of one of my hairs. Just try to take it off, and you will soon find out that I am more powerful than you are!”

“Wretched little monster!” said the King; “do you dare to call yourself the Princess’s lover, and to lay claim to such a treasure? Do you know that you are a dwarf—that you are so ugly that one cannot bear to look at you—and that I should have killed you myself long before this if you had been worthy of such a glorious death?”

The Yellow Dwarf, deeply enraged at these words, set spurs to his cat, which yelled horribly, and leaped hither and thither—terrifying everybody except the brave King, who pursued the Dwarf closely, till he, drawing a great knife with which he was armed, challenged the King to meet him in single combat, and rushed down into the courtyard of the palace with a terrible clatter. The King, quite provoked, followed him hastily, but they had hardly taken their places facing one another, and the whole Court had only just had time to rush out upon the balconies to watch what was going on, when suddenly the sun became as red as blood, and it was so dark that they could scarcely see at all. The thunder crashed, and the lightning seemed as if it must burn up everything; the two basilisks appeared, one on each side of the bad Dwarf, like giants, mountains high, and fire flew from their mouths and ears, until they looked like flaming furnaces. None of these things could terrify the noble young King, and the boldness of his looks and actions reassured those who were looking on, and perhaps even embarrassed the Yellow Dwarf himself; but even *his* courage gave way when he saw what was happening to his beloved Princess. For the Fairy of the Desert, looking more terrible than before, mounted upon a winged griffin, and with long snakes coiled round her neck, had given her such a blow with the lance she carried that Bellissima fell into the Queen’s arms bleeding and senseless. Her fond mother, feeling as much hurt by the blow as the Princess herself, uttered such piercing cries and lamentations that the King, hearing them, entirely lost his courage and presence of mind. Giving up the combat, he flew toward the Princess, to rescue or to die with her; but the Yellow Dwarf was too quick for him. Leaping with his Spanish cat upon the balcony, he snatched Bellissima from the Queen’s arms, and

before any of the ladies of the Court could stop him he had sprung upon the roof of the palace and disappeared with his prize.

The King, motionless with horror, looked on despairingly at this dreadful occurrence, which he was quite powerless to prevent, and to make matters worse his sight failed him, everything became dark, and he felt himself carried along through the air by a strong hand.

This new misfortune was the work of the wicked Fairy of the Desert, who had come with the Yellow Dwarf to help him carry off the Princess, and had fallen in love with the handsome young King of the Gold Mines directly she saw him. She thought that if she carried him off to some frightful cavern and chained him to a rock, then the fear of death would make him forget Bellissima and become her slave. So, as soon as they reached the place, she gave him back his sight, but without releasing him from his chains, and by her magic power she appeared before him as a young and beautiful fairy, and pretended to have come there quite by chance.

"What do I see?" she cried. "Is it *you*, dear Prince? What misfortune has brought you to this dismal place?"

The King, who was quite deceived by her altered appearance, replied:

"Alas! beautiful Fairy, the fairy who brought me here first took away my sight, but by her voice I recognized her as the Fairy of the Desert, though what she should have carried me off for I cannot tell you."

"Ah!" cried the pretended Fairy, "if you have fallen into *her* hands, you won't get away until you have married her. She has carried off more than one Prince like this, and she will certainly have anything she takes a fancy to." While she was thus pretending to be sorry for the King, he suddenly noticed her feet, which were like those of a griffin, and knew in a moment that this must be the Fairy of the Desert, for her feet were the one thing she could not change, however pretty she might make her face.

Without seeming to have noticed anything, he said, in a confidential way:

"Not that I have any dislike to the Fairy of the Desert, but I really cannot endure the way in which she protects the Yellow Dwarf and keeps me chained here like a criminal. It is true that I love a charming princess, but if the Fairy should set me free my gratitude would oblige me to love her only."

“Do you really mean what you say, Prince?” said the Fairy, quite deceived.

“Surely,” replied the Prince; “how could I deceive you? You see it is so much more flattering to my vanity to be loved by a fairy than by a simple princess. But, even if I am dying of love for her, I shall pretend to hate her until I am set free.”

The Fairy of the Desert, quite taken in by these words, resolved at once to transport the Prince to a pleasanter place. So, making him mount her chariot, to which she had harnessed swans instead of the bats which generally drew it, away she flew with him. But imagine the distress of the Prince when, from the giddy height at which they were rushing through the air, he saw his beloved Princess in a castle built of polished steel, the walls of which reflected the sun’s rays so hotly that no one could approach it without being burnt to a cinder! Bellissima was sitting in a little thicket by a brook, leaning her head upon her hand and weeping bitterly, but just as they passed she looked up and saw the King and the Fairy of the Desert. Now, the Fairy was so clever that she could not only seem beautiful to the King, but even the poor Princess thought her the most lovely being she had ever seen.

“What!” she cried; “was I not unhappy enough in this lonely castle to which that frightful Yellow Dwarf brought me? Must I also be made to know that the King of the Gold Mines ceased to love me as soon as he lost sight of me? But who can my rival be, whose fatal beauty is greater than mine?”

While she was saying this, the King, who really loved her as much as ever, was feeling terribly sad at being so rapidly torn away from his beloved Princess, but he knew too well how powerful the Fairy was to have any hope of escaping from her except by great patience and cunning.

The Fairy of the Desert had also seen Bellissima, and she tried to read in the King’s eyes the effect that this unexpected sight had had upon him.

“No one can tell you what you wish to know better than I can,” said he. “This chance meeting with an unhappy princess for whom I once had a passing fancy, before I was lucky enough to meet you, has affected me a little, I admit, but you are so much more to me than she is that I would rather die than leave you.”

“Ah, Prince,” she said, “can I believe that you really love me so much?”

“Time will show, madam,” replied the King; “but if you wish to convince me that you have some regard for me, do not, I beg of you, refuse to aid Bellissima.”

“Do you know what you are asking?” said the Fairy of the Desert, frowning, and looking at him suspiciously. “Do you want me to employ my art against the Yellow Dwarf, who is my best friend, and take away from him a proud princess whom I can but look upon as my rival?”

The King sighed, but made no answer—indeed, what was there to be said to such a clear-sighted person? At last they reached a vast meadow, gay with all sorts of flowers; a deep river surrounded it, and many little brooks murmured softly under the shady trees, where it was always cool and fresh. A little way off stood a splendid palace, the walls of which were of transparent emeralds. As soon as the swans which drew the Fairy’s chariot had alighted under a porch, which was paved with diamonds and had arches of rubies, they were greeted on all sides by thousands of beautiful beings, who came to meet them joyfully, singing these words:

“When Love within a heart would reign,
Useless to strive against him ’tis.
The proud but feel a sharper pain,
And make a greater triumph his.”

The Fairy of the Desert was delighted to hear them sing of her triumphs; she led the King into the most splendid room that can be imagined, and left him alone for a little while, just that he might not feel that he was a prisoner; but he felt sure that she had not really gone quite away, but was watching him from some hiding-place. So walking up to a great mirror, he said to it, “Trusty counsellor, let me see what I can do to make myself agreeable to the charming Fairy of the Desert; for I can think of nothing but how to please her.”

And he at once set to work to curl his hair, and, seeing upon a table a grander coat than his own, he put it on carefully. The Fairy came back so delighted that she could not conceal her joy.

“I am quite aware of the trouble you have taken to please me,” said she, “and I must tell you that you have succeeded perfectly already. You see it is not difficult to do if you really care for me.”

The King, who had his own reasons for wishing to keep the old Fairy in a good humor, did not spare pretty speeches, and after a time he was allowed to walk by himself upon the sea-shore. The Fairy of the Desert had by her enchantments raised such a terrible storm that the boldest pilot would not venture out in it, so she was not afraid of her prisoner’s being able to escape; and he found it some relief to think sadly over his terrible situation without being interrupted by his cruel captor.

Presently, after walking wildly up and down, he wrote these verses upon the sand with his stick:

“At last may I upon this shore
Lighten my sorrow with soft tears.
Alas! alas! I see no more
My Love, who yet my sadness cheers.

“And thou, O raging, stormy Sea,
Stirred by wild winds, from depth to height,
Thou hold’st my loved one far from me,
And I am captive to thy might.

“My heart is still more wild than thine,
For Fate is cruel unto me.
Why must I thus in exile pine?
Why is my Princess snatched from me?

“O! lovely Nymphs, from ocean caves,
Who know how sweet true love may be,
Come up and calm the furious waves
And set a desperate lover free!”

While he was still writing he heard a voice which attracted his attention in spite of himself. Seeing that the waves were rolling in higher than ever, he looked all round, and presently saw a lovely lady floating

gently toward him upon the crest of a huge billow, her long hair spread all about her; in one hand she held a mirror, and in the other a comb, and instead of feet she had a beautiful tail like a fish, with which she swam.

The King was struck dumb with astonishment at this unexpected sight; but as soon as she came within speaking distance, she said to him, “I know how sad you are at losing your Princess and being kept a prisoner by the Fairy of the Desert; if you like I will help you to escape from this fatal place, where you may otherwise have to drag on a weary existence for thirty years or more.”

The King of the Gold Mines hardly knew what answer to make to this proposal. Not because he did not wish very much to escape, but he was afraid that this might be only another device by which the Fairy of the Desert was trying to deceive him. As he hesitated the Mermaid, who guessed his thoughts, said to him:

“You may trust me: I am not trying to entrap you. I am so angry with the Yellow Dwarf and the Fairy of the Desert that I am not likely to wish to help them, especially since I constantly see your poor Princess, whose beauty and goodness make me pity her so much; and I tell you that if you will have confidence in me I will help you to escape.”

“I trust you absolutely,” cried the King, “and I will do whatever you tell me; but if you have seen my Princess I beg of you to tell me how she is and what is happening to her.

“We must not waste time in talking,” said she. “Come with me and I will carry you to the Castle of Steel, and we will leave upon this shore a figure so like you that even the Fairy herself will be deceived by it.”

So saying, she quickly collected a bundle of sea-weed, and, blowing it three times, she said:

“My friendly sea-weeds, I order you to stay here stretched upon the sand until the Fairy of the Desert comes to take you away.” And at once the sea-weeds became like the King, who stood looking at them in great astonishment, for they were even dressed in a coat like his, but they lay there pale and still as the King himself might have lain if one of the great waves had overtaken him and thrown him senseless upon the shore. And then the Mermaid caught up the King, and away they swam joyfully together.

“Now,” said she, “I have time to tell you about the Princess. In spite of the blow which the Fairy of the Desert gave her, the Yellow Dwarf compelled her to mount behind him upon his terrible Spanish cat; but she soon fainted away with pain and terror, and did not recover till they were within the walls of his frightful Castle of Steel. Here she was received by the prettiest girls it was possible to find, who had been carried there by the Yellow Dwarf, who hastened to wait upon her and showed her every possible attention. She was laid upon a couch covered with cloth of gold, embroidered with pearls as big as nuts.”

“Ah!” interrupted the King of the Gold Mines, “if Bellissima forgets me, and consents to marry him, I shall break my heart.”

“You need not be afraid of that,” answered the Mermaid, “the Princess thinks of no one but you, and the frightful Dwarf cannot persuade her to look at him.”

“Pray go on with your story,” said the King.

“What more is there to tell you?” replied the Mermaid. “Bellissima was sitting in the wood when you passed, and saw you with the Fairy of the Desert, who was so cleverly disguised that the Princess took her to be prettier than herself; you may imagine her despair, for she thought that you had fallen in love with her.”

“She believes that I love her!” cried the King. “What a fatal mistake! What is to be done to undeceive her?”

“You know best,” answered the Mermaid, smiling kindly at him. “When people are as much in love with one another as you two are, they don’t need advice from anyone else.”

As she spoke they reached the Castle of Steel, the side next the sea being the only one which the Yellow Dwarf had left unprotected by the dreadful burning walls.

“I know quite well,” said the Mermaid, “that the Princess is sitting by the brook-side, just where you saw her as you passed, but as you will have many enemies to fight with before you can reach her, take this sword; armed with it you may dare any danger, and overcome the greatest difficulties, only beware of one thing—that is, never to let it fall from your hand. Farewell; now I will wait by that rock, and if you need my help in carrying off your beloved Princess I will not fail you, for the Queen, her

mother, is my best friend, and it was for her sake that I went to rescue you.”

So saying, she gave to the King a sword made from a single diamond, which was more brilliant than the sun. He could not find words to express his gratitude, but he begged her to believe that he fully appreciated the importance of her gift, and would never forget her help and kindness.

We must now go back to the Fairy of the Desert. When she found that the King did not return, she hastened out to look for him, and reached the shore, with a hundred of the ladies of her train, loaded with splendid presents for him. Some carried baskets full of diamonds, others golden cups of wonderful workmanship, and amber, coral, and pearls, others, again, balanced upon their heads bales of the richest and most beautiful stuffs, while the rest brought fruit and flowers, and even birds. But what was the horror of the Fairy, who followed this gay troop, when she saw, stretched upon the sands, the image of the King which the Mermaid had made with the sea-weeds. Struck with astonishment and sorrow, she uttered a terrible cry, and threw herself down beside the pretended King, weeping, and howling, and calling upon her eleven sisters, who were also fairies, and who came to her assistance. But they were all taken in by the image of the King, for, clever as they were, the Mermaid was still cleverer, and all they could do was to help the Fairy of the Desert to make a wonderful monument over what they thought was the grave of the King of the Gold Mines. But while they were collecting jasper and porphyry, agate and marble, gold and bronze, statues and devices, to immortalize the King’s memory, he was thanking the good Mermaid and begging her still to help him, which she graciously promised to do as she disappeared; and then he set out for the Castle of Steel. He walked fast, looking anxiously round him, and longing once more to see his darling Bellissima, but he had not gone far before he was surrounded by four terrible sphinxes who would very soon have torn him to pieces with their sharp talons if it had not been for the Mermaid’s diamond sword. For, no sooner had he flashed it before their eyes than down they fell at his feet quite helpless, and he killed them with one blow. But he had hardly turned to continue his search when he met six dragons covered with scales that were harder than iron. Frightful as this encounter was the King’s courage was unshaken, and by the aid of his wonderful sword he cut them in pieces one after the other. Now he

hoped his difficulties were over, but at the next turning he was met by one which he did not know how to overcome. Four-and-twenty pretty and graceful nymphs advanced toward him, holding garlands of flowers, with which they barred the way.

“Where are you going, Prince?” they said; “it is our duty to guard this place, and if we let you pass great misfortunes will happen to you and to us. We beg you not to insist upon going on. Do you want to kill four-and-twenty girls who have never displeased you in any way?”

The King did not know what to do or to say. It went against all his ideas as a knight to do anything a lady begged him not to do; but, as he hesitated, a voice in his ear said:

“Strike! strike! and do not spare, or your Princess is lost for ever!”

So, without reply to the nymphs, he rushed forward instantly, breaking their garlands, and scattering them in all directions; and then went on without further hindrance to the little wood where he had seen Bellissima. She was seated by the brook looking pale and weary when he reached her, and he would have thrown himself down at her feet, but she drew herself away from him with as much indignation as if he had been the Yellow Dwarf.

“Ah! Princess,” he cried, “do not be angry with me. Let me explain everything. I am not faithless or to blame for what has happened. I am a miserable wretch who has displeased you without being able to help himself.”

“Ah!” cried Bellissima, “did I not see you flying through the air with the loveliest being imaginable? Was that against your will?”

“Indeed it was, Princess,” he answered; “the wicked Fairy of the Desert, not content with chaining me to a rock, carried me off in her chariot to the other end of the earth, where I should even now be a captive but for the unexpected help of a friendly mermaid, who brought me here to rescue you, my Princess, from the unworthy hands that hold you. Do not refuse the aid of your most faithful lover.” So saying, he threw himself at her feet and held her by her robe. But, alas! in so doing he let fall the magic sword, and the Yellow Dwarf, who was crouching behind a lettuce, no sooner saw it than he sprang out and seized it, well knowing its wonderful power.

The Princess gave a cry of terror on seeing the Dwarf, but this only irritated the little monster; muttering a few magical words he summoned two giants, who bound the King with great chains of iron.

“Now,” said the Dwarf, “I am master of my rival’s fate, but I will give him his life and permission to depart unharmed if you, Princess, will consent to marry me.”

“Let me die a thousand times rather,” cried the unhappy King.

“Alas!” cried the Princess, “must you die? Could anything be more terrible?”

“That you should marry that little wretch would be far more terrible,” answered the King.

“At least,” continued she, “let us die together.”

“Let me have the satisfaction of dying for you, my Princess,” said he.

“Oh, no, no!” she cried, turning to the Dwarf; “rather than that I will do as you wish.”

“Cruel Princess!” said the King, “would you make my life horrible to me by marrying another before my eyes?”

“Not so,” replied the Yellow Dwarf; “you are a rival of whom I am too much afraid; you shall not see our marriage.” So saying, in spite of Bellissima’s tears and cries, he stabbed the King to the heart with the diamond sword.

The poor Princess, seeing her lover lying dead at her feet, could no longer live without him; she sank down by him and died of a broken heart.

So ended these unfortunate lovers, whom not even the Mermaid could help, because all the magic power had been lost with the diamond sword.

As to the wicked Dwarf, he preferred to see the Princess dead rather than married to the King of the Gold Mines; and the Fairy of the Desert, when she heard of the King’s adventures, pulled down the grand monument which she had built, and was so angry at the trick that had been played her that she hated him as much as she had loved him before.

The kind Mermaid, grieved at the sad fate of the lovers, caused them to be changed into two tall palm trees, which stand always side by side, whispering together of their faithful love and caressing one another with their interlacing branches.[4]

4. Madame d’Aulnoy.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

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Once upon a time there lived in a certain village a little country girl, the prettiest creature was ever seen. Her mother was excessively fond of her; and her grandmother doted on her still more. This good woman had made for her a little red riding-hood; which became the girl so extremely well that everybody called her Little Red Riding-Hood.

One day her mother, having made some custards, said to her:

“Go, my dear, and see how thy grandmamma does, for I hear she has been very ill; carry her a custard, and this little pot of butter.”

Little Red Riding-Hood set out immediately to go to her grandmother, who lived in another village.

As she was going through the wood, she met with Gaffer Wolf, who had a very great mind to eat her up, but he dared not, because of some faggot-makers hard by in the forest. He asked her whither she was going. The poor child, who did not know that it was dangerous to stay and hear a wolf talk, said to him:

“I am going to see my grandmamma and carry her a custard and a little pot of butter from my mamma.”

“Does she live far off?” said the Wolf.

“Oh! ay,” answered Little Red Riding-Hood; “it is beyond that mill you see there, at the first house in the village.”

“Well,” said the Wolf, “and I’ll go and see her too. I’ll go this way and you go that, and we shall see who will be there soonest.”

The Wolf began to run as fast as he could, taking the nearest way, and the little girl went by that farthest about, diverting herself in gathering nuts, running after butterflies, and making nosegays of such little flowers as she met with. The Wolf was not long before he got to the old woman’s house. He knocked at the door—tap, tap.

“Who’s there?”

“Your grandchild, Little Red Riding-Hood,” replied the Wolf, counterfeiting her voice; “who has brought you a custard and a little pot of

butter sent you by mamma."

The good grandmother, who was in bed, because she was somewhat ill, cried out:

"Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up."

The Wolf pulled the bobbin, and the door opened, and then presently he fell upon the good woman and ate her up in a moment, for it was above three days that he had not touched a bit. He then shut the door and went into the grandmother's bed, expecting Little Red Riding-Hood, who came some time afterward and knocked at the door—tap, tap.

"Who's there?"

Little Red Riding-Hood, hearing the big voice of the Wolf, was at first afraid; but believing her grandmother had got a cold and was hoarse, answered:

"'Tis your grandchild, Little Red Riding-Hood, who has brought you a custard and a little pot of butter mamma sends you."

The Wolf cried out to her, softening his voice as much as he could:

"Pull the bobbin, and the latch will go up."

Little Red Riding-Hood pulled the bobbin, and the door opened.

The Wolf, seeing her come in, said to her, hiding himself under the bed-clothes:

"Put the custard and the little pot of butter upon the stool, and come and lie down with me."

Little Red Riding-Hood undressed herself and went into bed, where, being greatly amazed to see how her grandmother looked in her night-clothes, she said to her:

"Grandmamma, what great arms you have got!"

"That is the better to hug thee, my dear."

"Grandmamma, what great legs you have got!"

"That is to run the better, my child."

"Grandmamma, what great ears you have got!"

"That is to hear the better, my child."

"Grandmamma, what great eyes you have got!"

"It is to see the better, my child."

"Grandmamma, what great teeth you have got!"

"That is to eat thee up."

And, saying these words, this wicked wolf fell upon Little Red Riding-Hood, and ate her all up.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY IN THE WOOD

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There were formerly a king and a queen, who were so sorry that they had no children; so sorry that it cannot be expressed. They went to all the waters in the world; vows, pilgrimages, all ways were tried, and all to no purpose.

At last, however, the Queen had a daughter. There was a very fine christening; and the Princess had for her god-mothers all the fairies they could find in the whole kingdom (they found seven), that every one of them might give her a gift, as was the custom of fairies in those days. By this means the Princess had all the perfections imaginable.

After the ceremonies of the christening were over, all the company returned to the King’s palace, where was prepared a great feast for the fairies. There was placed before every one of them a magnificent cover with a case of massive gold, wherein were a spoon, knife, and fork, all of pure gold set with diamonds and rubies. But as they were all sitting down at table they saw come into the hall a very old fairy, whom they had not invited, because it was above fifty years since she had been out of a certain tower, and she was believed to be either dead or enchanted.

The King ordered her a cover, but could not furnish her with a case of gold as the others, because they had only seven made for the seven fairies. The old Fairy fancied she was slighted, and muttered some threats between her teeth. One of the young fairies who sat by her overheard how she grumbled; and, judging that she might give the little Princess some unlucky gift, went, as soon as they rose from table, and hid herself behind the hangings, that she might speak last, and repair, as much as she could, the evil which the old Fairy might intend.

In the meanwhile all the fairies began to give their gifts to the Princess. The youngest gave her for gift that she should be the most beautiful person in the world; the next, that she should have the wit of an angel; the third, that she should have a wonderful grace in everything she

did; the fourth, that she should dance perfectly well; the fifth, that she should sing like a nightingale; and the sixth, that she should play all kinds of music to the utmost perfection.

The old Fairy's turn coming next, with a head shaking more with spite than age, she said that the Princess should have her hand pierced with a spindle and die of the wound. This terrible gift made the whole company tremble, and everybody fell a-crying.

At this very instant the young Fairy came out from behind the hangings, and spake these words aloud:

"Assure yourselves, O King and Queen, that your daughter shall not die of this disaster. It is true, I have no power to undo entirely what my elder has done. The Princess shall indeed pierce her hand with a spindle; but, instead of dying, she shall only fall into a profound sleep, which shall last a hundred years, at the expiration of which a king's son shall come and awake her."

The King, to avoid the misfortune foretold by the old Fairy, caused immediately proclamation to be made, whereby everybody was forbidden, on pain of death, to spin with a distaff and spindle, or to have so much as any spindle in their houses. About fifteen or sixteen years after, the King and Queen being gone to one of their houses of pleasure, the young Princess happened one day to divert herself in running up and down the palace; when going up from one apartment to another, she came into a little room on the top of the tower, where a good old woman, alone, was spinning with her spindle. This good woman had never heard of the King's proclamation against spindles.

"What are you doing there, goody?" said the Princess.

"I am spinning, my pretty child," said the old woman, who did not know who she was.

"Ha!" said the Princess, "this is very pretty; how do you do it? Give it to me, that I may see if I can do so."

She had no sooner taken it into her hand than, whether being very hasty at it, somewhat unhandy, or that the decree of the Fairy had so ordained it, it ran into her hand, and she fell down in a swoon.

The good old woman, not knowing very well what to do in this affair, cried out for help. People came in from every quarter in great numbers; they threw water upon the Princess's face, unlaced her, struck her on the

palms of her hands, and rubbed her temples with Hungary-water; but nothing would bring her to herself.

And now the King, who came up at the noise, bethought himself of the prediction of the fairies, and, judging very well that this must necessarily come to pass, since the fairies had said it, caused the Princess to be carried into the finest apartment in his palace, and to be laid upon a bed all embroidered with gold and silver.

One would have taken her for a little angel, she was so very beautiful; for her swooning away had not diminished one bit of her complexion; her cheeks were carnation, and her lips were coral; indeed, her eyes were shut, but she was heard to breathe softly, which satisfied those about her that she was not dead. The King commanded that they should not disturb her, but let her sleep quietly till her hour of awaking was come.

The good Fairy who had saved her life by condemning her to sleep a hundred years was in the kingdom of Matakin, twelve thousand leagues off, when this accident befell the Princess; but she was instantly informed of it by a little dwarf, who had boots of seven leagues, that is, boots with which he could tread over seven leagues of ground in one stride. The Fairy came away immediately, and she arrived, about an hour after, in a fiery chariot drawn by dragons.

The King handed her out of the chariot, and she approved everything he had done, but as she had very great foresight, she thought when the Princess should awake she might not know what to do with herself, being all alone in this old palace; and this was what she did: she touched with her wand everything in the palace (except the King and Queen)—governesses, maids of honor, ladies of the bedchamber, gentlemen, officers, stewards, cooks, undercooks, scullions, guards, with their beefeaters, pages, footmen; she likewise touched all the horses which were in the stables, pads as well as others, the great dogs in the outward court and pretty little Mopsey too, the Princess’s little spaniel, which lay by her on the bed.

Immediately upon her touching them they all fell asleep, that they might not awake before their mistress and that they might be ready to wait upon her when she wanted them. The very spits at the fire, as full as they could hold of partridges and pheasants, did fall asleep also. All this was done in a moment. Fairies are not long in doing their business.

And now the King and the Queen, having kissed their dear child without waking her, went out of the palace and put forth a proclamation that nobody should dare to come near it.

This, however, was not necessary, for in a quarter of an hour's time there grew up all round about the park such a vast number of trees, great and small, bushes and brambles, twining one within another, that neither man nor beast could pass through; so that nothing could be seen but the very top of the towers of the palace; and that, too, not unless it was a good way off. Nobody; doubted but the Fairy gave herein a very extraordinary sample of her art, that the Princess, while she continued sleeping, might have nothing to fear from any curious people.

When a hundred years were gone and passed the son of the King then reigning, and who was of another family from that of the sleeping Princess, being gone a-hunting on that side of the country, asked:

What those towers were which he saw in the middle of a great thick wood?

Everyone answered according as they had heard. Some said:

That it was a ruinous old castle, haunted by spirits.

Others, That all the sorcerers and witches of the country kept there their sabbath or night's meeting.

The common opinion was: That an ogre lived there, and that he carried thither all the little children he could catch, that he might eat them up at his leisure, without anybody being able to follow him, as having himself only the power to pass through the wood.

The Prince was at a stand, not knowing what to believe, when a very good countryman spake to him thus:

"May it please your royal highness, it is now about fifty years since I heard from my father, who heard my grandfather say, that there was then in this castle a princess, the most beautiful was ever seen; that she must sleep there a hundred years, and should be waked by a king's son, for whom she was reserved."

The young Prince was all on fire at these words, believing, without weighing the matter, that he could put an end to this rare adventure; and, pushed on by love and honor, resolved that moment to look into it.

Scarce had he advanced toward the wood when all the great trees, the bushes, and brambles gave way of themselves to let him pass through; he

walked up to the castle which he saw at the end of a large avenue which he went into; and what a little surprised him was that he saw none of his people could follow him, because the trees closed again as soon as he had passed through them. However, he did not cease from continuing his way; a young and amorous prince is always valiant.

He came into a spacious outward court, where everything he saw might have frozen the most fearless person with horror. There reigned all over a most frightful silence; the image of death everywhere showed itself, and there was nothing to be seen but stretched-out bodies of men and animals, all seeming to be dead. He, however, very well knew, by the ruby faces and pimpled noses of the beefeaters, that they were only asleep; and their goblets, wherein still remained some drops of wine, showed plainly that they fell asleep in their cups.

He then crossed a court paved with marble, went up the stairs and came into the guard chamber, where guards were standing in their ranks, with their muskets upon their shoulders, and snoring as loud as they could. After that he went through several rooms full of gentlemen and ladies, all asleep, some standing, others sitting. At last he came into a chamber all gilded with gold, where he saw upon a bed, the curtains of which were all open, the finest sight was ever beheld—a princess, who appeared to be about fifteen or sixteen years of age, and whose bright and, in a manner, resplendent beauty, had somewhat in it divine. He approached with trembling and admiration, and fell down before her upon his knees.

And now, as the enchantment was at an end, the Princess awaked, and looking on him with eyes more tender than the first view might seem to admit of:

“Is it you, my Prince?” said she to him. “You have waited a long while.”

The Prince, charmed with these words, and much more with the manner in which they were spoken, knew not how to show his joy and gratitude; he assured her that he loved her better than he did himself; their discourse was not well connected, they did weep more than talk—little eloquence, a great deal of love. He was more at a loss than she, and we need not wonder at it; she had time to think on what to say to him; for it is very probable (though history mentions nothing of it) that the good Fairy,

during so long a sleep, had given her very agreeable dreams. In short, they talked four hours together, and yet they said not half what they had to say.

In the meanwhile all the palace awaked; everyone thought upon their particular business, and as all of them were not in love they were ready to die for hunger. The chief lady of honor, being as sharp set as other folks, grew very impatient, and told the Princess aloud that supper was served up. The Prince helped the Princess to rise; she was entirely dressed, and very magnificently, but his royal highness took care not to tell her that she was dressed like his great-grandmother, and had a point band peeping over a high collar; she looked not a bit less charming and beautiful for all that.

They went into the great hall of looking-glasses, where they supped, and were served by the Princess's officers, the violins and hautboys played old tunes, but very excellent, though it was now above a hundred years since they had played; and after supper, without losing any time, the lord almoner married them in the chapel of the castle, and the chief lady of honor drew the curtains. They had but very little sleep—the Princess had no occasion; and the Prince left her next morning to return to the city, where his father must needs have been in pain for him. The Prince told him:

That he lost his way in the forest as he was hunting, and that he had lain in the cottage of a charcoal-burner, who gave him cheese and brown bread.

The King, his father, who was a good man, believed him; but his mother could not be persuaded it was true; and seeing that he went almost every day a-hunting, and that he always had some excuse ready for so doing, though he had lain out three or four nights together, she began to suspect that he was married, for he lived with the Princess above two whole years, and had by her two children, the eldest of which, who was a daughter, was named Morning, and the youngest, who was a son, they called Day, because he was a great deal handsomer and more beautiful than his sister.

The Queen spoke several times to her son, to inform herself after what manner he did pass his time, and that in this he ought in duty to satisfy her. But he never dared to trust her with his secret; he feared her, though he loved her, for she was of the race of the Ogres, and the King would never have married her had it not been for her vast riches; it was even whispered

about the Court that she had Ogreish inclinations, and that, whenever she saw little children passing by, she had all the difficulty in the world to avoid falling upon them. And so the Prince would never tell her one word.

But when the King was dead, which happened about two years afterward, and he saw himself lord and master, he openly declared his marriage; and he went in great ceremony to conduct his Queen to the palace. They made a magnificent entry into the capital city, she riding between her two children.

Soon after the King went to make war with the Emperor Contalabutte, his neighbor. He left the government of the kingdom to the Queen his mother, and earnestly recommended to her care his wife and children. He was obliged to continue his expedition all the summer, and as soon as he departed the Queen-mother sent her daughter-in-law to a country house among the woods, that she might with the more ease gratify her horrible longing.

Some few days afterward she went thither herself, and said to her clerk of the kitchen:

"I have a mind to eat little Morning for my dinner to-morrow."

"Ah! madam," cried the clerk of the kitchen.

"I will have it so," replied the Queen (and this she spoke in the tone of an Ogress who had a strong desire to eat fresh meat), "and will eat her with a sauce Robert."

The poor man, knowing very well that he must not play tricks with Ogresses, took his great knife and went up into little Morning's chamber. She was then four years old, and came up to him jumping and laughing, to take him about the neck, and ask him for some sugar-candy. Upon which he began to weep, the great knife fell out of his hand, and he went into the back yard, and killed a little lamb, and dressed it with such good sauce that his mistress assured him that she had never eaten anything so good in her life. He had at the same time taken up little Morning, and carried her to his wife, to conceal her in the lodging he had at the bottom of the courtyard.

About eight days afterward the wicked Queen said to the clerk of the kitchen, "I will sup on little Day."

He answered not a word, being resolved to cheat her as he had done before. He went to find out little Day, and saw him with a little foil in his hand, with which he was fencing with a great monkey, the child being then

only three years of age. He took him up in his arms and carried him to his wife, that she might conceal him in her chamber along with his sister, and in the room of little Day cooked up a young kid, very tender, which the Ogress found to be wonderfully good.

This was hitherto all mighty well; but one evening this wicked Queen said to her clerk of the kitchen:

“I will eat the Queen with the same sauce I had with her children.”

It was now that the poor clerk of the kitchen despaired of being able to deceive her. The young Queen was turned of twenty, not reckoning the hundred years she had been asleep; and how to find in the yard a beast so firm was what puzzled him. He took then a resolution, that he might save his own life, to cut the Queen’s throat; and going up into her chamber, with intent to do it at once, he put himself into as great fury as he could possibly, and came into the young Queen’s room with his dagger in his hand. He would not, however, surprise her, but told her, with a great deal of respect, the orders he had received from the Queen-mother.

“Do it; do it” (said she, stretching out her neck). “Execute your orders, and then I shall go and see my children, my poor children, whom I so much and so tenderly loved.”

For she thought them dead ever since they had been taken away without her knowledge.

“No, no, madam” (cried the poor clerk of the kitchen, all in tears); “you shall not die, and yet you shall see your children again; but then you must go home with me to my lodgings, where I have concealed them, and I shall deceive the Queen once more, by giving her in your stead a young hind.”

Upon this he forthwith conducted her to his chamber, where, leaving her to embrace her children, and cry along with them, he went and dressed a young hind, which the Queen had for her supper, and devoured it with the same appetite as if it had been the young Queen. Exceedingly was she delighted with her cruelty, and she had invented a story to tell the King, at his return, how the mad wolves had eaten up the Queen his wife and her two children.

One evening, as she was, according to her custom, rambling round about the courts and yards of the palace to see if she could smell any fresh meat, she heard, in a ground room, little Day crying, for his mamma was

going to whip him, because he had been naughty; and she heard, at the same time, little Morning begging pardon for her brother.

The Ogress presently knew the voice of the Queen and her children, and being quite mad that she had been thus deceived, she commanded next morning, by break of day (with a most horrible voice, which made everybody tremble), that they should bring into the middle of the great court a large tub, which she caused to be filled with toads, vipers, snakes, and all sorts of serpents, in order to have thrown into it the Queen and her children, the clerk of the kitchen, his wife and maid; all whom she had given orders should be brought thither with their hands tied behind them.

They were brought out accordingly, and the executioners were just going to throw them into the tub, when the King (who was not so soon expected) entered the court on horseback (for he came post) and asked, with the utmost astonishment, what was the meaning of that horrible spectacle.

No one dared to tell him, when the Ogress, all enraged to see what had happened, threw herself head foremost into the tub, and was instantly devoured by the ugly creatures she had ordered to be thrown into it for others. The King could not but be very sorry, for she was his mother; but he soon comforted himself with his beautiful wife and his pretty children.

CINDERELLA, OR THE LITTLE GLASS SLIPPER

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Once there was a gentleman who married, for his second wife, the proudest and most haughty woman that was ever seen. She had, by a former husband, two daughters of her own humor, who were, indeed, exactly like her in all things. He had likewise, by another wife, a young daughter, but of unparalleled goodness and sweetness of temper, which she took from her mother, who was the best creature in the world.

No sooner were the ceremonies of the wedding over but the mother-in-law began to show herself in her true colors. She could not bear the good qualities of this pretty girl, and the less because they made her own daughters appear the more odious. She employed her in the meanest work of the house: she scoured the dishes, tables, etc., and scrubbed madam’s chamber, and those of misses, her daughters; she lay up in a sorry garret, upon a wretched straw bed, while her sisters lay in fine rooms, with floors all inlaid, upon beds of the very newest fashion, and where they had looking-glasses so large that they might see themselves at their full length from head to foot.

The poor girl bore all patiently, and dared not tell her father, who would have rattled her off; for his wife governed him entirely. When she had done her work, she used to go into the chimney-corner, and sit down among cinders and ashes, which made her commonly be called Cinderwench; but the youngest, who was not so rude and uncivil as the eldest, called her Cinderella. However, Cinderella, notwithstanding her mean apparel, was a hundred times handsomer than her sisters, though they were always dressed very richly.

It happened that the King’s son gave a ball, and invited all persons of fashion to it. Our young misses were also invited, for they cut a very grand figure among the quality. They were mightily delighted at this invitation, and wonderfully busy in choosing out such gowns, petticoats, and head-clothes as might become them. This was a new trouble to Cinderella; for it

was she who ironed her sisters' linen, and plaited their ruffles; they talked all day long of nothing but how they should be dressed.

"For my part," said the eldest, "I will wear my red velvet suit with French trimming."

"And I," said the youngest, "shall have my usual petticoat; but then, to make amends for that, I will put on my gold-flowered manteau, and my diamond stomacher, which is far from being the most ordinary one in the world."

They sent for the best tire-woman they could get to make up their head-dresses and adjust their double pinners, and they had their red brushes and patches from Mademoiselle de la Poche.

Cinderella was likewise called up to them to be consulted in all these matters, for she had excellent notions, and advised them always for the best, nay, and offered her services to dress their heads, which they were very willing she should do. As she was doing this, they said to her:

"Cinderella, would you not be glad to go to the ball?"

"Alas!" said she, "you only jeer me; it is not for such as I am to go thither."

"Thou art in the right of it," replied they; "it would make the people laugh to see a Cinderwench at a ball."

Anyone but Cinderella would have dressed their heads awry, but she was very good, and dressed them perfectly well They were almost two days without eating, so much were they transported with joy. They broke above a dozen laces in trying to be laced up close, that they might have a fine slender shape, and they were continually at their looking-glass. At last the happy day came; they went to Court, and Cinderella followed them with her eyes as long as she could, and when she had lost sight of them, she fell a-crying.

Her godmother, who saw her all in tears, asked her what was the matter.

"I wish I could—I wish I could—"; she was not able to speak the rest, being interrupted by her tears and sobbing.

This godmother of hers, who was a fairy, said to her, "Thou wishest thou couldst go to the ball; is it not so?"

"Y—es," cried Cinderella, with a great sigh.

“Well,” said her godmother, “be but a good girl, and I will contrive that thou shalt go.” Then she took her into her chamber, and said to her, “Run into the garden, and bring me a pumpkin.”

Cinderella went immediately to gather the finest she could get, and brought it to her godmother, not being able to imagine how this pumpkin could make her go to the ball. Her godmother scooped out all the inside of it, having left nothing but the rind; which done, she struck it with her wand, and the pumpkin was instantly turned into a fine coach, gilded all over with gold.

She then went to look into her mouse-trap, where she found six mice, all alive, and ordered Cinderella to lift up a little the trapdoor, when, giving each mouse, as it went out, a little tap with her wand, the mouse was that moment turned into a fine horse, which altogether made a very fine set of six horses of a beautiful mouse-colored dapple-gray. Being at a loss for a coachman,

“I will go and see,” says Cinderella, “if there is never a rat in the rat-trap—we may make a coachman of him.”

“Thou art in the right,” replied her godmother; “go and look.”

Cinderella brought the trap to her, and in it there were three huge rats. The fairy made choice of one of the three which had the largest beard, and, having touched him with her wand, he was turned into a fat, jolly coachman, who had the smartest whiskers eyes ever beheld. After that, she said to her:

“Go again into the garden, and you will find six lizards behind the watering-pot, bring them to me.”

She had no sooner done so but her godmother turned them into six footmen, who skipped up immediately behind the coach, with their liveries all bedaubed with gold and silver, and clung as close behind each other as if they had done nothing else their whole lives. The Fairy then said to Cinderella:

“Well, you see here an equipage fit to go to the ball with; are you not pleased with it?”

“Oh! yes,” cried she; “but must I go thither as I am, in these nasty rags?”

Her godmother only just touched her with her wand, and, at the same instant, her clothes were turned into cloth of gold and silver, all beset with

jewels. This done, she gave her a pair of glass slippers, the prettiest in the whole world. Being thus decked out, she got up into her coach; but her godmother, above all things, commanded her not to stay till after midnight, telling her, at the same time, that if she stayed one moment longer, the coach would be a pumpkin again, her horses mice, her coachman a rat, her footmen lizards, and her clothes become just as they were before.

She promised her godmother she would not fail of leaving the ball before midnight; and then away she drives, scarce able to contain herself for joy. The King's son who was told that a great princess, whom nobody knew, was come, ran out to receive her; he gave her his hand as she alighted out of the coach, and led her into the ball, among all the company. There was immediately a profound silence, they left off dancing, and the violins ceased to play, so attentive was everyone to contemplate the singular beauties of the unknown new-comer. Nothing was then heard but a confused noise of:

"Ha! how handsome she is! Ha! how handsome she is!"

The King himself, old as he was, could not help watching her, and telling the Queen softly that it was a long time since he had seen so beautiful and lovely a creature.

All the ladies were busied in considering her clothes and headdress, that they might have some made next day after the same pattern, provided they could meet with such fine material and as able hands to make them.

The King's son conducted her to the most honorable seat, and afterward took her out to dance with him; she danced so very gracefully that they all more and more admired her. A fine collation was served up, whereof the young prince ate not a morsel, so intently was he busied in gazing on her.

She went and sat down by her sisters, showing them a thousand civilities, giving them part of the oranges and citrons which the Prince had presented her with, which very much surprised them, for they did not know her. While Cinderella was thus amusing her sisters, she heard the clock strike eleven and three-quarters, whereupon she immediately made a courtesy to the company and hasted away as fast as she could.

When she got home she ran to seek out her godmother, and, after having thanked her, she said she could not but heartily wish she might go

next day to the ball, because the King’s son had desired her.

As she was eagerly telling her godmother whatever had passed at the ball, her two sisters knocked at the door, which Cinderella ran and opened.

“How long you have stayed!” cried she, gaping, rubbing her eyes and stretching herself as if she had been just waked out of her sleep; she had not, however, any manner of inclination to sleep since they went from home.

“If thou hadst been at the ball,” said one of her sisters, “thou wouldst not have been tired with it. There came thither the finest princess, the most beautiful ever was seen with mortal eyes; she showed us a thousand civilities, and gave us oranges and citrons.”

Cinderella seemed very indifferent in the matter; indeed, she asked them the name of that princess; but they told her they did not know it, and that the King’s son was very uneasy on her account and would give all the world to know who she was. At this Cinderella, smiling, replied:

“She must, then, be very beautiful indeed; how happy you have been! Could not I see her? Ah! dear Miss Charlotte, do lend me your yellow suit of clothes which you wear every day.”

“Ay, to be sure!” cried Miss Charlotte; “lend my clothes to such a dirty Cinderwench as thou art! I should be a fool.”

Cinderella, indeed, expected well such answer, and was very glad of the refusal; for she would have been sadly put to it if her sister had lent her what she asked for jestingly.

The next day the two sisters were at the ball, and so was Cinderella, but dressed more magnificently than before. The King’s son was always by her, and never ceased his compliments and kind speeches to her; to whom all this was so far from being tiresome that she quite forgot what her godmother had recommended to her; so that she, at last, counted the clock striking twelve when she took it to be no more than eleven; she then rose up and fled, as nimble as a deer. The Prince followed, but could not overtake her. She left behind one of her glass slippers, which the Prince took up most carefully. She got home but quite out of breath, and in her nasty old clothes, having nothing left her of all her finery but one of the little slippers, fellow to that she dropped. The guards at the palace gate were asked:

If they had not seen a princess go out.

Who said: They had seen nobody go out but a young girl, very meanly dressed, and who had more the air of a poor country wench than a gentlewoman.

When the two sisters returned from the ball Cinderella asked them: If they had been well diverted, and if the fine lady had been there.

They told her: Yes, but that she hurried away immediately when it struck twelve, and with so much haste that she dropped one of her little glass slippers, the prettiest in the world, which the King's son had taken up; that he had done nothing but look at her all the time at the ball, and that most certainly he was very much in love with the beautiful person who owned the glass slipper.

What they said was very true; for a few days after the King's son caused it to be proclaimed, by sound of trumpet, that he would marry her whose foot the slipper would just fit. They whom he employed began to try it upon the princesses, then the duchesses and all the Court, but in vain; it was brought to the two sisters, who did all they possibly could to thrust their foot into the slipper, but they could not effect it. Cinderella, who saw all this, and knew her slipper, said to them, laughing:

"Let me see if it will not fit me."

Her sisters burst out a-laughing, and began to banter her. The gentleman who was sent to try the slipper looked earnestly at Cinderella, and, finding her very handsome, said:

It was but just that she should try, and that he had orders to let everyone make trial.

He obliged Cinderella to sit down, and, putting the slipper to her foot, he found it went on very easily, and fitted her as if it had been made of wax. The astonishment her two sisters were in was excessively great, but still abundantly greater when Cinderella pulled out of her pocket the other slipper, and put it on her foot. Thereupon, in came her godmother, who, having touched with her wand Cinderella's clothes, made them richer and more magnificent than any of those she had before.

And now her two sisters found her to be that fine, beautiful lady whom they had seen at the ball. They threw themselves at her feet to beg pardon for all the ill-treatment they had made her undergo. Cinderella took them up, and, as she embraced them, cried:

That she forgave them with all her heart, and desired them always to love her.

She was conducted to the young prince, dressed as she was; he thought her more charming than ever, and, a few days after, married her. Cinderella, who was no less good than beautiful, gave her two sisters lodgings in the palace, and that very same day matched them with two great lords of the Court.[5]

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5. Charles Perrault.

ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP

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There once lived a poor tailor, who had a son called Aladdin, a careless, idle boy who would do nothing but play ball all day long in the streets with little idle boys like himself. This so grieved the father that he died; yet, in spite of his mother's tears and prayers, Aladdin did not mend his ways. One day, when he was playing in the streets as usual, a stranger asked him his age, and if he was not the son of Mustapha the tailor. "I am, sir," replied Aladdin; "but he died a long while ago." On this the stranger, who was a famous African magician, fell on his neck and kissed him, saying, "I am your uncle, and knew you from your likeness to my brother. Go to your mother and tell her I am coming." Aladdin ran home and told his mother of his newly found uncle. "Indeed, child," she said, "your father had a brother, but I always thought he was dead." However, she prepared supper, and bade Aladdin seek his uncle, who came laden with wine and fruit. He presently fell down and kissed the place where Mustapha used to sit, bidding Aladdin's mother not to be surprised at not having seen him before, as he had been forty years out of the country. He then turned to Aladdin, and asked him his trade, at which the boy hung his head, while his mother burst into tears. On learning that Aladdin was idle and would learn no trade, he offered to take a shop for him and stock it with merchandise. Next day he bought Aladdin a fine suit of clothes and took him all over the city, showing him the sights, and brought him home at nightfall to his mother, who was overjoyed to see her son so fine.

The next day the magician led Aladdin into some beautiful gardens a long way outside the city gates. They sat down by a fountain and the magician pulled a cake from his girdle, which he divided between them. They then journeyed onward till they almost reached the mountains. Aladdin was so tired that he begged to go back, but the magician beguiled him with pleasant stories, and led him on in spite of himself. At last they came to two mountains divided by a narrow valley. "We will go no

farther," said the false uncle. "I will show you something wonderful; only do you gather up sticks while I kindle a fire." When it was lit the magician threw on it a powder he had about him, at the same time saying some magical words. The earth trembled a little and opened in front of them, disclosing a square flat stone with a brass ring in the middle to raise it by. Aladdin tried to run away, but the magician caught him and gave him a blow that knocked him down. "What have I done, uncle?" he said piteously; whereupon the magician said more kindly: "Fear nothing, but obey me. Beneath this stone lies a treasure which is to be yours, and no one else may touch it, so you must do exactly as I tell you." At the word treasure Aladdin forgot his fears, and grasped the ring as he was told, saying the names of his father and grandfather. The stone came up quite easily, and some steps appeared. "Go down," said the magician; "at the foot of those steps you will find an open door leading into three large halls. Tuck up your gown and go through them without touching anything, or you will die instantly. These halls lead into a garden of fine fruit trees. Walk on until you come to a niche in a terrace where stands a lighted lamp. Pour out the oil it contains, and bring it to me." He drew a ring from his finger and gave it to Aladdin, bidding him prosper.

Aladdin found everything as the magician had said, gathered some fruit off the trees, and, having got the lamp, arrived at the mouth of the cave. The magician cried out in a great hurry: "Make haste and give me the lamp." This Aladdin refused to do until he was out of the cave. The magician flew into a terrible passion, and throwing some more powder on to the fire, he said something, and the stone rolled back into its place.

The magician left Persia for ever, which plainly showed that he was no uncle of Aladdin's, but a cunning magician, who had read in his magic books of a wonderful lamp, which would make him the most powerful man in the world. Though he alone knew where to find it, he could only receive it from the hand of another. He had picked out the foolish Aladdin for this purpose, intending to get the lamp and kill him afterward.

For two days Aladdin remained in the dark, crying and lamenting. At last he clasped his hands in prayer, and in so doing rubbed the ring, which the magician had forgotten to take from him. Immediately an enormous and frightful genie rose out of the earth, saying: "What wouldst thou with me? I am the Slave of the Ring, and will obey thee in all things." Aladdin

fearlessly replied: “Deliver me from this place!” whereupon the earth opened, and he found himself outside. As soon as his eyes could bear the light he went home, but fainted on the threshold. When he came to himself he told his mother what had passed, and showed her the lamp and the fruits he had gathered in the garden, which were, in reality, precious stones. He then asked for some food. “Alas! child,” she said, “I have nothing in the house, but I have spun a little cotton and will go and sell it.” Aladdin bade her keep her cotton, for he would sell the lamp instead. As it was very dirty she began to rub it, that it might fetch a higher price. Instantly a hideous genie appeared, and asked what she would have. She fainted away, but Aladdin, snatching the lamp, said boldly: “Fetch me something to eat!” The genie returned with a silver bowl, twelve silver plates containing rich meats, two silver cups, and two bottles of wine. Aladdin’s mother, when she came to herself, said: “Whence comes this splendid feast?” “Ask not, but eat,” replied Aladdin. So they sat at breakfast till it was dinner-time, and Aladdin told his mother about the lamp. She begged him to sell it, and have nothing to do with devils. “No,” said Aladdin, “since chance hath made us aware of its virtues, we will use it, and the ring likewise, which I shall always wear on my finger.” When they had eaten all the genie had brought, Aladdin sold one of the silver plates, and so on until none were left. He then had recourse to the genie, who gave him another set of plates, and thus they lived for many years.

One day Aladdin heard an order from the Sultan proclaimed that everyone was to stay at home and close his shutters while the Princess, his daughter, went to and from the bath. Aladdin was seized by a desire to see her face, which was very difficult, as she always went veiled. He hid himself behind the door of the bath, and peeped through a chink. The Princess lifted her veil as she went in, and looked so beautiful that Aladdin fell in love with her at first sight. He went home so changed that his mother was frightened. He told her he loved the Princess so deeply that he could not live without her, and meant to ask her in marriage of her father. His mother, on hearing this, burst out laughing, but Aladdin at last prevailed upon her to go before the Sultan and carry his request. She fetched a napkin and laid in it the magic fruits from the enchanted garden, which sparkled and shone like the most beautiful jewels. She took these with her to please the Sultan, and set out, trusting in the lamp. The Grand

Vizier and the lords of council had just gone in as she entered the hall and placed herself in front of the Sultan. He, however, took no notice of her. She went every day for a week, and stood in the same place. When the council broke up on the sixth day the Sultan said to his Vizier: “I see a certain woman in the audience-chamber every day carrying something in a napkin. Call her next time, that I may find out what she wants.” Next day, at a sign from the Vizier, she went up to the foot of the throne and remained kneeling till the Sultan said to her: “Rise, good woman, and tell me what you want.” She hesitated, so the Sultan sent away all but the Vizier, and bade her speak frankly, promising to forgive her beforehand for anything she might say. She then told him of her son’s violent love for the Princess. “I prayed him to forget her,” she said, “but in vain; he threatened to do some desperate deed if I refused to go and ask your Majesty for the hand of the Princess. Now I pray you to forgive not me alone, but my son Aladdin.” The Sultan asked her kindly what she had in the napkin, whereupon she unfolded the jewels and presented them. He was thunderstruck, and turning to the Vizier said: “What sayest thou? Ought I not to bestow the Princess on one who values her at such a price?” The Vizier, who wanted her for his own son, begged the Sultan to withhold her for three months, in the course of which he hoped his son would contrive to make him a richer present. The Sultan granted this, and told Aladdin’s mother that, though he consented to the marriage, she must not appear before him again for three months.

Aladdin waited patiently for nearly three months, but after two had elapsed his mother, going into the city to buy oil, found every one rejoicing, and asked what was going on. “Do you not know,” was the answer, “that the son of the Grand Vizier is to marry the Sultan’s daughter to-night?” Breathless, she ran and told Aladdin, who was overwhelmed at first, but presently bethought him of the lamp. He rubbed it, and the genie appeared, saying, “What is thy will?” Aladdin replied: “The Sultan, as thou knowest, has broken his promise to me, and the Vizier’s son is to have the Princess. My command is that to-night you bring hither the bride and bridegroom.” “Master, I obey,” said the genie. Aladdin then went to his chamber, where, sure enough, at midnight the genie transported the bed containing the Vizier’s son and the Princess. “Take this new-married man,” he said, “and put him outside in the cold, and return at daybreak.”

Whereupon the genie took the Vizier's son out of bed, leaving Aladdin with the Princess. "Fear nothing," Aladdin said to her; "you are my wife, promised to me by your unjust father, and no harm shall come to you." The Princess was too frightened to speak, and passed the most miserable night of her life, while Aladdin lay down beside her and slept soundly. At the appointed hour the genie fetched in the shivering bridegroom, laid him in his place, and transported the bed back to the palace.

Presently the Sultan came to wish his daughter good-morning. The unhappy Vizier's son jumped up and hid himself, while the Princess would not say a word, and was very sorrowful. The Sultan sent her mother to her, who said: "How comes it, child, that you will not speak to your father? What has happened?" The Princess sighed deeply, and at last told her mother how, during the night, the bed had been carried into some strange house, and what had passed there. Her mother did not believe her in the least, but bade her rise and consider it an idle dream.

The following night exactly the same thing happened, and next morning, on the Princess's refusal to speak, the Sultan threatened to cut off her head. She then confessed all, bidding him to ask the Vizier's son if it were not so. The Sultan told the Vizier to ask his son, who owned the truth, adding that, dearly as he loved the Princess, he had rather die than go through another such fearful night, and wished to be separated from her. His wish was granted, and there was an end to feasting and rejoicing.

When the three months were over, Aladdin sent his mother to remind the Sultan of his promise. She stood in the same place as before, and the Sultan, who had forgotten Aladdin, at once remembered him, and sent for her. On seeing her poverty the Sultan felt less inclined than ever to keep his word, and asked his Vizier's advice, who counselled him to set so high a value on the Princess that no man living could come up to it. The Sultan then turned to Aladdin's mother, saying: "Good woman, a Sultan must remember his promises, and I will remember mine, but your son must first send me forty basins of gold brimful of jewels, carried by forty black slaves, led by as many white ones, splendidly dressed. Tell him that I await his answer." The mother of Aladdin bowed low and went home, thinking all was lost. She gave Aladdin the message, adding: "He may wait long enough for your answer!" "Not so long, mother, as you think," her son replied. "I would do a great deal more than that for the Princess." He

summoned the genie, and in a few moments the eighty slaves arrived, and filled up the small house and garden. Aladdin made them set out to the palace, two and two, followed by his mother. They were so richly dressed, with such splendid jewels in their girdles, that everyone crowded to see them and the basins of gold they carried on their heads. They entered the palace, and, after kneeling before the Sultan, stood in a half-circle round the throne with their arms crossed, while Aladdin's mother presented them to the Sultan. He hesitated no longer, but said: "Good woman, return and tell your son that I wait for him with open arms." She lost no time in telling Aladdin, bidding him make haste. But Aladdin first called the genie. "I want a scented bath," he said, "a richly embroidered habit, a horse surpassing the Sultan's, and twenty slaves to attend me. Besides this, six slaves, beautifully dressed, to wait on my mother; and lastly, ten thousand pieces of gold in ten purses." No sooner said than done. Aladdin mounted his horse and passed through the streets, the slaves strewing gold as they went. Those who had played with him in his childhood knew him not, he had grown so handsome. When the Sultan saw him he came down from his throne, embraced him, and led him into a hall where a feast was spread, intending to marry him to the Princess that very day. But Aladdin refused, saying, "I must build a palace fit for her," and took his leave. Once home, he said to the genie: "Build me a palace of the finest marble, set with jasper, agate, and other precious stones. In the middle you shall build me a large hall with a dome, its four walls of massy gold and silver, each having six windows, whose lattices, all except one which is to be left unfinished, must be set with diamonds and rubies. There must be stables and horses and grooms and slaves; go and see about it!"

The palace was finished by the next day, and the genie carried him there and showed him all his orders faithfully carried out, even to the laying of a velvet carpet from Aladdin's palace to the Sultan's. Aladdin's mother then dressed herself carefully, and walked to the palace with her slaves, while he followed her on horseback. The Sultan sent musicians with trumpets and cymbals to meet them, so that the air resounded with music and cheers. She was taken to the Princess, who saluted her and treated her with great honor. At night the Princess said good-by to her father, and set out on the carpet for Aladdin's palace, with his mother at her side, and followed by the hundred slaves. She was charmed at the sight

of Aladdin, who ran to receive her. “Princess,” he said, “blame your beauty for my boldness if I have displeased you.” She told him that, having seen him, she willingly obeyed her father in this matter. After the wedding had taken place Aladdin led her into the hall, where a feast was spread, and she supped with him, after which they danced till midnight. Next day Aladdin invited the Sultan to see the palace. On entering the hall with the four-and-twenty windows, with their rubies, diamonds, and emeralds, he cried: “It is a world’s wonder! There is only one thing that surprises me. Was it by accident that one window was left unfinished?” “No, sir, by design,” returned Aladdin. “I wished your Majesty to have the glory of finishing this palace.” The Sultan was pleased, and sent for the best jewelers in the city. He showed them the unfinished window, and bade them fit it up like the others. “Sir,” replied their spokesman, “we cannot find jewels enough.” The Sultan had his own fetched, which they soon used, but to no purpose, for in a month’s time the work was not half done. Aladdin, knowing that their task was vain, bade them undo their work and carry the jewels back, and the genie finished the window at his command. The Sultan was surprised to receive his jewels again, and visited Aladdin, who showed him the window finished. The Sultan embraced him, the envious Vizier meanwhile hinting that it was the work of enchantment.

Aladdin had won the hearts of the people by his gentle bearing. He was made captain of the Sultan’s armies, and won several battles for him, but remained modest and courteous as before, and lived thus in peace and content for several years.

But far away in Africa the magician remembered Aladdin, and by his magic arts discovered that Aladdin, instead of perishing miserably in the cave, had escaped, and had married a princess, with whom he was living in great honor and wealth. He knew that the poor tailor’s son could only have accomplished this by means of the lamp, and traveled night and day until he reached the capital of China, bent on Aladdin’s ruin. As he passed through the town he heard people talking everywhere about a marvellous palace. “Forgive my ignorance,” he asked, “what is this palace you speak Of?” “Have you not heard of Prince Aladdin’s palace,” was the reply, “the greatest wonder of the world? I will direct you if you have a mind to see it.” The magician thanked him who spoke, and having seen the palace, knew that it had been raised by the Genie of the Lamp, and became half

mad with rage. He determined to get hold of the lamp, and again plunge Aladdin into the deepest poverty.

Unluckily, Aladdin had gone a-hunting for eight days, which gave the magician plenty of time. He bought a dozen copper lamps, put them into a basket, and went to the palace, crying: “New lamps for old!” followed by a jeering crowd. The Princess, sitting in the hall of four-and-twenty windows, sent a slave to find out what the noise was about, who came back laughing, so that the Princess scolded her. “Madam,” replied the slave, “who can help laughing to see an old fool offering to exchange fine new lamps for old ones?” Another slave, hearing this, said: “There is an old one on the cornice there which he can have.” Now this was the magic lamp, which Aladdin had left there, as he could not take it out hunting with him. The Princess, not knowing its value, laughingly bade the slave take it and make the exchange. She went and said to the magician: “Give me a new lamp for this.” He snatched it and bade the slave take her choice, amid the jeers of the crowd. Little he cared, but left off crying his lamps, and went out of the city gates to a lonely place, where he remained till nightfall, when he pulled out the lamp and rubbed it. The genie appeared, and at the magician’s command carried him, together with the palace and the Princess in it, to a lonely place in Africa.

Next morning the Sultan looked out of the window toward Aladdin’s palace and rubbed his eyes, for it was gone. He sent for the Vizier and asked what had become of the palace. The Vizier looked out too, and was lost in astonishment. He again put it down to enchantment, and this time the Sultan believed him, and sent thirty men on horseback to fetch Aladdin in chains. They met him riding home, bound him, and forced him to go with them on foot. The people, however, who loved him, followed, armed, to see that he came to no harm. He was carried before the Sultan, who ordered the executioner to cut off his head. The executioner made Aladdin kneel down, bandaged his eyes, and raised his scimitar to strike. At that instant the Vizier, who saw that the crowd had forced their way into the courtyard and were scaling the walls to rescue Aladdin, called to the executioner to stay his hand. The people, indeed, looked so threatening that the Sultan gave way and ordered Aladdin to be unbound, and pardoned him in the sight of the crowd. Aladdin now begged to know what he had done. “False wretch!” said the Sultan, “come thither,” and showed him

from the window the place where his palace had stood. Aladdin was so amazed that he could not say a word. “Where is my palace and my daughter?” demanded the Sultan. “For the first I am not so deeply concerned, but my daughter I must have, and you must find her or lose your head.” Aladdin begged for forty days in which to find her, promising, if he failed, to return and suffer death at the Sultan’s pleasure. His prayer was granted, and he went forth sadly from the Sultan’s presence. For three days he wandered about like a madman, asking everyone what had become of his palace, but they only laughed and pitied him. He came to the banks of a river, and knelt down to say his prayers before throwing himself in. In so doing he rubbed the magic ring he still wore. The genie he had seen in the cave appeared, and asked his will. “Save my life, genie,” said Aladdin, “bring my palace back.” “That is not in my power,” said the genie; “I am only the Slave of the Ring; you must ask him of the lamp.” “Even so,” said Aladdin, “but thou canst take me to the palace, and set me down under my dear wife’s window.” He at once found himself in Africa, under the window of the Princess, and fell asleep out of sheer weariness.

He was awakened by the singing of the birds, and his heart was lighter. He saw plainly that all his misfortunes were owing to the loss of the lamp, and vainly wondered who had robbed him of it.

That morning the Princess rose earlier than she had done since she had been carried into Africa by the magician, whose company she was forced to endure once a day. She, however, treated him so harshly that he dared not live there altogether. As she was dressing, one of her women looked out and saw Aladdin. The Princess ran and opened the window, and at the noise she made Aladdin looked up. She called to him to come to her, and great was the joy of these lovers at seeing each other again. After he had kissed her Aladdin said: “I beg of you, Princess, in God’s name, before we speak of anything else, for your own sake and mine, tell me that has become of an old lamp I left on the cornice in the hall of four-and-twenty windows, when I went a-hunting.” “Alas!” she said, “I am the innocent cause of our sorrows,” and told him of the exchange of the lamp. “Now I know,” cried Aladdin, “that we have to thank the African magician for this! Where is the lamp?” “He carries it about with him,” said the Princess. “I know, for he pulled it out of his breast to show me. He wishes me to break my faith with you and marry him, saying that you were

beheaded by my father's command. He is for ever speaking ill of you but I only reply by my tears. If I persist, I doubt not but he will use violence." Aladdin comforted her, and left her for a while. He changed clothes with the first person he met in the town, and having bought a certain powder, returned to the Princess, who let him in by a little side door. "Put on your most beautiful dress," he said to her "and receive the magician with smiles, leading him to believe that you have forgotten me. Invite him to sup with you, and say you wish to taste the wine of his country. He will go for some and while he is gone I will tell you what to do." She listened carefully to Aladdin and when he left she arrayed herself gaily for the first time since she left China. She put on a girdle and head-dress of diamonds, and, seeing in a glass that she was more beautiful than ever, received the magician, saying, to his great amazement: "I have made up my mind that Aladdin is dead, and that all my tears will not bring him back to me, so I am resolved to mourn no more, and have therefore invited you to sup with me; but I am tired of the wines of China, and would fain taste those of Africa." The magician flew to his cellar, and the Princess put the powder Aladdin had given her in her cup. When he returned she asked him to drink her health in the wine of Africa, handing him her cup in exchange for his, as a sign she was reconciled to him. Before drinking the magician made her a speech in praise of her beauty, but the Princess cut him short, saying: "Let us drink first, and you shall say what you will afterward." She set her cup to her lips and kept it there, while the magician drained his to the dregs and fell back lifeless. The Princess then opened the door to Aladdin, and flung her arms round his neck; but Aladdin put her away, bidding her leave him, as he had more to do. He then went to the dead magician, took the lamp out of his vest, and bade the genie carry the palace and all in it back to China. This was done, and the Princess in her chamber only felt two little shocks, and little thought she was at home again.

The Sultan, who was sitting in his closet, mourning for his lost daughter, happened to look up, and rubbed his eyes, for there stood the palace as before! He hastened thither, and Aladdin received him in the hall of the four-and-twenty windows, with the Princess at his side. Aladdin told him what had happened, and showed him the dead body of the magician, that he might believe. A ten days' feast was proclaimed, and it seemed as if Aladdin might now live the rest of his life in peace; but it was not to be.

The African magician had a younger brother, who was, if possible, more wicked and more cunning than himself. He traveled to China to avenge his brother's death, and went to visit a pious woman called Fatima, thinking she might be of use to him. He entered her cell and clapped a dagger to her breast, telling her to rise and do his bidding on pain of death. He changed clothes with her, colored his face like hers, put on her veil, and murdered her, that she might tell no tales. Then he went toward the palace of Aladdin, and all the people, thinking he was the holy woman, gathered round him, kissing his hands and begging his blessing. When he got to the palace there was such a noise going on round him that the Princess bade her slave look out of the window and ask what was the matter. The slave said it was the holy woman, curing people by her touch of their ailments, whereupon the Princess, who had long desired to see Fatima, sent for her. On coming to the Princess the magician offered up a prayer for her health and prosperity. When he had done the Princess made him sit by her, and begged him to stay with her always. The false Fatima, who wished for nothing better, consented, but kept his veil down for fear of discovery. The Princess showed him the hall, and asked him what he thought of it. "It is truly beautiful," said the false Fatima. "In my mind it wants but one thing." "And what is that?" said the Princess. "If only a roc's egg," replied he, "were hung up from the middle of this dome, it would be the wonder of the world."

After this the Princess could think of nothing but the roc's egg, and when Aladdin returned from hunting he found her in a very ill humor. He begged to know what was amiss, and she told him that all her pleasure in the hall was spoiled for the want of a roc's egg hanging from the dome. "If that is all," replied Aladdin, "you shall soon be happy." He left her and rubbed the lamp, and when the genie appeared commanded him to bring a roc's egg. The genie gave such a loud and terrible shriek that the hall shook. "Wretch!" he cried, "is it not enough that I have done everything for you, but you must command me to bring my master and hang him up in the midst of this dome? You and your wife and your palace deserve to be burnt to ashes, but that this request does not come from you, but from the brother of the African magician, whom you destroyed. He is now in your palace disguised as the holy woman—whom he murdered. He it was

who put that wish into your wife’s head. Take care of yourself, for he means to kill you.” So saying, the genie disappeared.

Aladdin went back to the Princess, saying his head ached, and requesting that the holy Fatima should be fetched to lay her hands on it. But when the magician came near, Aladdin, seizing his dagger, pierced him to the heart. “What have you done?” cried the Princess. “You have killed the holy woman!” “Not so,” replied Aladdin, “but a wicked magician,” and told her of how she had been deceived.

After this Aladdin and his wife lived in peace. He succeeded the Sultan when he died, and reigned for many years, leaving behind him a long line of kings.[6]

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6. Arabian Nights.

THE TALE OF A YOUTH WHO SET OUT TO LEARN WHAT FEAR WAS

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A father had two sons, of whom the eldest was clever and bright, and always knew what he was about; but the youngest was stupid, and couldn't learn or understand anything. So much so that those who saw him exclaimed: "What a burden he'll be to his father!" Now when there was anything to be done, the eldest had always to do it; but if something was required later or in the night-time, and the way led through the churchyard or some such ghostly place, he always replied: "Oh! no, father: nothing will induce me to go there, it makes me shudder!" for he was afraid. Or, when they sat of an evening around the fire telling stories which made one's flesh creep, the listeners sometimes said: "Oh! it makes one shudder," the youngest sat in a corner, heard the exclamation, and could not understand what it meant. "They are always saying it makes one shudder! it makes one shudder! Nothing makes me shudder. It's probably an art quite beyond me."

Now it happened that his father said to him one day: "Hearken, you there in the corner; you are growing big and strong, and you must learn to earn your own bread. Look at your brother, what pains he takes; but all the money I've spent on your education is thrown away." "My dear father," he replied, "I will gladly learn—in fact, if it were possible I should like to learn to shudder; I don't understand that a bit yet." The eldest laughed when he heard this, and thought to himself: "Good heavens! what a ninny my brother is! he'll never come to any good; as the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined." The father sighed, and answered him: "You'll soon learn to shudder; but that won't help you to make a living."

Shortly after this, when the sexton came to pay them a visit, the father broke out to him, and told him what a bad hand his youngest son was at everything: he knew nothing and learned nothing. "Only think! when I asked him how he purposed gaining a livelihood, he actually asked to be taught to shudder." "If that's all he wants," said the sexton, "I can teach

him that; just you send him to me, I'll soon polish him up." The father was quite pleased with the proposal, because he thought: "It will be a good discipline for the youth." And so the sexton took him into his house, and his duty was to toll the bell. After a few days he woke him at midnight, and bade him rise and climb into the tower and toll. "Now, my friend, I'll teach you to shudder," thought he. He stole forth secretly in front, and when the youth was up above, and had turned round to grasp the bell-rope, he saw, standing opposite the hole of the belfry, a white figure. "Who's there?" he called out, but the figure gave no answer, and neither stirred nor moved. "Answer," cried the youth, "or begone; you have no business here at this hour of the night." But the sexton remained motionless, so that the youth might think that it was a ghost. The youth called out the second time: "What do you want here? Speak if you are an honest fellow, or I'll knock you down the stairs." The sexton thought: "He can't mean that in earnest," so gave forth no sound, and stood as though he were made of stone. Then the youth shouted out to him the third time, and as that too had no effect, he made a dash at the spectre and knocked it down the stairs, so that it fell about ten steps and remained lying in a corner. Thereupon he tolled the bell, went home to bed without saying a word, and fell asleep. The sexton's wife waited a long time for her husband, but he never appeared. At last she became anxious, and woke the youth, and asked: "Don't you know where my husband is? He went up to the tower in front of you." "No," answered the youth; "but someone stood on the stairs up there just opposite the trap-door in the belfry, and because he wouldn't answer me, or go away, I took him for a rogue and knocked him down. You'd better go and see if it was he; I should be much distressed if it were." The wife ran and found her husband who was lying groaning in a corner, with his leg broken.

She carried him down, and then hurried with loud protestations to the youth's father. "Your son has been the cause of a pretty misfortune," she cried; "he threw my husband downstairs so that he broke his leg. Take the good-for-nothing wretch out of our house." The father was horrified, hurried to the youth, and gave him a scolding.

"What unholy pranks are these? The evil one must have put them into your head." "Father," he replied, "only listen to me; I am quite guiltless. He stood there in the night, like one who meant harm. I didn't know who it

was, and warned him three times to speak or begone." "Oh!" groaned the father, "you'll bring me nothing but misfortune; get out of my sight, I won't have anything more to do with you." "Yes, father, willingly; only wait till daylight, then I'll set out and learn to shudder, and in that way I shall be master of an art which will gain me a living." "Learn what you will," said the father, "it's all one to me. Here are fifty dollars for you, set forth into the wide world with them; but see you tell no one where you come from or who your father is, for I am ashamed of you." "Yes, father, whatever you wish; and if that's all you ask, I can easily keep it in mind."

When day broke the youth put the fifty dollars into his pocket, set out on the hard high road, and kept muttering to himself: "If I could only shudder! if I could only shudder!" Just at this moment a man came by who heard the youth speaking to himself, and when they had gone on a bit and were in sight of the gallows the man said to him: "Look! there is the tree where seven people have been hanged, and are now learning to fly; sit down under it and wait till nightfall, and then you'll pretty soon learn to shudder." "If that's all I have to do," answered the youth, "it's easily done; but if I learn to shudder so quickly, then you shall have my fifty dollars. Just come back to me to-morrow morning early." Then the youth went to the gallows-tree and sat down underneath it, and waited for the evening; and because he felt cold he lit himself a fire. But at midnight it got so chill that in spite of the fire he couldn't keep warm. And as the wind blew the corpses one against the other, tossing them to and fro, he thought to himself: "If you are perishing down here by the fire, how those poor things up there must be shaking and shivering!" And because he had a tender heart, he put up a ladder, which he climbed unhooked one body after the other, and took down all the seven. Then he stirred the fire, blew it up, and placed them all round in a circle, that they might warm themselves. But they sat there and did not move, and the fire caught their clothes. Then he spoke: "Take care, or I'll hang you up again." But the dead men did not hear and let their rags go on burning. Then he got angry, and said: "If you aren't careful yourselves, then I can't help you, and I don't mean to burn with you"; and he hung them up again in a row. Then he sat down at his fire and fell asleep. On the following morning the man came to him, and, wishing to get his fifty dollars, said: "Now you know what it is to shudder." "No," he answered, "how should I? Those fellows up there never

opened their mouths, and were so stupid that they let those few old tatters they have on their bodies burn." Then the man saw he wouldn't get his fifty dollars that day, and went off, saying: "Well, I'm blessed if I ever met such a person in my life before."

The youth went too on his way, and began to murmur to himself: "Oh! if I could only shudder! if I could only shudder!" A carrier who was walking behind him heard these words, and asked him: "Who are you" "I don't know," said the youth. "Where do you hail from?" "I don't know." "Who's your father?" "I mayn't say." "What are you constantly muttering to yourself?" "Oh!" said the youth, "I would give worlds to shudder, but no one can teach me." "Stuff and nonsense!" spoke the carrier; "come along with me, and I'll soon put that right." The youth went with the carrier, and in the evening they reached an inn, where they were to spend the night. Then, just as he was entering the room, he said again, quite aloud: "Oh! if I could only shudder! if I could only shudder!" The landlord, who heard this, laughed and said: "If that's what you're sighing for, you shall be given every opportunity here." "Oh! hold your tongue!" said the landlord's wife; "so many people have paid for their curiosity with their lives, it were a thousand pities if those beautiful eyes were never again to behold daylight." But the youth said: "No matter how difficult, I insist on learning it; why, that's what I've set out to do." He left the landlord no peace till he told him that in the neighborhood stood a haunted castle, where one could easily learn to shudder if one only kept watch in it for three nights. The King had promised the man who dared to do this thing his daughter as wife, and she was the most beautiful maiden under the sun. There was also much treasure hid in the castle, guarded by evil spirits, which would then be free, and was sufficient to make a poor man more than rich. Many had already gone in, but so far none had ever come out again. So the youth went to the King and spoke: "If I were allowed, I should much like to watch for three nights in the castle." The King looked at him, and because he pleased him, he said: "You can ask for three things, none of them living, and those you may take with you into the castle." Then he answered: "Well, I shall beg for a fire, a turning lathe, and a carving bench with the knife attached."

On the following day the King had everything put into the castle; and when night drew on the youth took up his position there, lit a bright fire in

one of the rooms, placed the carving bench with the knife close to it, and sat himself down on the turning lathe. “Oh! if I could only shudder!” he said: “but I sha’n’t learn it here either.” Toward midnight he wanted to make up the fire, and as he was blowing up a blaze he heard a shriek from a corner. “Ou, miou! how cold we are!” “You fools!” he cried; “why do you scream? If you are cold, come and sit at the fire and warm yourselves.” And as he spoke two huge black cats sprang fiercely forward and sat down, one on each side of him, and gazed wildly at him with their fiery eyes. After a time, when they had warmed themselves, they said: “Friend, shall we play a little game of cards?” “Why not?” he replied; “but first let me see your paws.” Then they stretched out their claws. “Ha!” said he; “what long nails you’ve got! Wait a minute: I must first cut them off.” Thereupon he seized them by the scruff of their necks, lifted them on to the carving bench, and screwed down their paws firmly. “After watching you narrowly,” said he, “I no longer feel any desire to play cards with you”; and with these words he struck them dead and threw them out into the water. But when he had thus sent the two of them to their final rest, and was again about to sit down at the fire, out of every nook and corner came forth black cats and black dogs with fiery chains in such swarms that he couldn’t possibly get away from them. They yelled in the most ghastly manner, jumped upon his fire, scattered it all, and tried to put it out. He looked on quietly for a time, but when it got beyond a joke he seized his carving-knife and called out: “Be off, you rabble rout!” and let fly at them. Some of them fled away, and the others he struck dead and threw them out into the pond below. When he returned he blew up the sparks of the fire once more, and warmed himself. And as he sat thus his eyes refused to keep open any longer, and a desire to sleep stole over him. Then he looked around him and beheld in the corner a large bed. “The very thing,” he said, and laid himself down in it. But when he wished to close his eyes the bed began to move by itself, and ran all round the castle. “Capital,” he said, “only a little quicker.” Then the bed sped on as if drawn by six horses, over thresholds and stairs, up this way and down that. All of a sudden—crash, crash! with a bound it turned over, upside down, and lay like a mountain on the top of him. But he tossed the blankets and pillows in the air, emerged from underneath, and said: “Now anyone who has the fancy for it may go a drive,” lay down at his fire, and slept till daylight. In the

morning the King came, and when he beheld him lying on the ground he imagined the ghosts had been too much for him, and that he was dead. Then he said: “What a pity! and such a fine fellow he was.” The youth heard this, got up, and said: “It’s not come to that yet.” Then the King was astonished, but very glad, and asked how it had fared with him. “First-rate,” he answered; “and now I’ve survived the one night, I shall get through the other two also.” The landlord, when he went to him, opened his eyes wide, and said: “Well, I never thought to see you alive again. Have you learned now what shuddering is?” “No,” he replied, “it’s quite hopeless; if someone could only tell me how to!”

The second night he went up again to the old castle, sat down at the fire, and began his old refrain: “If I could only shudder!” As midnight approached, a noise and din broke out, at first gentle, but gradually increasing; then all was quiet for a minute, and at length, with a loud scream, half of a man dropped down the chimney and fell before him. “Hi, up there!” shouted he; “there’s another half wanted down here, that’s not enough”; then the din commenced once more, there was a shrieking and a yelling, and then the other half fell down. “Wait a bit,” he said; “I’ll stir up the fire for you.” When he had done this and again looked around, the two pieces had united, and a horrible-looking man sat on his seat. “Come,” said the youth, “I didn’t bargain for that, the seat is mine.” The man tried to shove him away, but the youth wouldn’t allow it for a moment, and, pushing him off by force, sat down in his place again. Then more men dropped down, one after the other, who fetching nine skeleton legs and two skulls, put them up and played ninepins with them. The youth thought he would like to play too, and said: “Look here; do you mind my joining the game?” “No, not if you have money.” “I’ve money enough,” he replied, “but your balls aren’t round enough.” Then he took the skulls, placed them on his lathe, and turned them till they were round. “Now they’ll roll along better,” said he, “and houp-la! now the fun begins.” He played with them and lost some of his money, but when twelve struck everything vanished before his eyes. He lay down and slept peacefully. The next morning the King came, anxious for news. “How have you got on this time?” he asked. “I played ninepins,” he answered, “and lost a few pence.” “Didn’t you shudder then?” “No such luck,” said he; “I made myself merry. Oh! if I only knew what it was to shudder!”

On the third night he sat down again on his bench, and said, in the most desponding way: “If I could only shudder!” When it got late, six big men came in carrying a coffin. Then he cried: “Ha! ha! that’s most likely my little cousin who only died a few days ago”; and beckoning with his finger he called out: “Come, my small cousin, come.” They placed the coffin on the ground, and he approached it and took off the cover. In it lay a dead man. He felt his face, and it was cold as ice. “Wait,” he said “I’ll heat you up a bit,” went to the fire, warmed his hand, and laid it on the man’s face, but the dead remained cold. Then he lifted him out, sat down at the fire, laid him on his knee, and rubbed his arms that the blood should circulate again. When that too had no effect it occurred to him that if two people lay together in bed they warmed each other; so he put him into the bed, covered him up, and lay down beside him; after a time the corpse became warm and began to move. Then the youth said: “Now, my little cousin, what would have happened if I hadn’t warmed you?” But the dead man rose up and cried out: “Now I will strangle you.” “What!” said he, “is that all the thanks I get? You should be put straight back into your coffin,” lifted him up, threw him in, and closed the lid. Then the six men came and carried him out again. “I simply can’t shudder,” he said, “and it’s clear I sha’n’t learn it in a lifetime here.”

Then a man entered, of more than ordinary size and of a very fearful appearance; but he was old and had a white beard. “Oh! you miserable creature, now you will soon know what it is to shudder,” he cried, “for you must die.” “Not so quickly,” answered the youth. “If I am to die, you must catch me first.” “I shall soon lay hold of you,” spoke the monster. “Gently, gently, don’t boast too much, I’m as strong as you, and stronger too.” “We’ll soon see,” said the old man; “if you are stronger than I then I’ll let you off; come, let’s have a try.” Then he led him through some dark passages to a forge, and grasping an axe he drove one of the anvils with a blow into the earth. “I can do better than that,” cried the youth, and went to the other anvil. The old man drew near him in order to watch closely, and his white beard hung right down. The youth seized the axe, cleft the anvil open, and jammed in the old man’s beard. “Now I have you,” said the youth; “this time it’s your turn to die.” Then he seized an iron rod and belabored the old man till he, whimpering, begged him to leave off, and he would give him great riches. The youth drew out the axe and let him go.

The old man led him back to the castle and showed him in a cellar three chests of gold. “One of these,” said he, “belongs to the poor, one to the King, and the third is yours.” At that moment twelve struck, and the spirit vanished, leaving the youth alone in the dark. “I’ll surely be able to find a way out,” said he, and groping about he at length found his way back to the room, and fell asleep at his fire. The next morning the King came, and said: “Well, now you’ve surely learned to shudder?” “No,” he answered; “what can it be? My dead cousin was here, and an old bearded man came, who showed me heaps of money down below there, but what shuddering is no one has told me.” Then the King spoke: “You have freed the castle from its curse, and you shall marry my daughter.” “That’s all charming,” he said; “but I still don’t know what it is to shudder.”

Then the gold was brought up, and the wedding was celebrated, but the young King, though he loved his wife dearly, and though he was very happy, still kept on saying: “If I could only shudder! if I could only shudder!” At last he reduced her to despair. Then her maid said: “I’ll help you; we’ll soon make him shudder.” So she went out to the stream that flowed through the garden, and had a pail full of little gudgeons brought to her. At night, when the young King was asleep, his wife had to pull the clothes off him, and pour the pail full of little gudgeons over him, so that the little fish swam all about him. Then he awoke and cried out: “Oh! how I shudder, how I shudder, dear wife! Yes, now I know what shuddering is.”[7]

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7. Grimm.

RUMPELSTILTZKIN

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There was once upon a time a poor miller who had a very beautiful daughter. Now it happened one day that he had an audience with the King, and in order to appear a person of some importance he told him that he had a daughter who could spin straw into gold. “Now that’s a talent worth having,” said the King to the miller; “if your daughter is as clever as you say, bring her to my palace to-morrow, and I’ll put her to the test.” When the girl was brought to him he led her into a room full of straw, gave her a spinning-wheel and spindle, and said: “Now set to work and spin all night till early dawn, and if by that time you haven’t spun the straw into gold you shall die.” Then he closed the door behind him and left her alone inside.

So the poor miller’s daughter sat down, and didn’t know what in the world she was to do. She hadn’t the least idea of how to spin straw into gold, and became at last so miserable that she began to cry. Suddenly the door opened, and in stepped a tiny little man and said: “Good-evening, Miss Miller-maid; why are you crying so bitterly?” “Oh!” answered the girl, “I have to spin straw into gold, and haven’t a notion how it’s done.” “What will you give me if I spin it for you?” asked the manikin. “My necklace,” replied the girl. The little man took the necklace, sat himself down at the wheel, and whir, whir, whir, the wheel went round three times, and the bobbin was full. Then he put on another, and whir, whir, whir, the wheel went round three times, and the second too was full; and so it went on till the morning, when all the straw was spun away, and all the bobbins were full of gold. As soon as the sun rose the King came, and when he perceived the gold he was astonished and delighted, but his heart only lusted more than ever after the precious metal. He had the miller’s daughter put into another room full of straw, much bigger than the first, and bade her, if she valued her life, spin it all into gold before the following morning. The girl didn’t know what to do, and began to cry; then the door opened as before, and the tiny little man appeared and said:

“What’ll you give me if I spin the straw into gold for you?” “The ring from my finger,” answered the girl. The manikin took the ring, and whir! round went the spinning-wheel again, and when morning broke he had spun all the straw into glittering gold. The King was pleased beyond measure at the sights but his greed for gold was still not satisfied, and he had the miller’s daughter brought into a yet bigger room full of straw, and said: “You must spin all this away in the night; but if you succeed this time you shall become my wife.” “She’s only a miller’s daughter, it’s true,” he thought; “but I couldn’t find a richer wife if I were to search the whole world over.” When the girl was alone the little man appeared for the third time, and said: “What’ll you give me if I spin the straw for you once again?” “I’ve nothing more to give,” answered the girl. “Then promise me when you are Queen to give me your first child.” “Who knows what may not happen before that?” thought the miller’s daughter; and besides, she saw no other way out of it, so she promised the manikin what he demanded, and he set to work once more and spun the straw into gold. When the King came in the morning, and found everything as he had desired, he straightway made her his wife, and the miller’s daughter became a queen.

When a year had passed a beautiful son was born to her, and she thought no more of the little man, till all of a sudden one day he stepped into her room and said: “Now give me what you promised.” The Queen was in a great state, and offered the little man all the riches in her kingdom if he would only leave her the child. But the manikin said: “No, a living creature is dearer to me than all the treasures in the world.” Then the Queen began to cry and sob so bitterly that the little man was sorry for her, and said: “I’ll give you three days to guess my name, and if you find it out in that time you may keep your child.”

Then the Queen pondered the whole night over all the names she had ever heard, and sent a messenger to scour the land, and to pick up far and near any names he could come across. When the little man arrived on the following day she began with Kasper, Melchior, Belshazzar, and all the other names she knew, in a string, but at each one the manikin called out: “That’s not my name.” The next day she sent to inquire the names of all the people in the neighborhood, and had a long list of the most uncommon and extraordinary for the little man when he made his appearance. “Is your

name, perhaps, Sheepshanks Cruickshanks, Spindleshanks?" but he always replied: "That's not my name." On the third day the messenger returned and announced: "I have not been able to find any new names, but as I came upon a high hill round the corner of the wood, where the foxes and hares bid each other good-night, I saw a little house, and in front of the house burned a fire, and round the fire sprang the most grotesque little man, hopping on one leg and crying:

"To-morrow I brew, to-day I bake,
And then the child away I'll take;
For little deems my royal dame
That Rumpelstiltzkin is my name!"

You can imagine the Queen's delight at hearing the name, and when the little man stepped in shortly afterward and asked: "Now, my lady Queen, what's my name?" she asked first: "Is your name Conrad?" "No." "Is your name Harry?" "No." "Is your name perhaps, Rumpelstiltzkin?" "Some demon has told you that! some demon has told you that!" screamed the little man, and in his rage drove his right foot so far into the ground that it sank in up to his waist; then in a passion he seized the left foot with both hands and tore himself in two.[8]

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8. Grimm.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

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Once upon a time, in a very far-off country, there lived a merchant who had been so fortunate in all his undertakings that he was enormously rich. As he had, however, six sons and six daughters, he found that his money was not too much to let them all have everything they fancied, as they were accustomed to do.

But one day a most unexpected misfortune befell them. Their house caught fire and was speedily burnt to the ground, with all the splendid furniture, the books, pictures, gold, silver, and precious goods it contained; and this was only the beginning of their troubles. Their father, who had until this moment prospered in all ways, suddenly lost every ship he had upon the sea, either by dint of pirates, shipwreck, or fire. Then he heard that his clerks in distant countries, whom he trusted entirely, had proved unfaithful; and at last from great wealth he fell into the direst poverty.

All that he had left was a little house in a desolate place at least a hundred leagues from the town in which he had lived, and to this he was forced to retreat with his children, who were in despair at the idea of leading such a different life. Indeed, the daughters at first hoped that their friends, who had been so numerous while they were rich, would insist on their staying in their houses now they no longer possessed one. But they soon found that they were left alone, and that their former friends even attributed their misfortunes to their own extravagance, and showed no intention of offering them any help. So nothing was left for them but to take their departure to the cottage, which stood in the midst of a dark forest, and seemed to be the most dismal place upon the face of the earth. As they were too poor to have any servants, the girls had to work hard, like peasants, and the sons, for their part, cultivated the fields to earn their living. Roughly clothed, and living in the simplest way, the girls regretted unceasingly the luxuries and amusements of their former life; only the youngest tried to be brave and cheerful. She had been as sad as anyone when misfortune overtook her father, but, soon recovering her natural

gaiety, she set to work to make the best of things, to amuse her father and brothers as well as she could, and to try to persuade her sisters to join her in dancing and singing. But they would do nothing of the sort, and, because she was not as doleful as themselves, they declared that this miserable life was all she was fit for. But she was really far prettier and cleverer than they were; indeed, she was so lovely that she was always called Beauty. After two years, when they were all beginning to get used to their new life, something happened to disturb their tranquillity. Their father received the news that one of his ships, which he had believed to be lost, had come safely into port with a rich cargo. All the sons and daughters at once thought that their poverty was at an end, and wanted to set out directly for the town; but their father, who was more prudent, begged them to wait a little, and, though it was harvest time, and he could ill be spared, determined to go himself first, to make inquiries. Only the youngest daughter had any doubt but that they would soon again be as rich as they were before, or at least rich enough to live comfortably in some town where they would find amusement and gay companions once more. So they all loaded their father with commissions for jewels and dresses which it would have taken a fortune to buy; only Beauty, feeling sure that it was of no use, did not ask for anything. Her father, noticing her silence, said: “And what shall I bring for you, Beauty?”

“The only thing I wish for is to see you come home safely,” she answered.

But this only vexed her sisters, who fancied she was blaming them for having asked for such costly things. Her father, however, was pleased, but as he thought that at her age she certainly ought to like pretty presents, he told her to choose something.

“Well, dear father,” she said, “as you insist upon it, I beg that you will bring me a rose. I have not seen one since we came here, and I love them so much.”

So the merchant set out and reached the town as quickly as possible, but only to find that his former companions, believing him to be dead, had divided between them the goods which the ship had brought; and after six months of trouble and expense he found himself as poor as when he started, having been able to recover only just enough to pay the cost of his journey. To make matters worse, he was obliged to leave the town in the

most terrible weather, so that by the time he was within a few leagues of his home he was almost exhausted with cold and fatigue. Though he knew it would take some hours to get through the forest, he was so anxious to be at his journey's end that he resolved to go on; but night overtook him, and the deep snow and bitter frost made it impossible for his horse to carry him any further. Not a house was to be seen; the only shelter he could get was the hollow trunk of a great tree, and there he crouched all the night which seemed to him the longest he had ever known. In spite of his weariness the howling of the wolves kept him awake, and even when at last the day broke he was not much better off, for the falling snow had covered up every path, and he did not know which way to turn.

At length he made out some sort of track, and though at the beginning it was so rough and slippery that he fell down more than once, it presently became easier, and led him into an avenue of trees which ended in a splendid castle. It seemed to the merchant very strange that no snow had fallen in the avenue, which was entirely composed of orange trees, covered with flowers and fruit. When he reached the first court of the castle he saw before him a flight of agate steps, and went up them, and passed through several splendidly furnished rooms. The pleasant warmth of the air revived him, and he felt very hungry; but there seemed to be nobody in all this vast and splendid palace whom he could ask to give him something to eat. Deep silence reigned everywhere, and at last, tired of roaming through empty rooms and galleries, he stopped in a room smaller than the rest, where a clear fire was burning and a couch was drawn up closely to it. Thinking that this must be prepared for someone who was expected, he sat down to wait till he should come, and very soon fell into a sweet sleep.

When his extreme hunger wakened him after several hours, he was still alone; but a little table, upon which was a good dinner, had been drawn up close to him, and, as he had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours, he lost no time in beginning his meal, hoping that he might soon have an opportunity of thanking his considerate entertainer, whoever it might be. But no one appeared, and even after another long sleep, from which he awoke completely refreshed, there was no sign of anybody, though a fresh meal of dainty cakes and fruit was prepared upon the little table at his elbow. Being naturally timid, the silence began to terrify him, and he resolved to search once more through all the rooms; but it was of no use. Not even a

servant was to be seen; there was no sign of life in the palace! He began to wonder what he should do, and to amuse himself by pretending that all the treasures he saw were his own, and considering how he would divide them among his children. Then he went down into the garden, and though it was winter everywhere else, here the sun shone, and the birds sang, and the flowers bloomed, and the air was soft and sweet. The merchant, in ecstacies with all he saw and heard, said to himself:

"All this must be meant for me. I will go this minute and bring my children to share all these delights."

In spite of being so cold and weary when he reached the castle, he had taken his horse to the stable and fed it. Now he thought he would saddle it for his homeward journey, and he turned down the path which led to the stable. This path had a hedge of roses on each side of it, and the merchant thought he had never seen or smelt such exquisite flowers. They reminded him of his promise to Beauty, and he stopped and had just gathered one to take to her when he was startled by a strange noise behind him. Turning round, he saw a frightful Beast, which seemed to be very angry and said, in a terrible voice:

"Who told you that you might gather my roses? Was it not enough that I allowed you to be in my palace and was kind to you? This is the way you show your gratitude, by stealing my flowers! But your insolence shall not go unpunished." The merchant, terrified by these furious words, dropped the fatal rose, and, throwing himself on his knees, cried: "Pardon me, noble sir. I am truly grateful to you for your hospitality, which was so magnificent that I could not imagine that you would be offended by my taking such a little thing as a rose." But the Beast's anger was not lessened by this speech.

"You are very ready with excuses and flattery," he cried; "but that will not save you from the death you deserve."

"Alas!" thought the merchant, "if my daughter could only know what danger her rose has brought me into!"

And in despair he began to tell the Beast all his misfortunes, and the reason of his journey, not forgetting to mention Beauty's request.

"A king's ransom would hardly have procured all that my other daughters asked." he said: "but I thought that I might at least take Beauty her rose. I beg you to forgive me, for you see I meant no harm."

The Beast considered for a moment, and then he said, in a less furious tone:

“I will forgive you on one condition—that is, that you will give me one of your daughters.”

“Ah!” cried the merchant, “if I were cruel enough to buy my own life at the expense of one of my children’s, what excuse could I invent to bring her here?”

“No excuse would be necessary,” answered the Beast. “If she comes at all she must come willingly. On no other condition will I have her. See if any one of them is courageous enough, and loves you well enough to come and save your life. You seem to be an honest man, so I will trust you to go home. I give you a month to see if either of your daughters will come back with you and stay here, to let you go free. If neither of them is willing, you must come alone, after bidding them good-by for ever, for then you will belong to me. And do not imagine that you can hide from me, for if you fail to keep your word I will come and fetch you!” added the Beast grimly.

The merchant accepted this proposal, though he did not really think any of his daughters could be persuaded to come. He promised to return at the time appointed, and then, anxious to escape from the presence of the Beast, he asked permission to set off at once. But the Beast answered that he could not go until next day.

“Then you will find a horse ready for you,” he said. “Now go and eat your supper, and await my orders.”

The poor merchant, more dead than alive, went back to his room, where the most delicious supper was already served on the little table which was drawn up before a blazing fire. But he was too terrified to eat, and only tasted a few of the dishes, for fear the Beast should be angry if he did not obey his orders. When he had finished he heard a great noise in the next room, which he knew meant that the Beast was coming. As he could do nothing to escape his visit, the only thing that remained was to seem as little afraid as possible; so when the Beast appeared and asked roughly if he had supped well, the merchant answered humbly that he had, thanks to his host’s kindness. Then the Beast warned him to remember their agreement, and to prepare his daughter exactly for what she had to expect.

“Do not get up to-morrow,” he added, “until you see the sun and hear a golden bell ring. Then you will find your breakfast waiting for you here,

and the horse you are to ride will be ready in the courtyard. He will also bring you back again when you come with your daughter a month hence. Farewell. Take a rose to Beauty, and remember your promise!”

The merchant was only too glad when the Beast went away, and though he could not sleep for sadness, he lay down until the sun rose. Then, after a hasty breakfast, he went to gather Beauty’s rose, and mounted his horse, which carried him off so swiftly that in an instant he had lost sight of the palace, and he was still wrapped in gloomy thoughts when it stopped before the door of the cottage.

His sons and daughters, who had been very uneasy at his long absence, rushed to meet him, eager to know the result of his journey, which, seeing him mounted upon a splendid horse and wrapped in a rich mantle, they supposed to be favorable. He hid the truth from them at first, only saying sadly to Beauty as he gave her the rose:

“Here is what you asked me to bring you; you little know what it has cost.”

But this excited their curiosity so greatly that presently he told them his adventures from beginning to end, and then they were all very unhappy. The girls lamented loudly over their lost hopes, and the sons declared that their father should not return to this terrible castle, and began to make plans for killing the Beast if it should come to fetch him. But he reminded them that he had promised to go back. Then the girls were very angry with Beauty, and said it was all her fault, and that if she had asked for something sensible this would never have happened, and complained bitterly that they should have to suffer for her folly.

Poor Beauty, much distressed, said to them:

“I have, indeed, caused this misfortune, but I assure you I did it innocently. Who could have guessed that to ask for a rose in the middle of summer would cause so much misery? But as I did the mischief it is only just that I should suffer for it. I will therefore go back with my father to keep his promise.”

At first nobody would hear of this arrangement, and her father and brothers, who loved her dearly, declared that nothing should make them let her go; but Beauty was firm. As the time drew near she divided all her little possessions between her sisters, and said good-by to everything she loved, and when the fatal day came she encouraged and cheered her father

as they mounted together the horse which had brought him back. It seemed to fly rather than gallop, but so smoothly that Beauty was not frightened; indeed, she would have enjoyed the journey if she had not feared what might happen to her at the end of it. Her father still tried to persuade her to go back, but in vain. While they were talking the night fell, and then, to their great surprise, wonderful colored lights began to shine in all directions, and splendid fireworks blazed out before them; all the forest was illuminated by them, and even felt pleasantly warm, though it had been bitterly cold before. This lasted until they reached the avenue of orange trees, where were statues holding flaming torches, and when they got nearer to the palace they saw that it was illuminated from the roof to the ground, and music sounded softly from the courtyard. “The Beast must be very hungry,” said Beauty, trying to laugh, “if he makes all this rejoicing over the arrival of his prey.”

But, in spite of her anxiety, she could not help admiring all the wonderful things she saw.

The horse stopped at the foot of the flight of steps leading to the terrace, and when they had dismounted her father led her to the little room he had been in before, where they found a splendid fire burning, and the table daintily spread with a delicious supper.

The merchant knew that this was meant for them, and Beauty, who was rather less frightened now that she had passed through so many rooms and seen nothing of the Beast, was quite willing to begin, for her long ride had made her very hungry. But they had hardly finished their meal when the noise of the Beast’s footsteps was heard approaching, and Beauty clung to her father in terror, which became all the greater when she saw how frightened he was. But when the Beast really appeared, though she trembled at the sight of him, she made a great effort to hide her terror, and saluted him respectfully.

This evidently pleased the Beast. After looking at her he said, in a tone that might have struck terror into the boldest heart, though he did not seem to be angry:

“Good-evening, old man. Good-evening, Beauty.”

The merchant was too terrified to reply, but Beauty answered sweetly: “Good-evening, Beast.”

“Have you come willingly?” asked the Beast. “Will you be content to stay here when your father goes away?”

Beauty answered bravely that she was quite prepared to stay.

“I am pleased with you,” said the Beast. “As you have come of your own accord, you may stay. As for you, old man,” he added, turning to the merchant, “at sunrise to-morrow you will take your departure. When the bell rings get up quickly and eat your breakfast, and you will find the same horse waiting to take you home; but remember that you must never expect to see my palace again.”

Then turning to Beauty, he said:

“Take your father into the next room, and help him to choose everything you think your brothers and sisters would like to have. You will find two traveling-trunks there; fill them as full as you can. It is only just that you should send them something very precious as a remembrance of yourself.”

Then he went away, after saying, “Good-by, Beauty; good-by, old man”; and though Beauty was beginning to think with great dismay of her father’s departure, she was afraid to disobey the Beast’s orders; and they went into the next room, which had shelves and cupboards all round it. They were greatly surprised at the riches it contained. There were splendid dresses fit for a queen, with all the ornaments that were to be worn with them; and when Beauty opened the cupboards she was quite dazzled by the gorgeous jewels that lay in heaps upon every shelf. After choosing a vast quantity, which she divided between her sisters—for she had made a heap of the wonderful dresses for each of them—she opened the last chest, which was full of gold.

“I think, father,” she said, “that, as the gold will be more useful to you, we had better take out the other things again, and fill the trunks with it.” So they did this; but the more they put in the more room there seemed to be, and at last they put back all the jewels and dresses they had taken out, and Beauty even added as many more of the jewels as she could carry at once; and then the trunks were not too full, but they were so heavy that an elephant could not have carried them!

“The Beast was mocking us,” cried the merchant; “he must have pretended to give us all these things, knowing that I could not carry them away.”

“Let us wait and see,” answered Beauty. “I cannot believe that he meant to deceive us. All we can do is to fasten them up and leave them ready.”

So they did this and returned to the little room, where, to their astonishment, they found breakfast ready. The merchant ate his with a good appetite, as the Beast’s generosity made him believe that he might perhaps venture to come back soon and see Beauty. But she felt sure that her father was leaving her for ever, so she was very sad when the bell rang sharply for the second time, and warned them that the time had come for them to part. They went down into the courtyard, where two horses were waiting, one loaded with the two trunks, the other for him to ride. They were pawing the ground in their impatience to start, and the merchant was forced to bid Beauty a hasty farewell; and as soon as he was mounted he went off at such a pace that she lost sight of him in an instant. Then Beauty began to cry, and wandered sadly back to her own room. But she soon found that she was very sleepy, and as she had nothing better to do she lay down and instantly fell asleep. And then she dreamed that she was walking by a brook bordered with trees, and lamenting her sad fate, when a young prince, handsomer than anyone she had ever seen, and with a voice that went straight to her heart, came and said to her, “Ah, Beauty! you are not so unfortunate as you suppose. Here you will be rewarded for all you have suffered elsewhere. Your every wish shall be gratified. Only try to find me out, no matter how I may be disguised, as I love you dearly, and in making me happy you will find your own happiness. Be as true-hearted as you are beautiful, and we shall have nothing left to wish for.”

“What can I do, Prince, to make you happy?” said Beauty.

“Only be grateful,” he answered, “and do not trust too much to your eyes. And, above all, do not desert me until you have saved me from my cruel misery.”

After this she thought she found herself in a room with a stately and beautiful lady, who said to her:

“Dear Beauty, try not to regret all you have left behind you, for you are destined to a better fate. Only do not let yourself be deceived by appearances.”

Beauty found her dreams so interesting that she was in no hurry to awake, but presently the clock roused her by calling her name softly

twelve times, and then she got up and found her dressing-table set out with everything she could possibly want; and when her toilet was finished she found dinner was waiting in the room next to hers. But dinner does not take very long when you are all by yourself, and very soon she sat down cosily in the corner of a sofa, and began to think about the charming Prince she had seen in her dream.

“He said I could make him happy,” said Beauty to herself.

“It seems, then, that this horrible Beast keeps him a prisoner. How can I set him free? I wonder why they both told me not to trust to appearances? I don’t understand it. But, after all, it was only a dream, so why should I trouble myself about it? I had better go and find something to do to amuse myself.”

So she got up and began to explore some of the many rooms of the palace.

The first she entered was lined with mirrors, and Beauty saw herself reflected on every side, and thought she had never seen such a charming room. Then a bracelet which was hanging from a chandelier caught her eye, and on taking it down she was greatly surprised to find that it held a portrait of her unknown admirer, just as she had seen him in her dream. With great delight she slipped the bracelet on her arm, and went on into a gallery of pictures, where she soon found a portrait of the same handsome Prince, as large as life, and so well painted that as she studied it he seemed to smile kindly at her. Tearing herself away from the portrait at last, she passed through into a room which contained every musical instrument under the sun, and here she amused herself for a long while in trying some of them, and singing until she was tired. The next room was a library, and she saw everything she had ever wanted to read, as well as everything she had read, and it seemed to her that a whole lifetime would not be enough to even read the names of the books, there were so many. By this time it was growing dusk, and wax candles in diamond and ruby candlesticks were beginning to light themselves in every room.

Beauty found her supper served just at the time she preferred to have it, but she did not see anyone or hear a sound, and, though her father had warned her that she would be alone, she began to find it rather dull.

But presently she heard the Beast coming, and wondered tremblingly if he meant to eat her up now.

However, as he did not seem at all ferocious, and only said gruffly:

"Good-evening, Beauty," she answered cheerfully and managed to conceal her terror. Then the Beast asked her how she had been amusing herself, and she told him all the rooms she had seen.

Then he asked if she thought she could be happy in his palace; and Beauty answered that everything was so beautiful that she would be very hard to please if she could not be happy. And after about an hour's talk Beauty began to think that the Beast was not nearly so terrible as she had supposed at first. Then he got up to leave her, and said in his gruff voice:

"Do you love me, Beauty? Will you marry me?"

"Oh! what shall I say?" cried Beauty, for she was afraid to make the Beast angry by refusing.

"Say 'yes' or 'no' without fear," he replied.

"Oh! no, Beast," said Beauty hastily.

"Since you will not, good-night, Beauty," he said.

And she answered, "Good-night, Beast," very glad to find that her refusal had not provoked him. And after he was gone she was very soon in bed and asleep, and dreaming of her unknown Prince. She thought he came and said to her:

"Ah, Beauty! why are you so unkind to me? I fear I am fated to be unhappy for many a long day still."

And then her dreams changed, but the charming Prince figured in them all; and when morning came her first thought was to look at the portrait, and see if it was really like him, and she found that it certainly was.

This morning she decided to amuse herself in the garden, for the sun shone, and all the fountains were playing; but she was astonished to find that every place was familiar to her, and presently she came to the brook where the myrtle trees were growing where she had first met the Prince in her dream, and that made her think more than ever that he must be kept a prisoner by the Beast. When she was tired she went back to the palace, and found a new room full of materials for every kind of work—ribbons to make into bows, and silks to work into flowers. Then there was an aviary full of rare birds, which were so tame that they flew to Beauty as soon as they saw her, and perched upon her shoulders and her head.

"Pretty little creatures," she said, "how I wish that your cage was nearer to my room, that I might often hear you sing!"

So saying she opened a door, and found, to her delight, that it led into her own room, though she had thought it was quite the other side of the palace.

There were more birds in a room farther on, parrots and cockatoos that could talk, and they greeted Beauty by name; indeed, she found them so entertaining that she took one or two back to her room, and they talked to her while she was at supper; after which the Beast paid her his usual visit, and asked her the same questions as before, and then with a gruff "good-night" he took his departure, and Beauty went to bed to dream of her mysterious Prince. The days passed swiftly in different amusements, and after a while Beauty found out another strange thing in the palace, which often pleased her when she was tired of being alone. There was one room which she had not noticed particularly; it was empty, except that under each of the windows stood a very comfortable chair; and the first time she had looked out of the window it had seemed to her that a black curtain prevented her from seeing anything outside. But the second time she went into the room, happening to be tired, she sat down in one of the chairs, when instantly the curtain was rolled aside, and a most amusing pantomime was acted before her; there were dances, and colored lights, and music, and pretty dresses, and it was all so gay that Beauty was in ecstacies. After that she tried the other seven windows in turn, and there was some new and surprising entertainment to be seen from each of them, so that Beauty never could feel lonely any more. Every evening after supper the Beast came to see her, and always before saying good-night asked her in his terrible voice:

"Beauty, will you marry me?"

And it seemed to Beauty, now she understood him better, that when she said, "No, Beast," he went away quite sad. But her happy dreams of the handsome young Prince soon made her forget the poor Beast, and the only thing that at all disturbed her was to be constantly told to distrust appearances, to let her heart guide her, and not her eyes, and many other equally perplexing things, which, consider as she would, she could not understand.

So everything went on for a long time, until at last, happy as she was, Beauty began to long for the sight of her father and her brothers and sisters; and one night, seeing her look very sad, the Beast asked her what

was the matter. Beauty had quite ceased to be afraid of him. Now she knew that he was really gentle in spite of his ferocious looks and his dreadful voice. So she answered that she was longing to see her home once more. Upon hearing this the Beast seemed sadly distressed, and cried miserably.

"Ah! Beauty, have you the heart to desert an unhappy Beast like this? What more do you want to make you happy? Is it because you hate me that you want to escape?"

"No, dear Beast," answered Beauty softly, "I do not hate you, and I should be very sorry never to see you any more, but I long to see my father again. Only let me go for two months, and I promise to come back to you and stay for the rest of my life."

The Beast, who had been sighing dolefully while she spoke, now replied:

"I cannot refuse you anything you ask, even though it should cost me my life. Take the four boxes you will find in the room next to your own, and fill them with everything you wish to take with you. But remember your promise and come back when the two months are over, or you may have cause to repent it, for if you do not come in good time you will find your faithful Beast dead. You will not need any chariot to bring you back. Only say good-by to all your brothers and sisters the night before you come away, and when you have gone to bed turn this ring round upon your finger and say firmly: 'I wish to go back to my palace and see my Beast again.' Good-night, Beauty. Fear nothing, sleep peacefully, and before long you shall see your father once more."

As soon as Beauty was alone she hastened to fill the boxes with all the rare and precious things she saw about her, and only when she was tired of heaping things into them did they seem to be full.

Then she went to bed, but could hardly sleep for joy. And when at last she did begin to dream of her beloved Prince she was grieved to see him stretched upon a grassy bank, sad and weary, and hardly like himself.

"What is the matter?" she cried.

He looked at her reproachfully, and said:

"How can you ask me, cruel one? Are you not leaving me to my death perhaps?"

"Ah! don't be so sorrowful," cried Beauty; "I am only going to assure my father that I am safe and happy. I have promised the Beast faithfully

that I will come back, and he would die of grief if I did not keep my word!”

“What would that matter to you?” said the Prince “Surely you would not care?”

“Indeed, I should be ungrateful if I did not care for such a kind Beast,” cried Beauty indignantly. “I would die to save him from pain. I assure you it is not his fault that he is so ugly.”

Just then a strange sound woke her—someone was speaking not very far away; and opening her eyes she found herself in a room she had never seen before, which was certainly not nearly so splendid as those she was used to in the Beast’s palace. Where could she be? She got up and dressed hastily, and then saw that the boxes she had packed the night before were all in the room. While she was wondering by what magic the Beast had transported them and herself to this strange place she suddenly heard her father’s voice, and rushed out and greeted him joyfully. Her brothers and sisters were all astonished at her appearance, as they had never expected to see her again, and there was no end to the questions they asked her. She had also much to hear about what had happened to them while she was away, and of her father’s journey home. But when they heard that she had only come to be with them for a short time, and then must go back to the Beast’s palace for ever, they lamented loudly. Then Beauty asked her father what he thought could be the meaning of her strange dreams, and why the Prince constantly begged her not to trust to appearances. After much consideration, he answered: “You tell me yourself that the Beast, frightful as he is, loves you dearly, and deserves your love and gratitude for his gentleness and kindness; I think the Prince must mean you to understand that you ought to reward him by doing as he wishes you to, in spite of his ugliness.”

Beauty could not help seeing that this seemed very probable; still, when she thought of her dear Prince who was so handsome, she did not feel at all inclined to marry the Beast. At any rate, for two months she need not decide, but could enjoy herself with her sisters. But though they were rich now, and lived in town again, and had plenty of acquaintances, Beauty found that nothing amused her very much; and she often thought of the palace, where she was so happy, especially as at home she never once dreamed of her dear Prince, and she felt quite sad without him.

Then her sisters seemed to have got quite used to being without her, and even found her rather in the way, so she would not have been sorry when the two months were over but for her father and brothers, who begged her to stay, and seemed so grieved at the thought of her departure that she had not the courage to say good-by to them. Every day when she got up she meant to say it at night, and when night came she put it off again, until at last she had a dismal dream which helped her to make up her mind. She thought she was wandering in a lonely path in the palace gardens, when she heard groans which seemed to come from some bushes hiding the entrance of a cave, and running quickly to see what could be the matter, she found the Beast stretched out upon his side, apparently dying. He reproached her faintly with being the cause of his distress, and at the same moment a stately lady appeared, and said very gravely:

"Ah! Beauty, you are only just in time to save his life. See what happens when people do not keep their promises! If you had delayed one day more, you would have found him dead."

Beauty was so terrified by this dream that the next morning she announced her intention of going back at once, and that very night she said good-by to her father and all her brothers and sisters, and as soon as she was in bed she turned her ring round upon her finger, and said firmly, "I wish to go back to my palace and see my Beast again," as she had been told to do.

Then she fell asleep instantly, and only woke up to hear the clock saying "Beauty, Beauty" twelve times in its musical voice, which told her at once that she was really in the palace once more. Everything was just as before, and her birds were so glad to see her! But Beauty thought she had never known such a long day, for she was so anxious to see the Beast again that she felt as if suppertime would never come.

But when it did come and no Beast appeared she was really frightened; so, after listening and waiting for a long time, she ran down into the garden to search for him. Up and down the paths and avenues ran poor Beauty, calling him in vain, for no one answered, and not a trace of him could she find; until at last, quite tired, she stopped for a minute's rest, and saw that she was standing opposite the shady path she had seen in her dream. She rushed down it, and, sure enough, there was the cave, and in it lay the Beast—asleep, as Beauty thought. Quite glad to have found him,

she ran up and stroked his head, but, to her horror, he did not move or open his eyes.

“Oh! he is dead; and it is all my fault,” said Beauty, crying bitterly.

But then, looking at him again, she fancied he still breathed, and, hastily fetching some water from the nearest fountain, she sprinkled it over his face, and, to her great delight, he began to revive.

“Oh! Beast, how you frightened me!” she cried. “I never knew how much I loved you until just now, when I feared I was too late to save your life.”

“Can you really love such an ugly creature as I am?” said the Beast faintly. “Ah! Beauty, you only came just in time. I was dying because I thought you had forgotten your promise. But go back now and rest, I shall see you again by and by.”

Beauty, who had half expected that he would be angry with her, was reassured by his gentle voice, and went back to the palace, where supper was awaiting her; and afterward the Beast came in as usual, and talked about the time she had spent with her father, asking if she had enjoyed herself, and if they had all been very glad to see her.

Beauty answered politely, and quite enjoyed telling him all that had happened to her. And when at last the time came for him to go, and he asked, as he had so often asked before, “Beauty, will you marry me?”

She answered softly, “Yes, dear Beast.”

As she spoke a blaze of light sprang up before the windows of the palace; fireworks crackled and guns banged, and across the avenue of orange trees, in letters all made of fire-flies, was written: “Long live the Prince and his Bride.”

Turning to ask the Beast what it could all mean, Beauty found that he had disappeared, and in his place stood her long-loved Prince! At the same moment the wheels of a chariot were heard upon the terrace, and two ladies entered the room. One of them Beauty recognized as the stately lady she had seen in her dreams; the other was also so grand and queenly that Beauty hardly knew which to greet first.

But the one she already knew said to her companion:

“Well, Queen, this is Beauty, who has had the courage to rescue your son from the terrible enchantment. They love one another, and only your consent to their marriage is wanting to make them perfectly happy.”

“I consent with all my heart,” cried the Queen. “How can I ever thank you enough, charming girl, for having restored my dear son to his natural form?”

And then she tenderly embraced Beauty and the Prince, who had meanwhile been greeting the Fairy and receiving her congratulations.

“Now,” said the Fairy to Beauty, “I suppose you would like me to send for all your brothers and sisters to dance at your wedding?”

And so she did, and the marriage was celebrated the very next day with the utmost splendor, and Beauty and the Prince lived happily ever after.[9]

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9. La Belle et la Bete. Par Madame de Villeneuve.

THE MASTER-MAID

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Once upon a time there was a king who had many sons. I do not exactly know how many there were, but the youngest of them could not stay quietly at home, and was determined to go out into the world and try his luck, and after a long time the King was forced to give him leave to go. When he had traveled about for several days, he came to a giant's house, and hired himself to the giant as a servant. In the morning the giant had to go out to pasture his goats, and as he was leaving the house he told the King's son that he must clean out the stable. "And after you have done that," he said, "you need not do any more work to-day, for you have come to a kind master, and that you shall find. But what I set you to do must be done both well and thoroughly, and you must on no account go into any of the rooms which lead out of the room in which you slept last night. If you do, I will take your life."

"Well to be sure, he is an easy master!" said the Prince to himself as he walked up and down the room humming and singing, for he thought there would be plenty of time left to clean out the stable; "but it would be amusing to steal a glance into his other rooms as well," thought the Prince, "for there must be something that he is afraid of my seeing, as I am not allowed to enter them." So he went into the first room. A cauldron was hanging from the walls; it was boiling, but the Prince could see no fire under it. "I wonder what is inside it," he thought, and dipped a lock of his hair in, and the hair became just as if it were all made of copper. "That's a nice kind of soup. If anyone were to taste that his throat would be gilded," said the youth, and then he went into the next chamber. There, too, a cauldron was hanging from the wall, bubbling and boiling, but there was no fire under this either. "I will just try what this is like too," said the Prince, thrusting another lock of his hair into it, and it came out silvered over. "Such costly soup is not to be had in my father's palace," said the Prince; "but everything depends on how it tastes," and then he went into the third room. There, too, a cauldron was hanging from the wall, boiling,

exactly the same as in the two other rooms, and the Prince took pleasure in trying this also, so he dipped a lock of hair in, and it came out so brightly gilded that it shone again. “Some talk about going from bad to worse,” said the Prince; “but this is better and better. If he boils gold here, what can he boil in there?” He was determined to see, and went through the door into the fourth room. No cauldron was to be seen there, but on a bench someone was seated who was like a king’s daughter, but, whosoever she was, she was so beautiful that never in the Prince’s life had he seen her equal.

“Oh! in heaven’s name what are you doing here?” said she who sat upon the bench.

“I took the place of servant here yesterday,” said the Prince.

“May you soon have a better place, if you have come to serve here!” said she.

“Oh, but I think I have got a kind master,” said the Prince. “He has not given me hard work to do to-day. When I have cleaned out the stable I shall be done.”

“Yes, but how will you be able to do that?” she asked again. “If you clean it out as other people do, ten pitchforksful will come in for every one you throw out. But I will teach you how to do it; you must turn your pitchfork upside down, and work with the handle, and then all will fly out of its own accord.”

“Yes, I will attend to that,” said the Prince, and stayed sitting where he was the whole day, for it was soon settled between them that they would marry each other, he and the King’s daughter; so the first day of his service with the giant did not seem long to him. But when evening was drawing near she said that it would now be better for him to clean out the stable before the giant came home. When he got there he had a fancy to try if what she had said were true, so he began to work in the same way that he had seen the stable-boys doing in his father’s stables, but he soon saw that he must give up that, for when he had worked a very short time he had scarcely any room left to stand. So he did what the Princess had taught him, turned the pitchfork round, and worked with the handle, and in the twinkling of an eye the stable was as clean as if it had been scoured. When he had done that, he went back again into the room in which the giant had

given him leave to stay, and there he walked backward and forward on the floor, and began to hum and sing.

Then came the giant home with the goats. “Have you cleaned the stable?” asked the giant.

“Yes, now it is clean and sweet, master,” said the King’s son.

“I shall see about that,” said the giant, and went round to the stable, but it was just as the Prince had said.

“You have certainly been talking to my Master-maid, for you never got that out of your own head,” said the giant.

“Master-maid! What kind of a thing is that, master?” said the Prince, making himself look as stupid as an ass; “I should like to see that.”

“Well, you will see her quite soon enough,” said the giant.

On the second morning the giant had again to go out with his goats, so he told the Prince that on that day he was to fetch home his horse, which was out on the mountain-side, and when he had done that he might rest himself for the remainder of the day, “for you have come to a kind master, and that you shall find,” said the giant once more. “But do not go into any of the rooms that I spoke of yesterday, or I will wring your head off,” said he, and then went away with his flock of goats.

“Yes, indeed, you are a kind master,” said the Prince; “but I will go in and talk to the Master-maid again; perhaps before long she may like better to be mine than yours.”

So he went to her. Then she asked him what he had to do that day.

“Oh! not very dangerous work, I fancy,” said the King’s son. “I have only to go up the mountain-side after his horse.”

“Well, how do you mean to set about it?” asked the Master-maid.

“Oh! there is no great art in riding a horse home,” said the King’s son. “I think I must have ridden friskier horses before now.”

“Yes, but it is not so easy a thing as you think to ride the horse home,” said the Master-maid; “but I will teach you what to do. When you go near it, fire will burst out of its nostrils like flames from a pine torch; but be very careful, and take the bridle which is hanging by the door there, and fling the bit straight into his jaws, and then it will become so tame that you will be able to do what you like with it.” He said he would bear this in mind, and then he again sat in there the whole day by the Master-maid, and they chatted and talked of one thing and another, but the first thing and the

last now was, how happy and delightful it would be if they could but marry each other, and get safely away from the giant; and the Prince would have forgotten both the mountain-side and the horse if the Master-maid had not reminded him of them as evening drew near, and said that now it would be better if he went to fetch the horse before the giant came. So he did this, and took the bridle which was hanging on a crook, and strode up the mountain-side, and it was not long before he met with the horse, and fire and red flames streamed forth out of its nostrils. But the youth carefully watched his opportunity, and just as it was rushing at him with open jaws he threw the bit straight into its mouth, and the horse stood as quiet as a young lamb, and there was no difficulty at all in getting it home to the stable. Then the Prince went back into his room again, and began to hum and to sing.

Toward evening the giant came home. “Have you fetched the horse back from the mountain-side?” he asked.

“That I have, master; it was an amusing horse to ride, but I rode him straight home, and put him in the stable too,” said the Prince.

“I will see about that,” said the giant, and went out to the stable, but the horse was standing there just as the Prince had said. “You have certainly been talking with my Master-maid, for you never got that out of your own head,” said the giant again.

“Yesterday, master, you talked about this Master-maid, and to-day you are talking about her; ah, heaven bless you, master, why will you not show me the thing? for it would be a real pleasure to me to see it,” said the Prince, who again pretended to be silly and stupid.

“Oh! you will see her quite soon enough,” said the giant.

On the morning of the third day the giant again had to go into the wood with the goats. “To-day you must go underground and fetch my taxes,” he said to the Prince. “When you have done this, you may rest for the remainder of the day, for you shall see what an easy master you have come to,” and then he went away.

“Well, however easy a master you may be, you set me very hard work to do,” thought the Prince; “but I will see if I cannot find your Master-maid; you say she is yours, but for all that she may be able to tell me what to do now,” and he went back to her. So, when the Master-maid asked him

what the giant had set him to do that day, he told her that he was to go underground and get the taxes.

“And how will you set about that?” said the Master-maid.

“Oh! you must tell me how to do it,” said the Prince, “for I have never yet been underground, and even if I knew the way I do not know how much I am to demand.”

“Oh! yes, I will soon tell you that; you must go to the rock there under the mountain-ridge, and take the club that is there, and knock on the rocky wall,” said the Master-maid. “Then someone will come out who will sparkle with fire; you shall tell him your errand, and when he asks you how much you want to have you are to say: ‘As much as I can carry.’ ”

“Yes, I will keep that in mind,” said he, and then he sat there with the Master-maid the whole day, until night drew near, and he would gladly have stayed there till now if the Master-maid had not reminded him that it was time to be off to fetch the taxes before the giant came.

So he set out on his way, and did exactly what the Master-maid had told him. He went to the rocky wall, and took the club, and knocked on it. Then came one so full of sparks that they flew both out of his eyes and his nose. “What do you want?” said he.

“I was to come here for the giant, and demand the tax for him,” said the King’s son.

“How much are you to have then?” said the other.

“I ask for no more than I am able to carry with me,” said the Prince.

“It is well for you that you have not asked for a horse-load,” said he who had come out of the rock. “But now come in with me.”

This the Prince did, and what a quantity of gold and silver he saw! It was lying inside the mountain like heaps of stones in a waste place, and he got a load that was as large as he was able to carry, and with that he went his way. So in the evening, when the giant came home with the goats, the Prince went into the chamber and hummed and sang again as he had done on the other two evenings.

“Have you been for the tax?” said the giant.

“Yes, that I have, master,” said the Prince.

“Where have you put it then?” said the giant again.

“The bag of gold is standing there on the bench,” said the Prince.

“I will see about that,” said the giant, and went away to the bench, but the bag was standing there, and it was so full that gold and silver dropped out when the giant untied the string.

“You have certainly been talking with my Master-maid!” said the giant, “and if you have I will wring your neck.”

“Master-maid?” said the Prince; “yesterday my master talked about this Master-maid, and to-day he is talking about her again, and the first day of all it was talk of the same kind. I do wish I could see the thing myself,” said he.

“Yes, yes, wait till to-morrow,” said the giant, “and then I myself will take you to her.”

“Ah! master, I thank you—but you are only mocking me,” said the King’s son.

Next day the giant took him to the Master-maid. “Now you shall kill him, and boil him in the great big cauldron you know of, and when you have got the broth ready give me a call,” said the giant; then he lay down on the bench to sleep, and almost immediately began to snore so that it sounded like thunder among the hills.

So the Master-maid took a knife, and cut the Prince’s little finger, and dropped three drops of blood upon a wooden stool; then she took all the old rags, and shoe-soles, and all the rubbish she could lay hands on, and put them in the cauldron; and then she filled a chest with gold dust, and a lump of salt, and a water-flask which was hanging by the door, and she also took with her a golden apple, and two gold chickens; and then she and the Prince went away with all the speed they could, and when they had gone a little way they came to the sea, and then they sailed, but where they got the ship from I have never been able to learn.

Now, when the giant had slept a good long time, he began to stretch himself on the bench on which he was lying. “Will it soon boil?” said he.

“It is just beginning,” said the first drop of blood on the stool.

So the giant lay down to sleep again, and slept for a long, long time. Then he began to move about a little again. “Will it soon be ready now?” said he, but he did not look up this time any more than he had done the first time, for he was still half asleep.

“Half done!” said the second drop of blood, and the giant believed it was the Master-maid again, and turned himself on the bench, and lay down

to sleep once more. When he had slept again for many hours, he began to move and stretch himself. “Is it not done yet?” said he.

“It is quite ready,” said the third drop of blood. Then the giant began to sit up and rub his eyes, but he could not see who it was who had spoken to him, so he asked for the Master-maid, and called her. But there was no one to give him an answer.

“Ah! well, she has just stolen out for a little,” thought the giant, and he took a spoon, and went off to the cauldron to have a taste; but there was nothing in it but shoe-soles, and rags, and such trumpery as that, and all was boiled up together, so that he could not tell whether it was porridge or milk pottage. When he saw this, he understood what had happened, and fell into such a rage that he hardly knew what he was doing. Away he went after the Prince and the Master-maid so fast that the wind whistled behind him, and it was not long before he came to the water, but he could not get over it. “Well, well, I will soon find a cure for that; I have only to call my river-sucker,” said the giant, and he did call him. So his river-sucker came and lay down, and drank one, two, three draughts, and with that the water in the sea fell so low that the giant saw the Master-maid and the Prince out on the sea in their ship. “Now you must throw out the lump of salt,” said the Master-maid, and the Prince did so, and it grew up into such a great high mountain right across the sea that the giant could not come over it, and the river-sucker could not drink any more water. “Well, well, I will soon find a cure for that,” said the giant, so he called to his hill-borer to come and bore through the mountain so that the river-sucker might be able to drink up the water again. But just as the hole was made, and the river-sucker was beginning to drink, the Master-maid told the Prince to throw one or two drops out of the flask, and when he did this the sea instantly became full of water again, and before the river-sucker could take one drink they reached the land and were in safety. So they determined to go home to the Prince’s father, but the Prince would on no account permit the Master-maid to walk there, for he thought that it was unbecoming either for her or for him to go on foot.

“Wait here the least little bit of time, while I go home for the seven horses which stand in my father’s stable,” said he; “it is not far off, and I shall not be long away, but I will not let my betrothed bride go on foot to the palace.”

“Oh! no, do not go, for if you go home to the King’s palace you will forget me, I foresee that.”

“How could I forget you? We have suffered so much evil together, and love each other so much,” said the Prince; and he insisted on going home for the coach with the seven horses, and she was to wait for him there, by the sea-shore. So at last the Master-maid had to yield, for he was so absolutely determined to do it. “But when you get there you must not even give yourself time to greet anyone, but go straight into the stable, and take the horses, and put them in the coach, and drive back as quickly as you can. For they will all come round about you; but you must behave just as if you did not see them, and on no account must you taste anything, for if you do it will cause great misery both to you and to me,” said she; and this he promised.

But when he got home to the King’s palace one of his brothers was just going to be married, and the bride and all her kith and kin had come to the palace; so they all thronged round him, and questioned him about this and that, and wanted him to go in with them; but he behaved as if he did not see them, and went straight to the stable, and got out the horses and began to harness them. When they saw that they could not by any means prevail on him to go in with them, they came out to him with meat and drink, and the best of everything that they had prepared for the wedding; but the Prince refused to touch anything, and would do nothing but put the horses in as quickly as he could. At last, however, the bride’s sister rolled an apple across the yard to him, and said: “As you won’t eat anything else, you may like to take a bite of that, for you must be both hungry and thirsty after your long journey.” And he took up the apple and bit a piece out of it. But no sooner had he got the piece of apple in his mouth than he forgot the Master-maid and that he was to go back in the coach to fetch her.

“I think I must be mad! what do I want with this coach and horses?” said he; and then he put the horses back into the stable, and went into the King’s palace, and there it was settled that he should marry the bride’s sister, who had rolled the apple to him.

The Master-maid sat by the sea-shore for a long, long time, waiting for the Prince, but no Prince came. So she went away, and when she had walked a short distance she came to a little hut which stood all alone in a small wood, hard by the King’s palace. She entered it and asked if she

might be allowed to stay there. The hut belonged to an old crone, who was also an ill-tempered and malicious troll. At first she would not let the Master-maid remain with her; but at last, after a long time, by means of good words and good payment, she obtained leave. But the hut was as dirty and black inside as a pigsty, so the Master-maid said that she would smarten it up a little, that it might look a little more like what other people's houses looked inside. The old crone did not like this either. She scowled, and was very cross, but the Master-maid did not trouble herself about that. She took out her chest of gold, and flung a handful of it or so into the fire, and the gold boiled up and poured out over the whole of the hut, until every part of it both inside and out was gilded. But when the gold began to bubble up the old hag grew so terrified that she fled as if the Evil One himself were pursuing her, and she did not remember to stoop down as she went through the doorway, and so she split her head and died. Next morning the sheriff came traveling by there. He was greatly astonished when he saw the gold hut shining and glittering there in the copse, and he was still more astonished when he went in and caught sight of the beautiful young maiden who was sitting there; he fell in love with her at once, and straightway on the spot he begged her, both prettily and kindly, to marry him.

"Well, but have you a great deal of money?" said the Master-maid.

"Oh! yes; so far as that is concerned, I am not ill off," said the sheriff. So now he had to go home to get the money, and in the evening he came back, bringing with him a bag with two bushels in it, which he set down on the bench. Well, as he had such a fine lot of money, the Master-maid said she would have him, so they sat down to talk.

But scarcely had they sat down together before the Master-maid wanted to jump up again. "I have forgotten to see to the fire," she said.

"Why should you jump up to do that?" said the sheriff; "I will do that!" So he jumped up, and went to the chimney in one bound.

"Just tell me when you have got hold of the shovel," said the Master-maid.

"Well, I have hold of it now," said the sheriff.

"Then you may hold the shovel, and the shovel you, and pour red-hot coals over you, till day dawns," said the Master-maid. So the sheriff had to stand there the whole night and pour red-hot coals over himself, and, no

matter how much he cried and begged and entreated, the red-hot coals did not grow the colder for that. When the day began to dawn, and he had power to throw down the shovel, he did not stay long where he was, but ran away as fast as he possibly could; and everyone who met him stared and looked after him, for he was flying as if he were mad, and he could not have looked worse if he had been both flayed and tanned, and everyone wondered where he had been, but for very shame he would tell nothing.

The next day the attorney came riding by the place where the Master-maid dwelt. He saw how brightly the hut shone and gleamed through the wood, and he too went into it to see who lived there, and when he entered and saw the beautiful young maiden he fell even more in love with her than the sheriff had done, and began to woo her at once. So the Master-maid asked him, as she had asked the sheriff, if he had a great deal of money, and the attorney said he was not ill off for that, and would at once go home to get it; and at night he came with a great big sack of money—this time it was a four-bushel sack—and set it on the bench by the Master-maid. So she promised to have him, and he sat down on the bench by her to arrange about it, but suddenly she said that she had forgotten to lock the door of the porch that night, and must do it.

"Why should you do that?" said the attorney; "sit still, I will do it."

So he was on his feet in a moment, and out in the porch.

"Tell me when you have got hold of the door-latch," said the Master-maid.

"I have hold of it now," cried the attorney.

"Then you may hold the door, and the door you, and may you go between wall and wall till day dawns."

What a dance the attorney had that night! He had never had such a waltz before, and he never wished to have such a dance again. Sometimes he was in front of the door, and sometimes the door was in front of him, and it went from one side of the porch to the other, till the attorney was well-nigh beaten to death. At first he began to abuse the Master-maid, and then to beg and pray, but the door did not care for anything but keeping him where he was till break of day.

As soon as the door let go its hold of him, off went the attorney. He forgot who ought to be paid off for what he had suffered, he forgot both his sack of money and his wooing, for he was so afraid lest the house-door

should come dancing after him. Everyone who met him stared and looked after him, for he was flying like a madman, and he could not have looked worse if a herd of rams had been butting at him all night long.

On the third day the bailiff came by, and he too saw the gold house in the little wood, and he too felt that he must go and see who lived there; and when he caught sight of the Master-maid he became so much in love with her that he wooed her almost before he greeted her.

The Master-maid answered him as she had answered the other two, that if he had a great deal of money, she would have him. “So far as that is concerned, I am not ill off,” said the bailiff; so he was at once told to go home and fetch it, and this he did. At night he came back, and he had a still larger sack of money with him than the attorney had brought; it must have been at least six bushels, and he set it down on the bench. So it was settled that he was to have the Master-maid. But hardly had they sat down together before she said that she had forgotten to bring in the calf, and must go out to put it in the byre.

“No, indeed, you shall not do that,” said the bailiff; “I am the one to do that.” And, big and fat as he was, he went out as briskly as a boy.

“Tell me when you have got hold of the calf’s tail,” said the Master-maid.

“I have hold of it now,” cried the bailiff.

“Then may you hold the calf’s tail, and the calf’s tail hold you, and may you go round the world together till day dawns!” said the Master-maid. So the bailiff had to bestir himself, for the calf went over rough and smooth, over hill and dale, and, the more the bailiff cried and screamed, the faster the calf went. When daylight began to appear, the bailiff was half dead; and so glad was he to leave loose of the calf’s tail, that he forgot the sack of money and all else. He walked now slowly—more slowly than the sheriff and the attorney had done, but, the slower he went, the more time had everyone to stare and look at him; and they used it too, and no one can imagine how tired out and ragged he looked after his dance with the calf.

On the following day the wedding was to take place in the King’s palace, and the elder brother was to drive to church with his bride, and the brother who had been with the giant with her sister. But when they had seated themselves in the coach and were about to drive off from the palace

one of the trace-pins broke, and, though they made one, two, and three to put in its place, that did not help them, for each broke in turn, no matter what kind of wood they used to make them of. This went on for a long time, and they could not get away from the palace, so they were all in great trouble. Then the sheriff said (for he too had been bidden to the wedding at Court): “Yonder away in the thicket dwells a maiden, and if you can get her to lend you the handle of the shovel that she uses to make up her fire I know very well that it will hold fast.” So they sent off a messenger to the thicket, and begged so prettily that they might have the loan of her shovel-handle of which the sheriff had spoken that they were not refused; so now they had a trace-pin which would not snap in two.

But all at once, just as they were starting, the bottom of the coach fell in pieces. They made a new bottom as fast as they could, but, no matter how they nailed it together, or what kind of wood they used, no sooner had they got the new bottom into the coach and were about to drive off than it broke again, so that they were still worse off than when they had broken the trace-pin. Then the attorney said, for he too was at the wedding in the palace: “Away there in the thicket dwells a maiden, and if you could but get her to lend you one-half of her porch-door I am certain that it will hold together.” So they again sent a messenger to the thicket, and begged so prettily for the loan of the gilded porch-door of which the attorney had told them that they got it at once. They were just setting out again, but now the horses were not able to draw the coach. They had six horses already, and now they put in eight, and then ten, and then twelve, but the more they put in, and the more the coachman whipped them, the less good it did; and the coach never stirred from the spot. It was already beginning to be late in the day, and to church they must and would go, so everyone who was in the palace was in a state of distress. Then the bailiff spoke up and said: “Out there in the gilded cottage in the thicket dwells a girl, and if you could but get her to lend you her calf I know it could draw the coach, even if it were as heavy as a mountain.” They all thought that it was ridiculous to be drawn to church by a calf, but there was nothing else for it but to send a messenger once more, and beg as prettily as they could, on behalf of the King, that she would let them have the loan of the calf that the bailiff had told them about. The Master-maid let them have it immediately—this time also she would not say “no.”

Then they harnessed the calf to see if the coach would move; and away it went, over rough and smooth, over stock and stone, so that they could scarcely breathe, and sometimes they were on the ground, and sometimes up in the air; and when they came to the church the coach began to go round and round like a spinning-wheel, and it was with the utmost difficulty and danger that they were able to get out of the coach and into the church. And when they went back again the coach went quicker still, so that most of them did not know how they got back to the palace at all.

When they had seated themselves at the table the Prince who had been in service with the giant said that he thought they ought to have invited the maiden who had lent them the shovel-handle, and the porch-door, and the calf up to the palace, “for,” said he, “if we had not got these three things, we should never have got away from the palace.”

The King also thought that this was both just and proper, so he sent five of his best men down to the gilded hut, to greet the maiden courteously from the King, and to beg her to be so good as to come up to the palace to dinner at mid-day.

“Greet the King, and tell him that, if he is too good to come to me, I am too good to come to him,” replied the Master-maid.

So the King had to go himself, and the Master-maid went with him immediately, and, as the King believed that she was more than she appeared to be, he seated her in the place of honor by the youngest bridegroom. When they had sat at the table for a short time, the Master-maid took out the cock, and the hen, and the golden apple which she had brought away with her from the giant’s house, and set them on the table in front of her, and instantly the cock and the hen began to fight with each other for the golden apple.

“Oh! look how those two there are fighting for the golden apple,” said the King’s son.

“Yes, and so did we two fight to get out that time when we were in the mountain,” said the Master-maid.

So the Prince knew her again, and you may imagine how delighted he was. He ordered the troll-witch who had rolled the apple to him to be torn in pieces between four-and-twenty horses, so that not a bit of her was left, and then for the first time they began really to keep the wedding, and,

weary as they were, the sheriff, the attorney, and the bailiff kept it up too.[10]

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10. Asbjornsen and Moe.

WHY THE SEA IS SALT

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Once upon a time, long, long ago, there were two brothers, the one rich and the other poor. When Christmas Eve came, the poor one had not a bite in the house, either of meat or bread; so he went to his brother, and begged him, in God's name, to give him something for Christmas Day. It was by no means the first time that the brother had been forced to give something to him, and he was not better pleased at being asked now than he generally was.

"If you will do what I ask you, you shall have a whole ham," said he. The poor one immediately thanked him, and promised this.

"Well, here is the ham, and now you must go straight to Dead Man's Hall," said the rich brother, throwing the ham to him.

"Well, I will do what I have promised," said the other, and he took the ham and set off. He went on and on for the livelong day, and at nightfall he came to a place where there was a bright light.

"I have no doubt this is the place," thought the man with the ham.

An old man with a long white beard was standing in the outhouse, chopping Yule logs.

"Good-evening," said the man with the ham.

"Good-evening to you. Where are you going at this late hour?" said the man.

"I am going to Dead Man's Hall, if only I am on the right track," answered the poor man.

"Oh! yes, you are right enough, for it is here," said the old man. "When you get inside they will all want to buy your ham, for they don't get much meat to eat there; but you must not sell it unless you can get the hand-mill which stands behind the door for it. When you come out again I will teach you how to stop the hand-mill, which is useful for almost everything."

So the man with the ham thanked the other for his good advice, and rapped at the door.

When he got in, everything happened just as the old man had said it would: all the people, great and small, came round him like ants on an ant-hill, and each tried to outbid the other for the ham.

“By rights my old woman and I ought to have it for our Christmas dinner, but, since you have set your hearts upon it, I must just give it up to you,” said the man. “But, if I sell it, I will have the hand-mill which is standing there behind the door.”

At first they would not hear of this, and haggled and bargained with the man, but he stuck to what he had said, and the people were forced to give him the hand-mill. When the man came out again into the yard, he asked the old wood-cutter how he was to stop the hand-mill, and when he had learned that, he thanked him and set off home with all the speed he could, but did not get there until after the clock had struck twelve on Christmas Eve.

“Where in the world have you been?” said the old woman. “Here I have sat waiting hour after hour, and have not even two sticks to lay across each other under the Christmas porridge-pot.”

“Oh! I could not come before; I had something of importance to see about, and a long way to go, too; but now you shall just see!” said the man, and then he set the hand-mill on the table, and bade it first grind light, then a table-cloth, and then meat, and beer, and everything else that was good for a Christmas Eve’s supper; and the mill ground all that he ordered. “Bless me!” said the old woman as one thing after another appeared; and she wanted to know where her husband had got the mill from, but he would not tell her that.

“Never mind where I got it; you can see that it is a good one, and the water that turns it will never freeze,” said the man. So he ground meat and drink, and all kinds of good things, to last all Christmas-tide, and on the third day he invited all his friends to come to a feast.

Now when the rich brother saw all that there was at the banquet and in the house, he was both vexed and angry, for he grudged everything his brother had. “On Christmas Eve he was so poor that he came to me and begged for a trifle, for God’s sake, and now he gives a feast as if he were both a count and a king!” thought he. “But, for heaven’s sake, tell me where you got your riches from,” said he to his brother.

“From behind the door,” said he who owned the mill, for he did not choose to satisfy his brother on that point; but later in the evening, when he had taken a drop too much, he could not refrain from telling how he had come by the hand-mill. “There you see what has brought me all my wealth!” said he, and brought out the mill, and made it grind first one thing and then another. When the brother saw that, he insisted on having the mill, and after a great deal of persuasion got it; but he had to give three hundred dollars for it, and the poor brother was to keep it till the haymaking was over, for he thought: “If I keep it as long as that, I can make it grind meat and drink that will last many a long year.” During that time you may imagine that the mill did not grow rusty, and when hay-harvest came the rich brother got it, but the other had taken good care not to teach him how to stop it. It was evening when the rich man got the mill home, and in the morning he bade the old woman go out and spread the hay after the mowers, and he would attend to the house himself that day, he said.

So, when dinner-time drew near, he set the mill on the kitchen-table, and said: “Grind herrings and milk pottage, and do it both quickly and well.”

So the mill began to grind herrings and milk pottage, and first all the dishes and tubs were filled, and then it came out all over the kitchen-floor. The man twisted and turned it, and did all he could to make the mill stop, but, howsoever he turned it and screwed it, the mill went on grinding, and in a short time the pottage rose so high that the man was like to be drowned. So he threw open the parlor door, but it was not long before the mill had ground the parlor full too, and it was with difficulty and danger that the man could go through the stream of pottage and get hold of the door-latch. When he got the door open, he did not stay long in the room, but ran out, and the herrings and pottage came after him, and it streamed out over both farm and field. Now the old woman, who was out spreading the hay, began to think dinner was long in coming, and said to the women and the mowers: “Though the master does not call us home, we may as well go. It may be that he finds he is not good at making pottage and I should do well to help him.” So they began to straggle homeward, but when they had got a little way up the hill they met the herrings and pottage and bread, all pouring forth and winding about one over the other, and the

man himself in front of the flood. “Would to heaven that each of you had a hundred stomachs! Take care that you are not drowned in the pottage!” he cried as he went by them as if Mischief were at his heels, down to where his brother dwelt. Then he begged him, for God’s sake, to take the mill back again, and that in an instant, for, said he: “If it grind one hour more the whole district will be destroyed by herrings and pottage.” But the brother would not take it until the other paid him three hundred dollars, and that he was obliged to do. Now the poor brother had both the money and the mill again. So it was not long before he had a farmhouse much finer than that in which his brother lived, but the mill ground him so much money that he covered it with plates of gold; and the farmhouse lay close by the sea-shore, so it shone and glittered far out to sea. Everyone who sailed by there now had to be put in to visit the rich man in the gold farmhouse, and everyone wanted to see the wonderful mill, for the report of it spread far and wide, and there was no one who had not heard tell of it.

After a long, long time came also a skipper who wished to see the mill. He asked if it could make salt. “Yes, it could make salt,” said he who owned it, and when the skipper heard that, he wished with all his might and main to have the mill, let it cost what it might, for, he thought, if he had it, he would get off having to sail far away over the perilous sea for freights of salt. At first the man would not hear of parting with it, but the skipper begged and prayed, and at last the man sold it to him, and got many, many thousand dollars for it. When the skipper had got the mill on his back he did not stay there long, for he was so afraid that the man would change his mind, and he had no time to ask how he was to stop it grinding, but got on board his ship as fast as he could.

When he had gone a little way out to sea he took the mill on deck. “Grind salt, and grind both quickly and well,” said the skipper. So the mill began to grind salt, till it spouted out like water, and when the skipper had got the ship filled he wanted to stop the mill, but whichsoever way he turned it, and how much soever he tried, it went on grinding, and the heap of salt grew higher and higher, until at last the ship sank. There lies the mill at the bottom of the sea, and still, day by day, it grinds on; and that is why the sea is salt.[11]

11. Asbjornsen and Moe.

THE MASTER CAT; OR, PUSS IN BOOTS

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There was a miller who left no more estate to the three sons he had than his mill, his ass, and his cat. The partition was soon made. Neither scrivener nor attorney was sent for. They would soon have eaten up all the poor patrimony. The eldest had the mill, the second the ass, and the youngest nothing but the cat. The poor young fellow was quite comfortless at having so poor a lot.

“My brothers,” said he, “may get their living handsomely enough by joining their stocks together; but for my part, when I have eaten up my cat, and made me a muff of his skin, I must die of hunger.”

The Cat, who heard all this, but made as if he did not, said to him with a grave and serious air:

“Do not thus afflict yourself, my good master. You have nothing else to do but to give me a bag and get a pair of boots made for me that I may scamper through the dirt and the brambles, and you shall see that you have not so bad a portion in me as you imagine.”

The Cat’s master did not build very much upon what he said. He had often seen him play a great many cunning tricks to catch rats and mice, as when he used to hang by the heels, or hide himself in the meal, and make as if he were dead; so that he did not altogether despair of his affording him some help in his miserable condition. When the Cat had what he asked for he booted himself very gallantly, and putting his bag about his neck, he held the strings of it in his two forepaws and went into a warren where was great abundance of rabbits. He put bran and sow-thistle into his bag, and stretching out at length, as if he had been dead, he waited for some young rabbits, not yet acquainted with the deceits of the world, to come and rummage his bag for what he had put into it.

Scarce was he lain down but he had what he wanted. A rash and foolish young rabbit jumped into his bag, and Monsieur Puss, immediately drawing close the strings, took and killed him without pity. Proud of his

prey, he went with it to the palace and asked to speak with his majesty. He was shown upstairs into the King's apartment, and, making a low reverence, said to him:

"I have brought you, sir, a rabbit of the warren, which my noble lord the Marquis of Carabas" (for that was the title which puss was pleased to give his master) "has commanded me to present to your majesty from him."

"Tell thy master," said the king, "that I thank him and that he does me a great deal of pleasure."

Another time he went and hid himself among some standing corn, holding still his bag open, and when a brace of partridges ran into it he drew the strings and so caught them both. He went and made a present of these to the king, as he had done before of the rabbit which he took in the warren. The king, in like manner, received the partridges with great pleasure, and ordered him some money for drink.

The Cat continued for two or three months thus to carry his Majesty, from time to time, game of his master's taking. One day in particular, when he knew for certain that he was to take the air along the river-side, with his daughter, the most beautiful princess in the world, he said to his master:

"If you will follow my advice your fortune is made. You have nothing else to do but go and wash yourself in the river, in that part I shall show you, and leave the rest to me."

The Marquis of Carabas did what the Cat advised him to, without knowing why or wherefore. While he was washing the King passed by, and the Cat began to cry out:

"Help! help! My Lord Marquis of Carabas is going to be drowned."

At this noise the King put his head out of the coach-window, and, finding it was the Cat who had so often brought him such good game, he commanded his guards to run immediately to the assistance of his Lordship the Marquis of Carabas. While they were drawing the poor Marquis out of the river, the Cat came up to the coach and told the King that, while his master was washing, there came by some rogues, who went off with his clothes, though he had cried out: "Thieves! thieves!" several times, as loud as he could.

This cunning Cat had hidden them under a great stone. The King immediately commanded the officers of his wardrobe to run and fetch one of his best suits for the Lord Marquis of Carabas.

The King caressed him after a very extraordinary manner, and as the fine clothes he had given him extremely set off his good mien (for he was well made and very handsome in his person), the King's daughter took a secret inclination to him, and the Marquis of Carabas had no sooner cast two or three respectful and somewhat tender glances but she fell in love with him to distraction. The King would needs have him come into the coach and take part of the airing. The Cat, quite overjoyed to see his project begin to succeed, marched on before, and, meeting with some countrymen, who were mowing a meadow, he said to them:

"Good people, you who are mowing, if you do not tell the King that the meadow you mow belongs to my Lord Marquis of Carabas, you shall be chopped as small as herbs for the pot."

The King did not fail asking of the mowers to whom the meadow they were mowing belonged.

"To my Lord Marquis of Carabas," answered they altogether, for the Cat's threats had made them terribly afraid.

"You see, sir," said the Marquis, "this is a meadow which never fails to yield a plentiful harvest every year."

The Master Cat, who went still on before, met with some reapers, and said to them:

"Good people, you who are reaping, if you do not tell the King that all this corn belongs to the Marquis of Carabas, you shall be chopped as small as herbs for the pot."

The King, who passed by a moment after, would needs know to whom all that corn, which he then saw, did belong.

"To my Lord Marquis of Carabas," replied the reapers, and the King was very well pleased with it, as well as the Marquis, whom he congratulated thereupon. The Master Cat, who went always before, said the same words to all he met, and the King was astonished at the vast estates of my Lord Marquis of Carabas.

Monsieur Puss came at last to a stately castle, the master of which was an ogre, the richest had ever been known; for all the lands which the King had then gone over belonged to this castle. The Cat, who had taken care to

inform himself who this ogre was and what he could do, asked to speak with him, saying he could not pass so near his castle without having the honor of paying his respects to him.

The ogre received him as civilly as an ogre could do, and made him sit down.

“I have been assured,” said the Cat, “that you have the gift of being able to change yourself into all sorts of creatures you have a mind to; you can, for example, transform yourself into a lion, or elephant, and the like.”

“That is true,” answered the ogre very briskly; “and to convince you, you shall see me now become a lion.”

Puss was so sadly terrified at the sight of a lion so near him that he immediately got into the gutter, not without abundance of trouble and danger, because of his boots, which were of no use at all to him in walking upon the tiles. A little while after, when Puss saw that the ogre had resumed his natural form, he came down, and owned he had been very much frightened.

“I have been, moreover, informed,” said the Cat, “but I know not how to believe it, that you have also the power to take on you the shape of the smallest animals; for example, to change yourself into a rat or a mouse; but I must own to you I take this to be impossible.”

“Impossible!” cried the ogre; “you shall see that presently.”

And at the same time he changed himself into a mouse, and began to run about the floor. Puss no sooner perceived this but he fell upon him and ate him up.

Meanwhile the King, who saw, as he passed, this fine castle of the ogre’s, had a mind to go into it. Puss, who heard the noise of his Majesty’s coach running over the draw-bridge, ran out, and said to the King:

“Your Majesty is welcome to this castle of my Lord Marquis of Carabas.”

“What! my Lord Marquis,” cried the King, “and does this castle also belong to you? There can be nothing finer than this court and all the stately buildings which surround it; let us go into it, if you please.”

The Marquis gave his hand to the Princess, and followed the King, who went first. They passed into a spacious hall, where they found a magnificent collation, which the ogre had prepared for his friends, who were that very day to visit him, but dared not to enter, knowing the King

was there. His Majesty was perfectly charmed with the good qualities of my Lord Marquis of Carabas, as was his daughter, who had fallen violently in love with him, and, seeing the vast estate he possessed, said to him, after having drunk five or six glasses:

"It will be owing to yourself only, my Lord Marquis, if you are not my son-in-law."

The Marquis, making several low bows, accepted the honor which his Majesty conferred upon him, and forthwith, that very same day, married the Princess.

Puss became a great lord, and never ran after mice any more but only for his diversion.[12]

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12. Charles Perrault.

FELICIA AND THE POT OF PINKS

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Once upon a time there was a poor laborer who, feeling that he had not much longer to live, wished to divide his possessions between his son and daughter, whom he loved dearly.

So he called them to him, and said: “Your mother brought me as her dowry two stools and a straw bed; I have, besides, a hen, a pot of pinks, and a silver ring, which were given me by a noble lady who once lodged in my poor cottage. When she went away she said to me:

“ ‘Be careful of my gifts, good man; see that you do not lose the ring or forget to water the pinks. As for your daughter, I promise you that she shall be more beautiful than anyone you ever saw in your life; call her Felicia, and when she grows up give her the ring and the pot of pinks to console her for her poverty.’ Take them both, then, my dear child,” he added, “and your brother shall have everything else.”

The two children seemed quite contented, and when their father died they wept for him, and divided his possessions as he had told them. Felicia believed that her brother loved her, but when she sat down upon one of the stools he said angrily:

“Keep your pot of pinks and your ring, but let my things alone. I like order in my house.”

Felicia, who was very gentle, said nothing, but stood up crying quietly; while Bruno, for that was her brother’s name, sat comfortably by the fire. Presently, when supper-time came, Bruno had a delicious egg, and he threw the shell to Felicia, saying:

“There, that is all I can give you; if you don’t like it, go out and catch frogs; there are plenty of them in the marsh close by.” Felicia did not answer, but she cried more bitterly than ever, and went away to her own little room. She found it filled with the sweet scent of the pinks, and, going up to them, she said sadly:

“Beautiful pinks, you are so sweet and so pretty, you are the only comfort I have left. Be very sure that I will take care of you, and water you

well, and never allow any cruel hand to tear you from your stems.”

As she leaned over them she noticed that they were very dry. So taking her pitcher, she ran off in the clear moonlight to the fountain, which was at some distance. When she reached it she sat down upon the brink to rest, but she had hardly done so when she saw a stately lady coming toward her, surrounded by numbers of attendants. Six maids of honor carried her train, and she leaned upon the arm of another.

When they came near the fountain a canopy was spread for her, under which was placed a sofa of cloth-of-gold, and presently a dainty supper was served, upon a table covered with dishes of gold and crystal, while the wind in the trees and the falling water of the fountain murmured the softest music.

Felicia was hidden in the shade, too much astonished by all she saw to venture to move; but in a few moments the Queen said:

“I fancy I see a shepherdess near that tree; bid her come hither.”

So Felicia came forward and saluted the Queen timidly, but with so much grace that all were surprised.

“What are you doing here, my pretty child?” asked the Queen. “Are you not afraid of robbers?”

“Ah! madam,” said Felicia, “a poor shepherdess who has nothing to lose does not fear robbers.”

“You are not very rich, then?” said the Queen, smiling.

“I am so poor,” answered Felicia, “that a pot of pinks and a silver ring are my only possessions in the world.”

“But you have a heart,” said the Queen. “What should you say if anybody wanted to steal that?”

“I do not know what it is like to lose one’s heart, madam,” she replied; “but I have always heard that without a heart one cannot live, and if it is broken one must die; and in spite of my poverty I should be sorry not to live.”

“You are quite right to take care of your heart, pretty one,” said the Queen. “But tell me, have you supped?”

“No, madam,” answered Felicia; “my brother ate all the supper there was.”

Then the Queen ordered that a place should be made for her at the table, and herself loaded Felicia’s plate with good things; but she was too

much astonished to be hungry.

“I want to know what you were doing at the fountain so late?” said the Queen presently.

“I came to fetch a pitcher of water for my pinks, madam,” she answered, stooping to pick up the pitcher which stood beside her; but when she showed it to the Queen she was amazed to see that it had turned to gold, all sparkling with great diamonds, and the water, of which it was full, was more fragrant than the sweetest roses. She was afraid to take it until the Queen said:

“It is yours, Felicia; go and water your pinks with it, and let it remind you that the Queen of the Woods is your friend.”

The shepherdess threw herself at the Queen’s feet, and thanked her humbly for her gracious words.

“Ah! madam,” she cried, “if I might beg you to stay here a moment I would run and fetch my pot of pinks for you—they could not fall into better hands.”

“Go, Felicia,” said the Queen, stroking her cheek softly; “I will wait here until you come back.”

So Felicia took up her pitcher and ran to her little room, but while she had been away Bruno had gone in and taken the pot of pinks, leaving a great cabbage in its place. When she saw the unlucky cabbage Felicia was much distressed, and did not know what to do; but at last she ran back to the fountain, and, kneeling before the Queen, said:

“Madam, Bruno has stolen my pot of pinks, so I have nothing but my silver ring; but I beg you to accept it as a proof of my gratitude.”

“But if I take your ring, my pretty shepherdess,” said the Queen, “you will have nothing left; and what will you do then?”

“Ah! madam,” she answered simply, “if I have your friendship I shall do very well.”

So the Queen took the ring and put it on her finger, and mounted her chariot, which was made of coral studded with emeralds, and drawn by six milk-white horses. And Felicia looked after her until the winding of the forest path hid her from her sight, and then she went back to the cottage, thinking over all the wonderful things that had happened.

The first thing she did when she reached her room was to throw the cabbage out of the window.

But she was very much surprised to hear an odd little voice cry out: “Oh! I am half killed!” and could not tell where it came from, because cabbages do not generally speak.

As soon as it was light, Felicia, who was very unhappy about her pot of pinks, went out to look for it, and the first thing she found was the unfortunate cabbage. She gave it a push with her foot, saying: “What are you doing here, and how dared you put yourself in the place of my pot of pinks?”

“If I hadn’t been carried,” replied the cabbage, “you may be very sure that I shouldn’t have thought of going there.”

It made her shiver with fright to hear the cabbage talk, but he went on:

“If you will be good enough to plant me by my comrades again, I can tell you where your pinks are at this moment—hidden in Bruno’s bed!”

Felicia was in despair when she heard this, not knowing how she was to get them back. But she replanted the cabbage very kindly in his old place, and, as she finished doing it, she saw Bruno’s hen, and said, catching hold of it:

“Come here, horrid little creature! you shall suffer for all the unkind things my brother has done to me.”

“Ah! shepherdess,” said the hen, “don’t kill me; I am rather a gossip, and I can tell you some surprising things that you will like to hear. Don’t imagine that you are the daughter of the poor laborer who brought you up; your mother was a queen who had six girls already, and the King threatened that unless she had a son who could inherit his kingdom she should have her head cut off.

“So when the Queen had another little daughter she was quite frightened, and agreed with her sister (who was a fairy) to exchange her for the fairy’s little son. Now the Queen had been shut up in a great tower by the King’s orders, and when a great many days went by and still she heard nothing from the Fairy she made her escape from the window by means of a rope ladder, taking her little baby with her. After wandering about until she was half dead with cold and fatigue she reached this cottage. I was the laborer’s wife, and was a good nurse, and the Queen gave you into my charge, and told me all her misfortunes, and then died before she had time to say what was to become of you.

“As I never in all my life could keep a secret, I could not help telling this strange tale to my neighbors, and one day a beautiful lady came here, and I told it to her also. When I had finished she touched me with a wand she held in her hand, and instantly I became a hen, and there was an end of my talking! I was very sad, and my husband, who was out when it happened, never knew what had become of me. After seeking me everywhere he believed that I must have been drowned, or eaten up by wild beasts in the forest. That same lady came here once more, and commanded that you should be called Felicia, and left the ring and the pot of pinks to be given to you; and while she was in the house twenty-five of the King’s guards came to search for you, doubtless meaning to kill you; but she muttered a few words, and immediately they all turned into cabbages. It was one of them whom you threw out of your window yesterday.

“I don’t know how it was that he could speak—I have never heard either of them say a word before, nor have I been able to do it myself until now.”

The Princess was greatly astonished at the hen’s story, and said kindly: “I am truly sorry for you, my poor nurse, and wish it was in my power to restore you to your real form. But we must not despair; it seems to me, after what you have told me, that something must be going to happen soon. Just now, however, I must go and look for my pinks, which I love better than anything in the world.”

Bruno had gone out into the forest, never thinking that Felicia would search in his room for the pinks, and she was delighted by his unexpected absence, and thought to get them back without further trouble. But as soon as she entered the room she saw a terrible army of rats, who were guarding the straw bed; and when she attempted to approach it they sprang at her, biting and scratching furiously. Quite terrified, she drew back, crying out: “Oh! my dear pinks, how can you stay here in such bad company?”

Then she suddenly bethought herself of the pitcher of water, and, hoping that it might have some magic power, she ran to fetch it, and sprinkled a few drops over the fierce-looking swarm of rats. In a moment not a tail or a whisker was to be seen. Each one had made for his hole as fast as his legs could carry him, so that the Princess could safely take her pot of pinks. She found them nearly dying for want of water, and hastily

poured all that was left in the pitcher upon them. As she bent over them, enjoying their delicious scent, a soft voice, that seemed to rustle among the leaves, said:

“Lovely Felicia, the day has come at last when I may have the happiness of telling you how even the flowers love you and rejoice in your beauty.”

The Princess, quite overcome by the strangeness of hearing a cabbage, a hen, and a pink speak, and by the terrible sight of an army of rats, suddenly became very pale, and fainted away.

At this moment in came Bruno. Working hard in the heat had not improved his temper, and when he saw that Felicia had succeeded in finding her pinks he was so angry that he dragged her out into the garden and shut the door upon her. The fresh air soon made her open her pretty eyes, and there before her stood the Queen of the Woods, looking as charming as ever.

“You have a bad brother,” she said; “I saw he turned you out. Shall I punish him for it?”

“Ah! no, madam,” she said; “I am not angry with him.

“But supposing he was not your brother, after all, what would you say then?” asked the Queen.

“Oh! but I think he must be,” said Felicia.

“What!” said the Queen, “have you not heard that you are a Princess?”

“I was told so a little while ago, madam, but how could I believe it without a single proof?”

“Ah! dear child,” said the Queen, “the way you speak assures me that, in spite of your humble upbringing, you are indeed a real princess, and I can save you from being treated in such a way again.”

She was interrupted at this moment by the arrival of a very handsome young man. He wore a coat of green velvet fastened with emerald clasps, and had a crown of pinks on his head. He knelt upon one knee and kissed the Queen’s hand.

“Ah!” she cried, “my pink, my dear son, what a happiness to see you restored to your natural shape by Felicia’s aid!” And she embraced him joyfully. Then, turning to Felicia, she said:

“Charming Princess, I know all the hen told you, but you cannot have heard that the zephyrs, to whom was entrusted the task of carrying my son

to the tower where the Queen, your mother, so anxiously waited for him, left him instead in a garden of flowers, while they flew off to tell your mother. Whereupon a fairy with whom I had quarrelled changed him into a pink, and I could do nothing to prevent it.

"You can imagine how angry I was, and how I tried to find some means of undoing the mischief she had done; but there was no help for it. I could only bring Prince Pink to the place where you were being brought up, hoping that when you grew up he might love you, and by your care be restored to his natural form. And you see everything has come right, as I hoped it would. Your giving me the silver ring was the sign that the power of the charm was nearly over, and my enemy's last chance was to frighten you with her army of rats. That she did not succeed in doing; so now, my dear Felicia, if you will be married to my son with this silver ring your future happiness is certain. Do you think him handsome and amiable enough to be willing to marry him?"

"Madam," replied Felicia, blushing, "you overwhelm me with your kindness. I know that you are my mother's sister, and that by your art you turned the soldiers who were sent to kill me into cabbages, and my nurse into a hen, and that you do me only too much honor in proposing that I shall marry your son. How can I explain to you the cause of my hesitation? I feel, for the first time in my life, how happy it would make me to be beloved. Can you indeed give me the Prince's heart?"

"It is yours already, lovely Princess!" he cried, taking her hand in his; "but for the horrible enchantment which kept me silent I should have told you long ago how dearly I love you."

This made the Princess very happy, and the Queen, who could not bear to see her dressed like a poor shepherdess, touched her with her wand, saying:

"I wish you to be attired as befits your rank and beauty." And immediately the Princess's cotton dress became a magnificent robe of silver brocade embroidered with carbuncles, and her soft dark hair was encircled by a crown of diamonds, from which floated a clear white veil. With her bright eyes, and the charming color in her cheeks, she was altogether such a dazzling sight that the Prince could hardly bear it.

"How pretty you are, Felicia!" he cried. "Don't keep me in suspense, I entreat you; say that you will marry me."

“Ah!” said the Queen, smiling, “I think she will not refuse now.”

Just then Bruno, who was going back to his work, came out of the cottage, and thought he must be dreaming when he saw Felicia; but she called him very kindly, and begged the Queen to take pity on him.

“What!” she said, “when he was so unkind to you?”

“Ah! madam,” said the Princess, “I am so happy that I should like everybody else to be happy too.”

The Queen kissed her, and said: “Well, to please you, let me see what I can do for this cross Bruno.” And with a wave of her wand she turned the poor little cottage into a splendid palace, full of treasures; only the two stools and the straw bed remained just as they were, to remind him of his former poverty. Then the Queen touched Bruno himself, and made him gentle and polite and grateful, and he thanked her and the Princess a thousand times. Lastly, the Queen restored the hen and the cabbages to their natural forms, and left them all very contented. The Prince and Princess were married as soon as possible with great splendor, and lived happily ever after.[13]

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13. Fortunee. Par Madame la Comtesse d’Aulnoy.

THE WHITE CAT

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Once upon a time there was a king who had three sons, who were all so clever and brave that he began to be afraid that they would want to reign over the kingdom before he was dead. Now the King, though he felt that he was growing old, did not at all wish to give up the government of his kingdom while he could still manage it very well, so he thought the best way to live in peace would be to divert the minds of his sons by promises which he could always get out of when the time came for keeping them.

So he sent for them all, and, after speaking to them kindly, he added:

"You will quite agree with me, my dear children, that my great age makes it impossible for me to look after my affairs of state as carefully as I once did. I begin to fear that this may affect the welfare of my subjects, therefore I wish that one of you should succeed to my crown; but in return for such a gift as this it is only right that you should do something for me. Now, as I think of retiring into the country, it seems to me that a pretty, lively, faithful little dog would be very good company for me; so, without any regard for your ages, I promise that the one who brings me the most beautiful little dog shall succeed me at once."

The three Princes were greatly surprised by their father's sudden fancy for a little dog, but as it gave the two younger ones a chance they would not otherwise have had of being king, and as the eldest was too polite to make any objection, they accepted the commission with pleasure. They bade farewell to the King, who gave them presents of silver and precious stones, and appointed to meet them at the same hour, in the same place, after a year had passed, to see the little dogs they had brought for him.

Then they went together to a castle which was about a league from the city, accompanied by all their particular friends, to whom they gave a grand banquet, and the three brothers promised to be friends always, to share whatever good fortune befell them, and not to be parted by any envy or jealousy; and so they set out, agreeing to meet at the same castle at the appointed time, to present themselves before the King together. Each one

took a different road, and the two eldest met with many adventures; but it is about the youngest that you are going to hear. He was young, and gay, and handsome, and knew everything that a prince ought to know; and as for his courage, there was simply no end to it.

Hardly a day passed without his buying several dogs—big and little, greyhounds, mastiffs, spaniels, and lapdogs. As soon as he had bought a pretty one he was sure to see a still prettier, and then he had to get rid of all the others and buy that one, as, being alone, he found it impossible to take thirty or forty thousand dogs about with him. He journeyed from day to day, not knowing where he was going, until at last, just at nightfall, he reached a great, gloomy forest. He did not know his way, and, to make matters worse, it began to thunder, and the rain poured down. He took the first path he could find, and after walking for a long time he fancied he saw a faint light, and began to hope that he was coming to some cottage where he might find shelter for the night. At length, guided by the light, he reached the door of the most splendid castle he could have imagined. This door was of gold covered with carbuncles, and it was the pure red light which shone from them that had shown him the way through the forest. The walls were of the finest porcelain in all the most delicate colors, and the Prince saw that all the stories he had ever read were pictured upon them; but as he was terribly wet, and the rain still fell in torrents, he could not stay to look about any more, but came back to the golden door. There he saw a deer’s foot hanging by a chain of diamonds, and he began to wonder who could live in this magnificent castle.

“They must feel very secure against robbers,” he said to himself. “What is to hinder anyone from cutting off that chain and digging out those carbuncles, and making himself rich for life?”

He pulled the deer’s foot, and immediately a silver bell sounded and the door flew open, but the Prince could see nothing but numbers of hands in the air, each holding a torch. He was so much surprised that he stood quite still, until he felt himself pushed forward by other hands, so that, though he was somewhat uneasy, he could not help going on. With his hand on his sword, to be prepared for whatever might happen, he entered a hall paved with lapis-lazuli, while two lovely voices sang:

“The hands you see floating above
Will swiftly your bidding obey;
If your heart dreads not conquering Love,
In this place you may fearlessly stay.”

The Prince could not believe that any danger threatened him when he was welcomed in this way, so, guided by the mysterious hands, he went toward a door of coral, which opened of its own accord, and he found himself in a vast hall of mother-of-pearl, out of which opened a number of other rooms, glittering with thousands of lights, and full of such beautiful pictures and precious things that the Prince felt quite bewildered. After passing through sixty rooms the hands that conducted him stopped, and the Prince saw a most comfortable-looking arm-chair drawn up close to the chimney-corner; at the same moment the fire lighted itself, and the pretty, soft, clever hands took off the Prince’s wet, muddy clothes, and presented him with fresh ones made of the richest stuffs, all embroidered with gold and emeralds. He could not help admiring everything he saw, and the deft way in which the hands waited on him, though they sometimes appeared so suddenly that they made him jump.

When he was quite ready—and I can assure you that he looked very different from the wet and weary Prince who had stood outside in the rain, and pulled the deer’s foot—the hands led him to a splendid room, upon the walls of which were painted the histories of Puss in Boots and a number of other famous cats. The table was laid for supper with two golden plates, and golden spoons and forks, and the sideboard was covered with dishes and glasses of crystal set with precious stones. The Prince was wondering who the second place could be for, when suddenly in came about a dozen cats carrying guitars and rolls of music, who took their places at one end of the room, and under the direction of a cat who beat time with a roll of paper began to mew in every imaginable key, and to draw their claws across the strings of the guitars, making the strangest kind of music that could be heard. The Prince hastily stopped up his ears, but even then the sight of these comical musicians sent him into fits of laughter.

“What funny thing shall I see next?” he said to himself, and instantly the door opened, and in came a tiny figure covered by a long black veil. It was conducted by two cats wearing black mantles and carrying swords,

and a large party of cats followed, who brought in cages full of rats and mice.

The Prince was so much astonished that he thought he must be dreaming, but the little figure came up to him and threw back its veil, and he saw that it was the loveliest little white cat it is possible to imagine. She looked very young and very sad, and in a sweet little voice that went straight to his heart she said to the Prince:

"King's son, you are welcome; the Queen of the Cats is glad to see you."

"Lady Cat," replied the Prince, "I thank you for receiving me so kindly, but surely you are no ordinary pussy-cat? Indeed, the way you speak and the magnificence of your castle prove it plainly."

"King's son," said the White Cat, "I beg you to spare me these compliments, for I am not used to them. But now," she added, "let supper be served, and let the musicians be silent, as the Prince does not understand what they are saying."

So the mysterious hands began to bring in the supper, and first they put on the table two dishes, one containing stewed pigeons and the other a fricassee of fat mice. The sight of the latter made the Prince feel as if he could not enjoy his supper at all; but the White Cat, seeing this, assured him that the dishes intended for him were prepared in a separate kitchen, and he might be quite certain that they contained neither rats nor mice; and the Prince felt so sure that she would not deceive him that he had no more hesitation in beginning. Presently he noticed that on the little paw that was next him the White Cat wore a bracelet containing a portrait, and he begged to be allowed to look at it. To his great surprise he found it represented an extremely handsome young man, who was so like himself that it might have been his own portrait! The White Cat sighed as he looked at it, and seemed sadder than ever, and the Prince dared not ask any questions for fear of displeasing her; so he began to talk about other things, and found that she was interested in all the subjects he cared for himself, and seemed to know quite well what was going on in the world. After supper they went into another room, which was fitted up as a theatre, and the cats acted and danced for their amusement, and then the White Cat said good-night to him, and the hands conducted him into a room he had not seen before, hung with tapestry worked with butterflies' wings of

every color; there were mirrors that reached from the ceiling to the floor, and a little white bed with curtains of gauze tied up with ribbons. The Prince went to bed in silence, as he did not quite know how to begin a conversation with the hands that waited on him, and in the morning he was awakened by a noise and confusion outside of his window, and the hands came and quickly dressed him in hunting costume. When he looked out all the cats were assembled in the courtyard, some leading greyhounds, some blowing horns, for the White Cat was going out hunting. The hands led a wooden horse up to the Prince, and seemed to expect him to mount it, at which he was very indignant; but it was no use for him to object, for he speedily found himself upon its back, and it pranced gaily off with him.

The White Cat herself was riding a monkey, which climbed even up to the eagles' nests when she had a fancy for the young eaglets. Never was there a pleasanter hunting party, and when they returned to the castle the Prince and the White Cat supped together as before, but when they had finished she offered him a crystal goblet, which must have contained a magic draught, for, as soon as he had swallowed its contents, he forgot everything, even the little dog that he was seeking for the King, and only thought how happy he was to be with the White Cat! And so the days passed, in every kind of amusement, until the year was nearly gone. The Prince had forgotten all about meeting his brothers: he did not even know what country he belonged to; but the White Cat knew when he ought to go back, and one day she said to him:

"Do you know that you have only three days left to look for the little dog for your father, and your brothers have found lovely ones?"

Then the Prince suddenly recovered his memory, and cried:

"What can have made me forget such an important thing? My whole fortune depends upon it; and even if I could in such a short time find a dog pretty enough to gain me a kingdom, where should I find a horse who would carry me all that way in three days?" And he began to be very vexed. But the White Cat said to him: "King's son, do not trouble yourself; I am your friend, and will make everything easy for you. You can still stay here for a day, as the good wooden horse can take you to your country in twelve hours."

"I thank you, beautiful Cat," said the Prince; "but what good will it do me to get back if I have not a dog to take to my father?"

“See here,” answered the White Cat, holding up an acorn; “there is a prettier one in this than in the Dogstar!”

“Oh! White Cat dear,” said the Prince, “how unkind you are to laugh at me now!”

“Only listen,” she said, holding the acorn to his ear.

And inside it he distinctly heard a tiny voice say: “Bow-wow!”

The Prince was delighted, for a dog that can be shut up in an acorn must be very small indeed. He wanted to take it out and look at it, but the White Cat said it would be better not to open the acorn till he was before the King, in case the tiny dog should be cold on the journey. He thanked her a thousand times, and said good-by quite sadly when the time came for him to set out.

“The days have passed so quickly with you,” he said, “I only wish I could take you with me now.”

But the White Cat shook her head and sighed deeply in answer.

After all the Prince was the first to arrive at the castle where he had agreed to meet his brothers, but they came soon after, and stared in amazement when they saw the wooden horse in the courtyard jumping like a hunter.

The Prince met them joyfully, and they began to tell him all their adventures; but he managed to hide from them what he had been doing, and even led them to think that a turnspit dog which he had with him was the one he was bringing for the King. Fond as they all were of one another, the two eldest could not help being glad to think that their dogs certainly had a better chance. The next morning they started in the same chariot. The elder brothers carried in baskets two such tiny, fragile dogs that they hardly dared to touch them. As for the turnspit, he ran after the chariot, and got so covered with mud that one could hardly see what he was like at all. When they reached the palace everyone crowded round to welcome them as they went into the King’s great hall; and when the two brothers presented their little dogs nobody could decide which was the prettier. They were already arranging between themselves to share the kingdom equally, when the youngest stepped forward, drawing from his pocket the acorn the White Cat had given him. He opened it quickly, and there upon a white cushion they saw a dog so small that it could easily have been put through a ring. The Prince laid it upon the ground, and it got up at once

and began to dance. The King did not know what to say, for it was impossible that anything could be prettier than this little creature. Nevertheless, as he was in no hurry to part with his crown, he told his sons that, as they had been so successful the first time, he would ask them to go once again, and seek by land and sea for a piece of muslin so fine that it could be drawn through the eye of a needle. The brothers were not very willing to set out again, but the two eldest consented because it gave them another chance, and they started as before. The youngest again mounted the wooden horse, and rode back at full speed to his beloved White Cat. Every door of the castle stood wide open, and every window and turret was illuminated, so it looked more wonderful than before. The hands hastened to meet him, and led the wooden horse off to the stable, while he hurried in to find the White Cat. She was asleep in a little basket on a white satin cushion, but she very soon started up when she heard the Prince, and was overjoyed at seeing him once more.

“How could I hope that you would come back to me King’s son?” she said. And then he stroked and petted her, and told her of his successful journey, and how he had come back to ask her help, as he believed that it was impossible to find what the King demanded. The White Cat looked serious, and said she must think what was to be done, but that, luckily, there were some cats in the castle who could spin very well, and if anybody could manage it they could, and she would set them the task herself.

And then the hands appeared carrying torches, and conducted the Prince and the White Cat to a long gallery which overlooked the river, from the windows of which they saw a magnificent display of fireworks of all sorts; after which they had supper, which the Prince liked even better than the fireworks, for it was very late, and he was hungry after his long ride. And so the days passed quickly as before; it was impossible to feel dull with the White Cat, and she had quite a talent for inventing new amusements—indeed, she was cleverer than a cat has any right to be. But when the Prince asked her how it was that she was so wise, she only said:

“King’s son, do not ask me; guess what you please. I may not tell you anything.”

The Prince was so happy that he did not trouble himself at all about the time, but presently the White Cat told him that the year was gone, and that

he need not be at all anxious about the piece of muslin, as they had made it very well.

"This time," she added, "I can give you a suitable escort"; and on looking out into the courtyard the Prince saw a superb chariot of burnished gold, enameled in flame color with a thousand different devices. It was drawn by twelve snow-white horses, harnessed four abreast; their trappings were flame-colored velvet, embroidered with diamonds. A hundred chariots followed, each drawn by eight horses, and filled with officers in splendid uniforms, and a thousand guards surrounded the procession. "Go!" said the White Cat, "and when you appear before the King in such state he surely will not refuse you the crown which you deserve. Take this walnut, but do not open it until you are before him, then you will find in it the piece of stuff you asked me for."

"Lovely Blanchette," said the Prince, "how can I thank you properly for all your kindness to me? Only tell me that you wish it, and I will give up for ever all thought of being king, and will stay here with you always."

"King's son," she replied, "it shows the goodness of your heart that you should care so much for a little white cat, who is good for nothing but to catch mice; but you must not stay."

So the Prince kissed her little paw and set out. You can imagine how fast he traveled when I tell you that they reached the King's palace in just half the time it had taken the wooden horse to get there. This time the Prince was so late that he did not try to meet his brothers at their castle, so they thought he could not be coming, and were rather glad of it, and displayed their pieces of muslin to the King proudly, feeling sure of success. And indeed the stuff was very fine, and would go through the eye of a very large needle; but the King, who was only too glad to make a difficulty, sent for a particular needle, which was kept among the Crown jewels, and had such a small eye that everybody saw at once that it was impossible that the muslin should pass through it. The Princes were angry, and were beginning to complain that it was a trick, when suddenly the trumpets sounded and the youngest Prince came in. His father and brothers were quite astonished at his magnificence, and after he had greeted them he took the walnut from his pocket and opened it, fully expecting to find the piece of muslin, but instead there was only a hazel-nut. He cracked it, and there lay a cherry-stone. Everybody was looking on, and the King was

chuckling to himself at the idea of finding the piece of muslin in a nutshell.

However, the Prince cracked the cherry-stone, but everyone laughed when he saw it contained only its own kernel. He opened that and found a grain of wheat, and in that was a millet seed. Then he himself began to wonder, and muttered softly:

“White Cat, White Cat, are you making fun of me?”

In an instant he felt a cat’s claw give his hand quite a sharp scratch, and hoping that it was meant as an encouragement he opened the millet seed, and drew out of it a piece of muslin four hundred ells long, woven with the loveliest colors and most wonderful patterns; and when the needle was brought it went through the eye six times with the greatest ease! The King turned pale, and the other Princes stood silent and sorrowful, for nobody could deny that this was the most marvelous piece of muslin that was to be found in the world.

Presently the King turned to his sons, and said, with a deep sigh:

“Nothing could console me more in my old age than to realize your willingness to gratify my wishes. Go then once more, and whoever at the end of a year can bring back the loveliest princess shall be married to her, and shall, without further delay, receive the crown, for my successor must certainly be married.” The Prince considered that he had earned the kingdom fairly twice over but still he was too well bred to argue about it, so he just went back to his gorgeous chariot, and, surrounded by his escort, returned to the White Cat faster than he had come. This time she was expecting him, the path was strewn with flowers, and a thousand braziers were burning scented woods which perfumed the air. Seated in a gallery from which she could see his arrival, the White Cat waited for him. “Well, King’s son,” she said, “here you are once more, without a crown.” “Madam,” said he, “thanks to your generosity I have earned one twice over; but the fact is that my father is so loth to part with it that it would be no pleasure to me to take it.”

“Never mind,” she answered, “it’s just as well to try and deserve it. As you must take back a lovely princess with you next time I will be on the look-out for one for you. In the meantime let us enjoy ourselves; to-night I have ordered a battle between my cats and the river rats on purpose to amuse you.” So this year slipped away even more pleasantly than the

preceding ones. Sometimes the Prince could not help asking the White Cat how it was she could talk.

“Perhaps you are a fairy,” he said. “Or has some enchanter changed you into a cat?”

But she only gave him answers that told him nothing. Days go by so quickly when one is very happy that it is certain the Prince would never have thought of its being time to go back, when one evening as they sat together the White Cat said to him that if he wanted to take a lovely princess home with him the next day he must be prepared to do what she told him.

“Take this sword,” she said, “and cut off my head!”

“I!” cried the Prince, “I cut off your head! Blanchette darling, how could I do it?”

“I entreat you to do as I tell you, King’s son,” she replied.

The tears came into the Prince’s eyes as he begged her to ask him anything but that—to set him any task she pleased as a proof of his devotion, but to spare him the grief of killing his dear Pussy. But nothing he could say altered her determination, and at last he drew his sword, and desperately, with a trembling hand, cut off the little white head. But imagine his astonishment and delight when suddenly a lovely princess stood before him, and, while he was still speechless with amazement, the door opened and a goodly company of knights and ladies entered, each carrying a cat’s skin! They hastened with every sign of joy to the Princess, kissing her hand and congratulating her on being once more restored to her natural shape. She received them graciously, but after a few minutes begged that they would leave her alone with the Prince, to whom she said:

“You see, Prince, that you were right in supposing me to be no ordinary cat. My father reigned over six kingdoms. The Queen, my mother, whom he loved dearly, had a passion for traveling and exploring, and when I was only a few weeks old she obtained his permission to visit a certain mountain of which she had heard many marvelous tales, and set out, taking with her a number of her attendants. On the way they had to pass near an old castle belonging to the fairies. Nobody had ever been into it, but it was reported to be full of the most wonderful things, and my mother remembered to have heard that the fairies had in their garden such fruits as were to be seen and tasted nowhere else. She began to wish to try them for

herself, and turned her steps in the direction of the garden. On arriving at the door, which blazed with gold and jewels, she ordered her servants to knock loudly, but it was useless; it seemed as if all the inhabitants of the castle must be asleep or dead. Now the more difficult it became to obtain the fruit, the more the Queen was determined that have it she would. So she ordered that they should bring ladders, and get over the wall into the garden; but though the wall did not look very high, and they tied the ladders together to make them very long, it was quite impossible to get to the top.

"The Queen was in despair, but as night was coming on she ordered that they should encamp just where they were, and went to bed herself, feeling quite ill, she was so disappointed. In the middle of the night she was suddenly awakened, and saw to her surprise a tiny, ugly old woman seated by her bedside, who said to her:

"'I must say that we consider it somewhat troublesome of your Majesty to insist upon tasting our fruit; but to save you annoyance, my sisters and I will consent to give you as much as you can carry away, on one condition—that is, that you shall give us your little daughter to bring up as our own.'

"'Ah! my dear madam,' cried the Queen, 'is there nothing else that you will take for the fruit? I will give you my kingdoms willingly.'

"'No,' replied the old fairy, 'we will have nothing but your little daughter. She shall be as happy as the day is long, and we will give her everything that is worth having in fairy-land, but you must not see her again until she is married.'

"'Though it is a hard condition,' said the Queen, 'I consent, for I shall certainly die if I do not taste the fruit, and so I should lose my little daughter either way.'

"So the old fairy led her into the castle, and, though it was still the middle of the night, the Queen could see plainly that it was far more beautiful than she had been told, which you can easily believe, Prince," said the White Cat, "when I tell you that it was this castle that we are now in. 'Will you gather the fruit yourself, Queen?' said the old fairy, 'or shall I call it to come to you?'

"'I beg you to let me see it come when it is called,' cried the Queen; 'that will be something quite new.' The old fairy whistled twice, then she

cried:

“ ‘Apricots, peaches, nectarines, cherries, plums, pears, melons, grapes, apples, oranges, lemons, gooseberries, strawberries, raspberries, come!’

“And in an instant they came tumbling in one over another, and yet they were neither dusty nor spoilt, and the Queen found them quite as good as she had fancied them. You see they grew upon fairy trees.

“The old fairy gave her golden baskets in which to take the fruit away, and it was as much as four hundred mules could carry. Then she reminded the Queen of her agreement, and led her back to the camp, and next morning she went back to her kingdom, but before she had gone very far she began to repent of her bargain, and when the King came out to meet her she looked so sad that he guessed that something had happened, and asked what was the matter. At first the Queen was afraid to tell him, but when, as soon as they reached the palace, five frightful little dwarfs were sent by the fairies to fetch me, she was obliged to confess what she had promised. The King was very angry, and had the Queen and myself shut up in a great tower and safely guarded, and drove the little dwarfs out of his kingdom; but the fairies sent a great dragon who ate up all the people he met, and whose breath burnt up everything as he passed through the country; and at last, after trying in vain to rid himself of this monster, the King, to save his subjects, was obliged to consent that I should be given up to the fairies. This time they came themselves to fetch me, in a chariot of pearl drawn by sea-horses, followed by the dragon, who was led with chains of diamonds. My cradle was placed between the old fairies, who loaded me with caresses, and away we whirled through the air to a tower which they had built on purpose for me. There I grew up surrounded with everything that was beautiful and rare, and learning everything that is ever taught to a princess, but without any companions but a parrot and a little dog, who could both talk; and receiving every day a visit from one of the old fairies, who came mounted upon the dragon. One day, however, as I sat at my window I saw a handsome young prince, who seemed to have been hunting in the forest which surrounded my prison, and who was standing and looking up at me. When he saw that I observed him he saluted me with great deference. You can imagine that I was delighted to have some one new to talk to, and in spite of the height of my window our conversation was prolonged till night fell, then my prince reluctantly bade me farewell.

But after that he came again many times and at last I consented to marry him, but the question was how was I to escape from my tower. The fairies always supplied me with flax for my spinning, and by great diligence I made enough cord for a ladder that would reach to the foot of the tower; but, alas! just as my prince was helping me to descend it, the crossest and ugliest of the old fairies flew in. Before he had time to defend himself my unhappy lover was swallowed up by the dragon. As for me, the fairies, furious at having their plans defeated, for they intended me to marry the king of the dwarfs, and I utterly refused, changed me into a white cat. When they brought me here I found all the lords and ladies of my father's court awaiting me under the same enchantment, while the people of lesser rank had been made invisible, all but their hands.

"As they laid me under the enchantment the fairies told me all my history, for until then I had quite believed that I was their child, and warned me that my only chance of regaining my natural form was to win the love of a prince who resembled in every way my unfortunate lover.

"And you have won it, lovely Princess," interrupted the Prince.

"You are indeed wonderfully like him," resumed the Princess—"in voice, in features, and everything; and if you really love me all my troubles will be at an end."

"And mine too," cried the Prince, throwing himself at her feet, "if you will consent to marry me."

"I love you already better than anyone in the world," she said; "but now it is time to go back to your father, and we shall hear what he says about it."

So the Prince gave her his hand and led her out, and they mounted the chariot together; it was even more splendid than before, and so was the whole company. Even the horses' shoes were of rubies with diamond nails, and I suppose that is the first time such a thing was ever seen.

As the Princess was as kind and clever as she was beautiful, you may imagine what a delightful journey the Prince found it, for everything the Princess said seemed to him quite charming.

When they came near the castle where the brothers were to meet, the Princess got into a chair carried by four of the guards; it was hewn out of one splendid crystal, and had silken curtains, which she drew round her that she might not be seen.

The Prince saw his brothers walking upon the terrace, each with a lovely princess, and they came to meet him, asking if he had also found a wife. He said that he had found something much rarer—a white cat! At which they laughed very much, and asked him if he was afraid of being eaten up by mice in the palace. And then they set out together for the town. Each prince and princess rode in a splendid carriage; the horses were decked with plumes of feathers, and glittered with gold. After them came the youngest prince, and last of all the crystal chair, at which everybody looked with admiration and curiosity. When the courtiers saw them coming they hastened to tell the King.

"Are the ladies beautiful?" he asked anxiously.

And when they answered that nobody had ever before seen such lovely princesses he seemed quite annoyed.

However, he received them graciously, but found it impossible to choose between them.

Then turning to his youngest son he said:

"Have you come back alone, after all?"

"Your Majesty," replied the Prince, "will find in that crystal chair a little white cat, which has such soft paws, and mews so prettily, that I am sure you will be charmed with it."

The King smiled, and went to draw back the curtains himself, but at a touch from the Princess the crystal shivered into a thousand splinters, and there she stood in all her beauty; her fair hair floated over her shoulders and was crowned with flowers, and her softly falling robe was of the purest white. She saluted the King gracefully, while a murmur of admiration rose from all around.

"Sire," she said, "I am not come to deprive you of the throne you fill so worthily. I have already six kingdoms, permit me to bestow one upon you, and upon each of your sons. I ask nothing but your friendship, and your consent to my marriage with your youngest son; we shall still have three kingdoms left for ourselves."

The King and all the courtiers could not conceal their joy and astonishment, and the marriage of the three Princes was celebrated at once. The festivities lasted several months, and then each king and queen departed to their own kingdom and lived happily ever after.[14]

14. La Chatte blanche. Par Madame la Comtesse d’Aulnoy.

THE WATER-LILY. THE GOLD-SPINNERS

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Once upon a time, in a large forest, there lived an old woman and three maidens. They were all three beautiful, but the youngest was the fairest. Their hut was quite hidden by trees, and none saw their beauty but the sun by day, and the moon by night, and the eyes of the stars. The old woman kept the girls hard at work, from morning till night, spinning gold flax into yarn, and when one distaff was empty another was given them, so they had no rest. The thread had to be fine and even, and when done was locked up in a secret chamber by the old woman, who twice or thrice every summer went a journey. Before she went she gave out work for each day of her absence, and always returned in the night, so that the girls never saw what she brought back with her, neither would she tell them whence the gold flax came, nor what it was to be used for.

Now, when the time came round for the old woman to set out on one of these journeys, she gave each maiden work for six days, with the usual warning: “Children, don’t let your eyes wander, and on no account speak to a man, for, if you do, your thread will lose its brightness, and misfortunes of all kinds will follow.” They laughed at this oft-repeated caution, saying to each other: “How can our gold thread lose its brightness, and have we any chance of speaking to a man?”

On the third day after the old woman’s departure a young prince, hunting in the forest, got separated from his companions, and completely lost. Weary of seeking his way, he flung himself down under a tree, leaving his horse to browse at will, and fell asleep.

The sun had set when he awoke and began once more to try and find his way out of the forest. At last he perceived a narrow foot-path, which he eagerly followed and found that it led him to a small hut. The maidens, who were sitting at the door of their hut for coolness, saw him approaching, and the two elder were much alarmed, for they remembered the old woman’s warning; but the youngest said: “Never before have I seen

anyone like him; let me have one look." They entreated her to come in, but, seeing that she would not, left her, and the Prince, coming up, courteously greeted the maiden, and told her he had lost his way in the forest and was both hungry and weary. She set food before him, and was so delighted with his conversation that she forgot the old woman's caution, and lingered for hours. In the meantime the Prince's companions sought him far and wide, but to no purpose, so they sent two messengers to tell the sad news to the King, who immediately ordered a regiment of cavalry and one of infantry to go and look for him.

After three days' search, they found the hut. The Prince was still sitting by the door and had been so happy in the maiden's company that the time had seemed like a single hour. Before leaving he promised to return and fetch her to his father's court, where he would make her his bride. When he had gone, she sat down to her wheel to make up for lost time, but was dismayed to find that her thread had lost all its brightness. Her heart beat fast and she wept bitterly, for she remembered the old woman's warning and knew not what misfortune might now befall her.

The old woman returned in the night and knew by the tarnished thread what had happened in her absence. She was furiously angry and told the maiden that she had brought down misery both on herself and on the Prince. The maiden could not rest for thinking of this. At last she could bear it no longer, and resolved to seek help from the Prince.

As a child she had learned to understand the speech of birds, and this was now of great use to her, for, seeing a raven pluming itself on a pine bough, she cried softly to it: "Dear bird, cleverest of all birds, as well as swiftest on wing, wilt thou help me?" "How can I help thee?" asked the raven. She answered: "Fly away, until thou comest to a splendid town, where stands a king's palace; seek out the king's son and tell him that a great misfortune has befallen me." Then she told the raven how her thread had lost its brightness, how terribly angry the old woman was, and how she feared some great disaster. The raven promised faithfully to do her bidding, and, spreading its wings, flew away. The maiden now went home and worked hard all day at winding up the yarn her elder sisters had spun, for the old woman would let her spin no longer. Toward evening she heard the raven's "craa, craa," from the pine tree and eagerly hastened thither to hear the answer.

By great good fortune the raven had found a wind wizard's son in the palace garden, who understood the speech of birds, and to him he had entrusted the message. When the Prince heard it, he was very sorrowful, and took counsel with his friends how to free the maiden. Then he said to the wind wizard's son: "Beg the raven to fly quickly back to the maiden and tell her to be ready on the ninth night, for then will I come and fetch her away." The wind wizard's son did this, and the raven flew so swiftly that it reached the hut that same evening. The maiden thanked the bird heartily and went home, telling no one what she had heard.

As the ninth night drew near she became very unhappy, for she feared lest some terrible mischance should arise and ruin all. On this night she crept quietly out of the house and waited trembling at some little distance from the hut. Presently she heard the muffled tramp of horses, and soon the armed troop appeared, led by the Prince, who had prudently marked all the trees beforehand, in order to know the way. When he saw the maiden he sprang from his horse, lifted her into the saddle, and then, mounting behind, rode homeward. The moon shone so brightly that they had no difficulty in seeing the marked trees.

By and by the coming of dawn loosened the tongues of all the birds, and, had the Prince only known what they were saying, or the maiden been listening, they might have been spared much sorrow, but they were thinking only of each other, and when they came out of the forest the sun was high in the heavens.

Next morning, when the youngest girl did not come to her work, the old woman asked where she was. The sisters pretended not to know, but the old woman easily guessed what had happened, and, as she was in reality a wicked witch, determined to punish the fugitives. Accordingly, she collected nine different kinds of enchanters' nightshade, added some salt, which she first bewitched, and, doing all up in a cloth into the shape of a fluffy ball, sent it after them on the wings of the wind, saying:

"Whirlwind!—mother of the wind!
Lend thy aid 'gainst her who sinned!
Carry with thee this magic ball.
Cast her from his arms for ever,
Bury her in the rippling river."

At midday the Prince and his men came to a deep river, spanned by so narrow a bridge that only one rider could cross at a time. The horse on which the Prince and the maiden were riding had just reached the middle when the magic ball flew by. The horse in its fright suddenly reared, and before anyone could stop it flung the maiden into the swift current below. The Prince tried to jump in after her, but his men held him back, and in spite of his struggles led him home, where for six weeks he shut himself up in a secret chamber, and would neither eat nor drink, so great was his grief. At last he became so ill his life was despaired of, and in great alarm the King caused all the wizards of his country to be summoned. But none could cure him. At last the wind wizard's son said to the King: "Send for the old wizard from Finland he knows more than all the wizards of your kingdom put together." A messenger was at once sent to Finland, and a week later the old wizard himself arrived on the wings of the wind. "Honored King," said the wizard, "the wind has blown this illness upon your son, and a magic ball has snatched away his beloved. This it is which makes him grieve so constantly. Let the wind blow upon him that it may blow away his sorrow." Then the King made his son go out into the wind, and he gradually recovered and told his father all. "Forget the maiden," said the King, "and take another bride"; but the Prince said he could never love another.

A year afterward he came suddenly upon the bridge where his beloved met her death. As he recalled the misfortune he wept bitterly, and would have given all he possessed to have her once more alive. In the midst of his grief he thought he heard a voice singing, and looked round, but could see no one. Then he heard the voice again, and it said:

"Alas! bewitched and all forsaken, 'Tis I must lie for ever here! My beloved no thought has taken To free his bride, that was so dear."

He was greatly astonished, sprang from his horse, and looked everywhere to see if no one were hidden under the bridge; but no one was there. Then he noticed a yellow water-lily floating on the surface of the water, half hidden by its broad leaves; but flowers do not sing, and in great surprise he waited, hoping to hear more. Then again the voice sang:

"Alas! bewitched and all forsaken,
'Tis I must lie for ever here!

My beloved no thought has taken
To free his bride, that was so dear.”

The Prince suddenly remembered the gold-spinners, and said to himself: “If I ride thither, who knows but that they could explain this to me?” He at once rode to the hut, and found the two maidens at the fountain. He told them what had befallen their sister the year before, and how he had twice heard a strange song, but yet could see no singer. They said that the yellow water-lily could be none other than their sister, who was not dead, but transformed by the magic ball. Before he went to bed, the eldest made a cake of magic herbs, which she gave him to eat. In the night he dreamed that he was living in the forest and could understand all that the birds said to each other. Next morning he told this to the maidens, and they said that the charmed cake had caused it, and advised him to listen well to the birds, and see what they could tell him, and when he had recovered his bride they begged him to return and deliver them from their wretched bondage.

Having promised this, he joyfully returned home, and as he was riding through the forest he could perfectly understand all that the birds said. He heard a thrush say to a magpie: “How stupid men are! they cannot understand the simplest thing. It is now quite a year since the maiden was transformed into a water-lily, and, though she sings so sadly that anyone going over the bridge must hear her, yet no one comes to her aid. Her former bridegroom rode over it a few days ago and heard her singing, but was no wiser than the rest.”

“And he is to blame for all her misfortunes,” added the magpie. “If he heeds only the words of men she will remain a flower for ever. She were soon delivered were the matter only laid before the old wizard of Finland.”

After hearing this, the Prince wondered how he could get a message conveyed to Finland. He heard one swallow say to another: “Come, let us fly to Finland; we can build better nests there.”

“Stop, kind friends!” cried the Prince. “Will you do something for me?” The birds consented, and he said: “Take a thousand greetings from me to the wizard of Finland, and ask him how I may restore a maiden transformed into a flower to her own form.”

The swallows flew away, and the Prince rode on to the bridge. There he waited, hoping to hear the song. But he heard nothing but the rushing of the water and the moaning of the wind, and, disappointed, rode home.

Shortly after, he was sitting in the garden, thinking that the swallows must have forgotten his message, when he saw an eagle flying above him. The bird gradually descended until it perched on a tree close to the Prince and said: “The wizard of Finland greets thee and bids me say that thou mayest free the maiden thus: Go to the river and smear thyself all over with mud; then say: ‘From a man into a crab,’ and thou wilt become a crab. Plunge boldly into the water, swim as close as thou canst to the water-lily’s roots, and loosen them from the mud and reeds. This done, fasten thy claws into the roots and rise with them to the surface. Let the water flow all over the flower, and drift with the current until thou comest to a mountain ash tree on the left bank. There is near it a large stone. Stop there and say: ‘From a crab into a man, from a water-lily into a maiden,’ and ye both will be restored to your own forms.”

Full of doubt and fear, the Prince let some time pass before he was bold enough to attempt to rescue the maiden. Then a crow said to him: “Why dost thou hesitate? The old wizard has not told thee wrong, neither have the birds deceived thee; hasten and dry the maiden’s tears.”

“Nothing worse than death can befall me,” thought the Prince, “and death is better than endless sorrow.” So he mounted his horse and went to the bridge. Again he heard the water-lily’s lament, and, hesitating no longer, smeared himself all over with mud, and, saying: “From a man into a crab,” plunged into the river. For one moment the water hissed in his ears, and then all was silent. He swam up to the plant and began to loosen its roots, but so firmly were they fixed in the mud and reeds that this took him a long time. He then grasped them and rose to the surface, letting the water flow over the flower. The current carried them down the stream, but nowhere could he see the mountain ash. At last he saw it, and close by the large stone. Here he stopped and said: “From a crab into a man, from a water-lily into a maiden,” and to his delight found himself once more a prince, and the maiden was by his side. She was ten times more beautiful than before, and wore a magnificent pale yellow robe, sparkling with jewels. She thanked him for having freed her from the cruel witch’s power, and willingly consented to marry him.

But when they came to the bridge where he had left his horse it was nowhere to be seen, for, though the Prince thought he had been a crab only a few hours, he had in reality been under the water for more than ten days. While they were wondering how they should reach his father's court, they saw a splendid coach driven by six gaily caparisoned horses coming along the bank. In this they drove to the palace. The King and Queen were at church, weeping for their son, whom they had long mourned for dead. Great was their delight and astonishment when the Prince entered, leading the beautiful maiden by the hand. The wedding was at once celebrated and there was feasting and merry-making throughout the kingdom for six weeks.

Some time afterward the Prince and his bride were sitting in the garden, when a crow said to them: "Ungrateful creatures! Have you forgotten the two poor maidens who helped you in your distress? Must they spin gold flax for ever? Have no pity on the old witch. The three maidens are princesses, whom she stole away when they were children together, with all the silver utensils, which she turned into gold flax. Poison were her fittest punishment."

The Prince was ashamed of having forgotten his promise and set out at once, and by great good fortune reached the hut when the old woman was away. The maidens had dreamed that he was coming, and were ready to go with him, but first they made a cake in which they put poison, and left it on a table where the old woman was likely to see it when she returned. She *did* see it, and thought it looked so tempting that she greedily ate it up and at once died.

In the secret chamber were found fifty wagon-loads of gold flax, and as much more was discovered buried. The hut was razed to the ground, and the Prince and his bride and her two sisters lived happily ever after.

THE TERRIBLE HEAD

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Once upon a time there was a king whose only child was a girl. Now the King had been very anxious to have a son, or at least a grandson, to come after him, but he was told by a prophet whom he consulted that his own daughter's son should kill him. This news terrified him so much that he determined never to let his daughter be married, for he thought it was better to have no grandson at all than to be killed by his grandson. He therefore called his workmen together, and bade them dig a deep round hole in the earth, and then he had a prison of brass built in the hole, and then, when it was finished, he locked up his daughter. No man ever saw her, and she never saw even the fields and the sea, but only the sky and the sun, for there was a wide open window in the roof of the house of brass. So the Princess would sit looking up at the sky, and watching the clouds float across, and wondering whether she should ever get out of her prison. Now one day it seemed to her that the sky opened above her, and a great shower of shining gold fell through the window in the roof, and lay glittering in her room. Not very long after, the Princess had a baby, a little boy, but when the King her father heard of it he was very angry and afraid, for now the child was born that should be his death. Yet, cowardly as he was, he had not quite the heart to kill the Princess and her baby outright, but he had them put in a huge brass-bound chest and thrust out to sea, that they might either be drowned or starved, or perhaps come to a country where they would be out of his way.

So the Princess and the baby floated and drifted in the chest on the sea all day and night, but the baby was not afraid of the waves nor of the wind, for he did not know that they could hurt him, and he slept quite soundly. And the Princess sang a song over him, and this was her song:

"Child, my child, how sound you sleep!
Though your mother's care is deep,
You can lie with heart at rest
In the narrow brass-bound chest;

In the starless night and drear
You can sleep, and never hear
Billows breaking, and the cry
Of the night-wind wandering by;
In soft purple mantle sleeping
With your little face on mine,
Hearing not your mother weeping
And the breaking of the brine.”

Well, the daylight came at last, and the great chest was driven by the waves against the shore of an island. There the brass-bound chest lay, with the Princess and her baby in it, till a man of that country came past, and saw it, and dragged it on to the beach, and when he had broken it open, behold! there was a beautiful lady and a little boy. So he took them home, and was very kind to them, and brought up the boy till he was a young man. Now when the boy had come to his full strength the King of that country fell in love with his mother, and wanted to marry her, but he knew that she would never part from her boy. So he thought of a plan to get rid of the boy, and this was his plan: A great Queen of a country not far off was going to be married, and this king said that all his subjects must bring him wedding presents to give her. And he made a feast to which he invited them all, and they all brought their presents; some brought gold cups, and some brought necklaces of gold and amber, and some brought beautiful horses; but the boy had nothing, though he was the son of a princess, for his mother had nothing to give him. Then the rest of the company began to laugh at him, and the King said: “If you have nothing else to give, at least you might go and fetch the Terrible Head.”

The boy was proud, and spoke without thinking:

“Then I swear that I *will* bring the Terrible Head, if it may be brought by a living man. But of what head you speak I know not.”

Then they told him that somewhere, a long way off, there dwelt three dreadful sisters, monstrous ogrish women, with golden wings and claws of brass, and with serpents growing on their heads instead of hair. Now these women were so awful to look on that whoever saw them was turned at once into stone. And two of them could not be put to death, but the youngest, whose face was very beautiful, could be killed, and it was *her*

head that the boy had promised to bring. You may imagine it was no easy adventure.

When he heard all this he was perhaps sorry that he had sworn to bring the Terrible Head, but he was determined to keep his oath. So he went out from the feast, where they all sat drinking and making merry, and he walked alone beside the sea in the dusk of the evening, at the place where the great chest, with himself and his mother in it, had been cast ashore.

There he went and sat down on a rock, looking toward the sea, and wondering how he should begin to fulfill his vow. Then he felt some one touch him on the shoulder; and he turned, and saw a young man like a king's son, having with him a tall and beautiful lady, whose blue eyes shone like stars. They were taller than mortal men, and the young man had a staff in his hand with golden wings on it, and two golden serpents twisted round it, and he had wings on his cap and on his shoes. He spoke to the boy, and asked him why he was so unhappy; and the boy told him how he had sworn to bring the Terrible Head, and knew not how to begin to set about the adventure.

Then the beautiful lady also spoke, and said that "it was a foolish oath and a hasty, but it might be kept if a brave man had sworn it." Then the boy answered that he was not afraid, if only he knew the way.

Then the lady said that to kill the dreadful woman with the golden wings and the brass claws, and to cut off her head, he needed three things: first, a Cap of Darkness, which would make him invisible when he wore it; next, a Sword of Sharpness, which would cleave iron at one blow; and last, the Shoes of Swiftness, with which he might fly in the air.

The boy answered that he knew not where such things were to be procured, and that, wanting them, he could only try and fail. Then the young man, taking off his own shoes, said: "First, you shall use these shoes till you have taken the Terrible Head, and then you must give them back to me. And with these shoes you will fly as fleet as a bird, or a thought, over the land or over the waves of the sea, wherever the shoes know the way. But there are ways which they do not know, roads beyond the borders of the world. And these roads have you to travel. Now first you must go to the Three Gray Sisters, who live far off in the north, and are so very cold that they have only one eye and one tooth among the three. You must creep up close to them, and as one of them passes the eye to the other

you must seize it, and refuse to give it up till they have told you the way to the Three Fairies of the Garden, and *they* will give you the Cap of Darkness and the Sword of Sharpness, and show you how to wing beyond this world to the land of the Terrible Head."

Then the beautiful lady said: "Go forth at once, and do not return to say good-by to your mother, for these things must be done quickly, and the Shoes of Swiftness themselves will carry you to the land of the Three Gray Sisters—for they know the measure of that way."

So the boy thanked her, and he fastened on the Shoes of Swiftness, and turned to say good-by to the young man and the lady. But, behold! they had vanished, he knew not how or where! Then he leaped in the air to try the Shoes of Swiftness, and they carried him more swiftly than the wind, over the warm blue sea, over the happy lands of the south, over the northern peoples who drank mare's milk and lived in great wagons, wandering after their flocks. Across the wide rivers, where the wild fowl rose and fled before him, and over the plains and the cold North Sea he went, over the fields of snow and the hills of ice, to a place where the world ends, and all water is frozen, and there are no men, nor beasts, nor any green grass. There in a blue cave of the ice he found the Three Gray Sisters, the oldest of living things. Their hair was as white as the snow, and their flesh of an icy blue, and they mumbled and nodded in a kind of dream, and their frozen breath hung round them like a cloud. Now the opening of the cave in the ice was narrow, and it was not easy to pass in without touching one of the Gray Sisters. But, floating on the Shoes of Swiftness, the boy just managed to steal in, and waited till one of the sisters said to another, who had their one eye:

"Sister, what do you see? do you see old times coming back?"

"No, sister."

"Then give *me* the eye, for perhaps I can see farther than you."

Then the first sister passed the eye to the second, but as the second groped for it the boy caught it cleverly out of her hand.

"Where is the eye, sister?" said the second gray woman.

"You have taken it yourself, sister," said the first gray woman.

"Have you lost the eye, sister? have you lost the eye?" said the third gray woman; "shall we *never* find it again, and see old times coming back?"

Then the boy slipped from behind them out of the cold cave into the air, and he laughed aloud.

When the gray women heard that laugh they began to weep, for now they knew that a stranger had robbed them, and that they could not help themselves, and their tears froze as they fell from the hollows where no eyes were, and rattled on the icy ground of the cave. Then they began to implore the boy to give them their eye back again, and he could not help being sorry for them, they were so pitiful. But he said he would never give them the eye till they told him the way to the Fairies of the Garden.

Then they wrung their hands miserably, for they guessed why he had come, and how he was going to try to win the Terrible Head. Now the Dreadful Women were akin to the Three Gray Sisters, and it was hard for them to tell the boy the way. But at last they told him to keep always south, and with the land on his left and the sea on his right, till he reached the Island of the Fairies of the Garden. Then he gave them back the eye, and they began to look out once more for the old times coming back again. But the boy flew south between sea and land, keeping the land always on his left hand, till he saw a beautiful island crowned with flowering trees. There he alighted, and there he found the Three Fairies of the Garden. They were like three very beautiful young women, dressed one in green, one in white, and one in red, and they were dancing and singing round an apple tree with apples of gold, and this was their song:

THE SONG OF THE WESTERN FAIRIES

Round and round the apples of gold,
Round and round dance we;
Thus do we dance from the days of old
About the enchanted tree;
Round, and round, and round we go,
While the spring is green, or the stream shall flow,
Or the wind shall stir the sea!

There is none may taste of the golden fruit
Till the golden new time come
Many a tree shall spring from shoot,

Many a blossom be withered at root,
Many a song be dumb;
Broken and still shall be many a lute
Or ever the new times come!

Round and round the tree of gold,
Round and round dance we,
So doth the great world spin from of old,
Summer and winter, and fire and cold,
Song that is sung, and tale that is told,
Even as we dance, that fold and unfold
Round the stem of the fairy tree!

These grave dancing fairies were very unlike the Grey Women, and they were glad to see the boy, and treated him kindly. Then they asked him why he had come; and he told them how he was sent to find the Sword of Sharpness and the Cap of Darkness. And the fairies gave him these, and a wallet, and a shield, and belted the sword, which had a diamond blade, round his waist, and the cap they set on his head, and told him that now even they could not see him though they were fairies. Then he took it off, and they each kissed him and wished him good fortune, and then they began again their eternal dance round the golden tree, for it is their business to guard it till the new times come, or till the world's ending. So the boy put the cap on his head, and hung the wallet round his waist, and the shining shield on his shoulders, and flew beyond the great river that lies coiled like a serpent round the whole world. And by the banks of that river, there he found the three Terrible Women all asleep beneath a poplar tree, and the dead poplar leaves lay all about them. Their golden wings were folded and their brass claws were crossed, and two of them slept with their hideous heads beneath their wings like birds, and the serpents in their hair writhed out from under the feathers of gold. But the youngest slept between her two sisters, and she lay on her back, with her beautiful sad face turned to the sky; and though she slept her eyes were wide open. If the boy had seen her he would have been changed into stone by the terror and the pity of it, she was so awful; but he had thought of a plan for killing her without looking on her face. As soon as he caught sight of the three from

far off he took his shining shield from his shoulders, and held it up like a mirror, so that he saw the Dreadful Women reflected in it, and did not see the Terrible Head itself. Then he came nearer and nearer, till he reckoned that he was within a sword's stroke of the youngest, and he guessed where he should strike a back blow behind him. Then he drew the Sword of Sharpness and struck once, and the Terrible Head was cut from the shoulders of the creature, and the blood leaped out and struck him like a blow. But he thrust the Terrible Head into his wallet, and flew away without looking behind. Then the two Dreadful Sisters who were left wakened, and rose in the air like great birds; and though they could not see him because of his Cap of Darkness, they flew after him up the wind, following by the scent through the clouds, like hounds hunting in a wood. They came so close that he could hear the clatter of their golden wings, and their shrieks to each other: "*here, here,*" "*no, there; this way he went*," as they chased him. But the Shoes of Swiftness flew too fast for them, and at last their cries and the rattle of their wings died away as he crossed the great river that runs round the world.

Now when the horrible creatures were far in the distance, and the boy found himself on the right side of the river, he flew straight eastward, trying to seek his own country. But as he looked down from the air he saw a very strange sight—a beautiful girl chained to a stake at the high-water mark of the sea. The girl was so frightened or so tired that she was only prevented from falling by the iron chain about her waist, and there she hung, as if she were dead. The boy was very sorry for her and flew down and stood beside her. When he spoke she raised her head and looked round, but his voice only seemed to frighten her. Then he remembered that he was wearing the Cap of Darkness, and that she could only hear him, not see him. So he took it off, and there he stood before her, the handsomest young man she had ever seen in all her life, with short curly yellow hair, and blue eyes, and a laughing face. And he thought her the most beautiful girl in the world. So first with one blow of the Sword of Sharpness he cut the iron chain that bound her, and then he asked her what she did there, and why men treated her so cruelly. And she told him that she was the daughter of the King of that country, and that she was tied there to be eaten by a monstrous beast out of the sea; for the beast came and devoured a girl every day. Now the lot had fallen on her; and as she was just saying this a

long fierce head of a cruel sea creature rose out of the waves and snapped at the girl. But the beast had been too greedy and too hurried, so he missed his aim the first time. Before he could rise and bite again the boy had whipped the Terrible Head out of his wallet and held it up. And when the sea beast leaped out once more its eyes fell on the head, and instantly it was turned into a stone. And the stone beast is there on the sea-coast to this day.

Then the boy and the girl went to the palace of the King, her father, where everyone was weeping for her death, and they could hardly believe their eyes when they saw her come back well. And the King and Queen made much of the boy, and could not contain themselves for delight when they found he wanted to marry their daughter. So the two were married with the most splendid rejoicings, and when they had passed some time at court they went home in a ship to the boy's own country. For he could not carry his bride through the air, so he took the Shoes of Swiftness, and the Cap of Darkness, and the Sword of Sharpness up to a lonely place in the hills. There he left them, and there they were found by the man and woman who had met him at home beside the sea, and had helped him to start on his journey.

When this had been done the boy and his bride set forth for home, and landed at the harbor of his native land. But whom should he meet in the very street of the town but his own mother, flying for her life from the wicked King, who now wished to kill her because he found that she would never marry him! For if she had liked the King ill before, she liked him far worse now that he had caused her son to disappear so suddenly. She did not know, of course, where the boy had gone, but thought the King had slain him secretly. So now she was running for her very life, and the wicked King was following her with a sword in his hand. Then, behold! she ran into her son's very arms, but he had only time to kiss her and step in front of her, when the King struck at him with his sword. The boy caught the blow on his shield, and cried to the King:

"I swore to bring you the Terrible Head, and see how I keep my oath!"

Then he drew forth the head from his wallet, and when the King's eyes fell on it, instantly he was turned into stone, just as he stood there with his sword lifted!

Now all the people rejoiced, because the wicked King should rule them no longer. And they asked the boy to be their king, but he said no, he must take his mother home to her father's house. So the people chose for king the man who had been kind to his mother when first she was cast on the island in the great chest.

Presently the boy and his mother and his wife set sail for his mother's own country, from which she had been driven so unkindly. But on the way they stayed at the court of a king, and it happened that he was holding games, and giving prizes to the best runners, boxers, and quoit-throwers. Then the boy would try his strength with the rest, but he threw the quoit so far that it went beyond what had ever been thrown before, and fell in the crowd, striking a man so that he died. Now this man was no other than the father of the boy's mother, who had fled away from his own kingdom for fear his grandson should find him and kill him after all. Thus he was destroyed by his own cowardice and by chance, and thus the prophecy was fulfilled. But the boy and his wife and his mother went back to the kingdom that was theirs, and lived long and happily after all their troubles.

THE STORY OF PRETTY GOLDILOCKS

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Once upon a time there was a princess who was the prettiest creature in the world. And because she was so beautiful, and because her hair was like the finest gold, and waved and rippled nearly to the ground, she was called Pretty Goldilocks. She always wore a crown of flowers, and her dresses were embroidered with diamonds and pearls, and everybody who saw her fell in love with her.

Now one of her neighbors was a young king who was not married. He was very rich and handsome, and when he heard all that was said about Pretty Goldilocks, though he had never seen her, he fell so deeply in love with her that he could neither eat nor drink. So he resolved to send an ambassador to ask her in marriage. He had a splendid carriage made for his ambassador, and gave him more than a hundred horses and a hundred servants, and told him to be sure and bring the Princess back with him. After he had started nothing else was talked of at Court, and the King felt so sure that the Princess would consent that he set his people to work at pretty dresses and splendid furniture, that they might be ready by the time she came. Meanwhile, the ambassador arrived at the Princess’s palace and delivered his little message, but whether she happened to be cross that day, or whether the compliment did not please her, is not known. She only answered that she was very much obliged to the King, but she had no wish to be married. The ambassador set off sadly on his homeward way, bringing all the King’s presents back with him, for the Princess was too well brought up to accept the pearls and diamonds when she would not accept the King, so she had only kept twenty-five English pins that he might not be vexed.

When the ambassador reached the city, where the King was waiting impatiently, everybody was very much annoyed with him for not bringing the Princess, and the King cried like a baby, and nobody could console him. Now there was at the Court a young man, who was more clever and

handsome than anyone else. He was called Charming, and everyone loved him, excepting a few envious people who were angry at his being the King's favorite and knowing all the State secrets. He happened to one day be with some people who were speaking of the ambassador's return and saying that his going to the Princess had not done much good, when Charming said rashly:

"If the King had sent me to the Princess Goldilocks I am sure she would have come back with me."

His enemies at once went to the King and said:

"You will hardly believe, sire, what Charming has the audacity to say —that if *he* had been sent to the Princess Goldilocks she would certainly have come back with him. He seems to think that he is so much handsomer than you that the Princess would have fallen in love with him and followed him willingly." The King was very angry when he heard this.

"Ha, ha!" said he; "does he laugh at my unhappiness, and think himself more fascinating than I am? Go, and let him be shut up in my great tower to die of hunger."

So the King's guards went to fetch Charming, who had thought no more of his rash speech, and carried him off to prison with great cruelty. The poor prisoner had only a little straw for his bed, and but for a little stream of water which flowed through the tower he would have died of thirst.

One day when he was in despair he said to himself:

"How can I have offended the King? I am his most faithful subject, and have done nothing against him."

The King chanced to be passing the tower and recognized the voice of his former favorite. He stopped to listen in spite of Charming's enemies, who tried to persuade him to have nothing more to do with the traitor. But the King said:

"Be quiet, I wish to hear what he says."

And then he opened the tower door and called to Charming, who came very sadly and kissed the King's hand, saying:

"What have I done, sire, to deserve this cruel treatment?"

"You mocked me and my ambassador," said the King, "and you said that if I had sent you for the Princess Goldilocks you would certainly have brought her back."

“It is quite true, sire,” replied Charming; “I should have drawn such a picture of you, and represented your good qualities in such a way, that I am certain the Princess would have found you irresistible. But I cannot see what there is in that to make you angry.”

The King could not see any cause for anger either when the matter was presented to him in this light, and he began to frown very fiercely at the courtiers who had so misrepresented his favorite.

So he took Charming back to the palace with him, and after seeing that he had a very good supper he said to him:

“You know that I love Pretty Goldilocks as much as ever, her refusal has not made any difference to me; but I don’t know how to make her change her mind; I really should like to send you, to see if you can persuade her to marry me.”

Charming replied that he was perfectly willing to go, and would set out the very next day.

“But you must wait till I can get a grand escort for you,” said the King. But Charming said that he only wanted a good horse to ride, and the King, who was delighted at his being ready to start so promptly, gave him letters to the Princess, and bade him good speed. It was on a Monday morning that he set out all alone upon his errand, thinking of nothing but how he could persuade the Princess Goldilocks to marry the King. He had a writing-book in his pocket, and whenever any happy thought struck him he dismounted from his horse and sat down under the trees to put it into the harangue which he was preparing for the Princess, before he forgot it.

One day when he had started at the very earliest dawn, and was riding over a great meadow, he suddenly had a capital idea, and, springing from his horse, he sat down under a willow tree which grew by a little river. When he had written it down he was looking round him, pleased to find himself in such a pretty place, when all at once he saw a great golden carp lying gasping and exhausted upon the grass. In leaping after little flies she had thrown herself high upon the bank, where she had lain till she was nearly dead. Charming had pity upon her, and, though he couldn’t help thinking that she would have been very nice for dinner, he picked her up gently and put her back into the water. As soon as Dame Carp felt the refreshing coolness of the water she sank down joyfully to the bottom of the river, then, swimming up to the bank quite boldly, she said:

“I thank you, Charming, for the kindness you have done me. You have saved my life; one day I will repay you.” So saying, she sank down into the water again, leaving Charming greatly astonished at her politeness.

Another day, as he journeyed on, he saw a raven in great distress. The poor bird was closely pursued by an eagle, which would soon have eaten it up, had not Charming quickly fitted an arrow to his bow and shot the eagle dead. The raven perched upon a tree very joyfully.

“Charming,” said he, “it was very generous of you to rescue a poor raven; I am not ungrateful, some day I will repay you.”

Charming thought it was very nice of the raven to say so, and went on his way.

Before the sun rose he found himself in a thick wood where it was too dark for him to see his path, and here he heard an owl crying as if it were in despair.

“Hark!” said he, “that must be an owl in great trouble, I am sure it has gone into a snare”; and he began to hunt about, and presently found a great net which some bird-catchers had spread the night before.

“What a pity it is that men do nothing but torment and persecute poor creatures which never do them any harm!” said he, and he took out his knife and cut the cords of the net, and the owl flitted away into the darkness, but then turning, with one flicker of her wings, she came back to Charming and said:

“It does not need many words to tell you how great a service you have done me. I was caught; in a few minutes the fowlers would have been here —without your help I should have been killed. I am grateful, and one day I will repay you.”

These three adventures were the only ones of any consequence that befell Charming upon his journey, and he made all the haste he could to reach the palace of the Princess Goldilocks.

When he arrived he thought everything he saw delightful and magnificent. Diamonds were as plentiful as pebbles, and the gold and silver, the beautiful dresses, the sweetmeats and pretty things that were everywhere quite amazed him; he thought to himself: “If the Princess consents to leave all this, and come with me to marry the King, he may think himself lucky!”

Then he dressed himself carefully in rich brocade, with scarlet and white plumes, and threw a splendid embroidered scarf over his shoulder, and, looking as gay and as graceful as possible, he presented himself at the door of the palace, carrying in his arm a tiny pretty dog which he had bought on the way. The guards saluted him respectfully, and a messenger was sent to the Princess to announce the arrival of Charming as ambassador of her neighbor the King.

"Charming," said the Princess, "the name promises well; I have no doubt that he is good looking and fascinates everybody."

"Indeed he does, madam," said all her maids of honor in one breath. "We saw him from the window of the garret where we were spinning flax, and we could do nothing but look at him as long as he was in sight."

"Well to be sure," said the Princess, "that's how you amuse yourselves, is it? Looking at strangers out of the window! Be quick and give me my blue satin embroidered dress, and comb out my golden hair. Let somebody make me fresh garlands of flowers, and give me my high-heeled shoes and my fan, and tell them to sweep my great hall and my throne, for I want everyone to say I am really 'Pretty Goldilocks.' "

You can imagine how all her maids scurried this way and that to make the Princess ready, and how in their haste they knocked their heads together and hindered each other, till she thought they would never have done. However, at last they led her into the gallery of mirrors that she might assure herself that nothing was lacking in her appearance, and then she mounted her throne of gold, ebony, and ivory, while her ladies took their guitars and began to sing softly. Then Charming was led in, and was so struck with astonishment and admiration that at first not a word could he say. But presently he took courage and delivered his harangue, bravely ending by begging the Princess to spare him the disappointment of going back without her.

"Sir Charming," answered she, "all the reasons you have given me are very good ones, and I assure you that I should have more pleasure in obliging you than anyone else, but you must know that a month ago as I was walking by the river with my ladies I took off my glove, and as I did so a ring that I was wearing slipped off my finger and rolled into the water. As I valued it more than my kingdom, you may imagine how vexed I was at losing it, and I vowed to never listen to any proposal of marriage unless

the ambassador first brought me back my ring. So now you know what is expected of you, for if you talked for fifteen days and fifteen nights you could not make me change my mind."

Charming was very much surprised by this answer, but he bowed low to the Princess, and begged her to accept the embroidered scarf and the tiny dog he had brought with him. But she answered that she did not want any presents, and that he was to remember what she had just told him. When he got back to his lodging he went to bed without eating any supper, and his little dog, who was called Frisk, couldn't eat any either, but came and lay down close to him. All night Charming sighed and lamented.

"How am I to find a ring that fell into the river a month ago?" said he. "It is useless to try; the Princess must have told me to do it on purpose, knowing it was impossible." And then he sighed again.

Frisk heard him and said:

"My dear master, don't despair; the luck may change, you are too good not to be happy. Let us go down to the river as soon as it is light."

But Charming only gave him two little pats and said nothing, and very soon he fell asleep.

At the first glimmer of dawn Frisk began to jump about, and when he had waked Charming they went out together, first into the garden, and then down to the river's brink, where they wandered up and down. Charming was thinking sadly of having to go back unsuccessful when he heard someone calling: "Charming, Charming!" He looked all about him and thought he must be dreaming, as he could not see anybody. Then he walked on and the voice called again: "Charming, Charming!"

"Who calls me?" said he. Frisk, who was very small and could look closely into the water, cried out: "I see a golden carp coming." And sure enough there was the great carp, who said to Charming:

"You saved my life in the meadow by the willow tree, and I promised that I would repay you. Take this, it is Princess Goldilock's ring." Charming took the ring out of Dame Carp's mouth, thanking her a thousand times, and he and tiny Frisk went straight to the palace, where someone told the Princess that he was asking to see her.

"Ah! poor fellow," said she, "he must have come to say good-by, finding it impossible to do as I asked."

So in came Charming, who presented her with the ring and said:

“Madam, I have done your bidding. Will it please you to marry my master?” When the Princess saw her ring brought back to her unhurt she was so astonished that she thought she must be dreaming.

“Truly, Charming,” said she, “you must be the favorite of some fairy, or you could never have found it.”

“Madam,” answered he, “I was helped by nothing but my desire to obey your wishes.”

“Since you are so kind,” said she, “perhaps you will do me another service, for till it is done I will never be married. There is a prince not far from here whose name is Galifron, who once wanted to marry me, but when I refused he uttered the most terrible threats against me, and vowed that he would lay waste my country. But what could I do? I could not marry a frightful giant as tall as a tower, who eats up people as a monkey eats chestnuts, and who talks so loud that anybody who has to listen to him becomes quite deaf. Nevertheless, he does not cease to persecute me and to kill my subjects. So before I can listen to your proposal you must kill him and bring me his head.”

Charming was rather dismayed at this command, but he answered:

“Very well, Princess, I will fight this Galifron; I believe that he will kill me, but at any rate I shall die in your defense.”

Then the Princess was frightened and said everything she could think of to prevent Charming from fighting the giant, but it was of no use, and he went out to arm himself suitably, and then, taking little Frisk with him, he mounted his horse and set out for Galifron’s country. Everyone he met told him what a terrible giant Galifron was, and that nobody dared go near him; and the more he heard, the more frightened he grew. Frisk tried to encourage him by saying: “While you are fighting the giant, dear master, I will go and bite his heels, and when he stoops down to look at me you can kill him.”

Charming praised his little dog’s plan, but knew that this help would not do much good.

At last he drew near the giant’s castle, and saw to his horror that every path that led to it was strewn with bones. Before long he saw Galifron coming. His head was higher than the tallest trees, and he sang in a terrible voice:

“Bring out your little boys and girls,
Pray do not stay to do their curls,
For I shall eat so very many,
I shall not know if they have any.”

Thereupon Charming sang out as loud as he could to the same tune:

“Come out and meet the valiant Charming
Who finds you not at all alarming;
Although he is not very tall,
He’s big enough to make you fall.”

The rhymes were not very correct, but you see he had made them up so quickly that it is a miracle that they were not worse; especially as he was horribly frightened all the time. When Galifron heard these words he looked all about him, and saw Charming standing, sword in hand this put the giant into a terrible rage, and he aimed a blow at Charming with his huge iron club, which would certainly have killed him if it had reached him, but at that instant a raven perched upon the giant’s head, and, pecking with its strong beak and beating with its great wings so confused and blinded him that all his blows fell harmlessly upon the air, and Charming, rushing in, gave him several strokes with his sharp sword so that he fell to the ground. Whereupon Charming cut off his head before he knew anything about it, and the raven from a tree close by croaked out:

“You see I have not forgotten the good turn you did me in killing the eagle. To-day I think I have fulfilled my promise of repaying you.”

“Indeed, I owe you more gratitude than you ever owed me,” replied Charming.

And then he mounted his horse and rode off with Galifron’s head.

When he reached the city the people ran after him in crowds, crying:

“Behold the brave Charming, who has killed the giant!” And their shouts reached the Princess’s ear, but she dared not ask what was happening, for fear she should hear that Charming had been killed. But very soon he arrived at the palace with the giant’s head, of which she was still terrified, though it could no longer do her any harm.

“Princess,” said Charming, “I have killed your enemy; I hope you will now consent to marry the King my master.”

“Oh dear! no,” said the Princess, “not until you have brought me some water from the Gloomy Cavern.

“Not far from here there is a deep cave, the entrance to which is guarded by two dragons with fiery eyes, who will not allow anyone to pass them. When you get into the cavern you will find an immense hole, which you must go down, and it is full of toads and snakes; at the bottom of this hole there is another little cave, in which rises the Fountain of Health and Beauty. It is some of this water that I really must have: everything it touches becomes wonderful. The beautiful things will always remain beautiful, and the ugly things become lovely. If one is young one never grows old, and if one is old one becomes young. You see, Charming, I could not leave my kingdom without taking some of it with me.”

“Princess,” said he, “you at least can never need this water, but I am an unhappy ambassador, whose death you desire. Where you send me I will go, though I know I shall never return.”

And, as the Princess Goldilocks showed no sign of relenting, he started with his little dog for the Gloomy Cavern. Everyone he met on the way said:

“What a pity that a handsome young man should throw away his life so carelessly! He is going to the cavern alone, though if he had a hundred men with him he could not succeed. Why does the Princess ask impossibilities?” Charming said nothing, but he was very sad. When he was near the top of a hill he dismounted to let his horse graze, while Frisk amused himself by chasing flies. Charming knew he could not be far from the Gloomy Cavern, and on looking about him he saw a black hideous rock from which came a thick smoke, followed in a moment by one of the dragons with fire blazing from his mouth and eyes. His body was yellow and green, and his claws scarlet, and his tail was so long that it lay in a hundred coils. Frisk was so terrified at the sight of it that he did not know where to hide. Charming, quite determined to get the water or die, now drew his sword, and, taking the crystal flask which Pretty Goldilocks had given him to fill, said to Frisk:

“I feel sure that I shall never come back from this expedition; when I am dead, go to the Princess and tell her that her errand has cost me my

life. Then find the King my master, and relate all my adventures to him."

As he spoke he heard a voice calling: "Charming, Charming!"

"Who calls me?" said he; then he saw an owl sitting in a hollow tree, who said to him:

"You saved my life when I was caught in the net, now I can repay you. Trust me with the flask, for I know all the ways of the Gloomy Cavern, and can fill it from the Fountain of Beauty." Charming was only too glad to give her the flask, and she flitted into the cavern quite unnoticed by the dragon, and after some time returned with the flask, filled to the very brim with sparkling water. Charming thanked her with all his heart, and joyfully hastened back to the town.

He went straight to the palace and gave the flask to the Princess, who had no further objection to make. So she thanked Charming, and ordered that preparations should be made for her departure, and they soon set out together. The Princess found Charming such an agreeable companion that she sometimes said to him: "Why didn't we stay where we were? I could have made you king, and we should have been so happy!"

But Charming only answered:

"I could not have done anything that would have vexed my master so much, even for a kingdom, or to please you, though I think you are as beautiful as the sun."

At last they reached the King's great city, and he came out to meet the Princess, bringing magnificent presents, and the marriage was celebrated with great rejoicings. But Goldilocks was so fond of Charming that she could not be happy unless he was near her, and she was always singing his praises.

"If it hadn't been for Charming," she said to the King, "I should never have come here; you ought to be very much obliged to him, for he did the most impossible things and got me water from the Fountain of Beauty, so I can never grow old, and shall get prettier every year."

Then Charming's enemies said to the King:

"It is a wonder that you are not jealous, the Queen thinks there is nobody in the world like Charming. As if anybody you had sent could not have done just as much!"

"It is quite true, now I come to think of it," said the King. "Let him be chained hand and foot, and thrown into the tower."

So they took Charming, and as a reward for having served the King so faithfully he was shut up in the tower, where he only saw the jailer, who brought him a piece of black bread and a pitcher of water every day.

However, little Frisk came to console him, and told him all the news.

When Pretty Goldilocks heard what had happened she threw herself at the King's feet and begged him to set Charming free, but the more she cried, the more angry he was, and at last she saw that it was useless to say any more; but it made her very sad. Then the King took it into his head that perhaps he was not handsome enough to please the Princess Goldilocks, and he thought he would bathe his face with the water from the Fountain of Beauty, which was in the flask on a shelf in the Princess's room, where she had placed it that she might see it often. Now it happened that one of the Princess's ladies in chasing a spider had knocked the flask off the shelf and broken it, and every drop of the water had been spilt. Not knowing what to do, she had hastily swept away the pieces of crystal, and then remembered that in the King's room she had seen a flask of exactly the same shape, also filled with sparkling water. So, without saying a word, she fetched it and stood it upon the Queen's shelf.

Now the water in this flask was what was used in the kingdom for getting rid of troublesome people. Instead of having their heads cut off in the usual way, their faces were bathed with the water, and they instantly fell asleep and never woke up any more. So, when the King, thinking to improve his beauty, took the flask and sprinkled the water upon his face, *he* fell asleep, and nobody could wake him.

Little Frisk was the first to hear the news, and he ran to tell Charming, who sent him to beg the Princess not to forget the poor prisoner. All the palace was in confusion on account of the King's death, but tiny Frisk made his way through the crowd to the Princess's side, and said:

"Madam, do not forget poor Charming."

Then she remembered all he had done for her, and without saying a word to anyone went straight to the tower, and with her own hands took off Charming's chains. Then, putting a golden crown upon his head, and the royal mantle upon his shoulders, she said:

"Come, faithful Charming, I make you king, and will take you for my husband."

Charming, once more free and happy, fell at her feet and thanked her for her gracious words.

Everybody was delighted that he should be king, and the wedding, which took place at once, was the prettiest that can be imagined, and Prince Charming and Princess Goldilocks lived happily ever after.[15]

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15. Madame d’Aulnoy.

THE HISTORY OF WHITTINGTON

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Dick Whittington was a very little boy when his father and mother died; so little, indeed, that he never knew them, nor the place where he was born. He strolled about the country as ragged as a colt, till he met with a wagoner who was going to London, and who gave him leave to walk all the way by the side of his wagon without paying anything for his passage. This pleased little Whittington very much, as he wanted to see London sadly, for he had heard that the streets were paved with gold, and he was willing to get a bushel of it; but how great was his disappointment, poor boy! when he saw the streets covered with dirt instead of gold, and found himself in a strange place, without a friend, without food, and without money.

Though the wagoner was so charitable as to let him walk up by the side of the wagon for nothing, he took care not to know him when he came to town, and the poor boy was, in a little time, so cold and hungry that he wished himself in a good kitchen and by a warm fire in the country.

In his distress he asked charity of several people, and one of them bid him “Go to work for an idle rogue.” “That I will,” said Whittington, “with all my heart; I will work for you if you will let me.”

The man, who thought this savored of wit and impertinence (though the poor lad intended only to show his readiness to work), gave him a blow with a stick which broke his head so that the blood ran down. In this situation, and fainting for want of food, he laid himself down at the door of one Mr. Fitzwarren, a merchant, where the cook saw him, and, being an ill-natured hussy, ordered him to go about his business or she would scald him. At this time Mr. Fitzwarren came from the Exchange, and began also to scold at the poor boy, bidding him to go to work.

Whittington answered that he should be glad to work if anybody would employ him, and that he should be able if he could get some victuals to eat, for he had had nothing for three days, and he was a poor country boy, and knew nobody, and nobody would employ him.

He then endeavored to get up, but he was so very weak that he fell down again, which excited so much compassion in the merchant that he ordered the servants to take him in and give him some meat and drink, and let him help the cook to do any dirty work that she had to set him about. People are too apt to reproach those who beg with being idle, but give themselves no concern to put them in the way of getting business to do, or considering whether they are able to do it, which is not charity.

But we return to Whittington, who could have lived happy in this worthy family had he not been bumped about by the cross cook, who must be always roasting and basting, or when the spit was idle employed her hands upon poor Whittington! At last Miss Alice, his master's daughter, was informed of it, and then she took compassion on the poor boy, and made the servants treat him kindly.

Besides the crossness of the cook, Whittington had another difficulty to get over before he could be happy. He had, by order of his master, a flock-bed placed for him in a garret, where there was a number of rats and mice that often ran over the poor boy's nose and disturbed him in his sleep. After some time, however, a gentleman who came to his master's house gave Whittington a penny for brushing his shoes. This he put into his pocket, being determined to lay it out to the best advantage; and the next day, seeing a woman in the street with a cat under her arm, he ran up to know the price of it. The woman (as the cat was a good mouser) asked a deal of money for it, but on Whittington's telling her he had but a penny in the world, and that he wanted a cat sadly, she let him have it.

This cat Whittington concealed in the garret, for fear she should be beat about by his mortal enemy the cook, and here she soon killed or frightened away the rats and mice, so that the poor boy could now sleep as sound as a top.

Soon after this the merchant, who had a ship ready to sail, called for his servants, as his custom was, in order that each of them might venture something to try their luck; and whatever they sent was to pay neither freight nor custom, for he thought justly that God Almighty would bless him the more for his readiness to let the poor partake of his fortune.

All the servants appeared but poor Whittington, who, having neither money nor goods, could not think of sending anything to try his luck; but

his good friend Miss Alice, thinking his poverty kept him away, ordered him to be called.

She then offered to lay down something for him, but the merchant told his daughter that would not do, it must be something of his own. Upon which poor Whittington said he had nothing but a cat which he bought for a penny that was given him. “Fetch thy cat, boy,” said the merchant, “and send her.” Whittington brought poor puss and delivered her to the captain, with tears in his eyes, for he said he should now be disturbed by the rats and mice as much as ever. All the company laughed at the adventure but Miss Alice, who pitied the poor boy, and gave him something to buy another cat.

While puss was beating the billows at sea, poor Whittington was severely beaten at home by his tyrannical mistress the cook, who used him so cruelly, and made such game of him for sending his cat to sea, that at last the poor boy determined to run away from his place, and having packed up the few things he had, he set out very early in the morning on All-Hallows day. He traveled as far as Holloway, and there sat down on a stone to consider what course he should take; but while he was thus ruminating, Bow bells, of which there were only six, began to ring; and he thought their sounds addressed him in this manner:

“Turn again, Whittington,
Thrice Lord Mayor of London.”

“Lord Mayor of London!” said he to himself, “what would not one endure to be Lord Mayor of London, and ride in such a fine coach? Well, I’ll go back again, and bear all the pummelling and ill-usage of Cicely rather than miss the opportunity of being Lord Mayor!” So home he went, and happily got into the house and about his business before Mrs. Cicely made her appearance.

We must now follow Miss Puss to the coast of Africa. How perilous are voyages at sea, how uncertain the winds and the waves, and how many accidents attend a naval life!

The ship that had the cat on board was long beaten at sea, and at last, by contrary winds, driven on a part of the coast of Barbary which was inhabited by Moors unknown to the English. These people received our

countrymen with civility, and therefore the captain, in order to trade with them, showed them the patterns of the goods he had on board, and sent some of them to the King of the country, who was so well pleased that he sent for the captain and the factor to come to his palace, which was about a mile from the sea. Here they were placed, according to the custom of the country, on rich carpets, flowered with gold and silver; and the King and Queen being seated at the upper end of the room, dinner was brought in, which consisted of many dishes; but no sooner were the dishes put down but an amazing number of rats and mice came from all quarters and devoured all the meat in an instant.

The factor, in surprise, turned round to the nobles and asked if these vermin were not offensive. “Oh! yes,” said they, “very offensive; and the King would give half his treasure to be freed of them, for they not only destroy his dinner, as you see, but they assault him in his chamber, and even in bed, so that he is obliged to be watched while he is sleeping, for fear of them.”

The factor jumped for joy; he remembered poor Whittington and his cat, and told the King he had a creature on board the ship that would despatch all these vermin immediately. The King’s heart heaved so high at the joy which this news gave him that his turban dropped off his head. “Bring this creature to me,” said he; “vermin are dreadful in a court, and if she will perform what you say I will load your ship with gold and jewels in exchange for her.” The factor, who knew his business, took this opportunity to set forth the merits of Miss Puss. He told his Majesty that it would be inconvenient to part with her, as, when she was gone, the rats and mice might destroy the goods in the ship—but to oblige his Majesty he would fetch her. “Run, run,” said the Queen; “I am impatient to see the dear creature.”

Away flew the factor, while another dinner was providing, and returned with the cat just as the rats and mice were devouring that also. He immediately put down Miss Puss, who killed a great number of them.

The King rejoiced greatly to see his old enemies destroyed by so small a creature, and the Queen was highly pleased, and desired the cat might be brought near that she might look at her. Upon which the factor called “Pussy, pussy, pussy!” and she came to him. He then presented her to the Queen, who started back, and was afraid to touch a creature who had made

such havoc among the rats and mice; however, when the factor stroked the cat and called “Pussy, pussy!” the Queen also touched her and cried “Putty, putty!” for she had not learned English.

He then put her down on the Queen’s lap, where she, purring, played with her Majesty’s hand, and then sang herself to sleep.

The King, having seen the exploits of Miss Puss, and being informed that her kittens would stock the whole country, bargained with the captain and factor for the whole ship’s cargo, and then gave them ten times as much for the cat as all the rest amounted to. On which, taking leave of their Majesties and other great personages at court, they sailed with a fair wind for England, whither we must now attend them.

The morn had scarcely dawned when Mr. Fitzwarren arose to count over the cash and settle the business for that day. He had just entered the counting-house, and seated himself at the desk, when somebody came, tap, tap, at the door. “Who’s there?” said Mr. Fitzwarren. “A friend,” answered the other. “What friend can come at this unseasonable time?” “A real friend is never unseasonable,” answered the other. “I come to bring you good news of your ship Unicorn.” The merchant bustled up in such a hurry that he forgot his gout; instantly opened the door, and who should be seen waiting but the captain and factor, with a cabinet of jewels, and a bill of lading, for which the merchant lifted up his eyes and thanked heaven for sending him such a prosperous voyage. Then they told him the adventures of the cat, and showed him the cabinet of jewels which they had brought for Mr. Whittington. Upon which he cried out with great earnestness, but not in the most poetical manner:

“Go, send him in, and tell him of his fame,
And call him Mr. Whittington by name.”

It is not our business to animadvert upon these lines; we are not critics, but historians. It is sufficient for us that they are the words of Mr. Fitzwarren; and though it is beside our purpose, and perhaps not in our power to prove him a good poet, we shall soon convince the reader that he was a good man, which was a much better character; for when some who were present told him that this treasure was too much for such a poor boy as Whittington, he said: “God forbid that I should deprive him of a penny;

it is his own, and he shall have it to a farthing." He then ordered Mr. Whittington in, who was at this time cleaning the kitchen and would have excused himself from going into the counting-house, saying the room was swept and his shoes were dirty and full of hob-nails. The merchant, however, made him come in, and ordered a chair to be set for him. Upon which, thinking they intended to make sport of him, as had been too often the case in the kitchen, he besought his master not to mock a poor simple fellow, who intended them no harm, but let him go about his business. The merchant, taking him by the hand, said: "Indeed, Mr. Whittington, I am in earnest with you, and sent for you to congratulate you on your great success. Your cat has procured you more money than I am worth in the world, and may you long enjoy it and be happy!"

At length, being shown the treasure, and convinced by them that all of it belonged to him, he fell upon his knees and thanked the Almighty for his providential care of such a poor and miserable creature. He then laid all the treasure at his master's feet, who refused to take any part of it, but told him he heartily rejoiced at his prosperity, and hoped the wealth he had acquired would be a comfort to him, and would make him happy. He then applied to his mistress, and to his good friend Miss Alice, who refused to take any part of the money, but told him she heartily rejoiced at his good success, and wished him all imaginable felicity. He then gratified the captain, factor, and the ship's crew for the care they had taken of his cargo. He likewise distributed presents to all the servants in the house, not forgetting even his old enemy the cook, though she little deserved it.

After this Mr. Fitzwarren advised Mr. Whittington to send for the necessary people and dress himself like a gentleman, and made him the offer of his house to live in till he could provide himself with a better.

Now it came to pass when Mr. Whittington's face was washed, his hair curled, and he dressed in a rich suit of clothes, that he turned out a genteel young fellow; and, as wealth contributes much to give a man confidence, he in a little time dropped that sheepish behavior which was principally occasioned by a depression of spirits, and soon grew a sprightly and good companion, insomuch that Miss Alice, who had formerly pitied him, now fell in love with him.

When her father perceived they had this good liking for each other he proposed a match between them, to which both parties cheerfully

consented, and the Lord Mayor, Court of Aldermen, Sheriffs, the Company of Stationers, the Royal Academy of Arts, and a number of eminent merchants attended the ceremony, and were elegantly treated at an entertainment made for that purpose.

History further relates that they lived very happy, had several children, and died at a good old age. Mr. Whittington served as Sheriff of London and was three times Lord Mayor. In the last year of his mayoralty he entertained King Henry V and his Queen, after his conquest of France, upon which occasion the King, in consideration of Whittington's merit, said: "Never had prince such a subject"; which being told to Whittington at the table, he replied: "Never had subject such a king." His Majesty, out of respect to his good character, conferred the honor of knighthood on him soon after.

Sir Richard many years before his death constantly fed a great number of poor citizens, built a church and a college to it, with a yearly allowance for poor scholars, and near it erected a hospital.

He also built Newgate for criminals, and gave liberally to St. Bartholomew's Hospital and other public charities.

THE WONDERFUL SHEEP

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Once upon a time—in the days when the fairies lived—there was a king who had three daughters, who were all young, and clever, and beautiful; but the youngest of the three, who was called Miranda, was the prettiest and the most beloved.

The King, her father, gave her more dresses and jewels in a month than he gave the others in a year; but she was so generous that she shared everything with her sisters, and they were all as happy and as fond of one another as they could be.

Now, the King had some quarrelsome neighbors, who, tired of leaving him in peace, began to make war upon him so fiercely that he feared he would be altogether beaten if he did not make an effort to defend himself. So he collected a great army and set off to fight them, leaving the Princesses with their governess in a castle where news of the war was brought every day—sometimes that the King had taken a town, or won a battle, and, at last, that he had altogether overcome his enemies and chased them out of his kingdom, and was coming back to the castle as quickly as possible, to see his dear little Miranda whom he loved so much.

The three Princesses put on dresses of satin, which they had had made on purpose for this great occasion, one green, one blue, and the third white; their jewels were the same colors. The eldest wore emeralds, the second turquoises, and the youngest diamonds, and thus adorned they went to meet the King, singing verses which they had composed about his victories.

When he saw them all so beautiful and so gay he embraced them tenderly, but gave Miranda more kisses than either of the others.

Presently a splendid banquet was served, and the King and his daughters sat down to it, and as he always thought that there was some special meaning in everything, he said to the eldest:

“Tell me why you have chosen a green dress.”

“Sire,” she answered, “having heard of your victories I thought that green would signify my joy and the hope of your speedy return.”

“That is a very good answer,” said the King; “and you, my daughter,” he continued, “why did you take a blue dress?”

“Sire,” said the Princess, “to show that we constantly hoped for your success, and that the sight of you is as welcome to me as the sky with its most beautiful stars.”

“Why,” said the King, “your wise answers astonish me, and you, Miranda. What made you dress yourself all in white?

“Because, sire,” she answered, “white suits me better than anything else.”

“What!” said the King angrily, “was that all you thought of, vain child?”

“I thought you would be pleased with me,” said the Princess; “that was all.”

The King, who loved her, was satisfied with this, and even pretended to be pleased that she had not told him all her reasons at first.

“And now,” said he, “as I have supped well, and it is not time yet to go to bed, tell me what you dreamed last night.”

The eldest said she had dreamed that he brought her a dress, and the precious stones and gold embroidery on it were brighter than the sun.

The dream of the second was that the King had brought her a spinning wheel and a distaff, that she might spin him some shirts.

But the youngest said: “I dreamed that my second sister was to be married, and on her wedding-day, you, father, held a golden ewer and said: ‘Come, Miranda, and I will hold the water that you may dip your hands in it.’”

The King was very angry indeed when he heard this dream, and frowned horribly; indeed, he made such an ugly face that everyone knew how angry he was, and he got up and went off to bed in a great hurry; but he could not forget his daughter’s dream.

“Does the proud girl wish to make me her slave?” he said to himself. “I am not surprised at her choosing to dress herself in white satin without a thought of me. She does not think me worthy of her consideration! But I will soon put an end to her pretensions!”

He rose in a fury, and although it was not yet daylight, he sent for the Captain of his Bodyguard, and said to him:

“You have heard the Princess Miranda’s dream? I consider that it means strange things against me, therefore I order you to take her away into the forest and kill her, and, that I may be sure it is done, you must bring me her heart and her tongue. If you attempt to deceive me you shall be put to death!”

The Captain of the Guard was very much astonished when he heard this barbarous order, but he did not dare to contradict the King for fear of making him still more angry, or causing him to send someone else, so he answered that he would fetch the Princess and do as the King had said. When he went to her room they would hardly let him in, it was so early, but he said that the King had sent for Miranda, and she got up quickly and came out; a little black girl called Patypata held up her train, and her pet monkey and her little dog ran after her. The monkey was called Grabugeon, and the little dog Tintin.

The Captain of the Guard begged Miranda to come down into the garden where the King was enjoying the fresh air, and when they got there, he pretended to search for him, but as he was not to be found, he said:

“No doubt his Majesty has strolled into the forest,” and he opened the little door that led to it and they went through.

By this time the daylight had begun to appear, and the Princess, looking at her conductor, saw that he had tears in his eyes and seemed too sad to speak.

“What is the matter?” she said in the kindest way. “You seem very sorrowful.”

“Alas! Princess,” he answered, “who would not be sorrowful who was ordered to do such a terrible thing as I am? The King has commanded me to kill you here, and carry your heart and your tongue to him, and if I disobey I shall lose my life.”

The poor Princess was terrified, she grew very pale and began to cry softly.

Looking up at the Captain of the Guard with her beautiful eyes, she said gently:

“Will you really have the heart to kill me? I have never done you any harm, and have always spoken well of you to the King. If I had deserved

my father’s anger I would suffer without a murmur, but, alas! he is unjust to complain of me, when I have always treated him with love and respect.”

“Fear nothing, Princess,” said the Captain of the Guard. “I would far rather die myself than hurt you; but even if I am killed you will not be safe: we must find some way of making the King believe that you are dead.”

“What can we do?” said Miranda; “unless you take him my heart and my tongue he will never believe you.”

The Princess and the Captain of the Guard were talking so earnestly that they did not think of Patypata, but she had overheard all they said, and now came and threw herself at Miranda’s feet.

“Madam,” she said, “I offer you my life; let me be killed, I shall be only too happy to die for such a kind mistress.”

“Why, Patypata,” cried the Princess, kissing her, “that would never do; your life is as precious to me as my own, especially after such a proof of your affection as you have just given me.”

“You are right, Princess,” said Grabugeon, coming forward, “to love such a faithful slave as Patypata; she is of more use to you than I am, I offer you my tongue and my heart most willingly, especially as I wish to make a great name for myself in Goblin Land.”

“No, no, my little Grabugeon,” replied Miranda, “I cannot bear the thought of taking your life.”

“Such a good little dog as I am,” cried Tintin, “could not think of letting either of you die for his mistress. If anyone is to die for her it must be me.”

And then began a great dispute between Patypata, Grabugeon, and Tintin, and they came to high words, until at last Grabugeon, who was quicker than the others, ran up to the very top of the nearest tree, and let herself fall, head first, to the ground, and there she lay—quite dead!

The Princess was very sorry, but as Grabugeon was really dead, she allowed the Captain of the Guard to take her tongue; but, alas! it was such a little one—not bigger than the Princess’s thumb—that they decided sorrowfully that it was of no use at all: the King would not have been taken in by it for a moment!

“Alas! my little monkey,” cried the Princess, “I have lost you, and yet I am no better off than I was before.”

“The honor of saving your life is to be mine,” interrupted Patypata, and, before they could prevent her, she had picked up a knife and cut her head off in an instant.

But when the Captain of the Guard would have taken her tongue it turned out to be quite black, so that would not have deceived the King either.

“Am I not unlucky?” cried the poor Princess; “I lose everything I love, and am none the better for it.”

“If you had accepted my offer,” said Tintin, “you would only have had me to regret, and I should have had all your gratitude.”

Miranda kissed her little dog, crying so bitterly, that at last she could bear it no longer, and turned away into the forest. When she looked back the Captain of the Guard was gone, and she was alone, except for Patypata, Grabugeon, and Tintin, who lay upon the ground. She could not leave the place until she had buried them in a pretty little mossy grave at the foot of a tree, and she wrote their names upon the bark of the tree, and how they had all died to save her life. And then she began to think where she could go for safety—for this forest was so close to her father’s castle that she might be seen and recognized by the first passer-by, and, besides that, it was full of lions and wolves, who would have snapped up a princess just as soon as a stray chicken. So she began to walk as fast as she could, but the forest was so large and the sun was so hot that she nearly died of heat and terror and fatigue; look which way she would there seemed to be no end to the forest, and she was so frightened that she fancied every minute that she heard the King running after her to kill her. You may imagine how miserable she was, and how she cried as she went on, not knowing which path to follow, and with the thorny bushes scratching her dreadfully and tearing her pretty frock to pieces.

At last she heard the bleating of a sheep, and said to herself:

“No doubt there are shepherds here with their flocks; they will show me the way to some village where I can live disguised as a peasant girl. Alas! it is not always kings and princes who are the happiest people in the world. Who could have believed that I should ever be obliged to run away and hide because the King, for no reason at all, wishes to kill me?”

So saying she advanced toward the place where she heard the bleating, but what was her surprise when, in a lovely little glade quite surrounded

by trees, she saw a large sheep; its wool was as white as snow, and its horns shone like gold; it had a garland of flowers round its neck, and strings of great pearls about its legs, and a collar of diamonds; it lay upon a bank of orange-flowers, under a canopy of cloth of gold which protected it from the heat of the sun. Nearly a hundred other sheep were scattered about, not eating the grass, but some drinking coffee, lemonade, or sherbet, others eating ices, strawberries and cream, or sweetmeats, while others, again, were playing games. Many of them wore golden collars with jewels, flowers, and ribbons.

Miranda stopped short in amazement at this unexpected sight, and was looking in all directions for the shepherd of this surprising flock, when the beautiful sheep came bounding toward her.

“Approach, lovely Princess,” he cried; “have no fear of such gentle and peaceable animals as we are.”

“What a marvel!” cried the Princess, starting back a little. “Here is a sheep that can talk.”

“Your monkey and your dog could talk, madam,” said he; “are you more astonished at us than at them?”

“A fairy gave them the power to speak,” replied Miranda. “So I was used to them.”

“Perhaps the same thing has happened to us,” he said, smiling sheepishly. “But, Princess, what can have led you here?”

“A thousand misfortunes, Sir Sheep,” she answered.

“I am the unhappiest princess in the world, and I am seeking a shelter against my father’s anger.”

“Come with me, madam,” said the Sheep; “I offer you a hiding-place which you only will know of, and where you will be mistress of everything you see.”

“I really cannot follow you,” said Miranda, “for I am too tired to walk another step.”

The Sheep with the golden horns ordered that his chariot should be fetched, and a moment after appeared six goats, harnessed to a pumpkin, which was so big that two people could quite well sit in it, and was all lined with cushions of velvet and down. The Princess stepped into it, much amused at such a new kind of carriage, the King of the Sheep took his place beside her, and the goats ran away with them at full speed, and only

stopped when they reached a cavern, the entrance to which was blocked by a great stone. This the King touched with his foot, and immediately it fell down, and he invited the Princess to enter without fear. Now, if she had not been so alarmed by everything that had happened, nothing could have induced her to go into this frightful cave, but she was so afraid of what might be behind her that she would have thrown herself even down a well at this moment. So, without hesitation, she followed the Sheep, who went before her, down, down, down, until she thought they must come out at the other side of the world—indeed, she was not sure that he wasn't leading her into Fairyland. At last she saw before her a great plain, quite covered with all sorts of flowers, the scent of which seemed to her nicer than anything she had ever smelled before; a broad river of orange-flower water flowed round it and fountains of wine of every kind ran in all directions and made the prettiest little cascades and brooks. The plain was covered with the strangest trees, there were whole avenues where partridges, ready roasted, hung from every branch, or, if you preferred pheasants, quails, turkeys, or rabbits, you had only to turn to the right hand or to the left and you were sure to find them. In places the air was darkened by showers of lobster-patties, white puddings, sausages, tarts, and all sorts of sweetmeats, or with pieces of gold and silver, diamonds and pearls. This unusual kind of rain, and the pleasantness of the whole place, would, no doubt, have attracted numbers of people to it, if the King of the Sheep had been of a more sociable disposition, but from all accounts it is evident that he was as grave as a judge.

As it was quite the nicest time of the year when Miranda arrived in this delightful land the only palace she saw was a long row of orange trees, jasmines, honeysuckles, and musk-roses, and their interlacing branches made the prettiest rooms possible, which were hung with gold and silver gauze, and had great mirrors and candlesticks, and most beautiful pictures. The Wonderful Sheep begged that the Princess would consider herself queen over all that she saw, and assured her that, though for some years he had been very sad and in great trouble, she had it in her power to make him forget all his grief.

"You are so kind and generous, noble Sheep," said the Princess, "that I cannot thank you enough, but I must confess that all I see here seems to me so extraordinary that I don't know what to think of it."

As she spoke a band of lovely fairies came up and offered her amber baskets full of fruit, but when she held out her hands to them they glided away, and she could feel nothing when she tried to touch them.

“Oh!” she cried, “what can they be? Whom am I with?” and she began to cry.

At this instant the King of the Sheep came back to her, and was so distracted to find her in tears that he could have torn his wool.

“What is the matter, lovely Princess?” he cried. “Has anyone failed to treat you with due respect?”

“Oh! no,” said Miranda; “only I am not used to living with sprites and with sheep that talk, and everything here frightens me. It was very kind of you to bring me to this place, but I shall be even more grateful to you if you will take me up into the world again.”

“Do not be afraid,” said the Wonderful Sheep; “I entreat you to have patience, and listen to the story of my misfortunes. I was once a king, and my kingdom was the most splendid in the world. My subjects loved me, my neighbors envied and feared me. I was respected by everyone, and it was said that no king ever deserved it more.

“I was very fond of hunting, and one day, while chasing a stag, I left my attendants far behind; suddenly I saw the animal leap into a pool of water, and I rashly urged my horse to follow it, but before we had gone many steps I felt an extraordinary heat, instead of the coolness of the water; the pond dried up, a great gulf opened before me, out of which flames of fire shot up, and I fell helplessly to the bottom of a precipice.

“I gave myself up for lost, but presently a voice said: ‘Ungrateful Prince, even this fire is hardly enough to warm your cold heart!’

“ ‘Who complains of my coldness in this dismal place?’ I cried.

“ ‘An unhappy being who loves you hopelessly,’ replied the voice, and at the same moment the flames began to flicker and cease to burn, and I saw a fairy, whom I had known as long as I could remember, and whose ugliness had always horrified me. She was leaning upon the arm of a most beautiful young girl, who wore chains of gold on her wrists and was evidently her slave.

“ ‘Why, Ragotte,’ I said, for that was the fairy’s name, ‘what is the meaning of all this? Is it by your orders that I am here?’

“‘And whose fault is it,’ she answered, ‘that you have never understood me until now? Must a powerful fairy like myself condescend to explain her doings to you who are no better than an ant by comparison, though you think yourself a great king?’

“‘Call me what you like,’ I said impatiently; ‘but what is it that you want—my crown, or my cities, or my treasures?’

“‘Treasures!’ said the fairy, disdainfully. ‘If I chose I could make any one of my scullions richer and more powerful than you. I do not want your treasures, but,’ she added softly, ‘if you will give me your heart—if you will marry me—I will add twenty kingdoms to the one you have already; you shall have a hundred castles full of gold and five hundred full of silver, and, in short, anything you like to ask me for.’

“‘Madam Ragotte,’ said I, ‘when one is at the bottom of a pit where one has fully expected to be roasted alive, it is impossible to think of asking such a charming person as you are to marry one! I beg that you will set me at liberty, and then I shall hope to answer you fittingly.’

“‘Ah!’ said she, ‘if you really loved me you would not care where you were—a cave, a wood, a fox-hole, a desert, would please you equally well. Do not think that you can deceive me; you fancy you are going to escape, but I assure you that you are going to stay here and the first thing I shall give you to do will be to keep my sheep—they are very good company and speak quite as well as you do.

“As she spoke she advanced, and led me to this plain where we now stand, and showed me her flock, but I paid little attention to it or to her.

“To tell the truth, I was so lost in admiration of her beautiful slave that I forgot everything else, and the cruel Ragotte, perceiving this, turned upon her so furious and terrible a look that she fell lifeless to the ground.

“At this dreadful sight I drew my sword and rushed at Ragotte, and should certainly have cut off her head had she not by her magic arts chained me to the spot on which I stood; all my efforts to move were useless, and at last, when I threw myself down on the ground in despair, she said to me, with a scornful smile:

“‘I intend to make you feel my power. It seems that you are a lion at present, I mean you to be a sheep.’

“So saying, she touched me with her wand, and I became what you see. I did not lose the power of speech, or of feeling the misery of my present

state.

“‘For five years,’ she said, ‘you shall be a sheep, and lord of this pleasant land, while I, no longer able to see your face, which I loved so much, shall be better able to hate you as you deserve to be hated.’

“She disappeared as she finished speaking, and if I had not been too unhappy to care about anything I should have been glad that she was gone.

“The talking sheep received me as their king, and told me that they, too, were unfortunate princes who had, in different ways, offended the revengeful fairy, and had been added to her flock for a certain number of years; some more, some less. From time to time, indeed, one regains his own proper form and goes back again to his place in the upper world; but the other beings whom you saw are the rivals or the enemies of Ragotte, whom she has imprisoned for a hundred years or so; though even they will go back at last. The young slave of whom I told you about is one of these; I have seen her often, and it has been a great pleasure to me. She never speaks to me, and if I were nearer to her I know I should find her only a shadow, which would be very annoying. However, I noticed that one of my companions in misfortune was also very attentive to this little sprite, and I found out that he had been her lover, whom the cruel Ragotte had taken away from her long before; since then I have cared for, and thought of, nothing but how I might regain my freedom. I have often been in the forest; that is where I have seen you, lovely Princess, sometimes driving your chariot, which you did with all the grace and skill in the world; sometimes riding to the chase on so spirited a horse that it seemed as if no one but yourself could have managed it, and sometimes running races on the plain with the Princesses of your Court—running so lightly that it was you always who won the prize. Oh! Princess, I have loved you so long, and yet how dare I tell you of my love! what hope can there be for an unhappy sheep like myself?”

Miranda was so surprised and confused by all that she had heard that she hardly knew what answer to give to the King of the Sheep, but she managed to make some kind of little speech, which certainly did not forbid him to hope, and said that she should not be afraid of the shadows now she knew that they would some day come to life again. “Alas!” she continued, “if my poor Patypata, my dear Grabugeon, and pretty little

Tintin, who all died for my sake, were equally well off, I should have nothing left to wish for here!”

Prisoner though he was, the King of the Sheep had still some powers and privileges.

“Go,” said he to his Master of the Horse, “go and seek the shadows of the little black girl, the monkey, and the dog: they will amuse our Princess.”

And an instant afterward Miranda saw them coming toward her, and their presence gave her the greatest pleasure, though they did not come near enough for her to touch them.

The King of the Sheep was so kind and amusing, and loved Miranda so dearly, that at last she began to love him too. Such a handsome sheep, who was so polite and considerate, could hardly fail to please, especially if one knew that he was really a king, and that his strange imprisonment would soon come to an end. So the Princess’s days passed very gaily while she waited for the happy time to come. The King of the Sheep, with the help of all the flock, got up balls, concerts, and hunting parties, and even the shadows joined in all the fun, and came, making believe to be their own real selves.

One evening, when the couriers arrived (for the King sent most carefully for news—and they always brought the very best kinds), it was announced that the sister of the Princess Miranda was going to be married to a great Prince, and that nothing could be more splendid than all the preparations for the wedding.

“Ah!” cried the young Princess, “how unlucky I am to miss the sight of so many pretty things! Here am I imprisoned under the earth, with no company but sheep and shadows, while my sister is to be adorned like a queen and surrounded by all who love and admire her, and everyone but myself can go to wish her joy!”

“Why do you complain, Princess?” said the King of the Sheep. “Did I say that you were not to go to the wedding? Set out as soon as you please; only promise me that you will come back, for I love you too much to be able to live without you.”

Miranda was very grateful to him, and promised faithfully that nothing in the world should keep her from coming back. The King caused an escort suitable to her rank to be got ready for her, and she dressed herself

splendidly, not forgetting anything that could make her more beautiful. Her chariot was of mother-of-pearl, drawn by six dun-colored griffins just brought from the other side of the world, and she was attended by a number of guards in splendid uniforms, who were all at least eight feet high and had come from far and near to ride in the Princess's train.

Miranda reached her father's palace just as the wedding ceremony began, and everyone, as soon as she came in, was struck with surprise at her beauty and the splendor of her jewels. She heard exclamations of admiration on all sides; and the King her father looked at her so attentively that she was afraid he must recognize her; but he was so sure that she was dead that the idea never occurred to him.

However, the fear of not getting away made her leave before the marriage was over. She went out hastily, leaving behind her a little coral casket set with emeralds. On it was written in diamond letters: "Jewels for the Bride," and when they opened it, which they did as soon as it was found, there seemed to be no end to the pretty things it contained. The King, who had hoped to join the unknown Princess and find out who she was, was dreadfully disappointed when she disappeared so suddenly, and gave orders that if she ever came again the doors were to be shut that she might not get away so easily. Short as Miranda's absence had been, it had seemed like a hundred years to the King of the Sheep. He was waiting for her by a fountain in the thickest part of the forest, and the ground was strewn with splendid presents which he had prepared for her to show his joy and gratitude at her coming back.

As soon as she was in sight he rushed to meet her, leaping and bounding like a real sheep. He caressed her tenderly, throwing himself at her feet and kissing her hands, and told her how uneasy he had been in her absence, and how impatient for her return, with an eloquence which charmed her.

After some time came the news that the King's second daughter was going to be married. When Miranda heard it she begged the King of the Sheep to allow her to go and see the wedding as before. This request made him feel very sad, as if some misfortune must surely come of it, but his love for the Princess being stronger than anything else he did not like to refuse her.

“You wish to leave me, Princess,” said he; “it is my unhappy fate—you are not to blame. I consent to your going, but, believe me, I can give you no stronger proof of my love than by so doing.”

The Princess assured him that she would only stay a very short time, as she had done before, and begged him not to be uneasy, as she would be quite as much grieved if anything detained her as he could possibly be.

So, with the same escort, she set out, and reached the palace as the marriage ceremony began. Everybody was delighted to see her; she was so pretty that they thought she must be some fairy princess, and the Princes who were there could not take their eyes off her.

The King was more glad than anyone else that she had come again, and gave orders that the doors should all be shut and bolted that very minute. When the wedding was all but over the Princess got up quickly, hoping to slip away unnoticed among the crowd, but, to her great dismay, she found every door fastened.

She felt more at ease when the King came up to her, and with the greatest respect begged her not to run away so soon, but at least to honor him by staying for the splendid feast which was prepared for the Princes and Princesses. He led her into a magnificent hall, where all the Court was assembled, and himself taking up the golden bowl full of water, he offered it to her that she might dip her pretty fingers into it.

At this the Princess could no longer contain herself; throwing herself at the King’s feet, she cried out:

“My dream has come true after all—you have offered me water to wash my hands on my sister’s wedding day, and it has not vexed you to do it.”

The King recognized her at once—indeed, he had already thought several times how much like his poor little Miranda she was.

“Oh! my dear daughter,” he cried, kissing her, “can you ever forget my cruelty? I ordered you to be put to death because I thought your dream portended the loss of my crown. And so it did,” he added, “for now your sisters are both married and have kingdoms of their own—and mine shall be for you.” So saying he put his crown on the Princess’s head and cried:

“Long live Queen Miranda!”

All the Court cried: “Long live Queen Miranda!” after him, and the young Queen’s two sisters came running up, and threw their arms round

her neck, and kissed her a thousand times, and then there was such a laughing and crying, talking and kissing, all at once, and Miranda thanked her father, and began to ask after everyone—particularly the Captain of the Guard, to whom she owed so much; but, to her great sorrow, she heard that he was dead. Presently they sat down to the banquet, and the King asked Miranda to tell them all that had happened to her since the terrible morning when he had sent the Captain of the Guard to fetch her. This she did with so much spirit that all the guests listened with breathless interest. But while she was thus enjoying herself with the King and her sisters, the King of the Sheep was waiting impatiently for the time of her return, and when it came and went, and no Princess appeared, his anxiety became so great that he could bear it no longer.

"She is not coming back any more," he cried. "My miserable sheep's face displeases her, and without Miranda what is left to me, wretched creature that I am! Oh! cruel Ragotte; my punishment is complete."

For a long time he bewailed his sad fate like this, and then, seeing that it was growing dark, and that still there was no sign of the Princess, he set out as fast as he could in the direction of the town. When he reached the palace he asked for Miranda, but by this time everyone had heard the story of her adventures, and did not want her to go back again to the King of the Sheep, so they refused sternly to let him see her. In vain he begged and prayed them to let him in; though his entreaties might have melted hearts of stone they did not move the guards of the palace, and at last, quite broken-hearted, he fell dead at their feet.

In the meantime the King, who had not the least idea of the sad thing that was happening outside the gate of his palace, proposed to Miranda that she should be driven in her chariot all round the town, which was to be illuminated with thousands and thousands of torches, placed in windows and balconies, and in all the grand squares. But what a sight met her eyes at the very entrance of the palace! There lay her dear, kind sheep, silent and motionless, upon the pavement!

She threw herself out of the chariot and ran to him, crying bitterly, for she realized that her broken promise had cost him his life, and for a long, long time she was so unhappy that they thought she would have died too.

So you see that even a princess is not always happy—especially if she forgets to keep her word; and the greatest misfortunes often happen to

people just as they think they have obtained their heart’s desires![16]

16. Madame d’Aulnoy.

LITTLE THUMB

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There was, once upon a time, a man and his wife fagot-makers by trade, who had several children, all boys. The eldest was but ten years old, and the youngest only seven.

They were very poor, and their seven children incommoded them greatly, because not one of them was able to earn his bread. That which gave them yet more uneasiness was that the youngest was of a very puny constitution, and scarce ever spoke a word, which made them take that for stupidity which was a sign of good sense. He was very little, and when born no bigger than one's thumb, which made him be called Little Thumb.

The poor child bore the blame of whatsoever was done amiss in the house, and, guilty or not, was always in the wrong; he was, notwithstanding, more cunning and had a far greater share of wisdom than all his brothers put together; and, if he spake little, he heard and thought the more.

There happened now to come a very bad year, and the famine was so great that these poor people resolved to rid themselves of their children. One evening, when they were all in bed and the fagot-maker was sitting with his wife at the fire, he said to her, with his heart ready to burst with grief:

"Thou seest plainly that we are not able to keep our children, and I cannot see them starve to death before my face; I am resolved to lose them in the wood to-morrow, which may very easily be done; for, while they are busy in tying up fagots, we may run away, and leave them, without their taking any notice."

"Ah!" cried his wife; "and canst thou thyself have the heart to take thy children out along with thee on purpose to lose them?"

In vain did her husband represent to her their extreme poverty: she would not consent to it; she was indeed poor, but she was their mother. However, having considered what a grief it would be to her to see them perish with hunger, she at last consented, and went to bed all in tears.

Little Thumb heard every word that had been spoken; for observing, as he lay in his bed, that they were talking very busily, he got up softly, and hid himself under his father's stool, that he might hear what they said without being seen. He went to bed again, but did not sleep a wink all the rest of the night, thinking on what he had to do. He got up early in the morning, and went to the river-side, where he filled his pockets full of small white pebbles, and then returned home.

They all went abroad, but Little Thumb never told his brothers one syllable of what he knew. They went into a very thick forest, where they could not see one another at ten paces distance. The fagot-maker began to cut wood, and the children to gather up the sticks to make fagots. Their father and mother, seeing them busy at their work, got away from them insensibly, and ran away from them all at once, along a by-way through the winding bushes.

When the children saw they were left alone, they began to cry as loud as they could. Little Thumb let them cry on, knowing very well how to get home again, for, as he came, he took care to drop all along the way the little white pebbles he had in his pockets. Then he said to them:

"Be not afraid, brothers; father and mother have left us here, but I will lead you home again, only follow me."

They did so, and he brought them home by the very same way they came into the forest. They dared not go in, but sat themselves down at the door, listening to what their father and mother were saying.

The very moment the fagot-maker and his wife reached home the lord of the manor sent them ten crowns, which he had owed them a long while, and which they never expected. This gave them new life, for the poor people were almost famished. The fagot-maker sent his wife immediately to the butcher's. As it was a long while since they had eaten a bit, she bought thrice as much meat as would sup two people. When they had eaten, the woman said:

"Alas! where are now our poor children? they would make a good feast of what we have left here; but it was you, William, who had a mind to lose them: I told you we should repent of it. What are they now doing in the forest? Alas! dear God, the wolves have perhaps already eaten them up; thou art very inhuman thus to have lost thy children."

The fagot-maker grew at last quite out of patience, for she repeated it above twenty times, that they should repent of it, and that she was in the right of it for so saying. He threatened to beat her if she did not hold her tongue. It was not that the fagot-maker was not, perhaps, more vexed than his wife, but that she teased him, and that he was of the humor of a great many others, who love wives to speak well, but think those very importunate who are continually doing so. She was half-drowned in tears, crying out:

"Alas! where are now my children, my poor children?"

She spoke this so very loud that the children, who were at the gate, began to cry out all together:

"Here we are! Here we are!"

She ran immediately to open the door, and said, hugging them:

"I am glad to see you, my dear children; you are very hungry and weary; and my poor Peter, thou art horribly bemired; come in and let me clean thee."

Now, you must know that Peter was her eldest son, whom she loved above all the rest, because he was somewhat carroty, as she herself was. They sat down to supper, and ate with such a good appetite as pleased both father and mother, whom they acquainted how frightened they were in the forest, speaking almost always all together. The good folks were extremely glad to see their children once more at home, and this joy continued while the ten crowns lasted; but, when the money was all gone, they fell again into their former uneasiness, and resolved to lose them again; and, that they might be the surer of doing it, to carry them to a much greater distance than before.

They could not talk of this so secretly but they were overheard by Little Thumb, who made account to get out of this difficulty as well as the former; but, though he got up very early in the morning to go and pick up some little pebbles, he was disappointed, for he found the house-door double-locked, and was at a stand what to do. When their father had given each of them a piece of bread for their breakfast, Little Thumb fancied he might make use of this instead of the pebbles by throwing it in little bits all along the way they should pass; and so he put the bread in his pocket.

Their father and mother brought them into the thickest and most obscure part of the forest, when, stealing away into a by-path, they there

left them. Little Thumb was not very uneasy at it, for he thought he could easily find the way again by means of his bread, which he had scattered all along as he came; but he was very much surprised when he could not find so much as one crumb; the birds had come and had eaten it up, every bit. They were now in great affliction, for the farther they went the more they were out of their way, and were more and more bewildered in the forest.

Night now came on, and there arose a terribly high wind, which made them dreadfully afraid. They fancied they heard on every side of them the howling of wolves coming to eat them up. They scarce dared to speak or turn their heads. After this, it rained very hard, which wetted them to the skin; their feet slipped at every step they took, and they fell into the mire, whence they got up in a very dirty pickle; their hands were quite benumbed.

Little Thumb climbed up to the top of a tree, to see if he could discover anything; and having turned his head about on every side, he saw at last a glimmering light, like that of a candle, but a long way from the forest. He came down, and, when upon the ground, he could see it no more, which grieved him sadly. However, having walked for some time with his brothers toward that side on which he had seen the light, he perceived it again as he came out of the wood.

They came at last to the house where this candle was, not without an abundance of fear: for very often they lost sight of it, which happened every time they came into a bottom. They knocked at the door, and a good woman came and opened it; she asked them what they would have.

Little Thumb told her they were poor children who had been lost in the forest, and desired to lodge there for God’s sake.

The woman, seeing them so very pretty, began to weep, and said to them:

“Alas! poor babies; whither are ye come? Do ye know that this house belongs to a cruel ogre who eats up little children?”

“Ah! dear madam,” answered Little Thumb (who trembled every joint of him, as well as his brothers), “what shall we do? To be sure the wolves of the forest will devour us to-night if you refuse us to lie here; and so we would rather the gentleman should eat us; and perhaps he may take pity upon us, especially if you please to beg it of him.”

The Ogre’s wife, who believed she could conceal them from her husband till morning, let them come in, and brought them to warm themselves at a very good fire; for there was a whole sheep upon the spit, roasting for the Ogre’s supper.

As they began to be a little warm they heard three or four great raps at the door; this was the Ogre, who had come home. Upon this she hid them under the bed and went to open the door. The Ogre presently asked if supper was ready and the wine drawn, and then sat himself down to table. The sheep was as yet all raw and bloody; but he liked it the better for that. He sniffed about to the right and left, saying:

“I smell fresh meat.”

“What you smell so,” said his wife, “must be the calf which I have just now killed and flayed.”

“I smell fresh meat, I tell thee once more,” replied the Ogre, looking crossly at his wife; “and there is something here which I do not understand.”

As he spoke these words he got up from the table and went directly to the bed.

“Ah, ah!” said he; “I see then how thou wouldst cheat me, thou cursed woman; I know not why I do not eat thee up too, but it is well for thee that thou art a tough old carrion. Here is good game, which comes very quickly to entertain three ogres of my acquaintance who are to pay me a visit in a day or two.”

With that he dragged them out from under the bed one by one. The poor children fell upon their knees, and begged his pardon; but they had to do with one of the most cruel ogres in the world, who, far from having any pity on them, had already devoured them with his eyes, and told his wife they would be delicate eating when tossed up with good savory sauce. He then took a great knife, and, coming up to these poor children, whetted it upon a great whet-stone which he held in his left hand. He had already taken hold of one of them when his wife said to him:

“Why need you do it now? Is it not time enough to-morrow?”

“Hold your prating,” said the Ogre; “they will eat the tenderer.

“But you have so much meat already,” replied his wife, “you have no occasion; here are a calf, two sheep, and half a hog.”

“That is true,” said the Ogre; “give them their belly full that they may not fall away, and put them to bed.”

The good woman was overjoyed at this, and gave them a good supper; but they were so much afraid they could not eat a bit. As for the Ogre, he sat down again to drink, being highly pleased that he had got wherewithal to treat his friends. He drank a dozen glasses more than ordinary, which got up into his head and obliged him to go to bed.

The Ogre had seven daughters, all little children, and these young ogresses had all of them very fine complexions, because they used to eat fresh meat like their father; but they had little gray eyes, quite round, hooked noses, and very long sharp teeth, standing at a good distance from each other. They were not as yet over and above mischievous, but they promised very fair for it, for they had already bitten little children, that they might suck their blood.

They had been put to bed early, with every one a crown of gold upon her head. There was in the same chamber a bed of the like bigness, and it was into this bed the Ogre’s wife put the seven little boys, after which she went to bed to her husband.

Little Thumb, who had observed that the Ogre’s daughters had crowns of gold upon their heads, and was afraid lest the Ogre should repent his not killing them, got up about midnight, and, taking his brothers’ bonnets and his own, went very softly and put them upon the heads of the seven little ogresses, after having taken off their crowns of gold, which he put upon his own head and his brothers’, that the Ogre might take them for his daughters, and his daughters for the little boys whom he wanted to kill.

All this succeeded according to his desire; for, the Ogre waking about midnight, and sorry that he deferred to do that till morning which he might have done over-night, threw himself hastily out of bed, and, taking his great knife,

“Let us see,” said he, “how our little rogues do, and not make two jobs of the matter.”

He then went up, groping all the way, into his daughters’ chamber, and, coming to the bed where the little boys lay, and who were every soul of them fast asleep, except Little Thumb, who was terribly afraid when he found the Ogre fumbling about his head, as he had done about his brothers’, the Ogre, feeling the golden crowns, said:

“I should have made a fine piece of work of it, truly; I find I drank too much last night.”

Then he went to the bed where the girls lay; and, having found the boys’ little bonnets,

“Ah!” said he, “my merry lads, are you there? Let us work as we ought.”

And saying these words, without more ado, he cut the throats of all his seven daughters.

Well pleased with what he had done, he went to bed again to his wife. So soon as Little Thumb heard the Ogre snore, he waked his brothers, and bade them all put on their clothes presently and follow him. They stole down softly into the garden, and got over the wall. They kept running about all night, and trembled all the while, without knowing which way they went.

The Ogre, when he awoke, said to his wife: “Go upstairs and dress those young rascals who came here last night.”

The wife was very much surprised at this goodness of her husband, not dreaming after what manner she should dress them; but, thinking that he had ordered her to go and put on their clothes, she went up, and was strangely astonished when she perceived her seven daughters killed, and weltering in their blood.

She fainted away, for this is the first expedient almost all women find in such cases. The Ogre, fearing his wife would be too long in doing what he had ordered, went up himself to help her. He was no less amazed than his wife at this frightful spectacle.

“Ah! what have I done?” cried he. “The wretches shall pay for it, and that instantly.”

He threw a pitcher of water upon his wife’s face, and, having brought her to herself, said:

“Give me quickly my boots of seven leagues, that I may go and catch them.”

He went out, and, having run over a vast deal of ground, both on this side and that, he came at last into the very road where the poor children were, and not above a hundred paces from their father’s house. They espied the Ogre, who went at one step from mountain to mountain, and over rivers as easily as the narrowest kennels. Little Thumb, seeing a

hollow rock near the place where they were, made his brothers hide themselves in it, and crowded into it himself, minding always what would become of the Ogre.

The Ogre, who found himself much tired with his long and fruitless journey (for these boots of seven leagues greatly fatigued the wearer), had a great mind to rest himself, and, by chance, went to sit down upon the rock where the little boys had hid themselves. As it was impossible he could be more weary than he was, he fell asleep, and, after reposing himself some time, began to snore so frightfully that the poor children were no less afraid of him than when he held up his great knife and was going to cut their throats. Little Thumb was not so much frightened as his brothers, and told them that they should run away immediately toward home while the Ogre was asleep so soundly, and that they should not be in any pain about him. They took his advice, and got home presently. Little Thumb came up to the Ogre, pulled off his boots gently and put them on his own legs. The boots were very long and large, but, as they were fairies, they had the gift of becoming big and little, according to the legs of those who wore them; so that they fitted his feet and legs as well as if they had been made on purpose for him. He went immediately to the Ogre's house, where he saw his wife crying bitterly for the loss of the Ogre's murdered daughters.

"Your husband," said Little Thumb, "is in very great danger, being taken by a gang of thieves, who have sworn to kill him if he does not give them all his gold and silver. The very moment they held their daggers at his throat he perceived me, and desired me to come and tell you the condition he is in, and that you should give me whatsoever he has of value, without retaining any one thing; for otherwise they will kill him without mercy; and, as his case is very pressing, he desired me to make use (you see I have them on) of his boots, that I might make the more haste and to show you that I do not impose upon you."

The good woman, being sadly frightened, gave him all she had: for this Ogre was a very good husband, though he used to eat up little children. Little Thumb, having thus got all the Ogre's money, came home to his father's house, where he was received with abundance of joy.

There are many people who do not agree in this circumstance, and pretend that Little Thumb never robbed the Ogre at all, and that he only

thought he might very justly, and with a safe conscience, take off his boots of seven leagues, because he made no other use of them but to run after little children. These folks affirm that they are very well assured of this, and the more as having drunk and eaten often at the fagot-maker's house. They aver that when Little Thumb had taken off the Ogre's boots he went to Court, where he was informed that they were very much in pain about a certain army, which was two hundred leagues off, and the success of a battle. He went, say they, to the King, and told him that, if he desired it, he would bring him news from the army before night.

The King promised him a great sum of money upon that condition. Little Thumb was as good as his word, and returned that very same night with the news; and, this first expedition causing him to be known, he got whatever he pleased, for the King paid him very well for carrying his orders to the army. After having for some time carried on the business of a messenger, and gained thereby great wealth, he went home to his father, where it was impossible to express the joy they were all in at his return. He made the whole family very easy, bought places for his father and brothers, and, by that means, settled them very handsomely in the world, and, in the meantime, made his court to perfection.[17]

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17. Charles Perrault.

THE FORTY THIEVES

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In a town in Persia there dwelt two brothers, one named Cassim, the other Ali Baba. Cassim was married to a rich wife and lived in plenty, while Ali Baba had to maintain his wife and children by cutting wood in a neighboring forest and selling it in the town. One day, when Ali Baba was in the forest, he saw a troop of men on horseback, coming toward him in a cloud of dust. He was afraid they were robbers, and climbed into a tree for safety. When they came up to him and dismounted, he counted forty of them. They unbridled their horses and tied them to trees. The finest man among them, whom Ali Baba took to be their captain, went a little way among some bushes, and said: “Open, Sesame!”[18] so plainly that Ali Baba heard him. A door opened in the rocks, and having made the troop go in, he followed them, and the door shut again of itself. They stayed some time inside, and Ali Baba, fearing they might come out and catch him, was forced to sit patiently in the tree. At last the door opened again, and the Forty Thieves came out. As the Captain went in last he came out first, and made them all pass by him; he then closed the door, saying: “Shut, Sesame!” Every man bridled his horse and mounted, the Captain put himself at their head, and they returned as they came.

Then Ali Baba climbed down and went to the door concealed among the bushes, and said: “Open, Sesame!” and it flew open. Ali Baba, who expected a dull, dismal place, was greatly surprised to find it large and well lighted, hollowed by the hand of man in the form of a vault, which received the light from an opening in the ceiling. He saw rich bales of merchandise—silk, stuff-brocades, all piled together, and gold and silver in heaps, and money in leather purses. He went in and the door shut behind him. He did not look at the silver, but brought out as many bags of gold as he thought his asses, which were browsing outside, could carry, loaded them with the bags, and hid it all with fagots. Using the words: “Shut, Sesame!” he closed the door and went home.

Then he drove his asses into the yard, shut the gates, carried the money-bags to his wife, and emptied them out before her. He bade her keep the secret, and he would go and bury the gold. “Let me first measure it,” said his wife. “I will go borrow a measure of someone, while you dig the hole.” So she ran to the wife of Cassim and borrowed a measure. Knowing Ali Baba’s poverty, the sister was curious to find out what sort of grain his wife wished to measure, and artfully put some suet at the bottom of the measure. Ali Baba’s wife went home and set the measure on the heap of gold, and filled it and emptied it often, to her great content. She then carried it back to her sister, without noticing that a piece of gold was sticking to it, which Cassim’s wife perceived directly her back was turned. She grew very curious, and said to Cassim when he came home: “Cassim, your brother is richer than you. He does not count his money, he measures it.” He begged her to explain this riddle, which she did by showing him the piece of money and telling him where she found it. Then Cassim grew so envious that he could not sleep, and went to his brother in the morning before sunrise. “Ali Baba,” he said, showing him the gold piece, “you pretend to be poor and yet you measure gold.” By this Ali Baba perceived that through his wife’s folly Cassim and his wife knew their secret, so he confessed all and offered Cassim a share. “That I expect,” said Cassim; “but I must know where to find the treasure, otherwise I will discover all, and you will lose all.” Ali Baba, more out of kindness than fear, told him of the cave, and the very words to use. Cassim left Ali Baba, meaning to be beforehand with him and get the treasure for himself. He rose early next morning, and set out with ten mules loaded with great chests. He soon found the place, and the door in the rock. He said: “Open, Sesame!” and the door opened and shut behind him. He could have feasted his eyes all day on the treasures, but he now hastened to gather together as much of it as possible; but when he was ready to go he could not remember what to say for thinking of his great riches. Instead of “Sesame,” he said: “Open, Barley!” and the door remained fast. He named several different sorts of grain, all but the right one, and the door still stuck fast. He was so frightened at the danger he was in that he had as much forgotten the word as if he had never heard it.

About noon the robbers returned to their cave, and saw Cassim’s mules roving about with great chests on their backs. This gave them the alarm;

they drew their sabres, and went to the door, which opened on their Captain's saying: "Open, Sesame!" Cassim, who had heard the trampling of their horses' feet, resolved to sell his life dearly, so when the door opened he leaped out and threw the Captain down. In vain, however, for the robbers with their sabres soon killed him. On entering the cave they saw all the bags laid ready, and could not imagine how anyone had got in without knowing their secret. They cut Cassim's body into four quarters, and nailed them up inside the cave, in order to frighten anyone who should venture in, and went away in search of more treasure.

As night drew on Cassim's wife grew very uneasy, and ran to her brother-in-law, and told him where her husband had gone. Ali Baba did his best to comfort her, and set out to the forest in search of Cassim. The first thing he saw on entering the cave was his dead brother. Full of horror, he put the body on one of his asses, and bags of gold on the other two, and, covering all with some fagots, returned home. He drove the two asses laden with gold into his own yard, and led the other to Cassim's house. The door was opened by the slave Morgiana, whom he knew to be both brave and cunning. Unloading the ass, he said to her: "This is the body of your master, who has been murdered, but whom we must bury as though he had died in his bed. I will speak with you again, but now tell your mistress I am come." The wife of Cassim, on learning the fate of her husband, broke out into cries and tears, but Ali Baba offered to take her to live with him and his wife if she would promise to keep his counsel and leave everything to Morgiana; whereupon she agreed, and dried her eyes.

Morgiana, meanwhile, sought an apothecary and asked him for some lozenges. "My poor master," she said, "can neither eat nor speak, and no one knows what his distemper is." She carried home the lozenges and returned next day weeping, and asked for an essence only given to those just about to die. Thus, in the evening, no one was surprised to hear the wretched shrieks and cries of Cassim's wife and Morgiana, telling everyone that Cassim was dead. The day after Morgiana went to an old cobbler near the gates of the town who opened his stall early, put a piece of gold in his hand, and bade him follow her with his needle and thread. Having bound his eyes with a handkerchief, she took him to the room where the body lay, pulled off the bandage, and bade him sew the quarters together, after which she covered his eyes again and led him home. Then

they buried Cassim, and Morgiana his slave followed him to the grave, weeping and tearing her hair, while Cassim's wife stayed at home uttering lamentable cries. Next day she went to live with Ali Baba, who gave Cassim's shop to his eldest son.

The Forty Thieves, on their return to the cave, were much astonished to find Cassim's body gone and some of their money-bags. "We are certainly discovered," said the Captain, "and shall be undone if we cannot find out who it is that knows our secret. Two men must have known it; we have killed one, we must now find the other. To this end one of you who is bold and artful must go into the city dressed as a traveler, and discover whom we have killed, and whether men talk of the strange manner of his death. If the messenger fails he must lose his life, lest we be betrayed." One of the thieves started up and offered to do this, and after the rest had highly commended him for his bravery he disguised himself, and happened to enter the town at daybreak, just by Baba Mustapha's stall. The thief bade him good-day, saying: "Honest man, how can you possibly see to stitch at your age?" "Old as I am," replied the cobbler, "I have very good eyes, and will you believe me when I tell you that I sewed a dead body together in a place where I had less light than I have now." The robber was overjoyed at his good fortune, and, giving him a piece of gold, desired to be shown the house where he stitched up the dead body. At first Mustapha refused, saying that he had been blindfolded; but when the robber gave him another piece of gold he began to think he might remember the turnings if blindfolded as before. This means succeeded; the robber partly led him, and was partly guided by him, right in front of Cassim's house, the door of which the robber marked with a piece of chalk. Then, well pleased, he bade farewell to Baba Mustapha and returned to the forest. By and by Morgiana, going out, saw the mark the robber had made, quickly guessed that some mischief was brewing, and fetching a piece of chalk marked two or three doors on each side, without saying anything to her master or mistress.

The thief, meantime, told his comrades of his discovery. The Captain thanked him, and bade him show him the house he had marked. But when they came to it they saw that five or six of the houses were chalked in the same manner. The guide was so confounded that he knew not what answer to make, and when they returned he was at once beheaded for having

failed. Another robber was dispatched, and, having won over Baba Mustapha, marked the house in red chalk; but Morgiana being again too clever for them, the second messenger was put to death also. The Captain now resolved to go himself, but, wiser than the others, he did not mark the house, but looked at it so closely that he could not fail to remember it. He returned, and ordered his men to go into the neighboring villages and buy nineteen mules, and thirty-eight leather jars, all empty except one, which was full of oil. The Captain put one of his men, fully armed, into each, rubbing the outside of the jars with oil from the full vessel. Then the nineteen mules were loaded with thirty-seven robbers in jars, and the jar of oil, and reached the town by dusk. The Captain stopped his mules in front of Ali Baba's house, and said to Ali Baba, who was sitting outside for coolness: "I have brought some oil from a distance to sell at to-morrow's market, but it is now so late that I know not where to pass the night, unless you will do me the favor to take me in." Though Ali Baba had seen the Captain of the robbers in the forest, he did not recognize him in the disguise of an oil merchant. He bade him welcome, opened his gates for the mules to enter, and went to Morgiana to bid her prepare a bed and supper for his guest. He brought the stranger into his hall, and after they had supped went again to speak to Morgiana in the kitchen, while the Captain went into the yard under pretense of seeing after his mules, but really to tell his men what to do. Beginning at the first jar and ending at the last, he said to each man: "As soon as I throw some stones from the window of the chamber where I lie, cut the jars open with your knives and come out, and I will be with you in a trice." He returned to the house, and Morgiana led him to his chamber. She then told Abdallah, her fellow-slave, to set on the pot to make some broth for her master, who had gone to bed. Meanwhile her lamp went out, and she had no more oil in the house. "Do not be uneasy," said Abdallah; "go into the yard and take some out of one of those jars." Morgiana thanked him for his advice, took the oil pot, and went into the yard. When she came to the first jar the robber inside said softly: "Is it time?"

Any other slave but Morgiana, on finding a man in the jar instead of the oil she wanted, would have screamed and made a noise; but she, knowing the danger her master was in, bethought herself of a plan, and answered quietly: "Not yet, but presently." She went to all the jars, giving

the same answer, till she came to the jar of oil. She now saw that her master, thinking to entertain an oil merchant, had let thirty-eight robbers into his house. She filled her oil pot, went back to the kitchen, and, having lit her lamp, went again to the oil jar and filled a large kettle full of oil. When it boiled she went and poured enough oil into every jar to stifle and kill the robber inside. When this brave deed was done she went back to the kitchen, put out the fire and the lamp, and waited to see what would happen.

In a quarter of an hour the Captain of the robbers awoke, got up, and opened the window. As all seemed quiet, he threw down some little pebbles which hit the jars. He listened, and as none of his men seemed to stir he grew uneasy, and went down into the yard. On going to the first jar and saying, “Are you asleep?” he smelt the hot boiled oil, and knew at once that his plot to murder Ali Baba and his household had been discovered. He found all the gang was dead, and, missing the oil out of the last jar, became aware of the manner of their death. He then forced the lock of a door leading into a garden, and climbing over several walls made his escape. Morgiana heard and saw all this, and, rejoicing at her success, went to bed and fell asleep.

At daybreak Ali Baba arose, and, seeing the oil jars still there, asked why the merchant had not gone with his mules. Morgiana bade him look in the first jar and see if there was any oil. Seeing a man, he started back in terror. “Have no fear,” said Morgiana; “the man cannot harm you: he is dead.” Ali Baba, when he had recovered somewhat from his astonishment, asked what had become of the merchant. “Merchant!” said she, “he is no more a merchant than I am!” and she told him the whole story, assuring him that it was a plot of the robbers of the forest, of whom only three were left, and that the white and red chalk marks had something to do with it. Ali Baba at once gave Morgiana her freedom, saying that he owed her his life. They then buried the bodies in Ali Baba’s garden, while the mules were sold in the market by his slaves.

The Captain returned to his lonely cave, which seemed frightful to him without his lost companions, and firmly resolved to avenge them by killing Ali Baba. He dressed himself carefully, and went into the town, where he took lodgings in an inn. In the course of a great many journeys to the forest he carried away many rich stuffs and much fine linen, and set up

a shop opposite that of Ali Baba's son. He called himself Cogia Hassan, and as he was both civil and well dressed he soon made friends with Ali Baba's son, and through him with Ali Baba, whom he was continually asking to sup with him. Ali Baba, wishing to return his kindness, invited him into his house and received him smiling, thanking him for his kindness to his son. When the merchant was about to take his leave Ali Baba stopped him, saying: "Where are you going, sir, in such haste? Will you not stay and sup with me?" The merchant refused, saying that he had a reason; and, on Ali Baba's asking him what that was, he replied: "It is, sir, that I can eat no victuals that have any salt in them." "If that is all," said Ali Baba, "let me tell you that there shall be no salt in either the meat or the bread that we eat to-night." He went to give this order to Morgiana, who was much surprised. "Who is this man," she said, "who eats no salt with his meat?" "He is an honest man, Morgiana," returned her master; "therefore do as I bid you." But she could not withstand a desire to see this strange man, so she helped Abdallah to carry up the dishes, and saw in a moment that Cogia Hassan was the robber Captain, and carried a dagger under his garment. "I am not surprised," she said to herself, "that this wicked man, who intends to kill my master, will eat no salt with him; but I will hinder his plans."

She sent up the supper by Abdallah, while she made ready for one of the boldest acts that could be thought on. When the dessert had been served, Cogia Hassan was left alone with Ali Baba and his son, whom he thought to make drunk and then to murder them. Morgiana, meanwhile, put on a head-dress like a dancing-girl's, and clasped a girdle round her waist, from which hung a dagger with a silver hilt, and said to Abdallah: "Take your tabor, and let us go and divert our master and his guest." Abdallah took his tabor and played before Morgiana until they came to the door, where Abdallah stopped playing and Morgiana made a low courtesy. "Come in, Morgiana," said Ali Baba, "and let Cogia Hassan see what you can do"; and, turning to Cogia Hassan, he said: "She's my slave and my housekeeper." Cogia Hassan was by no means pleased, for he feared that his chance of killing Ali Baba was gone for the present; but he pretended great eagerness to see Morgiana, and Abdallah began to play and Morgiana to dance. After she had performed several dances she drew her dagger and made passes with it, sometimes pointing it at her own breast, sometimes at

her master's, as if it were part of the dance. Suddenly, out of breath, she snatched the tabor from Abdallah with her left hand, and, holding the dagger in her right hand, held out the tabor to her master. Ali Baba and his son put a piece of gold into it, and Cogia Hassan, seeing that she was coming to him, pulled out his purse to make her a present, but while he was putting his hand into it Morgiana plunged the dagger into his heart.

"Unhappy girl!" cried Ali Baba and his son, "what have you done to ruin us?"

"It was to preserve you, master, not to ruin you," answered Morgiana. "See here," opening the false merchant's garment and showing the dagger; "see what an enemy you have entertained! Remember, he would eat no salt with you, and what more would you have? Look at him! he is both the false oil merchant and the Captain of the Forty Thieves."

Ali Baba was so grateful to Morgiana for thus saving his life that he offered her to his son in marriage, who readily consented, and a few days after the wedding was celebrated with greatest splendor.

At the end of a year Ali Baba, hearing nothing of the two remaining robbers, judged they were dead, and set out to the cave. The door opened on his saying: "Open Sesame!" He went in, and saw that nobody had been there since the Captain left it. He brought away as much gold as he could carry, and returned to town. He told his son the secret of the cave, which his son handed down in his turn, so the children and grandchildren of Ali Baba were rich to the end of their lives.[19]

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18. Sesame is a kind of grain.

19. Arabian Nights.

HANSEL AND GRETTEL

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Once upon a time there dwelt on the outskirts of a large forest a poor woodcutter with his wife and two children; the boy was called Hansel and the girl Grettel. He had always little enough to live on, and once, when there was a great famine in the land, he couldn't even provide them with daily bread. One night, as he was tossing about in bed, full of cares and worry, he sighed and said to his wife: "What's to become of us? how are we to support our poor children, now that we have nothing more for ourselves?" "I'll tell you what, husband," answered the woman; "early to-morrow morning we'll take the children out into the thickest part of the wood; there we shall light a fire for them and give them each a piece of bread; then we'll go on to our work and leave them alone. They won't be able to find their way home, and we shall thus be rid of them." "No, wife," said her husband, "that I won't do; how could I find it in my heart to leave my children alone in the wood? The wild beasts would soon come and tear them to pieces." "Oh! you fool," said she, "then we must all four die of hunger, and you may just as well go and plane the boards for our coffins"; and she left him no peace till he consented. "But I can't help feeling sorry for the poor children," added the husband.

The children, too, had not been able to sleep for hunger, and had heard what their step-mother had said to their father. Grettel wept bitterly and spoke to Hansel: "Now it's all up with us." "No, no, Grettel," said Hansel, "don't fret yourself; I'll be able to find a way to escape, no fear." And when the old people had fallen asleep he got up, slipped on his little coat, opened the back door and stole out. The moon was shining clearly, and the white pebbles which lay in front of the house glittered like bits of silver. Hansel bent down and filled his pocket with as many of them as he could cram in. Then he went back and said to Grettel: "Be comforted, my dear little sister, and go to sleep: God will not desert us"; and he lay down in bed again.

At daybreak, even before the sun was up, the woman came and woke the two children: “Get up, you lie-abeds, we’re all going to the forest to fetch wood.” She gave them each a bit of bread and said: “There’s something for your luncheon, but don’t you eat it up before, for it’s all you’ll get.” Grettel took the bread under her apron, as Hansel had the stones in his pocket. Then they all set out together on the way to the forest. After they had walked for a little, Hansel stood still and looked back at the house, and this maneuver he repeated again and again. His father observed him, and said: “Hansel, what are you gazing at there, and why do you always remain behind? Take care, and don’t lose your footing.” “Oh! father,” said Hansel, “I am looking back at my white kitten, which is sitting on the roof, waving me a farewell.” The woman exclaimed: “What a donkey you are! that isn’t your kitten, that’s the morning sun shining on the chimney.” But Hansel had not looked back at his kitten, but had always dropped one of the white pebbles out of his pocket on to the path.

When they had reached the middle of the forest the father said: “Now, children, go and fetch a lot of wood, and I’ll light a fire that you may not feel cold.” Hansel and Grettel heaped up brushwood till they had made a pile nearly the size of a small hill. The brushwood was set fire to, and when the flames leaped high the woman said: “Now lie down at the fire, children, and rest yourselves: we are going into the forest to cut down wood; when we’ve finished we’ll come back and fetch you.” Hansel and Grettel sat down beside the fire, and at midday ate their little bits of bread. They heard the strokes of the axe, so they thought their father was quite near. But it was no axe they heard, but a bough he had tied on a dead tree, and that was blown about by the wind. And when they had sat for a long time their eyes closed with fatigue, and they fell fast asleep. When they awoke at last it was pitch dark. Grettel began to cry, and said: “How are we ever to get out of the wood?” But Hansel comforted her. “Wait a bit,” he said, “till the moon is up, and then we’ll find our way sure enough.” And when the full moon had risen he took his sister by the hand and followed the pebbles, which shone like new threepenny bits, and showed them the path. They walked on through the night, and at daybreak reached their father’s house again. They knocked at the door, and when the woman opened it she exclaimed: “You naughty children, what a time you’ve slept in the wood! we thought you were never going to come back.” But the

father rejoiced, for his conscience had reproached him for leaving his children behind by themselves.

Not long afterward there was again great dearth in the land, and the children heard their mother address their father thus in bed one night: “Everything is eaten up once more; we have only half a loaf in the house, and when that’s done it’s all up with us. The children must be got rid of; we’ll lead them deeper into the wood this time, so that they won’t be able to find their way out again. There is no other way of saving ourselves.” The man’s heart smote him heavily, and he thought: “Surely it would be better to share the last bite with one’s children!” But his wife wouldn’t listen to his arguments, and did nothing but scold and reproach him. If a man yields once he’s done for, and so, because he had given in the first time, he was forced to do so the second.

But the children were awake, and had heard the conversation. When the old people were asleep Hansel got up, and wanted to go out and pick up pebbles again, as he had done the first time; but the woman had barred the door, and Hansel couldn’t get out. But he consoled his little sister, and said: “Don’t cry, Grettel, and sleep peacefully, for God is sure to help us.”

At early dawn the woman came and made the children get up. They received their bit of bread, but it was even smaller than the time before. On the way to the wood Hansel crumbled it in his pocket, and every few minutes he stood still and dropped a crumb on the ground. “Hansel, what are you stopping and looking about you for?” said the father. “I’m looking back at my little pigeon, which is sitting on the roof waving me a farewell,” answered Hansel. “Fool!” said the wife; “that isn’t your pigeon, it’s the morning sun glittering on the chimney.” But Hansel gradually threw all his crumbs on the path. The woman led the children still deeper into the forest farther than they had ever been in their lives before. Then a big fire was lit again, and the mother said: “Just sit down there, children, and if you’re tired you can sleep a bit; we’re going into the forest to cut down wood, and in the evening when we’re finished we’ll come back to fetch you.” At midday Grettel divided her bread with Hansel, for he had strewn his all along their path. Then they fell asleep, and evening passed away, but nobody came to the poor children. They didn’t awake till it was pitch dark, and Hansel comforted his sister, saying: “Only wait, Grettel, till the moon rises, then we shall see the bread-crumbs I scattered along

the path; they will show us the way back to the house." When the moon appeared they got up, but they found no crumbs, for the thousands of birds that fly about the woods and fields had picked them all up. "Never mind," said Hansel to Grettel; "you'll see we'll find a way out"; but all the same they did not. They wandered about the whole night, and the next day, from morning till evening, but they could not find a path out of the wood. They were very hungry, too, for they had nothing to eat but a few berries they found growing on the ground. And at last they were so tired that their legs refused to carry them any longer, so they lay down under a tree and fell fast asleep.

On the third morning after they had left their father's house they set about their wandering again, but only got deeper and deeper into the wood, and now they felt that if help did not come to them soon they must perish. At midday they saw a beautiful little snow-white bird sitting on a branch, which sang so sweetly that they stopped still and listened to it. And when its song was finished it flapped its wings and flew on in front of them. They followed it and came to a little house, on the roof of which it perched; and when they came quite near they saw that the cottage was made of bread and roofed with cakes, while the window was made of transparent sugar. "Now we'll set to," said Hansel, "and have a regular blow-out.[20] I'll eat a bit of the roof, and you, Grettel, can eat some of the window, which you'll find a sweet morsel." Hansel stretched up his hand and broke off a little bit of the roof to see what it was like, and Grettel went to the casement and began to nibble at it. Thereupon a shrill voice called out from the room inside:

"Nibble, nibble, little mouse,
Who's nibbling my house?"

The children answered:

"Tis Heaven's own child,
The tempest wild,"

and went on eating, without putting themselves about. Hansel, who thoroughly appreciated the roof, tore down a big bit of it, while Grettel

pushed out a whole round window-pane, and sat down the better to enjoy it. Suddenly the door opened, and an ancient dame leaning on a staff hobbled out. Hansel and Grettel were so terrified that they let what they had in their hands fall. But the old woman shook her head and said: “Oh, ho! you dear children, who led you here? Just come in and stay with me, no ill shall befall you.” She took them both by the hand and let them into the house, and laid a most sumptuous dinner before them—milk and sugared pancakes, with apples and nuts. After they had finished, two beautiful little white beds were prepared for them, and when Hansel and Grettel lay down in them they felt as if they had got into heaven.

The old woman had appeared to be most friendly, but she was really an old witch who had waylaid the children, and had only built the little bread house in order to lure them in. When anyone came into her power she killed, cooked, and ate him, and held a regular feast-day for the occasion. Now witches have red eyes, and cannot see far, but, like beasts, they have a keen sense of smell, and know when human beings pass by. When Hansel and Grettel fell into her hands she laughed maliciously, and said jeeringly: “I’ve got them now; they sha’n’t escape me.” Early in the morning, before the children were awake, she rose up, and when she saw them both sleeping so peacefully, with their round rosy cheeks, she muttered to herself: “That’ll be a dainty bite.” Then she seized Hansel with her bony hand and carried him into a little stable, and barred the door on him; he might scream as much as he liked, it did him no good. Then she went to Grettel, shook her till she awoke, and cried: “Get up, you lazy-bones, fetch water and cook something for your brother. When he’s fat I’ll eat him up.” Grettel began to cry bitterly, but it was of no use; she had to do what the wicked witch bade her.

So the best food was cooked for poor Hansel, but Grettel got nothing but crab-shells. Every morning the old woman hobbled out to the stable and cried: “Hansel, put out your finger, that I may feel if you are getting fat.” But Hansel always stretched out a bone, and the old dame, whose eyes were dim, couldn’t see it, and thinking always it was Hansel’s finger, wondered why he fattened so slowly. When four weeks had passed and Hansel still remained thin, she lost patience and determined to wait no longer. “Hi, Grettel,” she called to the girl, “be quick and get some water. Hansel may be fat or thin, I’m going to kill him to-morrow and cook him.”

Oh! how the poor little sister sobbed as she carried the water, and how the tears rolled down her cheeks! “Kind heaven help us now!” she cried; “if only the wild beasts in the wood had eaten us, then at least we should have died together.” “Just hold your peace,” said the old hag; “it won’t help you.”

Early in the morning Grettel had to go out and hang up the kettle full of water, and light the fire. “First we’ll bake,” said the old dame; “I’ve heated the oven already and kneaded the dough.” She pushed Grettel out to the oven, from which fiery flames were already issuing. “Creep in,” said the witch, “and see if it’s properly heated, so that we can shove in the bread.” For when she had got Grettel in she meant to close the oven and let the girl bake, that she might eat her up too. But Grettel perceived her intention, and said: “I don’t know how I’m to do it; how do I get in?” “You silly goose!” said the hag, “the opening is big enough; see, I could get in myself,” and she crawled toward it, and poked her head into the oven. Then Grettel gave her a shove that sent her right in, shut the iron door, and drew the bolt. Gracious! how she yelled, it was quite horrible; but Grettel fled, and the wretched old woman was left to perish miserably.

Grettel flew straight to Hansel, opened the little stable-door, and cried: “Hansel, we are free; the old witch is dead.” Then Hansel sprang like a bird out of a cage when the door is opened. How they rejoiced, and fell on each other’s necks, and jumped for joy, and kissed one another! And as they had no longer any cause for fear, they went in the old hag’s house, and here they found, in every corner of the room, boxes with pearls and precious stones. “These are even better than pebbles,” said Hansel, and crammed his pockets full of them; and Grettel said: “I too will bring something home,” and she filled her apron full. “But now,” said Hansel, “let’s go and get well away from the witch’s wood.” When they had wandered about for some hours they came to a big lake. “We can’t get over,” said Hansel; “I see no bridge of any sort or kind.” “Yes, and there’s no ferry-boat either,” answered Grettel; “but look, there swims a white duck; if I ask her she’ll help us over,” and she called out:

“Here are two children, mournful very,
Seeing neither bridge nor ferry;

Take us upon your white back,
And row us over, quack, quack!”

The duck swam toward them, and Hansel got on her back and bade his little sister sit beside him. “No,” answered Grettel, “we should be too heavy a load for the duck: she shall carry us across separately.” The good bird did this, and when they were landed safely on the other side, and had gone for a while, the wood became more and more familiar to them, and at length they saw their father’s house in the distance. Then they set off to run, and bounding into the room fell on their father’s neck. The man had not passed a happy hour since he left them in the wood, but the woman had died. Grettel shook out her apron so that the pearls and precious stones rolled about the room, and Hansel threw down one handful after the other out of his pocket. Thus all their troubles were ended, and they lived happily ever afterward.

My story is done. See! there runs a little mouse; anyone who catches it may make himself a large fur cap out of it.[21]

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20. He was a vulgar boy!

21. Grimm.

SNOW-WHITE AND ROSE-RED

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A poor widow once lived in a little cottage with a garden in front of it, in which grew two rose trees, one bearing white roses and the other red. She had two children, who were just like the two rose trees; one was called Snow-white and the other Rose-red, and they were the sweetest and best children in the world, always diligent and always cheerful; but Snow-white was quieter and more gentle than Rose-red. Rose-red loved to run about the fields and meadows, and to pick flowers and catch butterflies; but Snow-white sat at home with her mother and helped her in the household, or read aloud to her when there was no work to do. The two children loved each other so dearly that they always walked about hand in hand whenever they went out together, and when Snow-white said, “We will never desert each other,” Rose-red answered: “No, not as long as we live”; and the mother added: “Whatever one gets she shall share with the other.” They often roamed about in the woods gathering berries and no beast offered to hurt them; on the contrary, they came up to them in the most confiding manner; the little hare would eat a cabbage leaf from their hands, the deer grazed beside them, the stag would bound past them merrily, and the birds remained on the branches and sang to them with all their might.

No evil ever befell them; if they tarried late in the wood and night overtook them, they lay down together on the moss and slept till morning, and their mother knew they were quite safe, and never felt anxious about them. Once, when they had slept all night in the wood and had been wakened by the morning sun, they perceived a beautiful child in a shining white robe sitting close to their resting-place. The figure got up, looked at them kindly, but said nothing, and vanished into the wood. And when they looked round about them they became aware that they had slept quite close to a precipice, over which they would certainly have fallen had they gone on a few steps further in the darkness. And when they told their mother of their adventure, she said what they had seen must have been the angel that guards good children.

Snow-white and Rose-red kept their mother's cottage so beautifully clean and neat that it was a pleasure to go into it. In summer Rose-red looked after the house, and every morning before her mother awoke she placed a bunch of flowers before the bed, from each tree a rose. In winter Snow-white lit the fire and put on the kettle, which was made of brass, but so beautifully polished that it shone like gold. In the evening when the snowflakes fell their mother said: "Snow-white, go and close the shutters," and they drew round the fire, while the mother put on her spectacles and read aloud from a big book and the two girls listened and sat and span. Beside them on the ground lay a little lamb, and behind them perched a little white dove with its head tucked under its wings.

One evening as they sat thus cosily together someone knocked at the door as though he desired admittance. The mother said: "Rose-red, open the door quickly; it must be some traveler seeking shelter." Rose-red hastened to unbar the door, and thought she saw a poor man standing in the darkness outside; but it was no such thing, only a bear, who poked his thick black head through the door. Rose-red screamed aloud and sprang back in terror, the lamb began to bleat, the dove flapped its wings, and Snow-white ran and hid behind her mother's bed. But the bear began to speak, and said: "Don't be afraid: I won't hurt you. I am half frozen, and only wish to warm myself a little." "My poor bear," said the mother, "lie down by the fire, only take care you don't burn your fur." Then she called out: "Snow-white and Rose-red, come out; the bear will do you no harm; he is a good, honest creature." So they both came out of their hiding-places, and gradually the lamb and dove drew near too, and they all forgot their fear. The bear asked the children to beat the snow a little out of his fur, and they fetched a brush and scrubbed him till he was dry. Then the beast stretched himself in front of the fire, and growled quite happily and comfortably. The children soon grew quite at their ease with him, and led their helpless guest a fearful life. They tugged his fur with their hands, put their small feet on his back, and rolled him about here and there, or took a hazel wand and beat him with it; and if he growled they only laughed. The bear submitted to everything with the best possible good-nature, only when they went too far he cried: "Oh! children, spare my life!

“Snow-white and Rose-red,
Don’t beat your lover dead.”

When it was time to retire for the night, and the others went to bed, the mother said to the bear: “You can lie there on the hearth, in heaven’s name; it will be shelter for you from the cold and wet.” As soon as day dawned the children led him out, and he trotted over the snow into the wood. From this time on the bear came every evening at the same hour, and lay down by the hearth and let the children play what pranks they liked with him; and they got so accustomed to him that the door was never shut till their black friend had made his appearance.

When spring came, and all outside was green, the bear said one morning to Snow-white: “Now I must go away, and not return again the whole summer.” “Where are you going to, dear bear?” asked Snow-white. “I must go to the wood and protect my treasure from the wicked dwarfs. In winter, when the earth is frozen hard, they are obliged to remain underground, for they can’t work their way through; but now, when the sun has thawed and warmed the ground, they break through and come up above to spy the land and steal what they can; what once falls into their hands and into their caves is not easily brought back to light.” Snow-white was quite sad over their friend’s departure, and when she unbarred the door for him, the bear, stepping out, caught a piece of his fur in the door-knocker, and Snow-white thought she caught sight of glittering gold beneath it, but she couldn’t be certain of it; and the bear ran hastily away, and soon disappeared behind the trees.

A short time after this the mother sent the children into the wood to collect fagots. They came in their wanderings upon a big tree which lay felled on the ground, and on the trunk among the long grass they noticed something jumping up and down, but what it was they couldn’t distinguish. When they approached nearer they perceived a dwarf with a wizened face and a beard a yard long. The end of the beard was jammed into a cleft of the tree, and the little man sprang about like a dog on a chain, and didn’t seem to know what he was to do. He glared at the girls with his fiery red eyes, and screamed out: “What are you standing there for? Can’t you come and help me?” “What were you doing, little man?” asked Rose-red. “You stupid, inquisitive goose!” replied the dwarf; “I

wanted to split the tree, in order to get little chips of wood for our kitchen fire; those thick logs that serve to make fires for coarse, greedy people like yourselves quite burn up all the little food we need. I had successfully driven in the wedge, and all was going well, but the cursed wood was so slippery that it suddenly sprang out, and the tree closed up so rapidly that I had no time to take my beautiful white beard out, so here I am stuck fast, and I can't get away; and you silly, smooth-faced, milk-and-water girls just stand and laugh! Ugh! what wretches you are!"

The children did all in their power, but they couldn't get the beard out; it was wedged in far too firmly. "I will run and fetch somebody," said Rose-red. "Crazy blockheads!" snapped the dwarf; "what's the good of calling anyone else? You're already two too many for me. Does nothing better occur to you than that?" "Don't be so impatient," said Snow-white, "I'll see you get help," and taking her scissors out of her pocket she cut off the end of his beard. As soon as the dwarf felt himself free he seized a bag full of gold which was hidden among the roots of the tree, lifted it up, and muttered aloud: "Curse these rude wretches, cutting off a piece of my splendid beard!" With these words he swung the bag over his back, and disappeared without as much as looking at the children again.

Shortly after this Snow-white and Rose-red went out to get a dish of fish. As they approached the stream they saw something which looked like an enormous grasshopper springing toward the water as if it were going to jump in. They ran forward and recognized their old friend the dwarf. "Where are you going to?" asked Rose-red; "you're surely not going to jump into the water?" "I'm not such a fool," screamed the dwarf. "Don't you see that cursed fish is trying to drag me in?" The little man had been sitting on the bank fishing, when unfortunately the wind had entangled his beard in the line; and when immediately afterward a big fish bit, the feeble little creature had no strength to pull it out; the fish had the upper fin, and dragged the dwarf toward him. He clung on with all his might to every rush and blade of grass, but it didn't help him much; he had to follow every movement of the fish, and was in great danger of being drawn into the water. The girls came up just at the right moment, held him firm, and did all they could to disentangle his beard from the line; but in vain, beard and line were in a hopeless muddle. Nothing remained but to produce the scissors and cut the beard, by which a small part of it was sacrificed.

When the dwarf perceived what they were about he yelled to them: “Do you call that manners, you toad-stools! to disfigure a fellow’s face? It wasn’t enough that you shortened my beard before, but you must now needs cut off the best bit of it. I can’t appear like this before my own people. I wish you’d been in Jericho first.” Then he fetched a sack of pearls that lay among the rushes, and without saying another word he dragged it away and disappeared behind a stone.

It happened that soon after this the mother sent the two girls to the town to buy needles, thread, laces, and ribbons. Their road led over a heath where huge boulders of rock lay scattered here and there. While trudging along they saw a big bird hovering in the air, circling slowly above them, but always descending lower, till at last it settled on a rock not far from them. Immediately afterward they heard a sharp, piercing cry. They ran forward, and saw with horror that the eagle had pounced on their old friend the dwarf, and was about to carry him off. The tender-hearted children seized hold of the little man, and struggled so long with the bird that at last he let go his prey. When the dwarf had recovered from the first shock he screamed in his screeching voice: “Couldn’t you have treated me more carefully? You have torn my thin little coat all to shreds, useless, awkward hussies that you are!” Then he took a bag of precious stones and vanished under the rocks into his cave. The girls were accustomed to his ingratitude, and went on their way and did their business in town. On their way home, as they were again passing the heath, they surprised the dwarf pouring out his precious stones on an open space, for he had thought no one would pass by at so late an hour. The evening sun shone on the glittering stones, and they glanced and gleamed so beautifully that the children stood still and gazed on them. “What are you standing there gaping for?” screamed the dwarf, and his ashen-gray face became scarlet with rage. He was about to go off with these angry words when a sudden growl was heard, and a black bear trotted out of the wood. The dwarf jumped up in great fright, but he hadn’t time to reach his place of retreat, for the bear was already close to him. Then he cried in terror: “Dear Mr. Bear, spare me! I’ll give you all my treasure. Look at those beautiful precious stones lying there. Spare my life! what pleasure would you get from a poor feeble little fellow like me? You won’t feel me between your teeth. There, lay hold of these two wicked girls, they will be a tender morsel for you, as fat as young quails; eat them

up, for heaven’s sake.” But the bear, paying no attention to his words, gave the evil little creature one blow with his paw, and he never moved again.

The girls had run away, but the bear called after them: “Snow-white and Rose-red, don’t be afraid; wait, and I’ll come with you.” Then they recognized his voice and stood still, and when the bear was quite close to them his skin suddenly fell off, and a beautiful man stood beside them, all dressed in gold. “I am a king’s son,” he said, “and have been doomed by that unholy little dwarf, who had stolen my treasure, to roam about the woods as a wild bear till his death should set me free. Now he has got his well-merited punishment.”

Snow-white married him, and Rose-red his brother, and they divided the great treasure the dwarf had collected in his cave between them. The old mother lived for many years peacefully with her children; and she carried the two rose trees with her, and they stood in front of her window, and every year they bore the finest red and white roses.[22]

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22. Grimm.

THE GOOSE-GIRL

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Once upon a time an old queen, whose husband had been dead for many years, had a beautiful daughter. When she grew up she was betrothed to a prince who lived a great way off. Now, when the time drew near for her to be married and to depart into a foreign kingdom, her old mother gave her much costly baggage, and many ornaments, gold and silver, trinkets and knicknacks, and, in fact, everything that belonged to a royal trousseau, for she loved her daughter very dearly. She gave her a waiting-maid also, who was to ride with her and hand her over to the bridegroom, and she provided each of them with a horse for the journey. Now the Princess's horse was called Falada, and could speak.

When the hour for departure drew near the old mother went to her bedroom, and taking a small knife she cut her fingers till they bled; then she held a white rag under them, and letting three drops of blood fall into it, she gave it to her daughter, and said: "Dear child, take great care of this rag: it may be of use to you on the journey."

So they took a sad farewell of each other, and the Princess stuck the rag in front of her dress, mounted her horse, and set forth on the journey to her bridegroom's kingdom. After they had ridden for about an hour the Princess began to feel very thirsty, and said to her waiting-maid: "Pray get down and fetch me some water in my golden cup out of yonder stream: I would like a drink." "If you're thirsty," said the maid, "dismount yourself, and lie down by the water and drink; I don't mean to be your servant any longer." The Princess was so thirsty that she got down, bent over the stream, and drank, for she wasn't allowed to drink out of the golden goblet. As she drank she murmured: "Oh! heaven, what am I to do?" and the three drops of blood replied:

"If your mother only knew,
Her heart would surely break in two."

But the Princess was meek, and said nothing about her maid's rude behavior, and quietly mounted her horse again. They rode on their way for several miles, but the day was hot, and the sun's rays smote fiercely on them, so that the Princess was soon overcome by thirst again. And as they passed a brook she called once more to her waiting-maid: "Pray get down and give me a drink from my golden cup," for she had long ago forgotten her maid's rude words. But the waiting-maid replied, more haughtily even than before: "If you want a drink, you can dismount and get it; I don't mean to be your servant." Then the Princess was compelled by her thirst to get down, and bending over the flowing water she cried and said: "Oh! heaven, what am I to do?" and the three drops of blood replied:

"If your mother only knew,
Her heart would surely break in two."

And as she drank thus, and leaned right over the water, the rag containing the three drops of blood fell from her bosom and floated down the stream, and she in her anxiety never even noticed her loss. But the waiting-maid had observed it with delight, as she knew it gave her power over the bride, for in losing the drops of blood the Princess had become weak and powerless. When she wished to get on her horse Falada again, the waiting-maid called out: "I mean to ride Falada: you must mount my beast"; and this too she had to submit to. Then the waiting-maid commanded her harshly to take off her royal robes, and to put on her common ones, and finally she made her swear by heaven not to say a word about the matter when they reached the palace; and if she hadn't taken this oath she would have been killed on the spot. But Falada observed everything, and laid it all to heart.

The waiting-maid now mounted Falada, and the real bride the worse horse, and so they continued their journey till at length they arrived at the palace yard. There was great rejoicing over the arrival, and the Prince sprang forward to meet them, and taking the waiting-maid for his bride, he lifted her down from her horse and led her upstairs to the royal chamber. In the meantime the real Princess was left standing below in the courtyard. The old King, who was looking out of his window, beheld her in this plight, and it struck him how sweet and gentle, even beautiful, she looked.

He went at once to the royal chamber, and asked the bride who it was she had brought with her and had left thus standing in the court below. “Oh!” replied the bride, “I brought her with me to keep me company on the journey; give the girl something to do, that she may not be idle.” But the old King had no work for her, and couldn’t think of anything; so he said, “I’ve a small boy who looks after the geese, she’d better help him.” The youth’s name was Curdken, and the real bride was made to assist him in herding geese.

Soon after this the false bride said to the Prince: “Dearest husband, I pray you grant me a favor.” He answered: “That I will.” “Then let the slaughterer cut off the head of the horse I rode here upon, because it behaved very badly on the journey.” But the truth was she was afraid lest the horse should speak and tell how she had treated the Princess. She carried her point, and the faithful Falada was doomed to die. When the news came to the ears of the real Princess she went to the slaughterer, and secretly promised him a piece of gold if he would do something for her. There was in the town a large dark gate, through which she had to pass night and morning with the geese; would he “kindly hang up Falada’s head there, that she might see it once again?” The slaughterer said he would do as she desired, chopped off the head, and nailed it firmly over the gateway.

Early next morning, as she and Curdken were driving their flock through the gate, she said as she passed under:

“Oh! Falada, ’tis you hang there”;

and the head replied:

“ ’Tis you; pass under, Princess fair:
If your mother only knew,
Her heart would surely break in two.”

Then she left the tower and drove the geese into a field. And when they had reached the common where the geese fed she sat down and unloosed her hair, which was of pure gold. Curdken loved to see it glitter in the sun, and wanted much to pull some hair out. Then she spoke:

“Wind, wind, gently sway,
Blow Curdken’s hat away;
Let him chase o’er field and wold
Till my locks of ruddy gold,
Now astray and hanging down,
Be combed and plaited in a crown.”

Then a gust of wind blew Curdken’s hat away, and he had to chase it over hill and dale. When he returned from the pursuit she had finished her combing and curling, and his chance of getting any hair was gone. Curdken was very angry, and wouldn’t speak to her. So they herded the geese till evening and then went home.

The next morning, as they passed under the gate, the girl said:

“Oh! Falada, ’tis you hang there;”

and the head replied:

“ ’Tis you; pass under, Princess fair:
If your mother only knew,
Her heart would surely break in two.”

Then she went on her way till she came to the common, where she sat down and began to comb out her hair; then Curdken ran up to her and wanted to grasp some of the hair from her head, but she called out hastily:

“Wind, wind, gently sway,
Blow Curdken’s hat away;
Let him chase o’er field and wold
Till my locks of ruddy gold,
Now astray and hanging down,
Be combed and plaited in a crown.”

Then a puff of wind came and blew Curdken’s hat far away, so that he had to run after it; and when he returned she had long finished putting up her golden locks, and he couldn’t get any hair; so they watched the geese till it was dark.

But that evening when they got home Curdken went to the old King, and said: “I refuse to herd geese any longer with that girl.” “For what reason?” asked the old King. “Because she does nothing but annoy me all day long,” replied Curdken; and he proceeded to relate all her iniquities, and said: “Every morning as we drive the flock through the dark gate she says to a horse’s head that hangs on the wall:

“‘Oh! Falada, ’tis you hang there’;

and the head replies:

“‘’Tis you; pass under, Princess fair:
If your mother only knew,
Her heart would surely break in two.’”

And Curdken went on to tell what passed on the common where the geese fed, and how he had always to chase his hat.

The old King bade him go and drive forth his flock as usual next day; and when morning came he himself took up his position behind the dark gate, and heard how the goose-girl greeted Falada. Then he followed her through the field, and hid himself behind a bush on the common. He soon saw with his own eyes how the goose-boy and the goose-girl looked after the geese, and how after a time the maiden sat down and loosed her hair, that glittered like gold, and repeated:

“Wind, wind, gently sway,
Blow Curdken’s hat away;
Let him chase o’er field and wold
Till my locks of ruddy gold
Now astray and hanging down,
Be combed and plaited in a crown.”

Then a gust of wind came and blew Curdken’s hat away, so that he had to fly over hill and dale after it, and the girl in the meantime quietly combed and plaited her hair: all this the old King observed, and returned to the palace without anyone having noticed him. In the evening when the goose-girl came home he called her aside, and asked her why she behaved

as she did. “I may not tell you why; how dare I confide my woes to anyone? for I swore not to by heaven, otherwise I should have lost my life.” The old King begged her to tell him all, and left her no peace, but he could get nothing out of her. At last he said: “Well, if you won’t tell me, confide your trouble to the iron stove there,” and he went away. Then she crept to the stove, and began to sob and cry and to pour out her poor little heart, and said: “Here I sit, deserted by all the world, I who am a king’s daughter, and a false waiting-maid has forced me to take off my own clothes, and has taken my place with my bridegroom, while I have to fulfill the lowly office of goose-girl.

“If my mother only knew
Her heart would surely break in two.”

But the old King stood outside at the stove chimney, and listened to her words. Then he entered the room again, and bidding her leave the stove, he ordered royal apparel to be put on her, in which she looked amazingly lovely. Then he summoned his son, and revealed to him that he had got the false bride, who was nothing but a waiting-maid, while the real one, in the guise of the ex-goose-girl, was standing at his side. The young King rejoiced from his heart when he saw her beauty and learned how good she was, and a great banquet was prepared, to which everyone was bidden. The bridegroom sat at the head of the table, the Princess on one side of him and the waiting-maid on the other; but she was so dazzled that she did not recognize the Princess in her glittering garments. Now when they had eaten and drunk, and were merry, the old King asked the waiting-maid to solve a knotty point for him. “What,” said he, “should be done to a certain person who has deceived everyone?” and he proceeded to relate the whole story, ending up with, “Now what sentence should be passed?” Then the false bride answered: “She deserves to be put stark naked into a barrel lined with sharp nails, which should be dragged by two white horses up and down the street till she is dead.”

“You are the person,” said the King, “and you have passed sentence on yourself; and even so it shall be done to you.” And when the sentence had been carried out the young King was married to his real bride, and both reigned over the kingdom in peace and happiness.[23]

23. Grimm.

TOADS AND DIAMONDS

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There was once upon a time a widow who had two daughters. The eldest was so much like her in the face and humor that whoever looked upon the daughter saw the mother. They were both so disagreeable and so proud that there was no living with them.

The youngest, who was the very picture of her father for courtesy and sweetness of temper, was withal one of the most beautiful girls ever seen. As people naturally love their own likeness, this mother even doted on her eldest daughter and at the same time had a horrible aversion for the youngest—she made her eat in the kitchen and work continually.

Among other things, this poor child was forced twice a day to draw water above a mile and a-half off the house, and bring home a pitcher full of it. One day, as she was at this fountain, there came to her a poor woman, who begged of her to let her drink.

“Oh! ay, with all my heart, Goody,” said this pretty little girl; and rinsing immediately the pitcher, she took up some water from the clearest place of the fountain, and gave it to her, holding up the pitcher all the while, that she might drink the easier.

The good woman, having drunk, said to her:

“You are so very pretty, my dear, so good and so mannerly, that I cannot help giving you a gift.” For this was a fairy, who had taken the form of a poor country woman, to see how far the civility and good manners of this pretty girl would go. “I will give you for a gift,” continued the Fairy, “that, at every word you speak, there shall come out of your mouth either a flower or a jewel.”

When this pretty girl came home her mother scolded her for staying so long at the fountain.

“I beg your pardon, mamma,” said the poor girl, “for not making more haste.”

And in speaking these words there came out of her mouth two roses, two pearls, and two diamonds.

“What is it I see there?” said the mother, quite astonished. “I think I see pearls and diamonds come out of the girl’s mouth! How happens this, child?”

This was the first time she had ever called her child.

The poor creature told her frankly all the matter, not without dropping out infinite numbers of diamonds.

“In good faith,” cried the mother, “I must send my child thither. Come hither, Fanny; look what comes out of thy sister’s mouth when she speaks. Wouldst not thou be glad, my dear, to have the same gift given thee? Thou hast nothing else to do but go and draw water out of the fountain, and when a certain poor woman asks you to let her drink, to give it to her very civilly.”

“It would be a very fine sight indeed,” said this ill-bred minx, “to see me go draw water.”

“You shall go, hussy!” said the mother; “and this minute.”

So away she went, but grumbling all the way, taking with her the best silver tankard in the house.

She was no sooner at the fountain than she saw coming out of the wood a lady most gloriously dressed, who came up to her, and asked to drink. This was, you must know, the very fairy who appeared to her sister, but now had taken the air and dress of a princess, to see how far this girl’s rudeness would go.

“Am I come hither,” said the proud, saucy one, “to serve you with water, pray? I suppose the silver tankard was brought purely for your ladyship, was it? However, you may drink out of it, if you have a fancy.”

“You are not over and above mannerly,” answered the Fairy, without putting herself in a passion. “Well, then, since you have so little breeding, and are so disobliging, I give you for a gift that at every word you speak there shall come out of your mouth a snake or a toad.”

So soon as her mother saw her coming she cried out:

“Well, daughter?”

“Well, mother?” answered the pert hussy, throwing out of her mouth two vipers and two toads.

“Oh! mercy,” cried the mother; “what is it I see? Oh! it is that wretch her sister who has occasioned all this; but she shall pay for it”; and

immediately she ran to beat her. The poor child fled away from her, and went to hide herself in the forest, not far from thence.

The King’s son, then on his return from hunting, met her, and seeing her so very pretty, asked her what she did there alone and why she cried.

“Alas! sir, my mamma has turned me out of doors.”

The King’s son, who saw five or six pearls and as many diamonds come out of her mouth, desired her to tell him how that happened. She thereupon told him the whole story; and so the King’s son fell in love with her, and, considering himself that such a gift was worth more than any marriage portion, conducted her to the palace of the King his father, and there married her.

As for the sister, she made herself so much hated that her own mother turned her off; and the miserable wretch, having wandered about a good while without finding anybody to take her in, went to a corner of the wood, and there died.[24]

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24. Charles Perrault.

PRINCE DARLING

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Once upon a time there lived a king who was so just and kind that his subjects called him “the Good King.” It happened one day, when he was out hunting, that a little white rabbit, which his dogs were chasing, sprang into his arms for shelter. The King stroked it gently, and said to it:

“Well, bunny, as you have come to me for protection I will see that nobody hurts you.”

And he took it home to his palace and had it put in a pretty little house, with all sorts of nice things to eat.

That night, when he was alone in his room, a beautiful lady suddenly appeared before him; her long dress was as white as snow, and she had a crown of white roses upon her head. The good King was very much surprised to see her, for he knew his door had been tightly shut, and he could not think how she had got in. But she said to him:

“I am the Fairy Truth. I was passing through the wood when you were out hunting, and I wished to find out if you were really good, as everybody said you were, so I took the shape of a little rabbit and came to your arms for shelter, for I know that those who are merciful to animals will be still kinder to their fellow-men. If you had refused to help me I should have been certain that you were wicked. I thank you for the kindness you have shown me, which has made me your friend for ever. You have only to ask me for anything you want and I promise that I will give it to you.”

“Madam,” said the good King, “since you are a fairy you no doubt know all my wishes. I have but one son whom I love very dearly, that is why he is called Prince Darling. If you are really good enough to wish to do me a favor, I beg that you will become his friend.”

“With all my heart,” answered the Fairy. “I can make your son the handsomest prince in the world, or the richest, or the most powerful; choose whichever you like for him.”

“I do not ask either of these things for my son,” replied the good King; “but if you will make him the best of princes, I shall indeed be grateful to

you. What good would it do him to be rich, or handsome, or to possess all the kingdoms of the world if he were wicked? You know well he would still be unhappy. Only a good man can be really contented."

"You are quite right," answered the Fairy; "but it is not in my power to make Prince Darling a good man unless he will help me; he must himself try hard to become good, I can only promise to give him good advice, to scold him for his faults, and to punish him if he will not correct and punish himself."

The good King was quite satisfied with this promise; and very soon afterward he died.

Prince Darling was very sorry, for he loved his father with all his heart, and he would willingly have given all his kingdoms and all his treasures of gold and silver if they could have kept the good King with him.

Two days afterward, when the Prince had gone to bed, the Fairy suddenly appeared to him and said:

"I promised your father that I would be your friend, and to keep my word I have come to bring you a present." At the same time she put a little gold ring upon his finger.

"Take great care of this ring," she said: "it is more precious than diamonds; every time you do a bad deed it will prick your finger, but if, in spite of its pricking, you go on in your own evil way, you will lose my friendship, and I shall become your enemy."

So saying, the Fairy disappeared, leaving Prince Darling very much astonished.

For some time he behaved so well that the ring never pricked him, and that made him so contented that his subjects called him Prince Darling the Happy.

One day, however, he went out hunting, but could get no sport, which put him in a very bad temper; it seemed to him as he rode along that his ring was pressing into his finger, but as it did not prick him he did not heed it. When he got home and went to his own room, his little dog Bibi ran to meet him, jumping round him with pleasure. "Get away!" said the Prince, quite gruffly. "I don't want you, you are in the way."

The poor little dog, who didn't understand this at all, pulled at his coat to make him at least look at her, and this made Prince Darling so cross that he gave her quite a hard kick.

Instantly his ring pricked him sharply, as if it had been a pin. He was very much surprised, and sat down in a corner of his room feeling quite ashamed of himself.

“I believe the Fairy is laughing at me,” he thought. “Surely I can have done no great wrong in just kicking a tiresome animal! What is the good of my being ruler of a great kingdom if I am not even allowed to beat my own dog?”

“I am not making fun of you,” said a voice, answering Prince Darling’s thoughts. “You have committed three faults. First of all, you were out of temper because you could not have what you wanted, and you thought all men and animals were only made to do your pleasure; then you were really angry, which is very naughty indeed; and lastly, you were cruel to a poor little animal who did not in the least deserve to be ill-treated.

“I know you are far above a little dog, but if it were right and allowable that great people should ill-treat all who are beneath them, I might at this moment beat you, or kill you, for a fairy is greater than a man. The advantage of possessing a great empire is not to be able to do the evil that one desires, but to do all the good that one possibly can.”

The Prince saw how naughty he had been, and promised to try and do better in future, but he did not keep his word. The fact was he had been brought up by a foolish nurse, who had spoiled him when he was little. If he wanted anything he only had to cry and fret and stamp his feet and she would give him whatever he asked for, which had made him self-willed; also she had told him from morning to night that he would one day be a king, and that kings were very happy, because everyone was bound to obey and respect them, and no one could prevent them from doing just as they liked.

When the Prince grew old enough to understand, he soon learned that there could be nothing worse than to be proud, obstinate, and conceited, and he had really tried to cure himself of these defects, but by that time all his faults had become habits; and a bad habit is very hard to get rid of. Not that he was naturally of a bad disposition; he was truly sorry when he had been naughty, and said:

“I am very unhappy to have to struggle against my anger and pride every day; if I had been punished for them when I was little they would not be such a trouble to me now.”

His ring pricked him very often, and sometimes he left off what he was doing at once; but at other times he would not attend to it. Strangely enough, it gave him only a slight prick for a trifling fault, but when he was really naughty it made his finger actually bleed. At last he got tired of being constantly reminded, and wanted to be able to do as he liked, so he threw his ring aside, and thought himself the happiest of men to have got rid of its teasing pricks. He gave himself up to doing every foolish thing that occurred to him, until he became quite wicked and nobody could like him any longer.

One day, when the Prince was walking about, he saw a young girl who was so very pretty that he made up his mind at once that he would marry her. Her name was Celia, and she was as good as she was beautiful.

Prince Darling fancied that Celia would think herself only too happy if he offered to make her a great queen, but she said fearlessly:

“Sire, I am only a shepherdess, and a poor girl, but, nevertheless, I will not marry you.”

“Do you dislike me?” asked the Prince, who was very much vexed at this answer.

“No, my Prince,” replied Celia; “I cannot help thinking you very handsome; but what good would riches be to me, and all the grand dresses and splendid carriages that you would give me, if the bad deeds which I should see you do every day made me hate and despise you?”

The Prince was very angry at this speech, and commanded his officers to make Celia a prisoner and carry her off to his palace. All day long the remembrance of what she had said annoyed him, but as he loved her he could not make up his mind to have her punished.

One of the Prince’s favorite companions was his foster-brother, whom he trusted entirely; but he was not at all a good man, and gave Prince Darling very bad advice, and encouraged him in all his evil ways. When he saw the Prince so downcast he asked what was the matter, and when he explained that he could not bear Celia’s bad opinion of him, and was resolved to be a better man in order to please her, this evil adviser said to him:

“You are very kind to trouble yourself about this little girl; if I were you I would soon make her obey me. Remember that you are a king, and that it would be laughable to see you trying to please a shepherdess, who

ought to be only too glad to be one of your slaves. Keep her in prison, and feed her on bread and water for a little while, and then, if she still says she will not marry you, have her head cut off, to teach other people that you mean to be obeyed. Why, if you cannot make a girl like that do as you wish, your subjects will soon forget that they are only put into this world for our pleasure."

"But," said Prince Darling, "would it not be a shame if I had an innocent girl put to death? For Celia has done nothing to deserve punishment."

"If people will not do as you tell them they ought to suffer for it," answered his foster-brother; "but even if it were unjust, you had better be accused of that by your subjects than that they should find out that they may insult and thwart you as often as they please."

In saying this he was touching a weak point in his brother's character; for the Prince's fear of losing any of his power made him at once abandon his first idea of trying to be good, and resolve to try and frighten the shepherdess into consenting to marry him.

His foster-brother, who wanted him to keep this resolution, invited three young courtiers, as wicked as himself to sup with the Prince, and they persuaded him to drink a great deal of wine, and continued to excite his anger against Celia by telling him that she had laughed at his love for her; until at last, in quite a furious rage, he rushed off to find her, declaring that if she still refused to marry him she should be sold as a slave the very next day.

But when he reached the room in which Celia had been locked up, he was greatly surprised to find that she was not in it, though he had the key in his own pocket all the time. His anger was terrible, and he vowed vengeance against whoever had helped her to escape. His bad friends, when they heard him, resolved to turn his wrath upon an old nobleman who had formerly been his tutor; and who still dared sometimes to tell the Prince of his faults, for he loved him as if he had been his own son. At first Prince Darling had thanked him, but after a time he grew impatient and thought it must be just mere love of fault-finding that made his old tutor blame him when everyone else was praising and flattering him. So he ordered him to retire from his Court, though he still, from time to time, spoke of him as a worthy man whom he respected, even if he no longer

loved him. His unworthy friends feared that he might some day take it into his head to recall his old tutor, so they thought they now had a good opportunity of getting him banished for ever.

They reported to the Prince that Suliman, for that was the tutor's name, had boasted of having helped Celia to escape, and they bribed three men to say that Suliman himself had told them about it. The Prince, in great anger, sent his foster-brother with a number of soldiers to bring his tutor before him, in chains, like a criminal. After giving this order he went to his own room, but he had scarcely got into it when there was a clap of thunder which made the ground shake, and the Fairy Truth appeared suddenly before him.

"I promised your father," said she sternly, "to give you good advice, and to punish you if you refused to follow it. You have despised my counsel, and have gone your own evil way until you are only outwardly a man; really you are a monster—the horror of everyone who knows you. It is time that I should fulfil my promise, and begin your punishment. I condemn you to resemble the animals whose ways you have imitated. You have made yourself like the lion by your anger, and like the wolf by your greediness. Like a snake, you have ungratefully turned upon one who was a second father to you; your churlishness has made you like a bull. Therefore, in your new form, take the appearance of all these animals."

The Fairy had scarcely finished speaking when Prince Darling saw to his horror that her words were fulfilled. He had a lion's head, a bull's horns, a wolf's feet, and a snake's body. At the same instant he found himself in a great forest, beside a clear lake, in which he could see plainly the horrible creature he had become, and a voice said to him:

"Look carefully at the state to which your wickedness has brought you; believe me, your soul is a thousand times more hideous than your body."

Prince Darling recognized the voice of the Fairy Truth and turned in a fury to catch her and eat her up if he possibly could; but he saw no one, and the same voice went on:

"I laugh at your powerlessness and anger, and I intend to punish your pride by letting you fall into the hands of your own subjects."

The Prince began to think that the best thing he could do would be to get as far away from the lake as he could, then at least he would not be continually reminded of his terrible ugliness. So he ran toward the wood,

but before he had gone many yards he fell into a deep pit which had been made to trap bears, and the hunters, who were hiding in a tree, leaped down, and secured him with several chains, and led him into the chief city of his own kingdom.

On the way, instead of recognizing that his own faults had brought this punishment upon him, he accused the Fairy of being the cause of all his misfortunes, and bit and tore at his chains furiously.

As they approached the town he saw that some great rejoicing was being held, and when the hunters asked what had happened they were told that the Prince, whose only pleasure it was to torment his people, had been found in his room, killed by a thunder-bolt (for that was what was supposed to have become of him). Four of his courtiers, those who had encouraged him in his wicked doings, had tried to seize the kingdom and divide it between them, but the people, who knew it was their bad counsels which had so changed the Prince, had cut off their heads, and had offered the crown to Suliman, whom the Prince had left in prison. This noble lord had just been crowned, and the deliverance of the kingdom was the cause of the rejoicing "For," they said, "he is a good and just man, and we shall once more enjoy peace and prosperity."

Prince Darling roared with anger when he heard this; but it was still worse for him when he reached the great square before his own palace. He saw Suliman seated upon a magnificent throne, and all the people crowded round, wishing him a long life that he might undo all the mischief done by his predecessor.

Presently Suliman made a sign with his hand that the people should be silent, and said: "I have accepted the crown you have offered me, but only that I may keep it for Prince Darling, who is not dead as you suppose; the Fairy has assured me that there is still hope that you may some day see him again, good and virtuous as he was when he first came to the throne. Alas!" he continued, "he was led away by flatterers. I knew his heart, and am certain that if it had not been for the bad influence of those who surrounded him he would have been a good king and a father to his people. We may hate his faults, but let us pity him and hope for his restoration. As for me, I would die gladly if that could bring back our Prince to reign justly and worthily once more."

These words went to Prince Darling's heart; he realized the true affection and faithfulness of his old tutor, and for the first time reproached himself for all his evil deeds; at the same instant he felt all his anger melting away, and he began quickly to think over his past life, and to admit that his punishment was not more than he had deserved. He left off tearing at the iron bars of the cage in which he was shut up, and became as gentle as a lamb.

The hunters who had caught him took him to a great menagerie, where he was chained up among all the other wild beasts, and he determined to show his sorrow for his past bad behavior by being gentle and obedient to the man who had to take care of him. Unfortunately, this man was very rough and unkind, and though the poor monster was quite quiet, he often beat him without rhyme or reason when he happened to be in a bad temper. One day when this keeper was asleep a tiger broke its chain, and flew at him to eat him up. Prince Darling, who saw what was going on, at first felt quite pleased to think that he should be delivered from his persecutor, but soon thought better of it and wished that he were free.

"I would return good for evil," he said to himself, "and save the unhappy man's life." He had hardly wished this when his iron cage flew open, and he rushed to the side of the keeper, who was awake and was defending himself against the tiger. When he saw the monster had got out he gave himself up for lost, but his fear was soon changed into joy, for the kind monster threw itself upon the tiger and very soon killed it, and then came and crouched at the feet of the man it had saved.

Overcome with gratitude, the keeper stooped to caress the strange creature which had done him such a great service; but suddenly a voice said in his ear:

"A good action should never go unrewarded," and at the same instant the monster disappeared, and he saw at his feet only a pretty little dog!

Prince Darling, delighted by the change, frisked about the keeper, showing his joy in every way he could, and the man, taking him up in his arms, carried him to the King, to whom he told the whole story.

The Queen said she would like to have this wonderful little dog, and the Prince would have been very happy in his new home if he could have forgotten that he was a man and a king. The Queen petted and took care of him, but she was so afraid that he would get too fat that she consulted the

court physician, who said that he was to be fed only upon bread, and was not to have much even of that. So poor Prince Darling was terribly hungry all day long, but he was very patient about it.

One day, when they gave him his little loaf for breakfast, he thought he would like to eat it out in the garden; so he took it up in his mouth and trotted away toward a brook that he knew of a long way from the palace. But he was surprised to find that the brook was gone, and where it had been stood a great house that seemed to be built of gold and precious stones. Numbers of people splendidly dressed were going into it, and sounds of music and dancing and feasting could be heard from the windows.

But what seemed very strange was that those people who came out of the house were pale and thin, and their clothes were torn, and hanging in rags about them. Some fell down dead as they came out before they had time to get away; others crawled farther with great difficulty; while others again lay on the ground, fainting with hunger, and begged a morsel of bread from those who were going into the house, but they would not so much as look at the poor creatures.

Prince Darling went up to a young girl who was trying to eat a few blades of grass, she was so hungry. Touched with compassion, he said to himself:

“I am very hungry, but I shall not die of starvation before I get my dinner; if I give my breakfast to this poor creature perhaps I may save her life.”

So he laid his piece of bread in the girl’s hand, and saw her eat it up eagerly.

She soon seemed to be quite well again, and the Prince, delighted to have been able to help her, was thinking of going home to the palace, when he heard a great outcry, and, turning round, saw Celia, who was being carried against her will into the great house.

For the first time the Prince regretted that he was no longer the monster, then he would have been able to rescue Celia; now he could only bark feebly at the people who were carrying her off, and try to follow them, but they chased and kicked him away.

He determined not to quit the place till he knew what had become of Celia, and blamed himself for what had befallen her.

“Alas!” he said to himself, “I am furious with the people who are carrying Celia off, but isn’t that exactly what I did myself, and if I had not been prevented did I not intend to be still more cruel to her?”

Here he was interrupted by a noise above his head—someone was opening a window, and he saw with delight that it was Celia herself, who came forward and threw out a plate of most delicious-looking food, then the window was shut again, and Prince Darling, who had not had anything to eat all day, thought he might as well take the opportunity of getting something. He ran forward to begin, but the young girl to whom he had given his bread gave a cry of terror and took him up in her arms, saying:

“Don’t touch it, my poor little dog—that house is the palace of pleasure, and everything that comes out of it is poisoned!”

At the same moment a voice said:

“You see a good action always brings its reward,” and the Prince found himself changed into a beautiful white dove. He remembered that white was the favorite color of the Fairy Truth, and began to hope that he might at last win back her favor. But just now his first care was for Celia, and rising into the air he flew round and round the house, until he saw an open window; but he searched through every room in vain. No trace of Celia was to be seen, and the Prince, in despair, determined to search through the world till he found her. He flew on and on for several days, till he came to a great desert, where he saw a cavern, and, to his delight, there sat Celia, sharing the simple breakfast of an old hermit.

Overjoyed to have found her, Prince Darling perched upon her shoulder, trying to express by his caresses how glad he was to see her again, and Celia, surprised and delighted by the tameness of this pretty white dove, stroked it softly, and said, though she never thought of its understanding her:

“I accept the gift that you make me of yourself, and I will love you always.”

“Take care what you are saying, Celia,” said the old hermit; “are you prepared to keep that promise?”

“Indeed, I hope so, my sweet shepherdess,” cried the Prince, who was at that moment restored to his natural shape. “You promised to love me always; tell me that you really mean what you said, or I shall have to ask

the Fairy to give me back the form of the dove which pleased you so much."

"You need not be afraid that she will change her mind," said the Fairy, throwing off the hermit's robe in which she had been disguised and appearing before them.

"Celia has loved you ever since she first saw you, only she would not tell you while you were so obstinate and naughty. Now you have repented and mean to be good you deserve to be happy, and so she may love you as much as she likes."

Celia and Prince Darling threw themselves at the Fairy's feet, and the Prince was never tired of thanking her for her kindness. Celia was delighted to hear how sorry he was for all his past follies and misdeeds, and promised to love him as long as she lived.

"Rise, my children," said the Fairy, "and I will transport you to the palace, and Prince Darling shall have back again the crown he forfeited by his bad behavior."

While she was speaking, they found themselves in Suliman's hall, and his delight was great at seeing his dear master once more. He gave up the throne joyfully to the Prince, and remained always the most faithful of his subjects.

Celia and Prince Darling reigned for many years, but he was so determined to govern worthily and to do his duty that his ring, which he took to wearing again, never once pricked him severely.[25]

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25. Cabinet des Fees.

BLUE BEARD

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There was a man who had fine houses, both in town and country, a deal of silver and gold plate, embroidered furniture, and coaches gilded all over with gold. But this man was so unlucky as to have a blue beard, which made him so frightfully ugly that all the women and girls ran away from him.

One of his neighbors, a lady of quality, had two daughters who were perfect beauties. He desired of her one of them in marriage, leaving to her choice which of the two she would bestow on him. They would neither of them have him, and sent him backward and forward from one another, not being able to bear the thoughts of marrying a man who had a blue beard, and what besides gave them disgust and aversion was his having already been married to several wives, and nobody ever knew what became of them.

Blue Beard, to engage their affection, took them, with the lady their mother and three or four ladies of their acquaintance, with other young people of the neighborhood, to one of his country seats, where they stayed a whole week.

There was nothing then to be seen but parties of pleasure, hunting, fishing, dancing, mirth, and feasting. Nobody went to bed, but all passed the night in rallying and joking with each other. In short, everything succeeded so well that the youngest daughter began to think the master of the house not to have a beard so very blue, and that he was a mighty civil gentleman.

As soon as they returned home, the marriage was concluded. About a month afterward, Blue Beard told his wife that he was obliged to take a country journey for six weeks at least, about affairs of very great consequence, desiring her to divert herself in his absence, to send for her friends and acquaintances, to carry them into the country, if she pleased, and to make good cheer wherever she was.

“Here,” said he, “are the keys of the two great wardrobes, wherein I have my best furniture; these are of my silver and gold plate, which is not every day in use; these open my strong boxes, which hold my money, both gold and silver; these my caskets of jewels; and this is the master-key to all my apartments. But for this little one here, it is the key of the closet at the end of the great gallery on the ground floor. Open them all; go into all and every one of them, except that little closet, which I forbid you, and forbid it in such a manner that, if you happen to open it, there’s nothing but what you may expect from my just anger and resentment.”

She promised to observe, very exactly, whatever he had ordered; when he, after having embraced her, got into his coach and proceeded on his journey.

Her neighbors and good friends did not stay to be sent for by the new married lady, so great was their impatience to see all the rich furniture of her house, not daring to come while her husband was there, because of his blue beard, which frightened them. They ran through all the rooms, closets, and wardrobes, which were all so fine and rich that they seemed to surpass one another.

After that they went up into the two great rooms, where was the best and richest furniture; they could not sufficiently admire the number and beauty of the tapestry, beds, couches, cabinets, stands, tables, and looking-glasses, in which you might see yourself from head to foot; some of them were framed with glass, others with silver, plain and gilded, the finest and most magnificent ever were seen.

They ceased not to extol and envy the happiness of their friend, who in the meantime in no way diverted herself in looking upon all these rich things, because of the impatience she had to go and open the closet on the ground floor. She was so much pressed by her curiosity that, without considering that it was very uncivil to leave her company, she went down a little back staircase, and with such excessive haste that she had twice or thrice like to have broken her neck.

Coming to the closet-door, she made a stop for some time, thinking upon her husband’s orders, and considering what unhappiness might attend her if she was disobedient; but the temptation was so strong she could not overcome it. She then took the little key, and opened it, trembling, but could not at first see anything plainly, because the windows were shut.

After some moments she began to perceive that the floor was all covered over with clotted blood, on which lay the bodies of several dead women, ranged against the walls. (These were all the wives whom Blue Beard had married and murdered, one after another.) She thought she should have died for fear, and the key, which she pulled out of the lock, fell out of her hand.

After having somewhat recovered her surprise, she took up the key, locked the door, and went upstairs into her chamber to recover herself; but she could not, she was so much frightened. Having observed that the key of the closet was stained with blood, she tried two or three times to wipe it off, but the blood would not come out; in vain did she wash it, and even rub it with soap and sand; the blood still remained, for the key was magical and she could never make it quite clean; when the blood was gone off from one side, it came again on the other.

Blue Beard returned from his journey the same evening, and said he had received letters upon the road, informing him that the affair he went about was ended to his advantage. His wife did all she could to convince him she was extremely glad of his speedy return.

Next morning he asked her for the keys, which she gave him, but with such a trembling hand that he easily guessed what had happened.

“What!” said he, “is not the key of my closet among the rest?”

“I must certainly have left it above upon the table,” said she.

“Fail not to bring it to me presently,” said Blue Beard.

After several goings backward and forward she was forced to bring him the key. Blue Beard, having very attentively considered it, said to his wife,

“How comes this blood upon the key?”

“I do not know,” cried the poor woman, paler than death.

“You do not know!” replied Blue Beard. “I very well know. You were resolved to go into the closet, were you not? Mighty well, madam; you shall go in, and take your place among the ladies you saw there.”

Upon this she threw herself at her husband’s feet, and begged his pardon with all the signs of true repentance, vowing that she would never more be disobedient. She would have melted a rock, so beautiful and sorrowful was she; but Blue Beard had a heart harder than any rock!

“You must die, madam,” said he, “and that presently.”

“Since I must die,” answered she (looking upon him with her eyes all bathed in tears), “give me some little time to say my prayers.”

“I give you,” replied Blue Beard, “half a quarter of an hour, but not one moment more.”

When she was alone she called out to her sister, and said to her:

“Sister Anne” (for that was her name), “go up, I beg you, upon the top of the tower, and look if my brothers are not coming over; they promised me that they would come to-day, and if you see them, give them a sign to make haste.”

Her sister Anne went up upon the top of the tower, and the poor afflicted wife cried out from time to time:

“Anne, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming?”

And sister Anne said:

“I see nothing but the sun, which makes a dust, and the grass, which looks green.”

In the meanwhile Blue Beard, holding a great sabre in his hand, cried out as loud as he could bawl to his wife:

“Come down instantly, or I shall come up to you.”

“One moment longer, if you please,” said his wife, and then she cried out very softly, “Anne, sister Anne, dost thou see anybody coming?”

And sister Anne answered:

“I see nothing but the sun, which makes a dust, and the grass, which is green.”

“Come down quickly,” cried Blue Beard, “or I will come up to you.”

“I am coming,” answered his wife; and then she cried, “Anne, sister Anne, dost thou not see anyone coming?”

“I see,” replied sister Anne, “a great dust, which comes on this side here.”

“Are they my brothers?”

“Alas! no, my dear sister, I see a flock of sheep.”

“Will you not come down?” cried Blue Beard

“One moment longer,” said his wife, and then she cried out: “Anne, sister Anne, dost thou see nobody coming?”

“I see,” said she, “two horsemen, but they are yet a great way off.”

“God be praised,” replied the poor wife joyfully; “they are my brothers; I will make them a sign, as well as I can, for them to make

haste.”

Then Blue Beard bawled out so loud that he made the whole house tremble. The distressed wife came down, and threw herself at his feet, all in tears, with her hair about her shoulders.

“This signifies nothing,” says Blue Beard; “you must die”; then, taking hold of her hair with one hand, and lifting up the sword with the other, he was going to take off her head. The poor lady, turning about to him, and looking at him with dying eyes, desired him to afford her one little moment to recollect herself.

“No, no,” said he, “recommend thyself to God,” and was just ready to strike…

At this very instant there was such a loud knocking at the gate that Blue Beard made a sudden stop. The gate was opened, and presently entered two horsemen, who, drawing their swords, ran directly to Blue Beard. He knew them to be his wife’s brothers, one a dragoon, the other a musketeer, so that he ran away immediately to save himself; but the two brothers pursued so close that they overtook him before he could get to the steps of the porch, when they ran their swords through his body and left him dead. The poor wife was almost as dead as her husband, and had not strength enough to rise and welcome her brothers.

Blue Beard had no heirs, and so his wife became mistress of all his estate. She made use of one part of it to marry her sister Anne to a young gentleman who had loved her a long while; another part to buy captains commissions for her brothers, and the rest to marry herself to a very worthy gentleman, who made her forget the ill time she had passed with Blue Beard.[26]

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26. Charles Perrault.

TRUSTY JOHN

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Once upon a time there was an old king who was so ill that he thought to himself, “I am most likely on my death-bed.” Then he said, “Send Trusty John to me.” Now Trusty John was his favorite servant, and was so called because all his life he had served him so faithfully. When he approached the bed the King spake to him: “Most trusty John, I feel my end is drawing near, and I could face it without a care were it not for my son. He is still too young to decide everything for himself, and unless you promise me to instruct him in all he should know, and to be to him as a father, I shall not close my eyes in peace.” Then Trusty John answered: “I will never desert him, and will serve him faithfully, even though it should cost me my life.” Then the old King said: “Now I die comforted and in peace”; and then he went on: “After my death you must show him the whole castle, all the rooms and apartments and vaults, and all the treasures that lie in them; but you must not show him the last room in the long passage, where the picture of the Princess of the Golden Roof is hidden. When he beholds that picture he will fall violently in love with it and go off into a dead faint, and for her sake he will encounter many dangers; you must guard him from this.” And when Trusty John had again given the King his hand upon it the old man became silent, laid his head on the pillow, and died.

When the old King had been carried to his grave Trusty John told the young King what he had promised his father on his death-bed, and added: “And I shall assuredly keep my word, and shall be faithful to you as I have been to him, even though it should cost me my life.”

Now when the time of mourning was over, Trusty John said to him: “It is time you should see your inheritance. I will show you your ancestral castle.” So he took him over everything, and let him see all the riches and splendid apartments, only the one room where the picture was he did not open. But the picture was placed so that if the door opened you gazed straight upon it, and it was so beautifully painted that you imagined it lived and moved, and that it was the most lovable and beautiful thing in

the whole world. But the young King noticed that Trusty John always missed one door, and said: “Why do you never open this one for me?” “There is something inside that would appall you,” he answered. But the King replied: “I have seen the whole castle, and shall find out what is in there”; and with these words he approached the door and wanted to force it open. But Trusty John held him back, and said: “I promised your father before his death that you shouldn’t see what that room contains. It might bring both you and me to great grief.” “Ah! no,” answered the young King; “if I don’t get in, it will be my certain destruction; I should have no peace night or day till I had seen what was in the room with my own eyes. Now I don’t budge from the spot till you have opened the door.”

Then Trusty John saw there was no way out of it, so with a heavy heart and many sighs he took the key from the big bunch. When he had opened the door he stepped in first, and thought to cover the likeness so that the King might not perceive it; but it was hopeless: the King stood on tiptoe and looked over his shoulder. And when he saw the picture of the maid, so beautiful and glittering with gold and precious stones, he fell swooning to the ground. Trusty John lifted him up, carried him to bed, and thought sorrowfully: “The curse has come upon us; gracious heaven! what will be the end of it all?” Then he poured wine down his throat till he came to himself again. The first words he spoke were: “Oh! who is the original of the beautiful picture?” “She is the Princess of the Golden Roof,” answered Trusty John. Then the King continued: “My love for her is so great that if all the leaves on the trees had tongues they could not express it; my very life depends on my winning her. You are my most trusty John: you must stand by me.”

The faithful servant pondered long how they were to set about the matter, for it was said to be difficult even to get into the presence of the Princess. At length he hit upon a plan, and spoke to the King: “All the things she has about her—tables, chairs, dishes, goblets, bowls, and all her household furniture—are made of gold. You have in your treasure five tons of gold; let the goldsmiths of your kingdom manufacture them into all manner of vases and vessels, into all sorts of birds and game and wonderful beasts; that will please her. We shall go to her with them and try our luck.” The King summoned all his goldsmiths, and they had to work hard day and night, till at length the most magnificent things were

completed. When a ship had been laden with them the faithful John disguised himself as a merchant, and the King had to do the same, so that they should be quite unrecognizable. And so they crossed the seas and journeyed till they reached the town where the Princess of the Golden Roof dwelt.

Trusty John made the King remain behind on the ship and await his return. “Perhaps,” he said, “I may bring the Princess back with me, so see that everything is in order; let the gold ornaments be arranged and the whole ship decorated.” Then he took a few of the gold things in his apron, went ashore, and proceeded straight to the palace. When he came to the courtyard he found a beautiful maiden standing at the well, drawing water with two golden pails. And as she was about to carry away the glittering water she turned round and saw the stranger, and asked him who he was. Then he replied: “I am a merchant,” and opening his apron, he let her peep in. “Oh! my,” she cried; “what beautiful gold wares!” she set down her pails, and examined one thing after the other. Then she said: “The Princess must see this, she has such a fancy for gold things that she will buy up all you have.” She took him by the hand and let him into the palace, for she was the lady’s maid.

When the Princess had seen the wares she was quite enchanted, and said: “They are all so beautifully made that I shall buy everything you have.” But Trusty John said: “I am only the servant of a rich merchant, what I have here is nothing compared to what my master has on his ship; his merchandise is more artistic and costly than anything that has ever been made in gold before.” She desired to have everything brought up to her, but he said: “There is such a quantity of things that it would take many days to bring them up, and they would take up so many rooms that you would have no space for them in your house.” Thus her desire and curiosity were excited to such an extent that at last she said: “Take me to your ship; I shall go there myself and view your master’s treasures.”

Then Trusty John was quite delighted, and brought her to the ship; and the King, when he beheld her, saw that she was even more beautiful than her picture, and thought every moment that his heart would burst. She stepped on to the ship, and the King led her inside. But Trusty John remained behind with the steersman, and ordered the ship to push off. “Spread all sail, that we may fly on the ocean like a bird in the air.”

Meanwhile the King showed the Princess inside all his gold wares, every single bit of it—dishes, goblets, bowls, the birds and game, and all the wonderful beasts. Many hours passed thus, and she was so happy that she did not notice that the ship was sailing away. After she had seen the last thing she thanked the merchant and prepared to go home; but when she came to the ship's side she saw that they were on the high seas, far from land, and that the ship was speeding on its way under full canvas. "Oh!" she cried in terror, "I am deceived, carried away and betrayed into the power of a merchant; I would rather have died!" But the King seized her hand and spake: "I am no merchant, but a king of as high birth as yourself; and it was my great love for you that made me carry you off by stratagem. The first time I saw your likeness I fell to the ground in a swoon." When the Princess of the Golden Roof heard this she was comforted, and her heart went out to him, so that she willingly consented to become his wife.

Now it happened one day, while they were sailing on the high seas, that Trusty John, sitting on the forepart of the ship, fiddling away to himself, observed three ravens in the air flying toward him. He ceased playing, and listened to what they were saying, for he understood their language. The one croaked: "Ah, ha! so he's bringing the Princess of the Golden Roof home." "Yes," answered the second, "but he's not got her yet." "Yes, he has," spake the third, "for she's sitting beside him on the ship." Then number one began again and cried: "That'll not help him! When they reach the land a chestnut horse will dash forward to greet them: the King will wish to mount it, and if he does it will gallop away with him, and disappear into the air, and he will never see his bride again." "Is there no escape for him?" asked number two. "Oh! yes, if someone else mounts quickly and shoots the horse dead with the pistol that is sticking in the holster, then the young King is saved. But who's to do that? And anyone who knows it and tells him will be turned into stone from his feet to his knees." Then spake number two: "I know more than that: even if the horse is slain, the young King will still not keep his bride: when they enter the palace together they will find a ready-made wedding shirt in a cupboard, which looks as though it were woven of gold and silver, but is really made of nothing but sulphur and tar: when the King puts it on it will burn him to his marrow and bones." Number three asked: "Is there no way of escape, then?" "Oh! yes," answered number two: "If someone seizes the shirt with

gloved hands and throws it into the fire, and lets it burn, then the young King is saved. But what's the good? Anyone knowing this and telling it will have half his body turned into stone, from his knees to his heart." Then number three spake: "I know yet more: though the bridal shirt too be burnt, the King hasn't even then secured his bride: when the dance is held after the wedding, and the young Queen is dancing, she will suddenly grow deadly white, and drop down like one dead, and unless some one lifts her up and draws three drops of blood from her right side, and spits them out again, she will die. But if anyone who knows this betrays it, he will be turned into stone from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet." When the ravens had thus conversed they fled onward, but Trusty John had taken it all in, and was sad and depressed from that time forward; for if he were silent to his master concerning what he had heard, he would involve him in misfortune; but if he took him into his confidence, then he himself would forfeit his life. At last he said: "I will stand by my master, though it should be my ruin."

Now when they drew near the land it came to pass just as the ravens had predicted, and a splendid chestnut horse bounded forward. "Capital!" said the King; "this animal shall carry me to my palace," and was about to mount, but Trusty John was too sharp for him, and, springing up quickly, seized the pistol out of the holster and shot the horse dead. Then the other servants of the King, who at no time looked favorably on Trusty John, cried out: "What a sin to kill the beautiful beast that was to bear the King to his palace!" But the King spake: "Silence! let him alone; he is ever my most trusty John. Who knows for what good end he may have done this thing?" So they went on their way and entered the palace, and there in the hall stood a cupboard in which lay the ready-made bridal shirt, looking for all the world as though it were made of gold and silver. The young King went toward it and was about to take hold of it, but Trusty John, pushing him aside, seized it with his gloved hands, threw it hastily into the fire, and let it burn The other servants commenced grumbling again, and said: "See, he's actually burning the King's bridal shirt." But the young King spoke: "Who knows for what good purpose he does it? Let him alone, he is my most trusty John." Then the wedding was celebrated, the dance began, and the bride joined in, but Trusty John watched her countenance carefully. Of a sudden she grew deadly white, and fell to the ground as if she were

dead. He at once sprang hastily toward her, lifted her up, and bore her to a room, where he laid her down, and kneeling beside her he drew three drops of blood from her right side, and spat them out. She soon breathed again and came to herself; but the young King had watched the proceeding, and not knowing why Trusty John had acted as he did, he flew into a passion, and cried: “Throw him into prison.” On the following morning sentence was passed on Trusty John, and he was condemned to be hanged. As he stood on the gallows he said: “Every one doomed to death has the right to speak once before he dies; and I too have that privilege?” “Yes,” said the King, “it shall be granted to you.” So Trusty John spoke: “I am unjustly condemned, for I have always been faithful to you”; and he proceeded to relate how he had heard the ravens’ conversation on the sea, and how he had to do all he did in order to save his master. Then the King cried: “Oh! my most trusty John, pardon! pardon! Take him down.” But as he uttered the last word Trusty John had fallen lifeless to the ground, and was a stone.

The King and Queen were in despair, and the King spake: “Ah! how ill have I rewarded such great fidelity!” and made them lift up the stone image and place it in his bedroom near his bed. As often as he looked at it he wept and said: “Oh! if I could only restore you to life, my most trusty John!” After a time the Queen gave birth to twins, two small sons, who throve and grew, and were a constant joy to her. One day when the Queen was at church, and the two children sat and played with their father, he gazed again full of grief on the stone statue, and sighing, wailed: “Oh, if I could only restore you to life, my most trusty John!” Suddenly the stone began to speak, and said: “Yes, you can restore me to life again if you are prepared to sacrifice what you hold most dear.” And the King cried out: “All I have in the world will I give up for your sake.” The stone continued: “If you cut off with your own hand the heads of your two children, and smear me with their blood, I shall come back to life.” The King was aghast when he heard that he had himself to put his children to death; but when he thought of Trusty John’s fidelity, and how he had even died for him, he drew his sword, and with his own hand cut the heads off his children. And when he had smeared the stone with their blood, life came back, and Trusty John stood once more safe and sound before him. He spake to the King: “Your loyalty shall be rewarded,” and taking up the heads of the children, he placed them on their bodies, smeared the wounds with their

blood, and in a minute they were all right again and jumping about as if nothing had happened. Then the King was full of joy, and when he saw the Queen coming, he hid Trusty John and the two children in a big cupboard. As she entered he said to her: “Did you pray in church?” “Yes,” she answered, “but my thoughts dwelt constantly on Trusty John, and of what he has suffered for us.” Then he spake: “Dear wife, we can restore him to life, but the price asked is our two little sons; we must sacrifice them.” The Queen grew white and her heart sank, but she replied: “We owe it to him on account of his great fidelity.” Then he rejoiced that she was of the same mind as he had been, and going forward he opened the cupboard, and fetched the two children and Trusty John out, saying: “God be praised! Trusty John is free once more, and we have our two small sons again.” Then he related to her all that had passed, and they lived together happily ever afterward.[27]

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27. Grimm.

THE BRAVE LITTLE TAILOR

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One summer’s day a little tailor sat on his table by the window in the best of spirits, and sewed for dear life. As he was sitting thus a peasant woman came down the street, calling out: “Good jam to sell, good jam to sell.” This sounded sweetly in the tailor’s ears; he put his frail little head out of the window, and shouted: “up here, my good woman, and you’ll find a willing customer.” The woman climbed up the three flights of stairs with her heavy basket to the tailor’s room, and he made her spread out all the pots in a row before him. He examined them all, lifted them up and smelled them, and said at last: “This jam seems good, weigh me four ounces of it, my good woman; and even if it’s a quarter of a pound I won’t stick at it.” The woman, who had hoped to find a good market, gave him what he wanted, but went away grumbling wrathfully. “Now heaven shall bless this jam for my use,” cried the little tailor, “and it shall sustain and strengthen me.” He fetched some bread out of a cupboard, cut a round off the loaf, and spread the jam on it. “That won’t taste amiss,” he said; “but I’ll finish that waistcoat first before I take a bite.” He placed the bread beside him, went on sewing, and out of the lightness of his heart kept on making his stitches bigger and bigger. In the meantime the smell of the sweet jam rose to the ceiling, where heaps of flies were sitting, and attracted them to such an extent that they swarmed on to it in masses. “Ha! who invited you?” said the tailor, and chased the unwelcome guests away. But the flies, who didn’t understand English, refused to let themselves be warned off, and returned again in even greater numbers. At last the little tailor, losing all patience, reached out of his chimney corner for a duster, and exclaiming: “Wait, and I’ll give it to you,” he beat them mercilessly with it. When he left off he counted the slain, and no fewer than seven lay dead before him with outstretched legs. “What a desperate fellow I am!” said he, and was filled with admiration at his own courage. “The whole town must know about this”; and in great haste the little tailor cut out a girdle, hemmed it, and embroidered on it in big letters, “Seven at a blow.”

“What did I say, the town? no, the whole world shall hear of it,” he said; and his heart beat for joy as a lamb wags his tail.

The tailor strapped the girdle round his waist and set out into the wide world, for he considered his workroom too small a field for his prowess. Before he set forth he looked round about him, to see if there was anything in the house he could take with him on his journey; but he found nothing except an old cheese, which he took possession of. In front of the house he observed a bird that had been caught in some bushes, and this he put into his wallet beside the cheese. Then he went on his way merrily, and being light and agile he never felt tired. His way led up a hill, on the top of which sat a powerful giant, who was calmly surveying the landscape. The little tailor went up to him, and greeting him cheerfully said: “Good-day, friend; there you sit at your ease viewing the whole wide world. I’m just on my way there. What do you say to accompanying me?” The giant looked contemptuously at the tailor, and said: “What a poor wretched little creature you are!” “That’s a good joke,” answered the little tailor, and unbuttoning his coat he showed the giant the girdle. “There now, you can read what sort of a fellow I am.” The giant read: “Seven at a blow”; and thinking they were human beings the tailor had slain, he conceived a certain respect for the little man. But first he thought he’d test him, so taking up a stone in his hand, he squeezed it till some drops of water ran out. “Now you do the same,” said the giant, “if you really wish to be thought strong.” “Is that all?” said the little tailor; “that’s child’s play to me,” so he dived into his wallet, brought out the cheese, and pressed it till the whey ran out. “My squeeze was in sooth better than yours,” said he. The giant didn’t know what to say, for he couldn’t have believed it of the little fellow. To prove him again, the giant lifted a stone and threw it so high that the eye could hardly follow it. “Now, my little pigmy, let me see you do that.” “Well thrown,” said the tailor; “but, after all, your stone fell to the ground; I’ll throw one that won’t come down at all.” He dived into his wallet again, and grasping the bird in his hand, he threw it up into the air. The bird, enchanted to be free, soared up into the sky, and flew away never to return. “Well, what do you think of that little piece of business, friend?” asked the tailor. “You can certainly throw,” said the giant; “but now let’s see if you can carry a proper weight.” With these words he led the tailor to a huge oak tree which had been felled to the ground, and said:

“If you are strong enough, help me to carry the tree out of the wood.” “Most certainly,” said the little tailor: “just you take the trunk on your shoulder; I’ll bear the top and branches, which is certainly the heaviest part.” The giant laid the trunk on his shoulder, but the tailor sat at his ease among the branches; and the giant, who couldn’t see what was going on behind him, had to carry the whole tree, and the little tailor into the bargain. There he sat behind in the best of spirits, lustily whistling a tune, as if carrying the tree were mere sport. The giant, after dragging the heavy weight for some time, could get on no further, and shouted out: “Hi! I must let the tree fall.” The tailor sprang nimbly down, seized the tree with both hands as if he had carried it the whole way and said to the giant: “Fancy a big lout like you not being able to carry a tree!”

They continued to go on their way together, and as they passed by a cherry tree the giant grasped the top of it, where the ripest fruit hung, gave the branches into the tailor’s hand, and bade him eat. But the little tailor was far too weak to hold the tree down, and when the giant let go the tree swung back into the air, bearing the little tailor with it. When he had fallen to the ground again without hurting himself, the giant said: “What! do you mean to tell me you haven’t the strength to hold down a feeble twig?” “It wasn’t strength that was wanting,” replied the tailor; “do you think that would have been anything for a man who has killed seven at a blow? I jumped over the tree because the huntsmen are shooting among the branches near us. Do you do the like if you dare.” The giant made an attempt, but couldn’t get over the tree, and stuck fast in the branches, so that here too the little tailor had the better of him.

“Well, you’re a fine fellow, after all,” said the giant; “come and spend the night with us in our cave.” The little tailor willingly consented to do this, and following his friend they went on till they reached a cave where several other giants were sitting round a fire, each holding a roast sheep in his hand, of which he was eating. The little tailor looked about him, and thought: “Yes, there’s certainly more room to turn round in here than in my workshop.” The giant showed him a bed and bade him lie down and have a good sleep. But the bed was too big for the little tailor, so he didn’t get into it, but crept away into the corner. At midnight, when the giant thought the little tailor was fast asleep, he rose up, and taking his big iron walking-stick, he broke the bed in two with a blow, and thought he had

made an end of the little grasshopper. At early dawn the giants went off to the wood, and quite forgot about the little tailor, till all of a sudden they met him trudging along in the most cheerful manner. The giants were terrified at the apparition, and, fearful lest he should slay them, they all took to their heels as fast as they could.

The little tailor continued to follow his nose, and after he had wandered about for a long time he came to the courtyard of a royal palace, and feeling tired he lay down on the grass and fell asleep. While he lay there the people came, and looking him all over read on his girdle: “Seven at a blow.” “Oh!” they said, “what can this great hero of a hundred fights want in our peaceful land? He must indeed be a mighty man of valor.” They went and told the King about him, and said what a weighty and useful man he’d be in time of war, and that it would be well to secure him at any price. This counsel pleased the King, and he sent one of his courtiers down to the little tailor, to offer him, when he awoke, a commission in their army. The messenger remained standing by the sleeper, and waited till he stretched his limbs and opened his eyes, when he tendered his proposal. “That’s the very thing I came here for,” he answered; “I am quite ready to enter the King’s service.” So he was received with all honor, and given a special house of his own to live in.

But the other officers resented the success of the little tailor, and wished him a thousand miles away. “What’s to come of it all?” they asked each other; “if we quarrel with him, he’ll let out at us, and at every blow seven will fall. There’ll soon be an end of us.” So they resolved to go in a body to the King, and all to send in their papers. “We are not made,” they said, “to hold out against a man who kills seven at a blow.” The King was grieved at the thought of losing all his faithful servants for the sake of one man, and he wished heartily that he had never set eyes on him, or that he could get rid of him. But he didn’t dare to send him away, for he feared he might kill him along with his people, and place himself on the throne. He pondered long and deeply over the matter, and finally came to a conclusion. He sent to the tailor and told him that, seeing what a great and warlike hero he was, he was about to make him an offer. In a certain wood of his kingdom there dwelled two giants who did much harm; by the way they robbed, murdered, burned, and plundered everything about them; “no one could approach them without endangering his life. But if he could

overcome and kill these two giants he should have his only daughter for a wife, and half his kingdom into the bargain; he might have a hundred horsemen, too, to back him up." "That's the very thing for a man like me," thought the little tailor; "one doesn't get the offer of a beautiful princess and half a kingdom every day." "Done with you," he answered; "I'll soon put an end to the giants. But I haven't the smallest need of your hundred horsemen; a fellow who can slay seven men at a blow need not be afraid of two."

The little tailor set out, and the hundred horsemen followed him. When he came to the outskirts of the wood he said to his followers: "You wait here, I'll manage the giants by myself"; and he went on into the wood, casting his sharp little eyes right and left about him. After a while he spied the two giants lying asleep under a tree, and snoring till the very boughs bent with the breeze. The little tailor lost no time in filling his wallet with stones, and then climbed up the tree under which they lay. When he got to about the middle of it he slipped along a branch till he sat just above the sleepers, when he threw down one stone after the other on the nearest giant. The giant felt nothing for a long time, but at last he woke up, and pinching his companion said: "What did you strike me for?" "I didn't strike you," said the other, "you must be dreaming." They both lay down to sleep again, and the tailor threw down a stone on the second giant, who sprang up and cried: "What's that for? Why did you throw something at me?" "I didn't throw anything," growled the first one. They wrangled on for a time, till, as both were tired, they made up the matter and fell asleep again. The little tailor began his game once more, and flung the largest stone he could find in his wallet with all his force, and hit the first giant on the chest. "This is too much of a good thing!" he yelled, and springing up like a madman, he knocked his companion against the tree till he trembled. He gave, however, as good as he got, and they became so enraged that they tore up trees and beat each other with them, till they both fell dead at once on the ground. Then the little tailor jumped down. "It's a mercy," he said, "that they didn't root up the tree on which I was perched, or I should have had to jump like a squirrel on to another, which, nimble though I am, would have been no easy job." He drew his sword and gave each of the giants a very fine thrust or two on the breast, and then went to the horsemen and said: "The deed is done, I've put an end to the two of

them; but I assure you it has been no easy matter, for they even tore up trees in their struggle to defend themselves; but all that's of no use against one who slays seven men at a blow." "Weren't you wounded?" asked the horsemen.

"No fear," answered the tailor; "they haven't touched a hair of my head." But the horsemen wouldn't believe him till they rode into the wood and found the giants weltering in their blood, and the trees lying around, torn up by the roots.

The little tailor now demanded the promised reward from the King, but he repented his promise, and pondered once more how he could rid himself of the hero. "Before you obtain the hand of my daughter and half my kingdom," he said to him, "you must do another deed of valor. A unicorn is running about loose in the wood, and doing much mischief; you must first catch it." "I'm even less afraid of one unicorn than of two giants; seven at a blow, that's my motto." He took a piece of cord and an axe with him, went out to the wood, and again told the men who had been sent with him to remain outside. He hadn't to search long, for the unicorn soon passed by, and, on perceiving the tailor, dashed straight at him as though it were going to spike him on the spot. "Gently, gently," said he, "not so fast, my friend"; and standing still he waited till the beast was quite near, when he sprang lightly behind a tree; the unicorn ran with all its force against the tree, and rammed its horn so firmly into the trunk that it had no strength left to pull it out again, and was thus successfully captured. "Now I've caught my bird," said the tailor, and he came out from behind the tree, placed the cord round its neck first, then struck the horn out of the tree with his axe, and when everything was in order led the beast before the King.

Still the King didn't want to give him the promised reward and made a third demand. The tailor was to catch a wild boar for him that did a great deal of harm in the wood; and he might have the huntsmen to help him. "Willingly," said the tailor; "that's mere child's play." But he didn't take the huntsmen into the wood with him, and they were well enough pleased to remain behind, for the wild boar had often received them in a manner which did not make them desire its further acquaintance. As soon as the boar perceived the tailor it ran at him with foaming mouth and gleaming teeth, and tried to knock him down; but our alert little friend ran into a

chapel that stood near, and got out of the window again with a jump. The boar pursued him into the church, but the tailor skipped round to the door, and closed it securely. So the raging beast was caught, for it was far too heavy and unwieldy to spring out of the window. The little tailor summoned the huntsmen together, that they might see the prisoner with their own eyes. Then the hero betook himself to the King, who was obliged now, whether he liked it or not, to keep his promise, and hand him over his daughter and half his kingdom. Had he known that no hero-warrior, but only a little tailor stood before him, it would have gone even more to his heart. So the wedding was celebrated with much splendor and little joy, and the tailor became a king.

After a time the Queen heard her husband saying one night in his sleep: “My lad, make that waistcoat and patch these trousers, or I’ll box your ears.” Thus she learned in what rank the young gentleman had been born, and next day she poured forth her woes to her father, and begged him to help her to get rid of a husband who was nothing more nor less than a tailor. The King comforted her, and said: “Leave your bedroom door open to-night, my servants shall stand outside, and when your husband is fast asleep they shall enter, bind him fast, and carry him on to a ship, which shall sail away out into the wide ocean.” The Queen was well satisfied with the idea, but the armor-bearer, who had overheard everything, being much attached to his young master, went straight to him and revealed the whole plot. “I’ll soon put a stop to the business,” said the tailor. That night he and his wife went to bed at the usual time; and when she thought he had fallen asleep she got up, opened the door, and then lay down again. The little tailor, who had only pretended to be asleep, began to call out in a clear voice: “My lad, make that waistcoat and patch those trousers, or I’ll box your ears. I have killed seven at a blow, slain two giants, led a unicorn captive, and caught a wild boar, then why should I be afraid of those men standing outside my door?” The men, when they heard the tailor saying these words, were so terrified that they fled as if pursued by a wild army, and didn’t dare go near him again. So the little tailor was and remained a king all the days of his life.

A VOYAGE TO LILLIPUT

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CHAPTER I

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My father had a small estate in Nottinghamshire, and I was the third of four sons. He sent me to Cambridge at fourteen years old, and after studying there three years I was bound apprentice to Mr. Bates, a famous surgeon in London. There, as my father now and then sent me small sums of money, I spent them in learning navigation, and other arts useful to those who travel, as I always believed it would be some time or other my fortune to do.

Three years after my leaving him my good master, Mr. Bates, recommended me as ship's surgeon to the "Swallow," on which I voyaged three years. When I came back I settled in London, and, having taken part of a small house, I married Miss Mary Burton, daughter of Mr. Edmund Burton, hosier.

But my good master Bates died two years after; and as I had few friends my business began to fail, and I determined to go again to sea. After several voyages, I accepted an offer from Captain W. Pritchard, master of the "Antelope," who was making a voyage to the South Sea. We set sail from Bristol, May 4, 1699; and our voyage at first was very prosperous.

But in our passage to the East Indies we were driven by a violent storm to the north-west of Van Diemen's Land. Twelve of our crew died from hard labor and bad food, and the rest were in a very weak condition. On the 5th of November, the weather being very hazy, the seamen spied a rock within 120 yards of the ship; but the wind was so strong that we were driven straight upon it, and immediately split. Six of the crew, of whom I was one, letting down the boat, got clear of the ship, and we rowed about three leagues, till we could work no longer. We therefore trusted ourselves to the mercy of the waves; and in about half an hour the boat was upset by a sudden squall. What became of my companions in the boat, or those who escaped on the rock or were left in the vessel, I cannot tell; but I conclude they were all lost. For my part, I swam as fortune directed me, and was pushed forward by wind and tide; but when I was able to struggle no

longer I found myself within my depth. By this time the storm was much abated. I reached the shore at last, about eight o'clock in the evening, and advanced nearly half a mile inland, but could not discover any sign of inhabitants. I was extremely tired, and with the heat of the weather I found myself much inclined to sleep. I lay down on the grass, which was very short and soft, and slept sounder than ever I did in my life for about nine hours. When I woke, it was just daylight. I attempted to rise, but could not; for as I happened to be lying on my back, I found my arms and legs were fastened on each side to the ground; and my hair, which was long and thick, tied down in the same manner. I could only look upward. The sun began to grow hot, and the light hurt my eyes. I heard a confused noise about me, but could see nothing except the sky. In a little time I felt something alive and moving on my left leg, which, advancing gently over my breast, came almost up to my chin, when, bending my eyes downward, I perceived it to be a human creature, not six inches high, with a bow and arrow in his hands, and a quiver at his back. In the meantime I felt at least forty more following the first. I was in the utmost astonishment, and roared so loud that they all ran back in a fright; and some of them were hurt with the falls they got by leaping from my sides upon the ground. However, they soon returned, and one of them, who ventured so far as to get a full sight of my face, lifted up his hands in admiration. I lay all this while in great uneasiness; but at length, struggling to get loose, I succeeded in breaking the strings that fastened my left arm to the ground; and at the same time, with a violent pull that gave me extreme pain, I a little loosened the strings that tied down my hair, so that I was just able to turn my head about two inches. But the creatures ran off a second time before I could seize them, whereupon there was a great shout, and in an instant I felt above a hundred arrows discharged on my left hand, which pricked me like so many needles. Moreover, they shot another flight into the air, of which some fell on my face, which I immediately covered with my left hand. When this shower of arrows was over I groaned with grief and pain, and then, striving again to get loose, they discharged another flight of arrows larger than the first, and some of them tried to stab me with their spears; but by good luck I had on a leather jacket, which they could not pierce. By this time I thought it most prudent to lie still till night, when, my left hand being already loose, I could easily free myself;

and as for the inhabitants, I thought I might be a match for the greatest army they could bring against me if they were all of the same size as him I saw. When the people observed that I was quiet they discharged no more arrows, but by the noise I heard I knew that their number was increased; and about four yards from me, for more than an hour, there was a knocking, like people at work. Then, turning my head that way as well as the pegs and strings would let me, I saw a stage set up, about a foot and a half from the ground, with two or three ladders to mount it. From this, one of them, who seemed to be a person of quality, made me a long speech, of which I could not understand a word, though I could tell from his manner that he sometimes threatened me, and sometimes spoke with pity and kindness. I answered in few words, but in the most submissive manner; and, being almost famished with hunger, I could not help showing my impatience by putting my finger frequently to my mouth, to signify that I wanted food. He understood me very well, and, descending from the stage, commanded that several ladders should be set against my sides, on which more than a hundred of the inhabitants mounted, and walked toward my mouth with baskets full of food, which had been sent by the King’s orders when he first received tidings of me. There were legs and shoulders like mutton but smaller than the wings of a lark. I ate them two or three at a mouthful, and took three loaves at a time. They supplied me as fast as they could, with a thousand marks of wonder at my appetite. I then made a sign that I wanted something to drink. They guessed that a small quantity would not suffice me, and, being a most ingenious people, they slung up one of their largest hogsheads, then rolled it toward my hand, and beat out the top. I drank it off at a draught, which I might well do, for it did not hold half a pint. They brought me a second hogshead, which I drank, and made signs for more; but they had none to give me. However, I could not wonder enough at the daring of these tiny mortals, who ventured to mount and walk upon my body, while one of my hands was free, without trembling at the very sight of so huge a creature as I must have seemed to them. After some time there appeared before me a person of high rank from his Imperial Majesty. His Excellency, having mounted my right leg, advanced to my face, with about a dozen of his retinue, and spoke about ten minutes, often pointing forward, which, as I afterward found, was toward the capital city, about half a mile distant, whither it was

commanded by his Majesty that I should be conveyed. I made a sign with my hand that was loose, putting it to the other (but over his Excellency's head, for fear of hurting him or his train), to show that I desired my liberty. He seemed to understand me well enough, for he shook his head, though he made other signs to let me know that I should have meat and drink enough, and very good treatment. Then I once more thought of attempting to escape; but when I felt the smart of their arrows on my face and hands, which were all in blisters and observed likewise that the number of my enemies increased, I gave tokens to let them know that they might do with me what they pleased. Then they daubed my face and hands with a sweet-smelling ointment, which in a few minutes removed all the smarts of the arrows. The relief from pain and hunger made me drowsy, and presently I fell asleep. I slept about eight hours, as I was told afterward; and it was no wonder, for the physicians, by the Emperor's orders, had mingled a sleeping draught in the hogsheads of wine.

It seems that, when I was discovered sleeping on the ground after my landing, the Emperor had early notice of it, and determined that I should be tied in the manner I have related (which was done in the night, while I slept), that plenty of meat and drink should be sent me, and a machine prepared to carry me to the capital city. Five hundred carpenters and engineers were immediately set to work to prepare the engine. It was a frame of wood, raised three inches from the ground, about seven feet long and four wide, moving upon twenty-two wheels. But the difficulty was to place me on it. Eighty poles were erected for this purpose, and very strong cords fastened to bandages which the workmen had tied round my neck, hands, body, and legs. Nine hundred of the strongest men were employed to draw up these cords by pulleys fastened on the poles, and in less than three hours I was raised and slung into the engine, and there tied fast. Fifteen hundred of the Emperor's largest horses, each about four inches and a half high, were then employed to draw me toward the capital. But while all this was done I still lay in a deep sleep, and I did not wake till four hours after we began our journey.

The Emperor and all his Court came out to meet us when we reached the capital; but his great officials would not suffer his Majesty to risk his person by mounting on my body. Where the carriage stopped there stood an ancient temple, supposed to be the largest in the whole kingdom, and

here it was determined that I should lodge. Near the great gate, through which I could easily creep, they fixed ninety-one chains, like those which hang to a lady's watch, which were locked to my left leg with thirty-six padlocks; and when the workmen found it was impossible for me to break loose, they cut all the strings that bound me. Then I rose up, feeling as melancholy as ever I did in my life. But the noise and astonishment of the people on seeing me rise and walk were inexpressible. The chains that held my left leg were about two yards long, and gave me not only freedom to walk backward and forward in a semicircle, but to creep in and lie at full length inside the temple. The Emperor, advancing toward me from among his courtiers, all most magnificently clad, surveyed me with great admiration, but kept beyond the length of my chain. He was taller by about the breadth of my nail than any of his Court, which alone was enough to strike awe into the beholders, and graceful and majestic. The better to behold him, I lay down on my side, so that my face was level with his, and he stood three yards off. However, I have had him since many times in my hand, and therefore cannot be deceived. His dress was very simple; but he wore a light helmet of gold, adorned with jewels and a plume. He held his sword drawn in his hand, to defend himself if I should break loose; it was almost three inches long, and the hilt was of gold, enriched with diamonds. His voice was shrill, but very clear. His Imperial Majesty spoke often to me, and I answered; but neither of us could understand a word.

CHAPTER II

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After about two hours the Court retired, and I was left with a strong guard to keep away the crowd, some of whom had had the impudence to shoot their arrows at me as I sat by the door of my house. But the colonel ordered six of them to be seized and delivered bound into my hands. I put five of them into my coat pocket; and as to the sixth, I made a face as if I would eat him alive. The poor man screamed terribly, and the colonel and his officers were much distressed, especially when they saw me take out my penknife. But I soon set them at ease, for, cutting the strings he was bound with, I put him gently on the ground, and away he ran. I treated the rest in the same manner, taking them one by one out of my pocket; and I saw that both the soldiers and people were delighted at this mark of my kindness.

Toward night I got with some difficulty into my house, where I lay on the ground, as I had to do for a fortnight, till a bed was prepared for me out of six hundred beds of the ordinary measure.

Six hundred servants were appointed me, and three hundred tailors made me a suit of clothes. Moreover, six of his Majesty’s greatest scholars were employed to teach me their language, so that soon I was able to converse after a fashion with the Emperor, who often honored me with his visits. The first words I learned were to desire that he would please to give me my liberty, which I every day repeated on my knees; but he answered that this must be a work of time, and that first I must swear a peace with him and his kingdom. He told me also that by the laws of the nation I must be searched by two of his officers, and that as this could not be done without my help, he trusted them in my hands, and whatever they took from me should be returned when I left the country. I took up the two officers, and put them into my coat pockets. These gentlemen, having pen, ink, and paper about them, made an exact list of everything they saw, which I afterward translated into English, and which ran as follows:

“In the right coat pocket of the great Man-Mountain we found only one great piece of coarse cloth, large enough to cover the carpet of your

Majesty's chief room of state. In the left pocket we saw a huge silver chest, with a silver cover, which we could not lift. We desired that it should be opened, and one of us stepping into it found himself up to the mid-leg in a sort of dust, some of which flying into our faces sent us both into a fit of sneezing. In his right waistcoat pocket we found a number of white thin substances, folded one over another, about the size of three men, tied with a strong cable, and marked with black figures, which we humbly conceive to be writings. In the left there was a sort of engine, from the back of which extended twenty long poles, with which, we conjecture, the Man-Mountain combs his head. In the smaller pocket on the right side were several round flat pieces of white and red metal, of different sizes. Some of the white, which appeared to be silver, were so large and heavy that my comrade and I could hardly lift them. From another pocket hung a huge silver chain, with a wonderful kind of engine fastened to it, a globe half silver and half of some transparent metal; for on the transparent side we saw certain strange figures, and thought we could touch them till we found our fingers stopped by the shining substance. This engine made an incessant noise, like a water-mill, and we conjecture it is either some unknown animal, or the god he worships, but probably the latter, for he told us that he seldom did anything without consulting it.

"This is a list of what we found about the body of the Man-Mountain, who treated us with great civility."

I had one private pocket which escaped their search, containing a pair of spectacles and a small spy-glass, which, being of no consequence to the Emperor, I did not think myself bound in honor to discover.

CHAPTER III

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My gentleness and good behavior gained so far on the Emperor and his Court, and, indeed, on the people in general, that I began to have hopes of getting my liberty in a short time. The natives came by degrees to be less fearful of danger from me. I would sometimes lie down and let five or six of them dance on my hand; and at last the boys and girls ventured to come and play at hide-and-seek in my hair.

The horses of the army and of the royal stables were no longer shy, having been daily led before me; and one of the Emperor's huntsmen, on a large courser, took my foot, shoe and all, which was indeed a prodigious leap. I amused the Emperor one day in a very extraordinary manner. I took nine sticks, and fixed them firmly in the ground in a square. Then I took four other sticks, and tied them parallel at each corner, about two feet from the ground. I fastened my handkerchief to the nine sticks that stood erect, and extended it on all sides till it was as tight as the top of a drum; and I desired the Emperor to let a troop of his best horse, twenty-four in number, come and exercise upon this plain. His majesty approved of the proposal, and I took them up one by one, with the proper officers to exercise them. As soon as they got into order they divided into two parties, discharged blunt arrows, drew their swords, fled and pursued, and, in short, showed the best military discipline I ever beheld. The parallel sticks secured them and their horses from falling off the stage, and the Emperor was so much delighted that he ordered this entertainment to be repeated several days, and persuaded the Empress herself to let me hold her in her chair within two yards of the stage, whence she could view the whole performance. Fortunately no accident happened, only once a fiery horse, pawing with his hoof, struck a hole in my handkerchief, and overthrew his rider and himself. But I immediately relieved them both, and covering the hole with one hand, I set down the troop with the other as I had taken them up. The horse that fell was strained in the shoulder; but the rider was not hurt, and I repaired my handkerchief as well as I could. However, I would not trust to the strength of it any more in such dangerous enterprises.

I had sent so many petitions for my liberty that his Majesty at length mentioned the matter in a full council, where it was opposed by none except Skyresh Bolgolam, admiral of the realm, who was pleased without any provocation to be my mortal enemy. However, he agreed at length, though he succeeded in himself drawing up the conditions on which I should be set free. After they were read I was requested to swear to perform them in the method prescribed by their laws, which was to hold my right foot in my left hand, and to place the middle finger of my right hand on the crown of my head, and my thumb on the top of my right ear. But I have made a translation of the conditions, which I here offer to the public:

"Golbaste Mamarem Evlame Gurdile Shefin Mully Ully Gue, Most Mighty Emperor of Lilliput, delight and terror of the universe, whose dominions extend to the ends of the globe, monarch of all monarchs, taller than the sons of men, whose feet press down to the center, and whose head strikes against the sun, at whose nod the princes of the earth shake their knees, pleasant as the spring, comfortable as the summer, fruitful as autumn, dreadful as winter: His Most Sublime Majesty proposeth to the Man-Mountain, lately arrived at our celestial dominions, the following articles, which by a solemn oath he shall be obliged to perform:

"First. The Man-Mountain shall not depart from our dominions without our license under the great seal.

"Second. He shall not presume to come into our metropolis without our express order, at which time the inhabitants shall have two hours' warning to keep within doors.

"Third. The said Man-Mountain shall confine his walks to our principal high roads, and not offer to walk or lie down in a meadow or field of corn.

"Fourth. As he walks the said roads he shall take the utmost care not to trample upon the bodies of any of our loving subjects, their horses or carriages, nor take any of our subjects into his hands without their own consent.

"Fifth. If an express requires extraordinary speed the Man-Mountain shall be obliged to carry in his pocket the messenger and horse a six days' journey, and return the said messenger (if so required) safe to our imperial presence.

“Sixth. He shall be our ally against our enemies in the island of Blefuscu, and do his utmost to destroy their fleet, which is now preparing to invade us.

“Lastly. Upon his solemn oath to observe all the above articles, the said Man-Mountain shall have a daily allowance of meat and drink sufficient for the support of 1,724 of our subjects, with free access to our royal person, and other marks of our favor. Given at our palace at Belfaburac, the twelfth day of the ninety-first moon of our reign.”

I swore to these articles with great cheerfulness, whereupon my chains were immediately unlocked, and I was at full liberty.

One morning, about a fortnight after I had obtained my freedom, Reldresal, the Emperor’s secretary for private affairs, came to my house, attended only by one servant. He ordered his coach to wait at a distance, and desired that I would give him an hour’s audience. I offered to lie down that he might the more conveniently reach my ear; but he chose rather to let me hold him in my hand during our conversation. He began with compliments on my liberty, but he added that, save for the present state of things at Court, perhaps I might not have obtained it so soon. “For,” he said, “however flourishing we may seem to foreigners, we are in danger of an invasion from the island of Blefuscu, which is the other great empire of the universe, almost as large and as powerful as this of his Majesty. For as to what we have heard you say, that there are other kingdoms in the world, inhabited by human creatures as large as yourself, our philosophers are very doubtful, and rather conjecture that you dropped from the moon, or one of the stars, because a hundred mortals of your size would soon destroy all the fruit and cattle of his Majesty’s dominions. Besides, our histories of six thousand moons make no mention of any other regions than the two mighty empires of Lilliput and Blefuscu, which, as I was going to tell you, are engaged in a most obstinate war, which began in the following manner: It is allowed on all hands that the primitive way of breaking eggs was upon the larger end; but his present Majesty’s grandfather, while he was a boy, going to eat an egg, and breaking it according to the ancient practice, happened to cut one of his fingers. Whereupon the Emperor, his father, made a law commanding all his subjects to break the smaller end of their eggs. The people so highly resented this law that there have been six rebellions raised on that account,

wherein one emperor lost his life, and another his crown. It is calculated that eleven hundred persons have at different times suffered rather than break their eggs at the smaller end. But these rebels, the Bigendians, have found so much encouragement at the Emperor of Blefuscu's Court, to which they always fled for refuge, that a bloody war, as I said, has been carried on between the two empires for six-and-thirty moons; and now the Blefuscudians have equipped a large fleet, and are preparing to descend upon us. Therefore his Imperial Majesty, placing great confidence in your valor and strength, has commanded me to set the case before you."

I desired the secretary to present my humble duty to the Emperor, and to let him know that I was ready, at the risk of my life, to defend him against all invaders.

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It was not long before I communicated to his Majesty the plan I formed for seizing the enemy's whole fleet. The Empire of Blefuscu is an island parted from Lilliput only by a channel eight hundred yards wide. I consulted the most experienced seamen on the depth of the channel, and they told me that in the middle, at high water, it was seventy glumguffs (about six feet of European measure). I walked toward the coast, where, lying down behind a hillock, I took out my spy-glass, and viewed the enemy's fleet at anchor—about fifty men-of-war, and other vessels. I then came back to my house and gave orders for a great quantity of the strongest cables and bars of iron. The cable was about as thick as packthread, and the bars of the length and size of a knitting-needle. I trebled the cable to make it stronger, and for the same reason twisted three of the iron bars together, bending the ends into a hook. Having thus fixed fifty hooks to as many cables, I went back to the coast, and taking off my coat, shoes, and stockings, walked into the sea in my leather jacket about half an hour before high water. I waded with what haste I could, swimming in the middle about thirty yards, till I felt ground, and thus arrived at the fleet in less than half an hour. The enemy was so frightened when they saw me that they leaped out of their ships and swam ashore, where there could not be fewer than thirty thousand. Then, fastening a hook to the hole at the prow of each ship, I tied all the cords together at the end. Meanwhile the enemy discharged several thousand arrows, many of which stuck in my hands and face. My greatest fear was for my eyes, which I should have lost if I had not suddenly thought of the pair of spectacles which had escaped the Emperor's searchers. These I took out and fastened upon my nose, and thus armed went on with my work in spite of the arrows, many of which struck against the glasses of my spectacles, but without any other effect than slightly disturbing them. Then, taking the knot in my hand, I began to pull; but not a ship would stir, for they were too fast held by their anchors. Thus the boldest part of my enterprise remained. Letting go the cord, I resolutely cut with my knife the cables that fastened the anchors, receiving

more than two hundred shots in my face and hands. Then I took up again the knotted end of the cables to which my hooks were tied, and with great ease drew fifty of the enemy's largest men-of-war after me.

When the Blefuscudians saw the fleet moving in order, and me pulling at the end, they set up a scream of grief and despair that it is impossible to describe. When I had got out of danger I stopped awhile to pick out the arrows that stuck in my hands and face, and rubbed on some of the same ointment that was given me at my arrival. I then took off my spectacles, and after waiting about an hour, till the tide was a little fallen, I waded on to the royal port of Lilliput.

The Emperor and his whole Court stood on the shore awaiting me. They saw the ships move forward in a large half-moon, but could not discern me, who, in the middle of the channel, was under water up to my neck. The Emperor concluded that I was drowned, and that the enemy's fleet was approaching in a hostile manner. But he was soon set at ease, for, the channel growing shallower every step I made, I came in a short time within hearing, and holding up the end of the cable by which the fleet was fastened, I cried in a loud voice: "Long live the most puissant Emperor of Lilliput!" The Prince received me at my landing with all possible joy, and made me a Nardal on the spot, which is the highest title of honor among them.

His Majesty desired that I would take some opportunity to bring all the rest of his enemy's ships into his ports, and seemed to think of nothing less than conquering the whole Empire of Blefuscu, and becoming the sole monarch of the world. But I plainly protested that I would never be the means of bringing a free and brave people into slavery; and though the wisest of the Ministers were of my opinion, my open refusal was so opposed to his Majesty's ambition that he could never forgive me. And from this time a plot began between himself and those of his Ministers who were my enemies, that nearly ended in my utter destruction.

About three weeks after this exploit there arrived an embassy from Blefuscu, with humble offers of peace, which was soon concluded, on terms very advantageous to our Emperor. There were six ambassadors, with a train of about five hundred persons, all very magnificent. Having been privately told that I had befriended them, they made me a visit, and paying me many compliments on my valor and generosity, invited me to

their kingdom in the Emperor their master's name. I asked them to present my most humble respects to the Emperor their master, whose royal person I resolved to attend before I returned to my own country. Accordingly, the next time I had the honor to see our Emperor I desired his general permission to visit the Blefuscudian monarch. This he granted me, but in a very cold manner, of which I afterward learned the reason.

When I was just preparing to pay my respects to the Emperor of Blefuscu, a distinguished person at Court, to whom I had once done a great service, came to my house very privately at night, and without sending his name desired admission. I put his lordship into my coat pocket, and, giving orders to a trusty servant to admit no one, I fastened the door, placed my visitor on the table, and sat down by it. His lordship's face was full of trouble; and he asked me to hear him with patience, in a matter that highly concerned my honor and my life.

"You are aware," he said, "that Skyresh Bolgolam has been your mortal enemy ever since your arrival, and his hatred is increased since your great success against Blefuscu, by which his glory as admiral is obscured. This lord and others have accused you of treason, and several councils have been called in the most private manner on your account. Out of gratitude for your favors I procured information of the whole proceedings, venturing my head for your service, and this was the charge against you:

"First, that you, having brought the imperial fleet of Blefuscu into the royal port, were commanded by his Majesty to seize all the other ships, and put to death all the Bigendian exiles, and also all the people of the empire who would not immediately consent to break their eggs at the smaller end. And that, like a false traitor to his Most Serene Majesty, you excused yourself from the service on pretence of unwillingness to force the consciences and destroy the liberties and lives of an innocent people.

"Again, when ambassadors arrived from the Court of Blefuscu, like a false traitor, you aided and entertained them, though you knew them to be servants of a prince lately in open war against his Imperial Majesty.

"Moreover, you are now preparing, contrary to the duty of a faithful subject, to voyage to the Court of Blefuscu.

"In the debate on this charge," my friend continued, "his Majesty often urged the services you had done him, while the admiral and treasurer

insisted that you should be put to a shameful death. But Reldresal, secretary for private affairs, who has always proved himself your friend suggested that if his Majesty would please to spare your life and only give orders to put out both your eyes, justice might in some measure be satisfied. At this Bolgolam rose up in fury, wondering how the secretary dared desire to preserve the life of a traitor; and the treasurer, pointing out the expense of keeping you, also urged your death. But his Majesty was graciously pleased to say that since the council thought the loss of your eyes too easy a punishment, some other might afterward be inflicted. And the secretary, humbly desiring to be heard again, said that as to expense your allowance might be gradually lessened, so that, for want of sufficient food you should grow weak and faint, and die in a few months, when his Majesty's subjects might cut your flesh from your bones and bury it, leaving the skeleton for the admiration of posterity.

"Thus, through the great friendship of the secretary the affair was arranged. It was commanded that the plan of starving you by degrees should be kept a secret; but the sentence of putting out your eyes was entered on the books. In three days your friend the secretary will come to your house and read the accusation before you, and point out the great mercy of his Majesty, that only condemns you to the loss of your eyes—which, he does not doubt, you will submit to humbly and gratefully. Twenty of his Majesty's surgeons will attend, to see the operation well performed, by discharging very sharp-pointed arrows into the balls of your eyes as you lie on the ground.

"I leave you," said my friend, "to consider what measures you will take; and, to escape suspicion, I must immediately return, as secretly as I came."

His lordship did so; and I remained alone, in great perplexity. At first I was bent on resistance; for while I had liberty I could easily with stones pelt the metropolis to pieces; but I soon rejected that idea with horror, remembering the oath I had made to the Emperor, and the favors I had received from him. At last, having his Majesty's leave to pay my respects to the Emperor of Blefuscu, I resolved to take this opportunity. Before the three days had passed I wrote a letter to my friend the secretary telling him of my resolution; and, without waiting for an answer, went to the coast, and entering the channel, between wading and swimming reached

the port of Blefuscu, where the people, who had long expected me, led me to the capital.

His Majesty, with the royal family and great officers of the Court, came out to receive me, and they entertained me in a manner suited to the generosity of so great a prince. I did not, however, mention my disgrace with the Emperor of Lilliput, since I did not suppose that prince would disclose the secret while I was out of his power. But in this, it soon appeared, I was deceived.

CHAPTER V

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Three days after my arrival, walking out of curiosity to the northeast coast of the island, I observed at some distance in the sea something that looked like a boat overturned. I pulled off my shoes and stockings, and wading two or three hundred yards, I plainly saw it to be a real boat, which I supposed might by some tempest have been driven from a ship. I returned immediately to the city for help, and after a huge amount of labor I managed to get my boat to the royal port of Blefuscu, where a great crowd of people appeared, full of wonder at sight of so prodigious a vessel. I told the Emperor that my good fortune had thrown this boat in my way to carry me to some place whence I might return to my native country, and begged his orders for materials to fit it up, and leave to depart—which, after many kindly speeches, he was pleased to grant.

Meanwhile the Emperor of Lilliput, uneasy at my long absence (but never imagining that I had the least notice of his designs), sent a person of rank to inform the Emperor of Blefuscu of my disgrace; this messenger had orders to represent the great mercy of his master, who was content to punish me with the loss of my eyes, and who expected that his brother of Blefuscu would have me sent back to Lilliput, bound hand and foot, to be punished as a traitor. The Emperor of Blefuscu answered with many civil excuses. He said that as for sending me bound, his brother knew it was impossible. Moreover, though I had taken away his fleet he was grateful to me for many good offices I had done him in making the peace. But that both their Majesties would soon be made easy; for I had found a prodigious vessel on the shore, able to carry me on the sea, which he had given orders to fit up; and he hoped in a few weeks both empires would be free from me.

With this answer the messenger returned to Lilliput; and I (though the monarch of Blefuscu secretly offered me his gracious protection if I would continue in his service) hastened my departure, resolving never more to put confidence in princes.

In about a month I was ready to take leave. The Emperor of Blefuscu, with the Empress and the royal family, came out of the palace; and I lay down on my face to kiss their hands, which they graciously gave me. His Majesty presented me with fifty purses of sprugs (their greatest gold coin) and his picture at full length, which I put immediately into one of my gloves, to keep it from being hurt. Many other ceremonies took place at my departure.

I stored the boat with meat and drink, and took six cows and two bulls alive, with as many ewes and rams, intending to carry them into my own country; and to feed them on board, I had a good bundle of hay and a bag of corn. I would gladly have taken a dozen of the natives; but this was a thing the Emperor would by no means permit, and besides a diligent search into my pockets, his Majesty pledged my honor not to carry away any of his subjects, though with their own consent and desire.

Having thus prepared all things as well as I was able, I set sail. When I had made twenty-four leagues, by my reckoning, from the island of Blefuscu, I saw a sail steering to the northeast. I hailed her, but could get no answer; yet I found I gained upon her, for the wind slackened; and in half an hour she spied me, and discharged a gun. I came up with her between five and six in the evening, Sept. 26, 1701; but my heart leaped within me to see her English colors. I put my cows and sheep into my coat pockets, and got on board with all my little cargo. The captain received me with kindness, and asked me to tell him what place I came from last; but at my answer he thought I was raving. However, I took my black cattle and sheep out of my pocket, which, after great astonishment, clearly convinced him.

We arrived in England on the 13th of April, 1702. I stayed two months with my wife and family; but my eager desire to see foreign countries would suffer me to remain no longer. However, while in England I made great profit by showing my cattle to persons of quality and others; and before I began my second voyage I sold them for 600*l*. I left 1500*l*. with my wife, and fixed her in a good house; then taking leave of her and my boy and girl, with tears on both sides, I sailed on board the “Adventure.”[28]

28. Swift.

THE PRINCESS ON THE GLASS HILL

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Once upon a time there was a man who had a meadow which lay on the side of a mountain, and in the meadow there was a barn in which he stored hay. But there had not been much hay in the barn for the last two years, for every St. John's eve, when the grass was in the height of its vigor, it was all eaten clean up, just as if a whole flock of sheep had gnawed it down to the ground during the night. This happened once, and it happened twice, but then the man got tired of losing his crop, and said to his sons—he had three of them, and the third was called Cinderlad—that one of them must go and sleep in the barn on St. John's night, for it was absurd to let the grass be eaten up again, blade and stalk, as it had been the last two years, and the one who went to watch must keep a sharp look-out, the man said.

The eldest was quite willing to go to the meadow; he would watch the grass, he said, and he would do it so well that neither man, nor beast, nor even the devil himself should have any of it. So when evening came he went to the barn, and lay down to sleep, but when night was drawing near there was such a rumbling and such an earthquake that the walls and roof shook again, and the lad jumped up and took to his heels as fast as he could, and never even looked back, and the barn remained empty that year just as it had been for the last two.

Next St. John's eve the man again said that he could not go on in this way, losing all the grass in the outlying field year after year, and that one of his sons must just go there and watch it, and watch well too. So the next oldest son was willing to show what he could do. He went to the barn and lay down to sleep, as his brother had done; but when night was drawing near there was a great rumbling, and then an earthquake, which was even worse than that on the former St. John's night, and when the youth heard it he was terrified, and went off, running as if for a wager.

The year after, it was Cinderlad's turn, but when he made ready to go the others laughed at him, and mocked him. "Well, you are just the right one to watch the hay, you who have never learned anything but how to sit

among the ashes and bake yourself!” said they. Cinderlad, however, did not trouble himself about what they said, but when evening drew near rambled away to the outlying field. When he got there he went into the barn and lay down, but in about an hour’s time the rumbling and creaking began, and it was frightful to hear it. “Well, if it gets no worse than that, I can manage to stand it,” thought Cinderlad. In a little time the creaking began again, and the earth quaked so that all the hay flew about the boy. “Oh! if it gets no worse than that I can manage to stand it,” thought Cinderlad. But then came a third rumbling, and a third earthquake, so violent that the boy thought the walls and roof had fallen down, but when that was over everything suddenly grew as still as death around him. “I am pretty sure that it will come again,” thought Cinderlad; but no, it did not. Everything was quiet, and everything stayed quiet, and when he had lain still a short time he heard something that sounded as if a horse were standing chewing just outside the barn door. He stole away to the door, which was ajar, to see what was there, and a horse was standing eating. It was so big, and fat, and fine a horse that Cinderlad had never seen one like it before, and a saddle and bridle lay upon it, and a complete suit of armor for a knight, and everything was of copper, and so bright that it shone again. “Ha, ha! it is thou who eatest up our hay then,” thought the boy; “but I will stop that.” So he made haste, and took out his steel for striking fire, and threw it over the horse, and then it had no power to stir from the spot, and became so tame that the boy could do what he liked with it. So he mounted it and rode away to a place which no one knew of but himself, and there he tied it up. When he went home again his brothers laughed and asked how he had got on.

“You didn’t lie long in the barn, if even you have been so far as the field!” said they.

“I lay in the barn till the sun rose, but I saw nothing and heard nothing, not I,” said the boy. “God knows what there was to make you two so frightened.”

“Well, we shall soon see whether you have watched the meadow or not,” answered the brothers, but when they got there the grass was all standing just as long and as thick as it had been the night before.

The next St. John’s eve it was the same thing, once again: neither of the two brothers dared to go to the outlying field to watch the crop, but

Cinderlad went, and everything happened exactly the same as on the previous St. John's eve: first there was a rumbling and an earthquake, and then there was another, and then a third: but all three earthquakes were much, very much more violent than they had been the year before. Then everything became still as death again, and the boy heard something chewing outside the barn door, so he stole as softly as he could to the door, which was slightly ajar, and again there was a horse standing close by the wall of the house, eating and chewing, and it was far larger and fatter than the first horse, and it had a saddle on its back, and a bridle was on it too, and a full suit of armor for a knight, all of bright silver, and as beautiful as anyone could wish to see. "Ho, ho!" thought the boy, "is it thou who eatest up our hay in the night? but I will put a stop to that." So he took out his steel for striking fire, and threw it over the horse's mane, and the beast stood there as quiet as a lamb. Then the boy rode this horse, too, away to the place where he kept the other, and then went home again.

"I suppose you will tell us that you have watched well again this time," said the brothers.

"Well, so I have," said Cinderlad. So they went there again, and there the grass was, standing as high and as thick as it had been before, but that did not make them any kinder to Cinderlad.

When the third St. John's night came neither of the two elder brothers dared to lie in the outlying barn to watch the grass, for they had been so heartily frightened the night that they had slept there that they could not get over it, but Cinderlad dared to go, and everything happened just the same as on the two former nights. There were three earthquakes, each worse than the other, and the last flung the boy from one wall of the barn to the other, but then everything suddenly became still as death. When he had lain quietly a short time, he heard something chewing outside the barn door; then he once more stole to the door, which was slightly ajar, and behold, a horse was standing just outside it, which was much larger and fatter than the two others he had caught. "Ho, ho! it is thou, then, who art eating up our hay this time," thought the boy; "but I will put a stop to that." So he pulled out his steel for striking fire, and threw it over the horse, and it stood as still as if it had been nailed to the field, and the boy could do just what he liked with it. Then he mounted it and rode away to the place where he had the two others, and then he went home again. Then

the two brothers mocked him just as they had done before, and told him that they could see that he must have watched the grass very carefully that night, for he looked just as if he were walking in his sleep; but Cinderlad did not trouble himself about that, but just bade them go to the field and see. They did go, and this time too the grass was standing, looking as fine and as thick as ever.

The King of the country in which Cinderlad's father dwelt had a daughter whom he would give to no one who could not ride up to the top of the glass hill, for there was a high, high hill of glass, slippery as ice, and it was close to the King's palace. Upon the very top of this the King's daughter was to sit with three gold apples in her lap, and the man who could ride up and take the three golden apples should marry her, and have half the kingdom. The King had this proclaimed in every church in the whole kingdom, and in many other kingdoms too. The Princess was very beautiful, and all who saw her fell violently in love with her, even in spite of themselves. So it is needless to say that all the princes and knights were eager to win her, and half the kingdom besides, and that for this cause they came riding thither from the very end of the world, dressed so splendidly that their raiments gleamed in the sunshine, and riding on horses which seemed to dance as they went, and there was not one of these princes who did not think that he was sure to win the Princess.

When the day appointed by the King had come, there was such a host of knights and princes under the glass hill that they seemed to swarm, and everyone who could walk or even creep was there too, to see who won the King's daughter. Cinderlad's two brothers were there too, but they would not hear of letting him go with them, for he was so dirty and black with sleeping and grubbing among the ashes that they said everyone would laugh at them if they were seen in the company of such an oaf.

"Well, then, I will go all alone by myself," said Cinderlad.

When the two brothers got to the glass hill, all the princes and knights were trying to ride up it, and their horses were in a foam; but it was all in vain, for no sooner did the horses set foot upon the hill than down they slipped, and there was not one which could get even so much as a couple of yards up. Nor was that strange, for the hill was as smooth as a glass window-pane, and as steep as the side of a house. But they were all eager to win the King's daughter and half the kingdom, so they rode and they

slipped, and thus it went on. At length all the horses were so tired that they could do no more, and so hot that the foam dropped from them and the riders were forced to give up the attempt. The King was just thinking that he would cause it to be proclaimed that the riding should begin afresh on the following day, when perhaps it might go better, when suddenly a knight came riding up on so fine a horse that no one had ever seen the like of it before, and the knight had armor of copper, and his bridle was of copper too, and all his accoutrements were so bright that they shone again. The other knights all called out to him that he might just as well spare himself the trouble of trying to ride up the glass hill, for it was of no use to try; but he did not heed them, and rode straight off to it, and went up as if it were nothing at all. Thus he rode for a long way—it may have been a third part of the way up—but when he had got so far he turned his horse round and rode down again. But the Princess thought that she had never yet seen so handsome a knight, and while he was riding up she was sitting thinking, “Oh! how I hope he may be able to come up to the top!” And when she saw that he was turning his horse back she threw one of the golden apples down after him, and it rolled into his shoe. But when he had come down from off the hill he rode away, and that so fast that no one knew what had become of him.

So all the princes and knights were bidden to present themselves before the King that night, so that he who had ridden so far up the glass hill might show the golden apple which the King’s daughter had thrown down. But no one had anything to show. One knight presented himself after the other, and none could show the apple.

At night, too, Cinderlad’s brothers came home again and had a long story to tell about riding up the glass hill. At first, they said, there was not one who was able to get even so much as one step up, but then came a knight who had armor of copper, and a bridle of copper, and his armor and trappings were so bright that they shone to a great distance, and it was something like a sight to see him riding. He rode one-third of the way up the glass hill, and he could easily have ridden the whole of it if he had liked; but he had turned back, for he had made up his mind that that was enough for once. “Oh! I should have liked to see him too, that I should,” said Cinderlad, who was as usual sitting by the chimney among the

cinders. “You, indeed!” said the brothers, “you look as if you were fit to be among such great lords, nasty beast that you are to sit there!”

Next day the brothers were for setting out again, and this time too Cinderlad begged them to let him go with them and see who rode; but no, they said he was not fit to do that, for he was much too ugly and dirty. “Well, well, then I will go all alone by myself,” said Cinderlad. So the brothers went to the glass hill, and all the princes and knights began to ride again, and this time they had taken care to roughen the shoes of their horses; but that did not help them: they rode and they slipped as they had done the day before, and not one of them could get even so far as a yard up the hill. When they had tired out their horses, so that they could do no more, they again had to stop altogether. But just as the King was thinking that it would be well to proclaim that the riding should take place next day for the last time, so that they might have one more chance, he suddenly bethought himself that it would be well to wait a little longer to see if the knight in copper armor would come on this day too. But nothing was to be seen of him. Just as they were still looking for him, however, came a knight riding on a steed that was much, much finer than that which the knight in copper armor had ridden, and this knight had silver armor and a silver saddle and bridle, and all were so bright that they shone and glistened when he was a long way off. Again the other knights called to him, and said that he might just as well give up the attempt to ride up the glass hill, for it was useless to try; but the knight paid no heed to that, but rode straight away to the glass hill, and went still farther up than the knight in copper armor had gone; but when he had ridden two-thirds of the way up he turned his horse around, and rode down again. The Princess liked this knight still better than she had liked the other, and sat longing that he might be able to get up above, and when she saw him turning back she threw the second apple after him, and it rolled into his shoe, and as soon as he had got down the glass hill he rode away so fast that no one could see what had become of him.

In the evening, when everyone was to appear before the King and Princess, in order that he who had the golden apple might show it, one knight went in after the other, but none of them had a golden apple to show.

At night the two brothers went home as they had done the night before, and told how things had gone, and how everyone had ridden, but no one had been able to get up the hill. “But last of all,” they said, “came one in silver armor, and he had a silver bridle on his horse, and a silver saddle, and oh, but he could ride! He took his horse two-thirds of the way up the hill, but then he turned back. He was a fine fellow,” said the brothers, “and the Princess threw the second golden apple to him!”

“Oh, how I should have liked to see him too!” said Cinderlad.

“Oh, indeed! He was a little brighter than the ashes that you sit grubbing among, you dirty black creature!” said the brothers.

On the third day everything went just as on the former days. Cinderlad wanted to go with them to look at the riding, but the two brothers would not have him in their company, and when they got to the glass hill there was no one who could ride even so far as a yard up it, and everyone waited for the knight in silver armor, but he was neither to be seen nor heard of. At last, after a long time, came a knight riding upon a horse that was such a fine one, its equal had never yet been seen. The knight had golden armor, and the horse a golden saddle and bridle, and these were all so bright that they shone and dazzled everyone, even while the knight was still at a great distance. The other princes and knights were not able even to call to tell him how useless it was to try to ascend the hill, so amazed were they at sight of his magnificence. He rode straight away to the glass hill, and galloped up it as if it were no hill at all, so that the Princess had not even time to wish that he might get up the whole way. As soon as he had ridden to the top, he took the third golden apple from the lap of the Princess and then turned his horse about and rode down again, and vanished from their sight before anyone was able to say a word to him.

When the two brothers came home again at night they had much to tell of how the riding had gone off that day, and at last they told about the knight in the golden armor too. “He was a fine fellow, that was! Such another splendid knight is not to be found on earth!” said the brothers.

“Oh, how I should have liked to see him too!” said Cinderlad.

“Well, he shone nearly as brightly as the coal-heaps that thou art always lying raking among, dirty black creature that thou art!” said the brothers.

Next day all the knights and princes were to appear before the King and Princess—it had been too late for them to do it the night before—in order that he who had the golden apple might produce it. They all went in turn, first princes, and then knights, but none of them had a golden apple.

"But somebody must have it," said the King, "for with our own eyes we all saw a man ride up and take it." So he commanded that everyone in the kingdom should come to the palace, and see if he could show the apple. And one after the other they all came, but no one had the golden apple, and after a long, long time Cinderlad's two brothers came likewise. They were the last of all, so the King inquired of them if there was no one else in the kingdom left to come.

"Oh! yes, we have a brother," said the two, "but he never got the golden apple! He never left the cinder-heap on any of the three days."

"Never mind that," said the King; "as everyone else has come to the palace, let him come too."

So Cinderlad was forced to go to the King's palace.

"Hast thou the golden apple?" asked the King.

"Yes, here is the first, and here is the second, and here is the third, too," said Cinderlad, and he took all three apples out of his pocket, and with that drew off his sooty rags, and appeared there before them in his bright golden armor, which gleamed as he stood.

"Thou shalt have my daughter, and the half of my kingdom, and thou hast well earned both!" said the King. So there was a wedding, and Cinderlad got the King's daughter, and everyone made merry at the wedding, for all of them could make merry, though they could not ride up the glass hill, and if they have not left off their merry-making they must be at it still.[29]

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29. Asbjornsen and Moe.

THE STORY OF PRINCE AHMED AND THE FAIRY PARIBANOU

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There was a sultan, who had three sons and a niece. The eldest of the Princes was called Houssain, the second Ali, the youngest Ahmed, and the Princess, his niece, Nouronnihar.

The Princess Nouronnihar was the daughter of the younger brother of the Sultan, who died, and left the Princess very young. The Sultan took upon himself the care of his daughter's education, and brought her up in his palace with the three Princes, proposing to marry her when she arrived at a proper age, and to contract an alliance with some neighboring prince by that means. But when he perceived that the three Princes, his sons, loved her passionately, he thought more seriously on that affair. He was very much concerned; the difficulty he foresaw was to make them agree, and that the two youngest should consent to yield her up to their elder brother. As he found them positively obstinate, he sent for them all together, and said to them: "Children, since for your good and quiet I have not been able to persuade you no longer to aspire to the Princess, your cousin, I think it would not be amiss if every one traveled separately into different countries, so that you might not meet each other. And, as you know I am very curious, and delight in everything that's singular, I promise my niece in marriage to him that shall bring me the most extraordinary rarity; and for the purchase of the rarity you shall go in search after, and the expense of traveling, I will give you every one a sum of money."

As the three Princes were always submissive and obedient to the Sultan's will, and each flattered himself fortune might prove favorable to him, they all consented to it. The Sultan paid them the money he promised them; and that very day they gave orders for the preparations for their travels, and took their leave of the Sultan, that they might be the more ready to go the next morning. Accordingly they all set out at the same gate of the city, each dressed like a merchant, attended by an officer of

confidence dressed like a slave, and all well mounted and equipped. They went the first day's journey together, and lay all at an inn, where the road was divided into three different tracts. At night, when they were at supper together, they all agreed to travel for a year, and to meet at that inn; and that the first that came should wait for the rest; that, as they had all three taken their leave together of the Sultan, they might all return together. The next morning by break of day, after they had embraced and wished each other good success, they mounted their horses and took each a different road.

Prince Houssain, the eldest brother, arrived at Bisnagar, the capital of the kingdom of that name, and the residence of its king. He went and lodged at a khan appointed for foreign merchants; and, having learned that there were four principal divisions where merchants of all sorts sold their commodities, and kept shops, and in the midst of which stood the castle, or rather the King's palace, he went to one of these divisions the next day.

Prince Houssain could not view this division without admiration. It was large, and divided into several streets, all vaulted and shaded from the sun, and yet very light too. The shops were all of a size, and all that dealt in the same sort of goods lived in one street; as also the handicrafts-men, who kept their shops in the smaller streets.

The multitude of shops, stocked with all sorts of merchandise, as the finest linens from several parts of India, some painted in the most lively colors, and representing beasts, trees, and flowers; silks and brocades from Persia, China, and other places, porcelain both from Japan and China, and tapestries, surprised him so much that he knew not how to believe his own eyes; but when he came to the goldsmiths and jewelers he was in a kind of ecstacy to behold such prodigious quantities of wrought gold and silver, and was dazzled by the lustre of the pearls, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and other jewels exposed to sale.

Another thing Prince Houssain particularly admired was the great number of rose-sellers who crowded the streets; for the Indians are so great lovers of that flower that no one will stir without a nosegay in his hand or a garland on his head; and the merchants keep them in pots in their shops, that the air is perfectly perfumed.

After Prince Houssain had run through that division, street by street, his thoughts fully employed on the riches he had seen, he was very much

tired, which a merchant perceiving, civilly invited him to sit down in his shop, and he accepted; but had not been sat down long before he saw a crier pass by with a piece of tapestry on his arm, about six feet square, and cried at thirty purses. The Prince called to the crier, and asked to see the tapestry, which seemed to him to be valued at an exorbitant price, not only for the size of it, but the meanness of the stuff; when he had examined it well, he told the crier that he could not comprehend how so small a piece of tapestry, and of so indifferent appearance, could be set at so high a price.

The crier, who took him for a merchant, replied: “If this price seems so extravagant to you, your amazement will be greater when I tell you I have orders to raise it to forty purses, and not to part with it under.” “Certainly,” answered Prince Houssain, “it must have something very extraordinary in it, which I know nothing of.” “You have guessed it, sir,” replied the crier, “and will own it when you come to know that whoever sits on this piece of tapestry may be transported in an instant wherever he desires to be, without being stopped by any obstacle.”

At this discourse of the crier the Prince of the Indies, considering that the principal motive of his travel was to carry the Sultan, his father, home some singular rarity, thought that he could not meet with any which could give him more satisfaction. “If the tapestry,” said he to the crier, “has the virtue you assign it, I shall not think forty purses too much, but shall make you a present besides.” “Sir,” replied the crier, “I have told you the truth; and it is an easy matter to convince you of it, as soon as you have made the bargain for forty purses, on condition I show you the experiment. But, as I suppose you have not so much about you, and to receive them I must go with you to your khan, where you lodge, with the leave of the master of the shop, we will go into the back shop, and I will spread the tapestry; and when we have both sat down, and you have formed the wish to be transported into your apartment of the khan, if we are not transported thither it shall be no bargain, and you shall be at your liberty. As to your present, though I am paid for my trouble by the seller, I shall receive it as a favor, and be very much obliged to you, and thankful.”

On the credit of the crier, the Prince accepted the conditions, and concluded the bargain; and, having got the master’s leave, they went into his back shop; they both sat down on it, and as soon as the Prince formed

his wish to be transported into his apartment at the khan he presently found himself and the crier there; and, as he wanted not a more sufficient proof of the virtue of the tapestry, he counted the crier out forty pieces of gold, and gave him twenty pieces for himself.

In this manner Prince Houssain became the possessor of the tapestry, and was overjoyed that at his arrival at Bisnagar he had found so rare a piece, which he never disputed would gain him the hand of Nouronnihar. In short, he looked upon it as an impossible thing for the Princes his younger brothers to meet with anything to be compared with it. It was in his power, by sitting on his tapestry, to be at the place of meeting that very day; but, as he was obliged to stay there for his brothers, as they had agreed, and as he was curious to see the King of Bisnagar and his Court, and to inform himself of the strength, laws, customs, and religion of the kingdom, he chose to make a longer abode there, and to spend some months in satisfying his curiosity.

Prince Houssain might have made a longer abode in the kingdom and Court of Bisnagar, but he was so eager to be nearer the Princess that, spreading the tapestry, he and the officer he had brought with him sat down, and as soon as he had formed his wish were transported to the inn at which he and his brothers were to meet, and where he passed for a merchant till they came.

Prince Ali, Prince Houssain's second brother, who designed to travel into Persia, took the road, having three days after he parted with his brothers joined a caravan, and after four days' travel arrived at Schiraz, which was the capital of the kingdom of Persia. Here he passed for a jeweler.

The next morning Prince Ali, who traveled only for his pleasure, and had brought nothing but just necessaries along with him, after he had dressed himself, took a walk into that part of the town which they at Schiraz called the bezestein.

Among all the criers who passed backward and forward with several sorts of goods, offering to sell them, he was not a little surprised to see one who held an ivory telescope in his hand of about a foot in length and the thickness of a man's thumb, and cried it at thirty purses. At first he thought the crier mad, and to inform himself went to a shop, and said to the merchant, who stood at the door: "Pray, sir, is not that man" (pointing

to the crier who cried the ivory perspective glass at thirty purses) “mad? If he is not, I am very much deceived.”

“Indeed, sir,” answered the merchant, “he was in his right senses yesterday; I can assure you he is one of the ablest criers we have, and the most employed of any when anything valuable is to be sold. And if he cries the ivory perspective glass at thirty purses it must be worth as much or more, on some account or other. He will come by presently, and we will call him, and you shall be satisfied; in the meantime sit down on my sofa, and rest yourself.”

Prince Ali accepted the merchant’s obliging offer, and presently afterward the crier passed by. The merchant called him by his name, and, pointing to the Prince, said to him: “Tell that gentleman, who asked me if you were in your right senses, what you mean by crying that ivory perspective glass, which seems not to be worth much, at thirty purses. I should be very much amazed myself if I did not know you.” The crier, addressing himself to Prince Ali, said: “Sir, you are not the only person that takes me for a madman on account of this perspective glass. You shall judge yourself whether I am or no, when I have told you its property and I hope you will value it at as high a price as those I have showed it to already, who had as bad an opinion of me as you.

“First, sir,” pursued the crier, presenting the ivory pipe to the Prince, “observe that this pipe is furnished with a glass at both ends; and consider that by looking through one of them you see whatever object you wish to behold.” “I am,” said the Prince, “ready to make you all imaginable reparation for the scandal I have thrown on you if you will make the truth of what you advance appear,” and as he had the ivory pipe in his hand, after he had looked at the two glasses he said: “Show me at which of these ends I must look that I may be satisfied.” The crier presently showed him, and he looked through, wishing at the same time to see the Sultan his father, whom he immediately beheld in perfect health, set on his throne, in the midst of his council. Afterward, as there was nothing in the world so dear to him, after the Sultan, as the Princess Nouronnihar, he wished to see her; and saw her at her toilet laughing, and in a pleasant humor, with her women about her.

Prince Ali wanted no other proof to be persuaded that this perspective glass was the most valuable thing in the world, and believed that if he

should neglect to purchase it he should never meet again with such another rarity. He therefore took the crier with him to the khan where he lodged, and counted him out the money, and received the perspective glass.

Prince Ali was overjoyed at his bargain, and persuaded himself that, as his brothers would not be able to meet with anything so rare and admirable, the Princess Nouronnihar would be the recompense of his fatigue and trouble; that he thought of nothing but visiting the Court of Persia incognito, and seeing whatever was curious in Schiraz and thereabouts, till the caravan with which he came returned back to the Indies. As soon as the caravan was ready to set out, the Prince joined them, and arrived happily without any accident or trouble, otherwise than the length of the journey and fatigue of traveling, at the place of rendezvous, where he found Prince Houssain, and both waited for Prince Ahmed.

Prince Ahmed, who took the road of Samarcand, the next day after his arrival there went, as his brothers had done, into the bezestein, where he had not walked long but heard a crier, who had an artificial apple in his hand, cry it at five and thirty purses; upon which he stopped the crier, and said to him: “Let me see that apple, and tell me what virtue and extraordinary properties it has, to be valued at so high a rate.” “Sir,” said the crier, giving it into his hand, “if you look at the outside of this apple, it is very worthless, but if you consider its properties, virtues, and the great use and benefit it is to mankind, you will say it is no price for it, and that he who possesses it is master of a great treasure. In short, it cures all sick persons of the most mortal diseases; and if the patient is dying it will recover him immediately and restore him to perfect health; and this is done after the easiest manner in the world, which is by the patient’s smelling the apple.”

“If I may believe you,” replied Prince Ahmed, “the virtues of this apple are wonderful, and it is invaluable; but what ground have I, for all you tell me, to be persuaded of the truth of this matter?” “Sir,” replied the crier, “the thing is known and averred by the whole city of Samarcand; but, without going any further, ask all these merchants you see here, and hear what they say. You will find several of them will tell you they had not been alive this day if they had not made use of this excellent remedy. And, that you may better comprehend what it is, I must tell you it is the fruit of the study and experiments of a celebrated philosopher of this city, who applied

himself all his lifetime to the study and knowledge of the virtues of plants and minerals, and at last attained to this composition, by which he performed such surprising cures in this town as will never be forgot, but died suddenly himself, before he could apply his sovereign remedy, and left his wife and a great many young children behind him, in very indifferent circumstances, who, to support her family and provide for her children, is resolved to sell it."

While the crier informed Prince Ahmed of the virtues of the artificial apple, a great many persons came about them and confirmed what he said; and one among the rest said he had a friend dangerously ill, whose life was despaired of; and that was a favorable opportunity to show Prince Ahmed the experiment. Upon which Prince Ahmed told the crier he would give him forty purses if he cured the sick person.

The crier, who had orders to sell it at that price, said to Prince Ahmed: "Come, sir, let us go and make the experiment, and the apple shall be yours; and I can assure you that it will always have the desired effect." In short, the experiment succeeded, and the Prince, after he had counted out to the crier forty purses, and he had delivered the apple to him, waited patiently for the first caravan that should return to the Indies, and arrived in perfect health at the inn where the Princes Houssain and Ali waited for him.

When the Princes met they showed each other their treasures, and immediately saw through the glass that the Princess was dying. They then sat down on the carpet, wished themselves with her, and were there in a moment.

Prince Ahmed no sooner perceived himself in Nouronnihar's chamber than he rose off the tapestry, as did also the other two Princes, and went to the bedside, and put the apple under her nose; some moments after the Princess opened her eyes, and turned her head from one side to another, looking at the persons who stood about her; and then rose up in the bed, and asked to be dressed, just as if she had waked out of a sound sleep. Her women having presently informed her, in a manner that showed their joy, that she was obliged to the three Princes for the sudden recovery of her health, and particularly to Prince Ahmed, she immediately expressed her joy to see them, and thanked them all together, and afterward Prince Ahmed in particular.

While the Princess was dressing the Princes went to throw themselves at the Sultan their father's feet, and pay their respects to him. But when they came before him they found he had been informed of their arrival by the chief of the Princess's eunuchs, and by what means the Princess had been perfectly cured. The Sultan received and embraced them with the greatest joy, both for their return and the recovery of the Princess his niece, whom he loved as well as if she had been his own daughter, and who had been given over by the physicians. After the usual ceremonies and compliments the Princes presented each his rarity: Prince Houssain his tapestry, which he had taken care not to leave behind him in the Princess's chamber; Prince Ali his ivory perspective glass, and Prince Ahmed his artificial apple; and after each had commended their present, when they put it into the Sultan's hands, they begged of him to pronounce their fate, and declare to which of them he would give the Princess Nouronnihar for a wife, according to his promise.

The Sultan of the Indies, having heard, without interrupting them, all that the Princes could represent further about their rarities, and being well informed of what had happened in relation to the Princess Nouronnihar's cure, remained some time silent, as if he were thinking on what answer he should make. At last he broke the silence, and said to them: "I would declare for one of you children with a great deal of pleasure if I could do it with justice; but consider whether I can do it or no. 'Tis true, Prince Ahmed, the Princess my niece is obliged to your artificial apple for her cure; but I must ask you whether or no you could have been so serviceable to her if you had not known by Prince Ali's perspective glass the danger she was in, and if Prince Houssain's tapestry had not brought you so soon. Your perspective glass, Prince Ali, informed you and your brothers that you were like to lose the Princess your cousin, and there you must own a great obligation.

"You must also grant that that knowledge would have been of no service without the artificial apple and the tapestry. And lastly, Prince Houssain, the Princess would be very ungrateful if she should not show her acknowledgment of the service of your tapestry, which was so necessary a means toward her cure. But consider, it would have been of little use if you had not been acquainted with the Princess's illness by Prince Ali's glass, and Prince Ahmed had not applied his artificial apple. Therefore, as

neither tapestry, ivory perspective glass, nor artificial apple have the least preference one before the other, but, on the contrary, there's a perfect equality, I cannot grant the Princess to any one of you; and the only fruit you have reaped from your travels is the glory of having equally contributed to restore her health.

"If all this be true," added the Sultan, "you see that I must have recourse to other means to determine certainly in the choice I ought to make among you; and that, as there is time enough between this and night, I'll do it to-day. Go and get each of you a bow and arrow, and repair to the great plain, where they exercise horses. I'll soon come to you, and declare I will give the Princess Nouronnihar to him that shoots the farthest."

The three Princes had nothing to say against the decision of the Sultan. When they were out of his presence they each provided themselves with a bow and arrow, which they delivered to one of their officers, and went to the plain appointed, followed by a great concourse of people.

The Sultan did not make them wait long for him, and as soon as he arrived Prince Houssain, as the eldest, took his bow and arrow and shot first; Prince Ali shot next, and much beyond him; and Prince Ahmed last of all, but it so happened that nobody could see where his arrow fell; and, notwithstanding all the diligence that was used by himself and everybody else, it was not to be found far or near. And though it was believed that he shot the farthest, and that he therefore deserved the Princess Nouronnihar, it was, however, necessary that his arrow should be found to make the matter more evident and certain; and, notwithstanding his remonstrance, the Sultan judged in favor of Prince Ali, and gave orders for preparations to be made for the wedding, which was celebrated a few days after with great magnificence.

Prince Houssain would not honor the feast with his presence. In short, his grief was so violent and insupportable that he left the Court, and renounced all right of succession to the crown, to turn hermit.

Prince Ahmed, too, did not come to Prince Ali's and the Princess Nouronnihar's wedding any more than his brother Houssain, but did not renounce the world as he had done. But, as he could not imagine what had become of his arrow, he stole away from his attendants and resolved to search after it, that he might not have anything to reproach himself with. With this intent he went to the place where the Princes Houssain's and

Ali’s were gathered up, and, going straight forward from there, looking carefully on both sides of him, he went so far that at last he began to think his labor was all in vain; but yet he could not help going forward till he came to some steep craggy rocks, which were bounds to his journey, and were situated in a barren country, about four leagues distant from where he set out.

II

When Prince Ahmed came pretty nigh to these rocks he perceived an arrow, which he gathered up, looked earnestly at it, and was in the greatest astonishment to find it was the same he shot away. “Certainly,” said he to himself, “neither I nor any man living could shoot an arrow so far,” and, finding it laid flat, not sticking into the ground, he judged that it rebounded against the rock. “There must be some mystery in this,” said he to himself again, “and it may be advantageous to me. Perhaps fortune, to make me amends for depriving me of what I thought the greatest happiness, may have reserved a greater blessing for my comfort.”

As these rocks were full of caves and some of those caves were deep, the Prince entered into one, and, looking about, cast his eyes on an iron door, which seemed to have no lock, but he feared it was fastened. However, thrusting against it, it opened, and discovered an easy descent, but no steps, which he walked down with his arrow in his hand. At first he thought he was going into a dark, obscure place, but presently a quite different light succeeded that which he came out of, and, entering into a large, spacious place, at about fifty or sixty paces distant, he perceived a magnificent palace, which he had not then time enough to look at. At the same time a lady of majestic port and air advanced as far as the porch, attended by a large troop of ladies, so finely dressed and beautiful that it was difficult to distinguish which was the mistress.

As soon as Prince Ahmed perceived the lady, he made all imaginable haste to go and pay his respects; and the lady, on her part, seeing him coming, prevented him from addressing his discourse to her first, but said to him: “Come nearer, Prince Ahmed, you are welcome.”

It was no small surprise to the Prince to hear himself named in a place he had never heard of, though so nigh to his father's capital, and he could not comprehend how he should be known to a lady who was a stranger to him. At last he returned the lady's compliment by throwing himself at her feet, and, rising up again, said to her:

"Madam, I return you a thousand thanks for the assurance you give me of a welcome to a place where I believed my imprudent curiosity had made me penetrate too far. But, madam, may I, without being guilty of ill manners, dare to ask you by what adventure you know me? and how you, who live in the same neighborhood with me, should be so great a stranger to me?"

"Prince," said the lady, "let us go into the hall, there I will gratify you in your request."

After these words the lady led Prince Ahmed into the hall. Then she sat down on a sofa, and when the Prince by her entreaty had done the same she said: "You are surprised, you say, that I should know you and not be known by you, but you will be no longer surprised when I inform you who I am. You are undoubtedly sensible that your religion teaches you to believe that the world is inhabited by genies as well as men. I am the daughter of one of the most powerful and distinguished genies, and my name is Paribanou. The only thing that I have to add is, that you seemed to me worthy of a more happy fate than that of possessing the Princess Nouronnihar; and, that you might attain to it, I was present when you drew your arrow, and foresaw it would not go beyond Prince Houssain's. I took it in the air, and gave it the necessary motion to strike against the rocks near which you found it, and I tell you that it lies in your power to make use of the favorable opportunity which presents itself to make you happy."

As the Fairy Paribanou pronounced these last words with a different tone, and looked, at the same time, tenderly upon Prince Ahmed, with a modest blush on her cheeks, it was no hard matter for the Prince to comprehend what happiness she meant. He presently considered that the Princess Nouronnihar could never be his and that the Fairy Paribanou excelled her infinitely in beauty, agreeableness, wit, and, as much as he could conjecture by the magnificence of the palace, in immense riches. He blessed the moment that he thought of seeking after his arrow a second time, and, yielding to his love, "Madam," replied he, "should I all my life

have the happiness of being your slave, and the admirer of the many charms which ravish my soul, I should think myself the most blessed of men. Pardon in me the boldness which inspires me to ask this favor, and don't refuse to admit me into your Court, a prince who is entirely devoted to you."

"Prince," answered the Fairy, "will you not pledge your faith to me, as well as I give mine to you?" "Yes, madam," replied the Prince, in an ecstacy of joy; "what can I do better, and with greater pleasure? Yes, my sultaness, my queen, I'll give you my heart without the least reserve." "Then," answered the Fairy, "you are my husband, and I am your wife. But, as I suppose," pursued she, "that you have eaten nothing to-day, a slight repast shall be served up for you, while preparations are making for our wedding feast at night, and then I will show you the apartments of my palace, and you shall judge if this hall is not the meanest part of it."

Some of the Fairy's women, who came into the hall with them, and guessed her intentions, went immediately out, and returned presently with some excellent meats and wines.

When Prince Ahmed had ate and drunk as much as he cared for, the Fairy Paribanou carried him through all the apartments, where he saw diamonds, rubies, emeralds and all sorts of fine jewels, intermixed with pearls, agate, jasper, porphyry, and all sorts of the most precious marbles. But, not to mention the richness of the furniture, which was inestimable, there was such a profuseness throughout that the Prince, instead of ever having seen anything like it, owned that he could not have imagined that there was anything in the world that could come up to it. "Prince," said the Fairy, "if you admire my palace so much, which, indeed, is very beautiful, what would you say to the palaces of the chief of our genies, which are much more beautiful, spacious, and magnificent? I could also charm you with my gardens, but we will let that alone till another time. Night draws near, and it will be time to go to supper."

The next hall which the Fairy led the Prince into, and where the cloth was laid for the feast, was the last apartment the Prince had not seen, and not in the least inferior to the others. At his entrance into it he admired the infinite number of sconces of wax candles perfumed with amber, the multitude of which, instead of being confused, were placed with so just a symmetry as formed an agreeable and pleasant sight. A large side table

was set out with all sorts of gold plate, so finely wrought that the workmanship was much more valuable than the weight of the gold. Several choruses of beautiful women richly dressed, and whose voices were ravishing, began a concert, accompanied with all sorts of the most harmonious instruments; and when they were set down at table the Fairy Paribanou took care to help Prince Ahmed to the most delicate meats, which she named as she invited him to eat of them, and which the Prince found to be so exquisitely nice that he commended them with exaggeration, and said that the entertainment far surpassed those of man. He found also the same excellence in the wines, which neither he nor the Fairy tasted of till the dessert was served up, which consisted of the choicest sweetmeats and fruits.

The wedding feast was continued the next day, or, rather, the days following the celebration were a continual feast.

At the end of six months Prince Ahmed, who always loved and honored the Sultan his father, conceived a great desire to know how he was, and that desire could not be satisfied without his going to see; he told the Fairy of it, and desired she would give him leave.

“Prince,” said she, “go when you please. But first, don’t take it amiss that I give you some advice how you shall behave yourself where you are going. First, I don’t think it proper for you to tell the Sultan your father of our marriage, nor of my quality, nor the place where you have been. Beg of him to be satisfied in knowing you are happy, and desire no more; and let him know that the sole end of your visit is to make him easy, and inform him of your fate.”

She appointed twenty gentlemen, well mounted and equipped, to attend him. When all was ready Prince Ahmed took his leave of the Fairy, embraced her, and renewed his promise to return soon. Then his horse, which was most finely caparisoned, and was as beautiful a creature as any in the Sultan of Indies’ stables, was led to him, and he mounted him with an extraordinary grace; and, after he had bid her a last adieu, set forward on his journey.

As it was not a great way to his father’s capital, Prince Ahmed soon arrived there. The people, glad to see him again, received him with acclamations of joy, and followed him in crowds to the Sultan’s apartment. The Sultan received and embraced him with great joy, complaining at the

same time, with a fatherly tenderness, of the affliction his long absence had been to him, which he said was the more grievous for that, fortune having decided in favor of Prince Ali his brother, he was afraid he might have committed some rash action.

The Prince told a story of his adventures without speaking of the Fairy, whom he said that he must not mention, and ended: “The only favor I ask of your Majesty is to give me leave to come often and pay you my respects, and to know how you do.”

“Son,” answered the Sultan of the Indies, “I cannot refuse you the leave you ask me; but I should much rather you would resolve to stay with me; at least tell me where I may send to you if you should fail to come, or when I may think your presence necessary.” “Sir,” replied Prince Ahmed, “what your Majesty asks of me is part of the mystery I spoke to your Majesty of. I beg of you to give me leave to remain silent on this head, for I shall come so frequently that I am afraid that I shall sooner be thought troublesome than be accused of negligence in my duty.”

The Sultan of the Indies pressed Prince Ahmed no more, but said to him: “Son, I penetrate no farther into your secrets, but leave you at your liberty; but can tell you that you could not do me a greater pleasure than to come, and by your presence restore to me the joy I have not felt this long time, and that you shall always be welcome when you come, without interrupting your business or pleasure.”

Prince Ahmed stayed but three days at the Sultan his father’s Court, and the fourth returned to the Fairy Paribanou, who did not expect him so soon.

A month after Prince Ahmed’s return from paying a visit to his father, as the Fairy Paribanou had observed that the Prince, since the time that he gave her an account of his journey, his discourse with his father, and the leave he asked to go and see him often, had never talked of the Sultan, as if there had been no such person in the world, whereas before he was always speaking of him, she thought he forebore on her account; therefore she took an opportunity to say to him one day: “Prince, tell me, have you forgot the Sultan your father? Don’t you remember the promise you made to go and see him often? For my part I have not forgot what you told me at your return, and so put you in mind of it, that you may not be long before you acquit yourself of your promise.”

So Prince Ahmed went the next morning with the same attendance as before, but much finer, and himself more magnificently mounted, equipped, and dressed, and was received by the Sultan with the same joy and satisfaction. For several months he constantly paid his visits, always in a richer and finer equipage.

At last some viziers, the Sultan's favorites, who judged of Prince Ahmed's grandeur and power by the figure he cut, made the Sultan jealous of his son, saying it was to be feared he might inveigle himself into the people's favor and dethrone him.

The Sultan of the Indies was so far from thinking that Prince Ahmed could be capable of so pernicious a design as his favorites would make him believe that he said to them: "You are mistaken; my son loves me, and I am certain of his tenderness and fidelity, as I have given him no reason to be disgusted."

But the favorites went on abusing Prince Ahmed till the Sultan said: "Be it as it will, I don't believe my son Ahmed is so wicked as you would persuade me he is; how ever, I am obliged to you for your good advice, and don't dispute but that it proceeds from your good intentions."

The Sultan of the Indies said this that his favorites might not know the impressions their discourse had made on his mind; which had so alarmed him that he resolved to have Prince Ahmed watched unknown to his grand vizier. So he sent for a female magician, who was introduced by a back door into his apartment. "Go immediately," he said, "and follow my son, and watch him so well as to find out where he retires, and bring me word."

The magician left the Sultan, and, knowing the place where Prince Ahmed found his arrow, went immediately thither, and hid herself near the rocks, so that nobody could see her.

The next morning Prince Ahmed set out by daybreak, without taking leave either of the Sultan or any of his Court, according to custom. The magician, seeing him coming, followed him with her eyes, till on a sudden she lost sight of him and his attendants.

As the rocks were very steep and craggy, they were an insurmountable barrier, so that the magician judged that there were but two things for it: either that the Prince retired into some cavern, or an abode of genies or fairies. Thereupon she came out of the place where she was hid and went directly to the hollow way, which she traced till she came to the farther

end, looking carefully about on all sides; but, notwithstanding all her diligence, could perceive no opening, not so much as the iron gate which Prince Ahmed discovered, which was to be seen and opened to none but men, and only to such whose presence was agreeable to the Fairy Paribanou.

The magician, who saw it was in vain for her to search any farther, was obliged to be satisfied with the discovery she had made, and returned to give the Sultan an account.

The Sultan was very well pleased with the magician's conduct, and said to her: "Do you as you think fit; I'll wait patiently the event of your promises," and to encourage her made her a present of a diamond of great value.

As Prince Ahmed had obtained the Fairy Paribanou's leave to go to the Sultan of the Indies' Court once a month, he never failed, and the magician, knowing the time, went a day or two before to the foot of the rock where she lost sight of the Prince and his attendants, and waited there.

The next morning Prince Ahmed went out, as usual, at the iron gate, with the same attendants as before, and passed by the magician, whom he knew not to be such, and, seeing her lie with her head against the rock, and complaining as if she were in great pain, he pitied her, turned his horse about, went to her, and asked her what was the matter with her, and what he could do to ease her.

The artful sorceress looked at the Prince in a pitiful manner, without ever lifting up her head, and answered in broken words and sighs, as if she could hardly fetch her breath, that she was going to the capital city, but on the way thither she was taken with so violent a fever that her strength failed her, and she was forced to lie down where he saw her, far from any habitation, and without any hopes of assistance.

"Good woman," replied Prince Ahmed, "you are not so far from help as you imagine. I am ready to assist you, and convey you where you will meet with a speedy cure; only get up, and let one of my people take you behind him."

At these words the magician, who pretended sickness only to know where the Prince lived and what he did, refused not the charitable offer he made her, and that her actions might correspond with her words she made

many pretended vain endeavors to get up. At the same time two of the Prince's attendants, alighting off their horses, helped her up, and set her behind another, and mounted their horses again, and followed the Prince, who turned back to the iron gate, which was opened by one of his retinue who rode before. And when he came into the outward court of the Fairy, without dismounting himself, he sent to tell her he wanted to speak with her.

The Fairy Paribanou came with all imaginable haste, not knowing what made Prince Ahmed return so soon, who, not giving her time to ask him the reason, said: "Princess, I desire you would have compassion on this good woman," pointing to the magician, who was held up by two of his retinue. "I found her in the condition you see her in, and promised her the assistance she stands in need of, and am persuaded that you, out of your own goodness, as well as upon my entreaty, will not abandon her."

The Fairy Paribanou, who had her eyes fixed upon the pretended sick woman all the time that the Prince was talking to her, ordered two of her women who followed her to take her from the two men that held her, and carry her into an apartment of the palace, and take as much care of her as she would herself.

While the two women executed the Fairy's commands, she went up to Prince Ahmed, and, whispering in his ear, said: "Prince, this woman is not so sick as she pretends to be; and I am very much mistaken if she is not an impostor, who will be the cause of a great trouble to you. But don't be concerned, let what will be devised against you; be persuaded that I will deliver you out of all the snares that shall be laid for you. Go and pursue your journey."

This discourse of the Fairy's did not in the least frighten Prince Ahmed. "My Princess," said he, "as I do not remember I ever did or designed anybody an injury, I cannot believe anybody can have a thought of doing me one, but if they have I shall not, nevertheless, forbear doing good whenever I have an opportunity." Then he went back to his father's palace.

In the meantime the two women carried the magician into a very fine apartment, richly furnished. First they sat her down upon a sofa, with her back supported with a cushion of gold brocade, while they made a bed on the same sofa before her, the quilt of which was finely embroidered with

silk, the sheets of the finest linen, and the coverlet cloth-of-gold. When they had put her into bed (for the old sorceress pretended that her fever was so violent she could not help herself in the least) one of the women went out, and returned soon again with a china dish in her hand, full of a certain liquor, which she presented to the magician, while the other helped her to sit up. “Drink this liquor,” said she; “it is the Water of the Fountain of Lions, and a sovereign remedy against all fevers whatsoever. You will find the effect of it in less than an hour’s time.”

The magician, to dissemble the better, took it after a great deal of entreaty; but at last she took the china dish, and, holding back her head, swallowed down the liquor. When she was laid down again the two women covered her up. “Lie quiet,” said she who brought her the china cup, “and get a little sleep if you can. We’ll leave you, and hope to find you perfectly cured when we come again an hour hence.”

The two women came again at the time they said they should, and found the magician up and dressed, and sitting upon the sofa. “Oh, admirable potion!” she said: “it has wrought its cure much sooner than you told me it would, and I shall be able to prosecute my journey.”

The two women, who were fairies as well as their mistress, after they had told the magician how glad they were that she was cured so soon, walked before her, and conducted her through several apartments, all more noble than that wherein she lay, into a large hall, the most richly and magnificently furnished of all the palace.

Fairy Paribanou sat in this hall on a throne of massive gold, enriched with diamonds, rubies, and pearls of an extraordinary size, and attended on each hand by a great number of beautiful fairies, all richly clothed. At the sight of so much majesty, the magician was not only dazzled, but was so amazed that, after she had prostrated herself before the throne, she could not open her lips to thank the Fairy as she proposed. However, Paribanou saved her the trouble, and said to her: “Good woman, I am glad I had an opportunity to oblige you, and to see you are able to pursue your journey. I won’t detain you, but perhaps you may not be displeased to see my palace; follow my women, and they will show it you.”

Then the magician went back and related to the Sultan of the Indies all that had happened, and how very rich Prince Ahmed was since his

marriage with the Fairy, richer than all the kings in the world, and how there was danger that he should come and take the throne from his father.

Though the Sultan of the Indies was very well persuaded that Prince Ahmed's natural disposition was good, yet he could not help being concerned at the discourse of the old sorceress, to whom, when she was taking her leave, he said: "I thank thee for the pains thou hast taken, and thy wholesome advice. I am so sensible of the great importance it is to me that I shall deliberate upon it in council."

Now the favorites advised that the Prince should be killed, but the magician advised differently: "Make him give you all kinds of wonderful things, by the Fairy's help, till she tires of him and sends him away. As, for example, every time your Majesty goes into the field, you are obliged to be at a great expense, not only in pavilions and tents for your army, but likewise in mules and camels to carry their baggage. Now, might not you engage him to use his interest with the Fairy to procure you a tent which might be carried in a man's hand, and which should be so large as to shelter your whole army against bad weather?"

When the magician had finished her speech, the Sultan asked his favorites if they had anything better to propose; and, finding them all silent, determined to follow the magician's advice, as the most reasonable and most agreeable to his mild government.

Next day the Sultan did as the magician had advised him, and asked for the pavilion.

Prince Ahmed never expected that the Sultan his father would have asked such a thing, which at first appeared so difficult, not to say impossible. Though he knew not absolutely how great the power of genies and fairies was, he doubted whether it extended so far as to compass such a tent as his father desired. At last he replied: "Though it is with the greatest reluctance imaginable, I will not fail to ask the favor of my wife your Majesty desires, but will not promise you to obtain it; and if I should not have the honor to come again to pay you my respects that shall be the sign that I have not had success. But beforehand, I desire you to forgive me, and consider that you yourself have reduced me to this extremity."

"Son," replied the Sultan of the Indies, "I should be very sorry if what I ask of you should cause me the displeasure of never seeing you more. I find you don't know the power a husband has over a wife; and yours would

show that her love to you was very indifferent if she, with the power she has of a fairy, should refuse you so trifling a request as this I desire you to ask of her for my sake." The Prince went back, and was very sad for fear of offending the Fairy. She kept pressing him to tell her what was the matter, and at last he said: "Madam, you may have observed that hitherto I have been content with your love, and have never asked you any other favor. Consider then, I conjure you, that it is not I, but the Sultan my father, who indiscreetly, or at least I think so, begs of you a pavilion large enough to shelter him, his Court, and army from the violence of the weather, and which a man may carry in his hand. But remember it is the Sultan my father asks this favor."

"Prince," replied the Fairy, smiling, "I am sorry that so small a matter should disturb you, and make you so uneasy as you appeared to me."

Then the Fairy sent for her treasurer, to whom, when she came, she said: "Nourgihan"—which was her name—"bring me the largest pavilion in my treasury." Nourgiham returned presently with the pavilion, which she could not only hold in her hand, but in the palm of her hand when she shut her fingers, and presented it to her mistress, who gave it to Prince Ahmed to look at.

When Prince Ahmed saw the pavilion which the Fairy called the largest in her treasury, he fancied she had a mind to jest with him, and thereupon the marks of his surprise appeared presently in his countenance; which Paribanou perceiving burst out laughing. "What! Prince," cried she, "do you think I jest with you? You'll see presently that I am in earnest. Nourgihan," said she to her treasurer, taking the tent out of Prince Ahmed's hands, "go and set it up, that the Prince may judge whether it may be large enough for the Sultan his father."

The treasurer went immediately with it out of the palace, and carried it a great way off; and when she had set it up one end reached to the very palace; at which time the Prince, thinking it small, found it large enough to shelter two greater armies than that of the Sultan his father's, and then said to Paribanou: "I ask my Princess a thousand pardons for my incredulity; after what I have seen I believe there is nothing impossible to you." "You see," said the Fairy, "that the pavilion is larger than what your father may have occasion for; for you must know that it has one property—that it is larger or smaller according to the army it is to cover."

The treasurer took down the tent again, and brought it to the Prince, who took it, and, without staying any longer than till the next day, mounted his horse, and went with the same attendants to the Sultan his father.

The Sultan, who was persuaded that there could not be any such thing as such a tent as he asked for, was in a great surprise at the Prince's diligence. He took the tent and after he had admired its smallness his amazement was so great that he could not recover himself. When the tent was set up in the great plain, which we have before mentioned, he found it large enough to shelter an army twice as large as he could bring into the field.

But the Sultan was not yet satisfied. "Son," said he, "I have already expressed to you how much I am obliged to you for the present of the tent you have procured me; that I look upon it as the most valuable thing in all my treasury. But you must do one thing more for me, which will be every whit as agreeable to me. I am informed that the Fairy, your spouse, makes use of a certain water, called the Water of the Fountain of Lions, which cures all sorts of fevers, even the most dangerous, and, as I am perfectly well persuaded my health is dear to you, I don't doubt but you will ask her for a bottle of that water for me, and bring it me as a sovereign medicine, which I may make use of when I have occasion. Do me this other important piece of service, and thereby complete the duty of a good son toward a tender father."

The Prince returned and told the Fairy what his father had said; "There's a great deal of wickedness in this demand?" she answered, "as you will understand by what I am going to tell you. The Fountain of Lions is situated in the middle of a court of a great castle, the entrance into which is guarded by four fierce lions, two of which sleep alternately, while the other two are awake. But don't let that frighten you: I'll give you means to pass by them without any danger."

The Fairy Paribanou was at that time very hard at work, and, as she had several clews of thread by her, she took up one, and, presenting it to Prince Ahmed, said: "First take this clew of thread. I'll tell you presently the use of it. In the second place, you must have two horses; one you must ride yourself, and the other you must lead, which must be loaded with a sheep cut into four quarters, that must be killed to-day. In the third place, you must be provided with a bottle, which I will give you, to bring the water

in. Set out early to-morrow morning, and when you have passed the iron gate throw the clew of thread before you, which will roll till it comes to the gates of the castle. Follow it, and when it stops, as the gates will be open, you will see the four lions: the two that are awake will, by their roaring, wake the other two, but don't be frightened, but throw each of them a quarter of mutton, and then clap spurs to your horse and ride to the fountain; fill your bottle without alighting, and then return with the same expedition. The lions will be so busy eating they will let you pass by them."

Prince Ahmed set out the next morning at the time appointed by the Fairy, and followed her directions exactly. When he arrived at the gates of the castle he distributed the quarters of mutton among the four lions, and, passing through the midst of them bravely, got to the fountain, filled his bottle, and returned back as safe and sound as he went. When he had gone a little distance from the castle gates he turned him about, and, perceiving two of the lions coming after him, he drew his sabre and prepared himself for defense. But as he went forward he saw one of them turned out of the road at some distance, and showed by his head and tail that he did not come to do him any harm, but only to go before him, and that the other stayed behind to follow, he put his sword up again in its scabbard. Guarded in this manner, he arrived at the capital of the Indies, but the lions never left him till they had conducted him to the gates of the Sultan's palace; after which they returned the same way they came, though not without frightening all that saw them, for all they went in a very gentle manner and showed no fierceness.

A great many officers came to attend the Prince while he dismounted his horse, and afterward conducted him into the Sultan's apartment, who was at that time surrounded with his favorites. He approached toward the throne, laid the bottle at the Sultan's feet, and kissed the rich tapestry which covered his footstool, and then said:

"I have brought you, sir, the healthful water which your Majesty desired so much to keep among your other rarities in your treasury, but at the same time wish you such extraordinary health as never to have occasion to make use of it."

After the Prince had made an end of his compliment the Sultan placed him on his right hand, and then said to him: "Son, I am very much obliged

to you for this valuable present, as also for the great danger you have exposed yourself to upon my account (which I have been informed of by a magician who knows the Fountain of Lions); but do me the pleasure," continued he, "to inform me by what address, or, rather, by what incredible power, you have been secured."

"Sir," replied Prince Ahmed, "I have no share in the compliment your Majesty is pleased to make me; all the honor is due to the Fairy my spouse, whose good advice I followed." Then he informed the Sultan what those directions were, and by the relation of this his expedition let him know how well he had behaved himself. When he had done the Sultan, who showed outwardly all the demonstrations of great joy, but secretly became more jealous, retired into an inward apartment, where he sent for the magician.

The magician, at her arrival, saved the Sultan the trouble to tell her of the success of Prince Ahmed's journey, which she had heard of before she came, and therefore was prepared with an infallible means, as she pretended. This means she communicated to the Sultan who declared it the next day to the Prince, in the midst of all his courtiers, in these words: "Son," said he, "I have one thing more to ask of you, after which I shall expect nothing more from your obedience, nor your interest with your wife. This request is, to bring me a man not above a foot and a half high, and whose beard is thirty feet long who carries a bar of iron upon his shoulders of five hundredweight, which he uses as a quarterstaff."

Prince Ahmed, who did not believe that there was such a man in the world as his father described, would gladly have excused himself; but the Sultan persisted in his demand, and told him the Fairy could do more incredible things.

The next day the Prince returned to his dear Paribanou, to whom he told his father's new demand, which, he said, he looked upon to be a thing more impossible than the two first; "for," added he, "I cannot imagine there can be such a man in the world; without doubt, he has a mind to try whether or no I am so silly as to go about it, or he has a design on my ruin. In short, how can he suppose that I should lay hold of a man so well armed, though he is but little? What arms can I make use of to reduce him to my will? If there are any means, I beg you will tell them, and let me come off with honor this time."

“Don’t affright yourself, Prince,” replied the Fairy; “you ran a risk in fetching the Water of the Fountain of Lions for your father, but there’s no danger in finding out this man, who is my brother Schaibar, but is so far from being like me, though we both had the same father, that he is of so violent a nature that nothing can prevent his giving cruel marks of his resentment for a slight offense; yet, on the other hand, is so good as to oblige anyone in whatever they desire. He is made exactly as the Sultan your father has described him, and has no other arms than a bar of iron of five hundred pounds weight, without which he never stirs, and which makes him respected. I’ll send for him, and you shall judge of the truth of what I tell you; but be sure to prepare yourself against being frightened at his extraordinary figure when you see him.” “What! my Queen,” replied Prince Ahmed, “do you say Schaibar is your brother? Let him be never so ugly or deformed I shall be so far from being frightened at the sight of him that, as our brother, I shall honor and love him.”

The Fairy ordered a gold chafing-dish to be set with a fire in it under the porch of her palace, with a box of the same metal, which was a present to her, out of which taking a perfume, and throwing it into the fire, there arose a thick cloud of smoke.

Some moments after the Fairy said to Prince Ahmed: “See, there comes my brother.” The Prince immediately perceived Schaibar coming gravely with his heavy bar on his shoulder, his long beard, which he held up before him, and a pair of thick mustachios, which he tucked behind his ears and almost covered his face; his eyes were very small and deep-set in his head, which was far from being of the smallest size, and on his head he wore a grenadier’s cap; besides all this, he was very much hump-backed.

If Prince Ahmed had not known that Schaibar was Paribanou’s brother, he would not have been able to have looked at him without fear, but, knowing first who he was, he stood by the Fairy without the least concern.

Schaibar, as he came forward, looked at the Prince earnestly enough to have chilled his blood in his veins, and asked Paribanou, when he first accosted her, who that man was. To which she replied: “He is my husband, brother. His name is Ahmed; he is son to the Sultan of the Indies. The reason why I did not invite you to my wedding was I was unwilling to divert you from an expedition you were engaged in, and from which I

heard with pleasure you returned victorious, and so took the liberty now to call for you."

At these words, Schaibar, looking on Prince Ahmed favorably, said: "Is there anything else, sister, wherein I can serve him? It is enough for me that he is your husband to engage me to do for him whatever he desires." "The Sultan, his father," replied Paribanou, "has a curiosity to see you, and I desire he may be your guide to the Sultan's Court." "He needs but lead me the way I'll follow him." "Brother," replied Paribanou, "it is too late to go to-day, therefore stay till to-morrow morning; and in the meantime I'll inform you of all that has passed between the Sultan of the Indies and Prince Ahmed since our marriage."

The next morning, after Schaibar had been informed of the affair, he and Prince Ahmed set out for the Sultan's Court. When they arrived at the gates of the capital the people no sooner saw Schaibar but they ran and hid themselves; and some shut up their shops and locked themselves up in their houses, while others, flying, communicated their fear to all they met, who stayed not to look behind them, but ran too; insomuch that Schaibar and Prince Ahmed, as they went along, found the streets all desolate till they came to the palaces where the porters, instead of keeping the gates, ran away too, so that the Prince and Schaibar advanced without any obstacle to the council-hall, where the Sultan was seated on his throne, and giving audience. Here likewise the ushers, at the approach of Schaibar, abandoned their posts, and gave them free admittance.

Schaibar went boldly and fiercely up to the throne, without waiting to be presented by Prince Ahmed, and accosted the Sultan of the Indies in these words: "Thou hast asked for me," said he; "see, here I am; what wouldst thou have with me?"

The Sultan, instead of answering him, clapped his hands before his eyes to avoid the sight of so terrible an object; at which uncivil and rude reception Schaibar was so much provoked, after he had given him the trouble to come so far, that he instantly lifted up his iron bar and killed him before Prince Ahmed could intercede in his behalf. All that he could do was to prevent his killing the grand vizier, who sat not far from him, representing to him that he had always given the Sultan his father good advice. "These are they, then," said Schaibar, "who gave him bad," and as he pronounced these words he killed all the other viziers and flattering

favorites of the Sultan who were Prince Ahmed's enemies. Every time he struck he killed some one or other, and none escaped but they who were not so frightened as to stand staring and gaping, and who saved themselves by flight.

When this terrible execution was over Schaibar came out of the council-hall into the midst of the courtyard with the iron bar upon his shoulder, and, looking hard at the grand vizier, who owed his life to Prince Ahmed, he said: "I know here is a certain magician, who is a greater enemy of my brother-in-law than all these base favorites I have chastised. Let the magician be brought to me presently." The grand vizier immediately sent for her, and as soon as she was brought Schaibar said, at the time he fetched a stroke at her with his iron bar: "Take the reward of thy pernicious counsel, and learn to feign sickness again."

After this he said: "This is not yet enough; I will use the whole town after the same manner if they do not immediately acknowledge Prince Ahmed, my brother-in-law, for their Sultan and the Sultan of the Indies." Then all that were there present made the air echo again with the repeated acclamations of: "Long life to Sultan Ahmed"; and immediately after he was proclaimed through the whole town. Schaibar made him be clothed in the royal vestments, installed him on the throne, and after he had caused all to swear homage and fidelity to him went and fetched his sister Paribanou, whom he brought with all the pomp and grandeur imaginable, and made her to be owned Sultaness of the Indies.

As for Prince Ali and Princess Nouronnihar, as they had no hand in the conspiracy against Prince Ahmed and knew nothing of any, Prince Ahmed assigned them a considerable province, with its capital, where they spent the rest of their lives. Afterwards he sent an officer to Prince Houssain to acquaint him with the change and make him an offer of which province he liked best; but that Prince thought himself so happy in his solitude that he bade the officer return the Sultan his brother thanks for the kindness he designed him, assuring him of his submission; and that the only favor he desired of him was to give him leave to live retired in the place he had made choice of for his retreat.[30]

30. Arabian Nights.

THE HISTORY OF JACK THE GIANT-KILLER

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In the reign of the famous King Arthur there lived in Cornwall a lad named Jack, who was a boy of a bold temper, and took delight in hearing or reading of conjurers, giants, and fairies; and used to listen eagerly to the deeds of the knights of King Arthur’s Round Table.

In those days there lived on St. Michael’s Mount, off Cornwall, a huge giant, eighteen feet high and nine feet round; his fierce and savage looks were the terror of all who beheld him.

He dwelt in a gloomy cavern on the top of the mountain, and used to wade over to the mainland in search of prey; when he would throw half a dozen oxen upon his back, and tie three times as many sheep and hogs round his waist, and march back to his own abode.

The giant had done this for many years when Jack resolved to destroy him.

Jack took a horn, a shovel, a pickaxe, his armor, and a dark lantern, and one winter’s evening he went to the mount. There he dug a pit twenty-two feet deep and twenty broad. He covered the top over so as to make it look like solid ground. He then blew his horn so loudly that the giant awoke and came out of his den crying out: “You saucy villain! you shall pay for this I’ll broil you for my breakfast!”

He had just finished, when, taking one step further, he tumbled headlong into the pit, and Jack struck him a blow on the head with his pickaxe which killed him. Jack then returned home to cheer his friends with the news.

Another giant, called Blunderbore, vowed to be revenged on Jack if ever he should have him in his power. This giant kept an enchanted castle in the midst of a lonely wood; and some time after the death of Cormoran Jack was passing through a wood, and being weary, sat down and went to sleep.

The giant, passing by and seeing Jack, carried him to his castle, where he locked him up in a large room, the floor of which was covered with the bodies, skulls and bones of men and women.

Soon after the giant went to fetch his brother who was likewise a giant, to take a meal off his flesh; and Jack saw with terror through the bars of his prison the two giants approaching.

Jack, perceiving in one corner of the room a strong cord, took courage, and making a slip-knot at each end, he threw them over their heads, and tied it to the window-bars; he then pulled till he had choked them. When they were black in the face he slid down the rope and stabbed them to the heart.

Jack next took a great bunch of keys from the pocket of Blunderbore, and went into the castle again. He made a strict search through all the rooms, and in one of them found three ladies tied up by the hair of their heads, and almost starved to death. They told him that their husbands had been killed by the giants, who had then condemned them to be starved to death because they would not eat the flesh of their own dead husbands.

“Ladies,” said Jack, “I have put an end to the monster and his wicked brother; and I give you this castle and all the riches it contains, to make some amends for the dreadful pains you have felt.” He then very politely gave them the keys of the castle, and went further on his journey to Wales.

As Jack had but little money, he went on as fast as possible. At length he came to a handsome house. Jack knocked at the door, when there came forth a Welsh giant. Jack said he was a traveler who had lost his way, on which the giant made him welcome, and let him into a room where there was a good bed to sleep in.

Jack took off his clothes quickly, but though he was weary he could not go to sleep. Soon after this he heard the giant walking backward and forward in the next room, and saying to himself:

“Though here you lodge with me this night,
You shall not see the morning light;
My club shall dash your brains out quite.”

“Say you so?” thought Jack. “Are these your tricks upon travelers? But I hope to prove as cunning as you are.” Then, getting out of bed, he groped

about the room, and at last found a large thick billet of wood. He laid it in his own place in the bed, and then hid himself in a dark corner of the room.

The giant, about midnight, entered the apartment, and with his bludgeon struck many blows on the bed, in the very place where Jack had laid the log; and then he went back to his own room, thinking he had broken all Jack's bones.

Early in the morning Jack put a bold face upon the matter, and walked into the giant's room to thank him for his lodging. The giant started when he saw him, and began to stammer out: "Oh! dear me; is it you? Pray how did you sleep last night? Did you hear or see anything in the dead of the night?"

"Nothing to speak of," said Jack, carelessly; "a rat, I believe, gave me three or four slaps with its tail, and disturbed me a little; but I soon went to sleep again."

The giant wondered more and more at this; yet he did not answer a word, but went to bring two great bowls of hasty-pudding for their breakfast. Jack wanted to make the giant believe that he could eat as much as himself, so he contrived to button a leathern bag inside his coat, and slip the hasty-pudding into this bag, while he seemed to put it into his mouth.

When breakfast was over he said to the giant: "Now I will show you a fine trick. I can cure all wounds with a touch; I could cut off my head in one minute, and the next put it sound again on my shoulders. You shall see an example." He then took hold of the knife, ripped up the leathern bag, and all the hasty-pudding tumbled out upon the floor.

"Ods splutter hur nails!" cried the Welsh giant, who was ashamed to be outdone by such a little fellow as Jack, "hur can do that hurself"; so he snatched up the knife, plunged it into his own stomach, and in a moment dropped down dead.

Jack, having hitherto been successful in all his undertakings, resolved not to be idle in future; he therefore furnished himself with a horse, a cap of knowledge, a sword of sharpness, shoes of swiftness, and an invisible coat, the better to perform the wonderful enterprises that lay before him.

He traveled over high hills, and on the third day he came to a large and spacious forest through which his road lay. Scarcely had he entered the

forest when he beheld a monstrous giant dragging along by the hair of their heads a handsome knight and his lady. Jack alighted from his horse, and tying him to an oak tree, put on his invisible coat, under which he carried his sword of sharpness.

When he came up to the giant he made several strokes at him, but could not reach his body, but wounded his thighs in several places; and at length, putting both hands to his sword and aiming with all his might, he cut off both his legs. Then Jack, setting his foot upon his neck, plunged his sword into the giant's body, when the monster gave a groan and expired.

The knight and his lady thanked Jack for their deliverance, and invited him to their house, to receive a proper reward for his services. "No," said Jack, "I cannot be easy till I find out this monster's habitation." So, taking the knight's directions, he mounted his horse and soon after came in sight of another giant, who was sitting on a block of timber waiting for his brother's return.

Jack alighted from his horse, and, putting on his invisible coat, approached and aimed a blow at the giant's head, but, missing his aim, he only cut off his nose. On this the giant seized his club and laid about him most unmercifully.

"Nay," said Jack, "if this be the case I'd better dispatch you!" so, jumping upon the block, he stabbed him in the back, when he dropped down dead.

Jack then proceeded on his journey, and traveled over hills and dales, till arriving at the foot of a high mountain he knocked at the door of a lonely house, when an old man let him in.

When Jack was seated the hermit thus addressed him: "My son, on the top of this mountain is an enchanted castle, kept by the giant Galligantus and a vile magician. I lament the fate of a duke's daughter, whom they seized as she was walking in her father's garden, and brought hither transformed into a deer."

Jack promised that in the morning, at the risk of his life, he would break the enchantment; and after a sound sleep he rose early, put on his invisible coat, and got ready for the attempt.

When he had climbed to the top of the mountain he saw two fiery griffins, but he passed between them without the least fear of danger, for

they could not see him because of his invisible coat. On the castle gate he found a golden trumpet, under which were written these lines:

"Whoever can this trumpet blow
Shall cause the giant's overthrow."

As soon as Jack had read this he seized the trumpet and blew a shrill blast, which made the gates fly open and the very castle itself tremble.

The giant and the conjurer now knew that their wicked course was at an end, and they stood biting their thumbs and shaking with fear. Jack, with his sword of sharpness, soon killed the giant, and the magician was then carried away by a whirlwind; and every knight and beautiful lady who had been changed into birds and beasts returned to their proper shapes. The castle vanished away like smoke, and the head of the giant Galligantus was then sent to King Arthur.

The knights and ladies rested that night at the old man's hermitage, and next day they set out for the Court. Jack then went up to the King, and gave his Majesty an account of all his fierce battles.

Jack's fame had now spread through the whole country, and at the King's desire the duke gave him his daughter in marriage, to the joy of all his kingdom. After this the King gave him a large estate, on which he and his lady lived the rest of their days in joy and contentment.[31]

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31. Old Chapbook.

THE BLACK BULL OF NORROWAY

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And many a hunting song they sung,
And song of game and glee;
Then tuned to plaintive strains their tongue,
“Of Scotland’s luve and lee.”
To wilder measures next they turn
“The Black, Black Bull of Norroway!”
Sudden the tapers cease to burn,
The minstrels cease to play.

“The Cout of Keeldar,” by J. Leyden.

In Norroway, langsyne, there lived a certain lady, and she had three dochters. The auldest o’ them said to her mither: “Mither, bake me a bannock, and roast me a collop, for I’m gaun awa’ to seek my fortune.” Her mither did sae; and the dochter gaed awa’ to an auld witch washerwife and telled her purpose. The auld wife bade her stay that day, and gang and look out o’ her back door, and see what she could see. She saw nocht the first day. The second day she did the same, and saw nocht. On the third day she looked again, and saw a coach-and-six coming along the road. She ran in and telled the auld wife what she saw. “Aweel,” quo’ the auld wife, “yon’s for you.” Sae they took her into the coach, and galloped aff.

The second dochter next says to her mither: “Mither, bake me a bannock, and roast me a collop, fur I’m gaun awa’ to seek my fortune.” Her mither did sae; and awa’ she gaed to the auld wife, as her sister had dune. On the third day she looked out o’ the back door, and saw a coach-and-four coming along the road. “Aweel,” quo’ the auld wife, “yon’s for you.” Sae they took her in, and aff they set.

The third dochter says to her mither: “Mither, bake me a bannock, and roast me a collop, for I’m gaun awa’ to seek my fortune.” Her mither did sae; and awa’ she gaed to the auld witch-wife. She bade her look out o’ her

back door, and see what she could see. She did sae; and when she came back said she saw nocht. The second day she did the same, and saw nocht. The third day she looked again, and on coming back said to the auld wife she saw nocht but a muckle Black Bull coming roaring alang the road. “Aweel,” quo’ the auld wife, “yon’s for you.” On hearing this she was next to distracted wi’ grief and terror; but she was lifted up and set on his back, and awa’ they went.

Aye they traveled, and on they traveled, till the lady grew faint wi’ hunger. “Eat out o’ my right lug,” says the Black Bull, “and drink out o’ my left lug, and set by your leavings.” Sae she did as he said, and was wonderfully refreshed. And lang they gaed, and sair they rade, till they came in sight o’ a very big and bonny castle. “Yonder we maun be this night,” quo’ the bull; “for my auld brither lives yonder”; and presently they were at the place. They lifted her aff his back, and took her in, and sent him away to a park for the night. In the morning, when they brought the bull hame, they took the lady into a fine shining parlor, and gave her a beautiful apple, telling her no to break it till she was in the greatest strait ever mortal was in in the world, and that wad bring her o’t. Again she was lifted on the bull’s back, and after she had ridden far, and farer than I can tell, they came in sight o’ a far bonnier castle, and far farther awa’ than the last. Says the bull till her: “Yonder we maun be the night, for my second brither lives yonder”; and they were at the place directly. They lifted her down and took her in, and sent the bull to the field for the night. In the morning they took the lady into a fine and rich room, and gave her the finest pear she had ever seen, bidding her no to break it till she was in the greatest strait ever mortal could be in, and that wad get her out o’t. Again she was lifted and set on his back, and awa’ they went. And lang they gaed, and sair they rade, till they came in sight o’ the far biggest castle, and far farthest aff, they had yet seen. “We maun be yonder the night,” says the bull, “for my young brither lives yonder”; and they were there directly. They lifted her down, took her in, and sent the bull to the field for the night. In the morning they took her into a room, the finest of a’, and gied her a plum, telling her no to break it till she was in the greatest strait mortal could be in, and that wad get her out o’t. Presently they brought hame the bull, set the lady on his back, and awa’ they went.

And aye they gaed, and on they rade, till they came to a dark and ugsome glen, where they stopped, and the lady lighted down. Says the bull to her: “Here ye maun stay till I gang and fight the deil. Ye maun seat yoursel’ on that stane, and move neither hand nor fit till I come back, else I’ll never find ye again. And if everything round about ye turns blue I hae beated the deil; but should a’ things turn red he’ll hae conquered me.” She set hersel’ down on the stane, and by-and-by a’ round her turned blue. O’ercome wi’ joy, she lifted the ae fit and crossed it owre the ither, sae glad was she that her companion was victorious. The bull returned and sought for but never could find her.

Lang she sat, and aye she grat, till she wearied. At last she rase and gaed awa’, she kedna whaur till. On she wandered till she came to a great hill o’ glass, that she tried a’ she could to climb, bat wasna able. Round the bottom o’ the hill she gaed, sabbing and seeking a passage owre, till at last she came to a smith’s house; and the smith promised, if she wad serve him seven years, he wad make her iron shoon, wherewi’ she could climb owre the glassy hill. At seven years’ end she got her iron shoon, clamb the glassy hill, and chanced to come to the auld washerwife’s habitation. There she was telled of a gallant young knight that had given in some bluidy sarks to wash, and whaever washed thae sarks was to be his wife. The auld wife had washed till she was tired, and then she set to her dochter, and baith washed, and they washed, and they better washed, in hopes of getting the young knight; but a’ they could do they couldna bring out a stain. At length they set the stranger damosel to wark; and whenever she began the stains came out pure and clean, but the auld wife made the knight believe it was her dochter had washed the sarks. So the knight and the eldest dochter were to be married, and the stranger damosel was distracted at the thought of it, for she was deeply in love wi’ him. So she bethought her of her apple, and breaking it, found it filled with gold and precious jewelry, the richest she had ever seen. “All these,” she said to the eldest dochter, “I will give you, on condition that you put off your marriage for ae day, and allow me to go into his room alone at night.” So the lady consented; but meanwhile the auld wife had prepared a sleeping-drink, and given it to the knight, wha drank it, and never wakened till next morning. The lee-lang night ther damosel sabbed and sang:

“Seven lang years I served for thee,
The glassy hill I clamb for thee,
The bluidy shirt I wrang for thee;
And wilt thou no wauken and turn to me?”

Next day she kentna what to do for grief. She then brak the pear, and found it filled wi’ jewelry far richer than the contents o’ the apple. Wi’ thae jewels she bargained for permission to be a second night in the young knight’s chamber; but the auld wife gied him anither sleeping-drink, and he again sleepit till morning. A’ night she kept sighing and singing as before:

“Seven lang years I served for thee,” &c. Still he sleepit, and she nearly lost hope a’thegither. But that day when he was out at the hunting, somebody asked him what noise and moaning was yon they heard all last night in his bedchamber. He said he heardna ony noise. But they assured him there was sae; and he resolved to keep waking that night to try what he could hear. That being the third night, and the damosel being between hope and despair, she brak her plum, and it held far the richest jewelry of the three. She bargained as before; and the auld wife, as before, took in the sleeping-drink to the young knight’s chamber; but he telled her he couldna drink it that night without sweetening. And when she gaed awa’ for some honey to sweeten it wi’, he poured out the drink, and sae made the auld wife think he had drunk it. They a’ went to bed again, and the damosel began, as before, singing:

“Seven lang years I served for thee,
The glassy hill I clamb for thee,
The bluidy shirt I wrang for thee;
And wilt thou no wauken and turn to me?”

He heard, and turned to her. And she telled him a’ that had befa’en her, and he telled her a’ that had happened to him. And he caused the auld washerwife and her dochter to be burned. And they were married, and he and she are living happy till this day, for aught I ken.[32]

32. Chambers, Popular Traditions of Scotland.

THE RED ETIN

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There were ance twa widows that lived on a small bit o' ground, which they rented from a farmer. Ane of them had twa sons, and the other had ane; and by-and-by it was time for the wife that had twa sons to send them away to seeke their fortune. So she told her eldest son ae day to take a can and bring her water from the well, that she might bake a cake for him; and however much or however little water he might bring, the cake would be great or sma' accordingly; and that cake was to be a' that she could gie him when he went on his travels.

The lad gaed away wi' the can to the well, and filled it wi' water, and then came away hame again; but the can being broken the maist part of the water had run out before he got back. So his cake was very sma'; yet sma' as it was, his mother asked if he was willing to take the half of it with her blessing, telling him that, if he chose rather to have the hale, he would only get it wi' her curse. The young man, thinking he might hae to travel a far way, and not knowing when or how he might get other provisions, said he would like to hae the hale cake, com of his mother's malison what like; so she gave him the hale cake, and her malison alang wi't. Then he took his brither aside, and gave him a knife to keep till he should come back, desiring him to look at it every morning, and as lang as it continued to be clear, then he might be sure that the owner of it was well; but if it grew dim and rusty, then for certain some ill had befallen him.

So the young man set out to seek his fortune. And he gaed a' that day, and a' the next day; and on the third day, in the afternoon, he came up to where a shepherd was sitting with a flock o' sheep. And he gaed up to the shepherd and asked him wha the sheep belanged to; and the man answered:

"The Red Etin of Ireland
Ance lived in Bellygan,
And stole King Malcolm's daughter,
The King of fair Scotland.
He beats her, he binds her,

He lays her on a band;
And every day he dings her
With a bright silver wand
Like Julian the Roman
He’s one that fears no man.
It’s said there’s ane predestinate
To be his mortal foe;
But that man is yet unborn
And lang may it be so.”

The young man then went on his journey; and he had not gone far when he espied an old man with white locks herding a flock of swine; and he gaed up to him and asked whose swine these were, when the man answered:

“The Red Etin of Ireland”—
(Repeat the verses above.)

Then the young man gaed on a bit farther, and came to another very old man herding goats; and when he asked whose goats they were, the answer was:

“The Red Etin of Ireland”—
(Repeat the verses again.)

This old man also told him to beware of the next beasts that he should meet, for they were of a very different kind from any he had yet seen.

So the young man went on, and by-and-by he saw a multitude of very dreadfu’ beasts, ilk ane o’ them wi’ twa heads, and on every head four horns. And he was sore frightened, and ran away from them as fast as he could; and glad was he when he came to a castle that stood on a hillock, wi’ the door standing wide to the wa’. And he gaed into the castle for shelter, and there he saw an auld wife sitting beside the kitchen fire. He asked the wife if he might stay there for the night, as he was tired wi’ a lang journey; and the wife said he might, but it was not a good place for him to be in, as it belanged to the Red Etin, who was a very terrible beast,

wi’ three heads, that spared no living man he could get hold of. The young man would have gone away, but he was afraid of the beasts on the outside of the castle; so he beseeched the old woman to conceal him as well as she could, and not to tell the Etin that he was there. He thought, if he could put over the night, he might get away in the morning without meeting wi’ the beasts, and so escape. But he had not been long in his hidy-hole before the awful Etin came in; and nae sooner was he in than he was heard crying:

“Snouk but and snouk ben,
I find the smell of an earthly man;
Be he living, or be he dead,
His heart this night shall kitchen[33] my bread.”

The monster soon found the poor young man, and pulled him from his hole. And when he had got him out he told him that if he could answer him three questions his life should be spared. The first was: Whether Ireland or Scotland was first inhabited? The second was: Whether man was made for woman, or woman for man? The third was: Whether men or brutes were made first? The lad not being able to answer one of these questions, the Red Etin took a mace and knocked him on the head, and turned him into a pillar of stone.

On the morning after this happened the younger brither took out the knife to look at it, and he was grieved to find it a’ brown wi’ rust. He told his mother that the time was now come for him to go away upon his travels also; so she requested him to take the can to the well for water, that she might bake a cake for him. The can being broken, he brought hame as little water as the other had done, and the cake was as little. She asked whether he would have the hale cake wi’ her malison, or the half wi’ her blessing; and, like his brither, he thought it best to have the hale cake, come o’ the malison what might. So he gaed away; and everything happened to him that had happened to his brother!

The other widow and her son heard of a’ that had happened frae a fairy, and the young man determined that he would also go upon his travels, and see if he could do anything to relieve his twa friends. So his mother gave him a can to go to the well and bring home water, that she might bake him a cake for his journey. And he gaed, and as he was bringing hame the

water, a raven owre abune his head cried to him to look, and he would see that the water was running out. And he was a young man of sense, and seeing the water running out, he took some clay and patched up the holes, so that he brought home enough water to bake a large cake. When his mother put it to him to take the half-cake wi' her blessing, he took it in preference to having the hale wi' her malison; and yet the half was bigger than what the other lads had got a'thegither.

So he gaed away on his journey; and after he had traveled a far way he met wi' an auld woman, that asked him if he would give her a bit of his bannock. And he said he would gladly do that, and so he gave her a piece of the bannock; and for that she gied him a magical wand, that she said might yet be of service to him if he took care to use it rightly. Then the auld woman, who was a fairy, told him a great deal that whould happen to him, and what he ought to do in a' circumstances; and after that she vanished in an instant out o' his sight. He gaed on a great way farther, and then he came up to the old man herding the sheep; and when he asked whose sheep these were, the answer was:

"The Red Etin of Ireland
Ance lived in Bellygan,
And stole King Malcolm's daughter,
The King of fair Scotland.
He beats her, he binds her,
He lays her on a band;
And every day he dings her
With a bright silver wand.
Like Julian the Roman,
He's one that fears no man,
But now I fear his end is near,
And destiny at hand;
And you're to be, I plainly see,
The heir of all his land."

(Repeat the same inquiries to the man attending the swine and the man attending the goats, with the same answer in each case.)

When he came to the place where the monstrous beasts were standing, he did not stop nor run away, but went boldly through among them. One came up roaring with open mouth to devour him, when he struck it with his wand, and laid it in an instant dead at his feet. He soon came to the Etin's castle, where he knocked, and was admitted. The auld woman that sat by the fire warned him of the terrible Etin, and what had been the fate of the twa brithers; but he was not to be daunted. The monster soon came in, saying:

"Snouk but and snouk ben,
I find the smell of an earthly man;
Be he living, or be he dead,
His heart shall be kitchen to my bread."

He quickly espied the young man, and bade him come forth on the floor. And then he put the three questions to him, but the young man had been told everything by the good fairy, so he was able to answer all the questions. When the Etin found this he knew that his power was gone. The young man then took up the axe and hewed off the monster's three heads. He next asked the old woman to show him where the King's daughters lay; and the old woman took him upstairs and opened a great many doors, and out of every door came a beautiful lady who had been imprisoned there by the Etin; and ane o' the ladies was the King's daughter. She also took him down into a low room, and there stood two stone pillars that he had only to touch wi' his wand, when his two friends and neighbors started into life. And the hale o' the prisoners were overjoyed at their deliverance, which they all acknowledged to be owing to the prudent young man. Next day they a' set out for the King's Court, and a gallant company they made. And the King married his daughter to the young man that had delivered her, and gave a noble's daughter to ilk ane o' the other young men; and so they a' lived happily a' the rest o' their days.[34]

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33. "Kitchen," that is, "season."

34. Chambers, Popular Traditions of Scotland.

THE RED FAIRY BOOK

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PREFACE

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In a second gleaning of the fields of Fairy Land we cannot expect to find a second Perrault. But there are good stories enough left, and it is hoped that some in the Red Fairy Book may have the attraction of being less familiar than many of the old friends. The tales have been translated, or, in the case of those from Madame d'Aulnoy's long stories, adapted, by Mrs. Hunt from the Norse, by Miss Minnie Wright from Madame d'Aulnoy, by Mrs. Lang and Miss Bruce from other French sources, by Miss May Sellar, Miss Farquharson, and Miss Blackley from the German, while the story of 'Sigurd' is condensed by the Editor from Mr. William Morris's prose version of the 'Volsunga Saga.' The Editor has to thank his friend, M. Charles Marelles, for permission to reproduce his versions of the 'Pied Piper,' of 'Drakestail,' and of 'Little Golden Hood' from the French, and M. Henri Carnoy for the same privilege in regard to 'The Six Sillies' from La Tradition.

Lady Frances Balfour has kindly copied an old version of 'Jack and the Beanstalk,' and Messrs. Smith and Elder have permitted the publication of two of Mr. Ralston's versions from the Russian.

A. L.

THE TWELVE DANCING PRINCESSES

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I

Once upon a time there lived in the village of Montignies-sur-Roc a little cow-boy, without either father or mother. His real name was Michael, but he was always called the Star Gazer, because when he drove his cows over the commons to seek for pasture, he went along with his head in the air, gaping at nothing.

As he had a white skin, blue eyes, and hair that curled all over his head, the village girls used to cry after him, ‘Well, Star Gazer, what are you doing?’ and Michael would answer, ‘Oh, nothing,’ and go on his way without even turning to look at them.

The fact was he thought them very ugly, with their sun-burnt necks, their great red hands, their coarse petticoats and their wooden shoes. He had heard that somewhere in the world there were girls whose necks were white and whose hands were small, who were always dressed in the finest silks and laces, and were called princesses, and while his companions round the fire saw nothing in the flames but common everyday fancies, he dreamed that he had the happiness to marry a princess.

II

One morning about the middle of August, just at mid-day when the sun was hottest, Michael ate his dinner of a piece of dry bread, and went to sleep under an oak. And while he slept he dreamt that there appeared before him a beautiful lady, dressed in a robe of cloth of gold, who said to him: ‘Go to the castle of Beloeil, and there you shall marry a princess.’

That evening the little cow-boy, who had been thinking a great deal about the advice of the lady in the golden dress, told his dream to the farm people. But, as was natural, they only laughed at the Star Gazer.

The next day at the same hour he went to sleep again under the same tree. The lady appeared to him a second time, and said: ‘Go to the castle of Beloeil, and you shall marry a princess.’

In the evening Michael told his friends that he had dreamed the same dream again, but they only laughed at him more than before. ‘Never mind,’ he thought to himself; ‘if the lady appears to me a third time, I will do as she tells me.’

The following day, to the great astonishment of all the village, about two o’clock in the afternoon a voice was heard singing:

‘Raleo, raleo, How the cattle go!’

It was the little cow-boy driving his herd back to the byre.

The farmer began to scold him furiously, but he answered quietly, ‘I am going away,’ made his clothes into a bundle, said good-bye to all his friends, and boldly set out to seek his fortunes.

There was great excitement through all the village, and on the top of the hill the people stood holding their sides with laughing, as they watched the Star Gazer trudging bravely along the valley with his bundle at the end of his stick.

It was enough to make anyone laugh, certainly.

III

It was well known for full twenty miles round that there lived in the castle of Beloeil twelve princesses of wonderful beauty, and as proud as they were beautiful, and who were besides so very sensitive and of such truly royal blood, that they would have felt at once the presence of a pea in their beds, even if the mattresses had been laid over it.

It was whispered about that they led exactly the lives that princesses ought to lead, sleeping far into the morning, and never getting up till mid-day. They had twelve beds all in the same room, but what was very extraordinary was the fact that though they were locked in by triple bolts, every morning their satin shoes were found worn into holes.

When they were asked what they had been doing all night, they always answered that they had been asleep; and, indeed, no noise was ever heard in the room, yet the shoes could not wear themselves out alone!

At last the Duke of Beloeil ordered the trumpet to be sounded, and a proclamation to be made that whoever could discover how his daughters wore out their shoes should choose one of them for his wife.

On hearing the proclamation a number of princes arrived at the castle to try their luck. They watched all night behind the open door of the princesses, but when the morning came they had all disappeared, and no one could tell what had become of them.

IV

When he reached the castle, Michael went straight to the gardener and offered his services. Now it happened that the garden boy had just been sent away, and though the Star Gazer did not look very sturdy, the gardener agreed to take him, as he thought that his pretty face and golden curls would please the princesses.

The first thing he was told was that when the princesses got up he was to present each one with a bouquet, and Michael thought that if he had nothing more unpleasant to do than that he should get on very well.

Accordingly he placed himself behind the door of the princesses' room, with the twelve bouquets in a basket. He gave one to each of the sisters, and they took them without even deigning to look at the lad, except Lina the youngest, who fixed her large black eyes as soft as velvet on him, and exclaimed, 'Oh, how pretty he is—our new flower boy!' The rest all burst out laughing, and the eldest pointed out that a princess ought never to lower herself by looking at a garden boy.

Now Michael knew quite well what had happened to all the princes, but notwithstanding, the beautiful eyes of the Princess Lina inspired him with a violent longing to try his fate. Unhappily he did not dare to come forward, being afraid that he should only be jeered at, or even turned away from the castle on account of his impudence.

V

Nevertheless, the Star Gazer had another dream. The lady in the golden dress appeared to him once more, holding in one hand two young laurel trees, a cherry laurel and a rose laurel, and in the other hand a little golden rake, a little golden bucket, and a silken towel. She thus addressed him:

‘Plant these two laurels in two large pots, rake them over with the rake, water them with the bucket, and wipe them with the towel. When they have grown as tall as a girl of fifteen, say to each of them, ‘’My beautiful laurel, with the golden rake I have raked you, with the golden bucket I have watered you, with the silken towel I have wiped you.‘’ Then after that ask anything you choose, and the laurels will give it to you.’

Michael thanked the lady in the golden dress, and when he woke he found the two laurel bushes beside him. So he carefully obeyed the orders he had been given by the lady.

The trees grew very fast, and when they were as tall as a girl of fifteen he said to the cherry laurel, ‘My lovely cherry laurel, with the golden rake I have raked thee, with the golden bucket I have watered thee, with the silken towel I have wiped thee. Teach me how to become invisible.’ Then there instantly appeared on the laurel a pretty white flower, which Michael gathered and stuck into his button-hole.

VI

That evening, when the princesses went upstairs to bed, he followed them barefoot, so that he might make no noise, and hid himself under one of the twelve beds, so as not to take up much room.

The princesses began at once to open their wardrobes and boxes. They took out of them the most magnificent dresses, which they put on before their mirrors, and when they had finished, turned themselves all round to admire their appearances.

Michael could see nothing from his hiding-place, but he could hear everything, and he listened to the princesses laughing and jumping with pleasure. At last the eldest said, ‘Be quick, my sisters, our partners will be impatient.’ At the end of an hour, when the Star Gazer heard no more noise, he peeped out and saw the twelve sisters in splendid garments, with

their satin shoes on their feet, and in their hands the bouquets he had brought them.

‘Are you ready?’ asked the eldest.

‘Yes,’ replied the other eleven in chorus, and they took their places one by one behind her.

Then the eldest Princess clapped her hands three times and a trap door opened. All the princesses disappeared down a secret staircase, and Michael hastily followed them.

As he was following on the steps of the Princess Lina, he carelessly trod on her dress.

‘There is somebody behind me,’ cried the Princess; ‘they are holding my dress.’

‘You foolish thing,’ said her eldest sister, ‘you are always afraid of something. It is only a nail which caught you.’

VII

They went down, down, down, till at last they came to a passage with a door at one end, which was only fastened with a latch. The eldest Princess opened it, and they found themselves immediately in a lovely little wood, where the leaves were spangled with drops of silver which shone in the brilliant light of the moon.

They next crossed another wood where the leaves were sprinkled with gold, and after that another still, where the leaves glittered with diamonds.

At last the Star Gazer perceived a large lake, and on the shores of the lake twelve little boats with awnings, in which were seated twelve princes, who, grasping their oars, awaited the princesses.

Each princess entered one of the boats, and Michael slipped into that which held the youngest. The boats glided along rapidly, but Lina’s, from being heavier, was always behind the rest. ‘We never went so slowly before,’ said the Princess; ‘what can be the reason?’

‘I don’t know,’ answered the Prince. ‘I assure you I am rowing as hard as I can.’

On the other side of the lake the garden boy saw a beautiful castle splendidly illuminated, whence came the lively music of fiddles, kettle-

drums, and trumpets.

In a moment they touched land, and the company jumped out of the boats; and the princes, after having securely fastened their barques, gave their arms to the princesses and conducted them to the castle.

VIII

Michael followed, and entered the ball-room in their train. Everywhere were mirrors, lights, flowers, and damask hangings.

The Star Gazer was quite bewildered at the magnificence of the sight.

He placed himself out of the way in a corner, admiring the grace and beauty of the princesses. Their loveliness was of every kind. Some were fair and some were dark; some had chestnut hair, or curls darker still, and some had golden locks. Never were so many beautiful princesses seen together at one time, but the one whom the cow-boy thought the most beautiful and the most fascinating was the little Princess with the velvet eyes.

With what eagerness she danced! leaning on her partner’s shoulder she swept by like a whirlwind. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkled, and it was plain that she loved dancing better than anything else.

The poor boy envied those handsome young men with whom she danced so gracefully, but he did not know how little reason he had to be jealous of them.

The young men were really the princes who, to the number of fifty at least, had tried to steal the princesses’ secret. The princesses had made them drink something of a philtre, which froze the heart and left nothing but the love of dancing.

IX

They danced on till the shoes of the princesses were worn into holes. When the cock crowed the third time the fiddles stopped, and a delicious supper was served by negro boys, consisting of sugared orange flowers,

crystallised rose leaves, powdered violets, cracknels, wafers, and other dishes, which are, as everyone knows, the favourite food of princesses.

After supper, the dancers all went back to their boats, and this time the Star Gazer entered that of the eldest Princess. They crossed again the wood with the diamond-spangled leaves, the wood with gold-sprinkled leaves, and the wood whose leaves glittered with drops of silver, and as a proof of what he had seen, the boy broke a small branch from a tree in the last wood. Lina turned as she heard the noise made by the breaking of the branch.

‘What was that noise?’ she said.

‘It was nothing,’ replied her eldest sister; ‘it was only the screech of the barn-owl that roosts in one of the turrets of the castle.’

While she was speaking Michael managed to slip in front, and running up the staircase, he reached the princesses’ room first. He flung open the window, and sliding down the vine which climbed up the wall, found himself in the garden just as the sun was beginning to rise, and it was time for him to set to his work.

X

That day, when he made up the bouquets, Michael hid the branch with the silver drops in the nosegay intended for the youngest Princess.

When Lina discovered it she was much surprised. However, she said nothing to her sisters, but as she met the boy by accident while she was walking under the shade of the elms, she suddenly stopped as if to speak to him; then, altering her mind, went on her way.

The same evening the twelve sisters went again to the ball, and the Star Gazer again followed them and crossed the lake in Lina’s boat. This time it was the Prince who complained that the boat seemed very heavy.

‘It is the heat,’ replied the Princess. ‘I, too, have been feeling very warm.’

During the ball she looked everywhere for the gardener’s boy, but she never saw him.

As they came back, Michael gathered a branch from the wood with the gold-spangled leaves, and now it was the eldest Princess who heard the

noise that it made in breaking.

‘It is nothing,’ said Lina; ‘only the cry of the owl which roosts in the turrets of the castle.’

XI

As soon as she got up she found the branch in her bouquet. When the sisters went down she stayed a little behind and said to the cow-boy: ‘Where does this branch come from?’

‘Your Royal Highness knows well enough,’ answered Michael.

‘So you have followed us?’

‘Yes, Princess.’

‘How did you manage it? we never saw you.’

‘I hid myself,’ replied the Star Gazer quietly.

The Princess was silent a moment, and then said:

‘You know our secret!—keep it. Here is the reward of your discretion.’ And she flung the boy a purse of gold.

‘I do not sell my silence,’ answered Michael, and he went away without picking up the purse.

For three nights Lina neither saw nor heard anything extraordinary; on the fourth she heard a rustling among the diamond-spangled leaves of the wood. That day there was a branch of the trees in her bouquet.

She took the Star Gazer aside, and said to him in a harsh voice:

‘You know what price my father has promised to pay for our secret?’

‘I know, Princess,’ answered Michael.

‘Don’t you mean to tell him?’

‘That is not my intention.’

‘Are you afraid?’

‘No, Princess.’

‘What makes you so discreet, then?’

But Michael was silent.

XII

Lina’s sisters had seen her talking to the little garden boy, and jeered at her for it.

‘What prevents your marrying him?’ asked the eldest, ‘you would become a gardener too; it is a charming profession. You could live in a cottage at the end of the park, and help your husband to draw up water from the well, and when we get up you could bring us our bouquets.’

The Princess Lina was very angry, and when the Star Gazer presented her bouquet, she received it in a disdainful manner.

Michael behaved most respectfully. He never raised his eyes to her, but nearly all day she felt him at her side without ever seeing him.

One day she made up her mind to tell everything to her eldest sister.

‘What!’ said she, ‘this rogue knows our secret, and you never told me! I must lose no time in getting rid of him.’

‘But how?’

‘Why, by having him taken to the tower with the dungeons, of course.’

For this was the way that in old times beautiful princesses got rid of people who knew too much.

But the astonishing part of it was that the youngest sister did not seem at all to relish this method of stopping the mouth of the gardener’s boy, who, after all, had said nothing to their father.

XIII

It was agreed that the question should be submitted to the other ten sisters. All were on the side of the eldest. Then the youngest sister declared that if they laid a finger on the little garden boy, she would herself go and tell their father the secret of the holes in their shoes.

At last it was decided that Michael should be put to the test; that they would take him to the ball, and at the end of supper would give him the philtre which was to enchant him like the rest.

They sent for the Star Gazer, and asked him how he had contrived to learn their secret; but still he remained silent.

Then, in commanding tones, the eldest sister gave him the order they had agreed upon.

He only answered:

‘I will obey.’

He had really been present, invisible, at the council of princesses, and had heard all; but he had made up his mind to drink of the philtre, and sacrifice himself to the happiness of her he loved.

Not wishing, however, to cut a poor figure at the ball by the side of the other dancers, he went at once to the laurels, and said:

‘My lovely rose laurel, with the golden rake I have raked thee, with the golden bucket I have watered thee, with a silken towel I have dried thee. Dress me like a prince.’

A beautiful pink flower appeared. Michael gathered it, and found himself in a moment clothed in velvet, which was as black as the eyes of the little Princess, with a cap to match, a diamond aigrette, and a blossom of the rose laurel in his button-hole.

Thus dressed, he presented himself that evening before the Duke of Beloeil, and obtained leave to try and discover his daughters’ secret. He looked so distinguished that hardly anyone would have known who he was.

XIV

The twelve princesses went upstairs to bed. Michael followed them, and waited behind the open door till they gave the signal for departure.

This time he did not cross in Lina’s boat. He gave his arm to the eldest sister, danced with each in turn, and was so graceful that everyone was delighted with him. At last the time came for him to dance with the little Princess. She found him the best partner in the world, but he did not dare to speak a single word to her.

When he was taking her back to her place she said to him in a mocking voice:

‘Here you are at the summit of your wishes: you are being treated like a prince.’

‘Don’t be afraid,’ replied the Star Gazer gently. ‘You shall never be a gardener’s wife.’

The little Princess stared at him with a frightened face, and he left her without waiting for an answer.

When the satin slippers were worn through the fiddles stopped, and the negro boys set the table. Michael was placed next to the eldest sister, and opposite to the youngest.

They gave him the most exquisite dishes to eat, and the most delicate wines to drink; and in order to turn his head more completely, compliments and flattery were heaped on him from every side.

But he took care not to be intoxicated, either by the wine or the compliments.

XV

At last the eldest sister made a sign, and one of the black pages brought in a large golden cup.

‘The enchanted castle has no more secrets for you,’ she said to the Star Gazer. ‘Let us drink to your triumph.’

He cast a lingering glance at the little Princess, and without hesitation lifted the cup.

‘Don’t drink!’ suddenly cried out the little Princess; ‘I would rather marry a gardener.’

And she burst into tears.

Michael flung the contents of the cup behind him, sprang over the table, and fell at Lina’s feet. The rest of the princes fell likewise at the knees of the princesses, each of whom chose a husband and raised him to her side. The charm was broken.

The twelve couples embarked in the boats, which crossed back many times in order to carry over the other princes. Then they all went through the three woods, and when they had passed the door of the underground passage a great noise was heard, as if the enchanted castle was crumbling to the earth.

They went straight to the room of the Duke of Beloeil, who had just awoke. Michael held in his hand the golden cup, and he revealed the secret of the holes in the shoes.

‘Choose, then,’ said the Duke, ‘whichever you prefer.’

‘My choice is already made,’ replied the garden boy, and he offered his hand to the youngest Princess, who blushed and lowered her eyes.

XVI

The Princess Lina did not become a gardener’s wife; on the contrary, it was the Star Gazer who became a Prince: but before the marriage ceremony the Princess insisted that her lover should tell her how he came to discover the secret.

So he showed her the two laurels which had helped him, and she, like a prudent girl, thinking they gave him too much advantage over his wife, cut them off at the root and threw them in the fire. And this is why the country girls go about singing:

Nous n’irons plus au bois,
Les lauriers sont coupes,’

and dancing in summer by the light of the moon.

THE PRINCESS MAYBLOSSOM

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Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen whose children had all died, first one and then another, until at last only one little daughter remained, and the Queen was at her wits' end to know where to find a really good nurse who would take care of her, and bring her up. A herald was sent who blew a trumpet at every street corner, and commanded all the best nurses to appear before the Queen, that she might choose one for the little Princess. So on the appointed day the whole palace was crowded with nurses, who came from the four corners of the world to offer themselves, until the Queen declared that if she was ever to see the half of them, they must be brought out to her, one by one, as she sat in a shady wood near the palace.

This was accordingly done, and the nurses, after they had made their curtsey to the King and Queen, ranged themselves in a line before her that she might choose. Most of them were fair and fat and charming, but there was one who was dark-skinned and ugly, and spoke a strange language which nobody could understand. The Queen wondered how she dared offer herself, and she was told to go away, as she certainly would not do. Upon which she muttered something and passed on, but hid herself in a hollow tree, from which she could see all that happened. The Queen, without giving her another thought, chose a pretty rosy-faced nurse, but no sooner was her choice made than a snake, which was hidden in the grass, bit that very nurse on her foot, so that she fell down as if dead. The Queen was very much vexed by this accident, but she soon selected another, who was just stepping forward when an eagle flew by and dropped a large tortoise upon her head, which was cracked in pieces like an egg-shell. At this the Queen was much horrified; nevertheless, she chose a third time, but with no better fortune, for the nurse, moving quickly, ran into the branch of a tree and blinded herself with a thorn. Then the Queen in dismay cried that there must be some malignant influence at work, and that she would choose no more that day; and she had just risen to return to the palace

when she heard peals of malicious laughter behind her, and turning round saw the ugly stranger whom she had dismissed, who was making very merry over the disasters and mocking everyone, but especially the Queen. This annoyed Her Majesty very much, and she was about to order that she should be arrested, when the witch—for she was a witch—with two blows from a wand summoned a chariot of fire drawn by winged dragons, and was whirled off through the air uttering threats and cries. When the King saw this he cried:

‘Alas! now we are ruined indeed, for that was no other than the Fairy Carabosse, who has had a grudge against me ever since I was a boy and put sulphur into her porridge one day for fun.’

Then the Queen began to cry.

‘If I had only known who it was,’ she said, ‘I would have done my best to make friends with her; now I suppose all is lost.’

The King was sorry to have frightened her so much, and proposed that they should go and hold a council as to what was best to be done to avert the misfortunes which Carabosse certainly meant to bring upon the little Princess.

So all the counsellors were summoned to the palace, and when they had shut every door and window, and stuffed up every keyhole that they might not be overheard, they talked the affair over, and decided that every fairy for a thousand leagues round should be invited to the christening of the Princess, and that the time of the ceremony should be kept a profound secret, in case the Fairy Carabosse should take it into her head to attend it.

The Queen and her ladies set to work to prepare presents for the fairies who were invited: for each one a blue velvet cloak, a petticoat of apricot satin, a pair of high-heeled shoes, some sharp needles, and a pair of golden scissors. Of all the fairies the Queen knew, only five were able to come on the day appointed, but they began immediately to bestow gifts upon the Princess. One promised that she should be perfectly beautiful, the second that she should understand anything—no matter what—the first time it was explained to her, the third that she should sing like a nightingale, the fourth that she should succeed in everything she undertook, and the fifth was opening her mouth to speak when a tremendous rumbling was heard in the chimney, and Carabosse, all covered with soot, came rolling down, crying:

‘I say that she shall be the unluckiest of the unlucky until she is twenty years old.’

Then the Queen and all the fairies began to beg and beseech her to think better of it, and not be so unkind to the poor little Princess, who had never done her any harm. But the ugly old Fairy only grunted and made no answer. So the last Fairy, who had not yet given her gift, tried to mend matters by promising the Princess a long and happy life after the fatal time was over. At this Carabosse laughed maliciously, and climbed away up the chimney, leaving them all in great consternation, and especially the Queen. However, she entertained the fairies splendidly, and gave them beautiful ribbons, of which they are very fond, in addition to the other presents.

When they were going away the oldest Fairy said that they were of opinion that it would be best to shut the Princess up in some place, with her waiting-women, so that she might not see anyone else until she was twenty years old. So the King had a tower built on purpose. It had no windows, so it was lighted with wax candles, and the only way into it was by an underground passage, which had iron doors only twenty feet apart, and guards were posted everywhere.

The Princess had been named Mayblossom, because she was as fresh and blooming as Spring itself, and she grew up tall and beautiful, and everything she did and said was charming. Every time the King and Queen came to see her they were more delighted with her than before, but though she was weary of the tower, and often begged them to take her away from it, they always refused. The Princess’s nurse, who had never left her, sometimes told her about the world outside the tower, and though the Princess had never seen anything for herself, yet she always understood exactly, thanks to the second Fairy’s gift. Often the King said to the Queen:

‘We were cleverer than Carabosse after all. Our Mayblossom will be happy in spite of her predictions.’

And the Queen laughed until she was tired at the idea of having outwitted the old Fairy. They had caused the Princess’s portrait to be painted and sent to all the neighbouring Courts, for in four days she would have completed her twentieth year, and it was time to decide whom she should marry. All the town was rejoicing at the thought of the Princess’s approaching freedom, and when the news came that King Merlin was

sending his ambassador to ask her in marriage for his son, they were still more delighted. The nurse, who kept the Princess informed of everything that went forward in the town, did not fail to repeat the news that so nearly concerned her, and gave such a description of the splendour in which the ambassador Fanfaronade would enter the town, that the Princess was wild to see the procession for herself.

‘What an unhappy creature I am,’ she cried, ‘to be shut up in this dismal tower as if I had committed some crime! I have never seen the sun, or the stars, or a horse, or a monkey, or a lion, except in pictures, and though the King and Queen tell me I am to be set free when I am twenty, I believe they only say it to keep me amused, when they never mean to let me out at all.’

And then she began to cry, and her nurse, and the nurse’s daughter, and the cradle-rocker, and the nursery-maid, who all loved her dearly, cried too for company, so that nothing could be heard but sobs and sighs. It was a scene of woe. When the Princess saw that they all pitied her she made up her mind to have her own way. So she declared that she would starve herself to death if they did not find some means of letting her see Fanfaronade’s grand entry into the town.

‘If you really love me,’ she said, ‘you will manage it, somehow or other, and the King and Queen need never know anything about it.’

Then the nurse and all the others cried harder than ever, and said everything they could think of to turn the Princess from her idea. But the more they said the more determined she was, and at last they consented to make a tiny hole in the tower on the side that looked towards the city gates.

After scratching and scraping all day and all night, they presently made a hole through which they could, with great difficulty, push a very slender needle, and out of this the Princess looked at the daylight for the first time. She was so dazzled and delighted by what she saw, that there she stayed, never taking her eyes away from the peep-hole for a single minute, until presently the ambassador’s procession appeared in sight.

At the head of it rode Fanfaronade himself upon a white horse, which pranced and caracoled to the sound of the trumpets. Nothing could have been more splendid than the ambassador’s attire. His coat was nearly hidden under an embroidery of pearls and diamonds, his boots were solid

gold, and from his helmet floated scarlet plumes. At the sight of him the Princess lost her wits entirely, and determined that Fanfaronade and nobody else would she marry.

‘It is quite impossible,’ she said, ‘that his master should be half as handsome and delightful. I am not ambitious, and having spent all my life in this tedious tower, anything—even a house in the country—will seem a delightful change. I am sure that bread and water shared with Fanfaronade will please me far better than roast chicken and sweetmeats with anybody else.’

And so she went on talk, talk, talking, until her waiting-women wondered where she got it all from. But when they tried to stop her, and represented that her high rank made it perfectly impossible that she should do any such thing, she would not listen, and ordered them to be silent.

As soon as the ambassador arrived at the palace, the Queen started to fetch her daughter.

All the streets were spread with carpets, and the windows were full of ladies who were waiting to see the Princess, and carried baskets of flowers and sweetmeats to shower upon her as she passed.

They had hardly begun to get the Princess ready when a dwarf arrived, mounted upon an elephant. He came from the five fairies, and brought for the Princess a crown, a sceptre, and a robe of golden brocade, with a petticoat marvellously embroidered with butterflies’ wings. They also sent a casket of jewels, so splendid that no one had ever seen anything like it before, and the Queen was perfectly dazzled when she opened it. But the Princess scarcely gave a glance to any of these treasures, for she thought of nothing but Fanfaronade. The Dwarf was rewarded with a gold piece, and decorated with so many ribbons that it was hardly possible to see him at all. The Princess sent to each of the fairies a new spinning-wheel with a distaff of cedar wood, and the Queen said she must look through her treasures and find something very charming to send them also.

When the Princess was arrayed in all the gorgeous things the Dwarf had brought, she was more beautiful than ever, and as she walked along the streets the people cried: ‘How pretty she is! How pretty she is!’

The procession consisted of the Queen, the Princess, five dozen other princesses her cousins, and ten dozen who came from the neighbouring kingdoms; and as they proceeded at a stately pace the sky began to grow

dark, then suddenly the thunder growled, and rain and hail fell in torrents. The Queen put her royal mantle over her head, and all the princesses did the same with their trains. Mayblossom was just about to follow their example when a terrific croaking, as of an immense army of crows, rooks, ravens, screech-owls, and all birds of ill-omen was heard, and at the same instant a huge owl skimmed up to the Princess, and threw over her a scarf woven of spiders' webs and embroidered with bats' wings. And then peals of mocking laughter rang through the air, and they guessed that this was another of the Fairy Carabosse's unpleasant jokes.

The Queen was terrified at such an evil omen, and tried to pull the black scarf from the Princess's shoulders, but it really seemed as if it must be nailed on, it clung so closely.

'Ah!' cried the Queen, 'can nothing appease this enemy of ours? What good was it that I sent her more than fifty pounds of sweetmeats, and as much again of the best sugar, not to mention two Westphalia hams? She is as angry as ever.'

While she lamented in this way, and everybody was as wet as if they had been dragged through a river, the Princess still thought of nothing but the ambassador, and just at this moment he appeared before her, with the King, and there was a great blowing of trumpets, and all the people shouted louder than ever. Fanfaronade was not generally at a loss for something to say, but when he saw the Princess, she was so much more beautiful and majestic than he had expected that he could only stammer out a few words, and entirely forgot the harangue which he had been learning for months, and knew well enough to have repeated it in his sleep. To gain time to remember at least part of it, he made several low bows to the Princess, who on her side dropped half-a-dozen curtseys without stopping to think, and then said, to relieve his evident embarrassment:

'Sir Ambassador, I am sure that everything you intend to say is charming, since it is you who mean to say it; but let us make haste into the palace, as it is pouring cats and dogs, and the wicked Fairy Carabosse will be amused to see us all stand dripping here. When we are once under shelter we can laugh at her.'

Upon this the Ambassador found his tongue, and replied gallantly that the Fairy had evidently foreseen the flames that would be kindled by the

bright eyes of the Princess, and had sent this deluge to extinguish them. Then he offered his hand to conduct the Princess, and she said softly:

‘As you could not possibly guess how much I like you, Sir Fanfaronade, I am obliged to tell you plainly that, since I saw you enter the town on your beautiful prancing horse, I have been sorry that you came to speak for another instead of for yourself. So, if you think about it as I do, I will marry you instead of your master. Of course I know you are not a prince, but I shall be just as fond of you as if you were, and we can go and live in some cosy little corner of the world, and be as happy as the days are long.’

The Ambassador thought he must be dreaming, and could hardly believe what the lovely Princess said. He dared not answer, but only squeezed the Princess’s hand until he really hurt her little finger, but she did not cry out. When they reached the palace the King kissed his daughter on both cheeks, and said:

‘My little lambkin, are you willing to marry the great King Merlin’s son, for this Ambassador has come on his behalf to fetch you?’

‘If you please, sire,’ said the Princess, dropping a curtsey.

‘I consent also,’ said the Queen; ‘so let the banquet be prepared.’

This was done with all speed, and everybody feasted except Mayblossom and Fanfaronade, who looked at one another and forgot everything else.

After the banquet came a ball, and after that again a ballet, and at last they were all so tired that everyone fell asleep just where he sat. Only the lovers were as wide-awake as mice, and the Princess, seeing that there was nothing to fear, said to Fanfaronade:

‘Let us be quick and run away, for we shall never have a better chance than this.’

Then she took the King’s dagger, which was in a diamond sheath, and the Queen’s neck-handkerchief, and gave her hand to Fanfaronade, who carried a lantern, and they ran out together into the muddy street and down to the sea-shore. Here they got into a little boat in which the poor old boatman was sleeping, and when he woke up and saw the lovely Princess, with all her diamonds and her spiders’—web scarf, he did not know what to think, and obeyed her instantly when she commanded him to set out. They could see neither moon nor stars, but in the Queen’s neck-

handkerchief there was a carbuncle which glowed like fifty torches. Fanfaronade asked the Princess where she would like to go, but she only answered that she did not care where she went as long as he was with her.

‘But, Princess,’ said he, ‘I dare not take you back to King Merlin’s court. He would think hanging too good for me.’

‘Oh, in that case,’ she answered, ‘we had better go to Squirrel Island; it is lonely enough, and too far off for anyone to follow us there.’

So she ordered the old boatman to steer for Squirrel Island.

Meanwhile the day was breaking, and the King and Queen and all the courtiers began to wake up and rub their eyes, and think it was time to finish the preparations for the wedding. And the Queen asked for her neck-handkerchief, that she might look smart. Then there was a scurrying hither and thither, and a hunting everywhere: they looked into every place, from the wardrobes to the stoves, and the Queen herself ran about from the garret to the cellar, but the handkerchief was nowhere to be found.

By this time the King had missed his dagger, and the search began all over again. They opened boxes and chests of which the keys had been lost for a hundred years, and found numbers of curious things, but not the dagger, and the King tore his beard, and the Queen tore her hair, for the handkerchief and the dagger were the most valuable things in the kingdom.

When the King saw that the search was hopeless he said:

‘Never mind, let us make haste and get the wedding over before anything else is lost.’ And then he asked where the Princess was. Upon this her nurse came forward and said:

‘Sire, I have been seeking her these two hours, but she is nowhere to be found.’ This was more than the Queen could bear. She gave a shriek of alarm and fainted away, and they had to pour two barrels of eau-de-cologne over her before she recovered. When she came to herself everybody was looking for the Princess in the greatest terror and confusion, but as she did not appear, the King said to his page:

‘Go and find the Ambassador Fanfaronade, who is doubtless asleep in some corner, and tell him the sad news.’

So the page hunted hither and thither, but Fanfaronade was no more to be found than the Princess, the dagger, or the neck-handkerchief!

Then the King summoned his counsellors and his guards, and, accompanied by the Queen, went into his great hall. As he had not had time to prepare his speech beforehand, the King ordered that silence should be kept for three hours, and at the end of that time he spoke as follows:

‘Listen, great and small! My dear daughter Mayblossom is lost: whether she has been stolen away or has simply disappeared I cannot tell. The Queen’s neck-handkerchief and my sword, which are worth their weight in gold, are also missing, and, what is worst of all, the Ambassador Fanfaronade is nowhere to be found. I greatly fear that the King, his master, when he receives no tidings from him, will come to seek him among us, and will accuse us of having made mince-meat of him. Perhaps I could bear even that if I had any money, but I assure you that the expenses of the wedding have completely ruined me. Advise me, then, my dear subjects, what had I better do to recover my daughter, Fanfaronade, and the other things.’

This was the most eloquent speech the King had been known to make, and when everybody had done admiring it the Prime Minister made answer:

‘Sire, we are all very sorry to see you so sorry. We would give everything we value in the world to take away the cause of your sorrow, but this seems to be another of the tricks of the Fairy Carabosse. The Princess’s twenty unlucky years were not quite over, and really, if the truth must be told, I noticed that Fanfaronade and the Princess appeared to admire one another greatly. Perhaps this may give some clue to the mystery of their disappearance.’

Here the Queen interrupted him, saying, ‘Take care what you say, sir. Believe me, the Princess Mayblossom was far too well brought up to think of falling in love with an Ambassador.’

At this the nurse came forward, and, falling on her knees, confessed how they had made the little needle-hole in the tower, and how the Princess had declared when she saw the Ambassador that she would marry him and nobody else. Then the Queen was very angry, and gave the nurse, and the cradle-rocker, and the nursery-maid such a scolding that they shook in their shoes. But the Admiral Cocked-Hat interrupted her, crying:

‘Let us be off after this good-for-nothing Fanfaronade, for with out a doubt he has run away with our Princess.’

Then there was a great clapping of hands, and everybody shouted, ‘By all means let us be after him.’

So while some embarked upon the sea, the others ran from kingdom to kingdom beating drums and blowing trumpets, and wherever a crowd collected they cried:

‘Whoever wants a beautiful doll, sweetmeats of all kinds, a little pair of scissors, a golden robe, and a satin cap has only to say where Fanfaronade has hidden the Princess Mayblossom.’

But the answer everywhere was, ‘You must go farther, we have not seen them.’

However, those who went by sea were more fortunate, for after sailing about for some time they noticed a light before them which burned at night like a great fire. At first they dared not go near it, not knowing what it might be, but by-and-by it remained stationary over Squirrel Island, for, as you have guessed already, the light was the glowing of the carbuncle. The Princess and Fanfaronade on landing upon the island had given the boatman a hundred gold pieces, and made him promise solemnly to tell no one where he had taken them; but the first thing that happened was that, as he rowed away, he got into the midst of the fleet, and before he could escape the Admiral had seen him and sent a boat after him.

When he was searched they found the gold pieces in his pocket, and as they were quite new coins, struck in honour of the Princess’s wedding, the Admiral felt certain that the boatman must have been paid by the Princess to aid her in her flight. But he would not answer any questions, and pretended to be deaf and dumb.

Then the Admiral said: ‘Oh! deaf and dumb is he? Lash him to the mast and give him a taste of the cat-o’-nine-tails. I don’t know anything better than that for curing the deaf and dumb!’

And when the old boatman saw that he was in earnest, he told all he knew about the cavalier and the lady whom he had landed upon Squirrel Island, and the Admiral knew it must be the Princess and Fanfaronade; so he gave the order for the fleet to surround the island.

Meanwhile the Princess Mayblossom, who was by this time terribly sleepy, had found a grassy bank in the shade, and throwing herself down

had already fallen into a profound slumber, when Fanfaronade, who happened to be hungry and not sleepy, came and woke her up, saying, very crossly:

‘Pray, madam, how long do you mean to stay here? I see nothing to eat, and though you may be very charming, the sight of you does not prevent me from famishing.’

‘What! Fanfaronade,’ said the Princess, sitting up and rubbing her eyes, ‘is it possible that when I am here with you you can want anything else? You ought to be thinking all the time how happy you are.’

‘Happy!’ cried he; ‘say rather unhappy. I wish with all my heart that you were back in your dark tower again.’

‘Darling, don’t be cross,’ said the Princess. ‘I will go and see if I can find some wild fruit for you.’

‘I wish you might find a wolf to eat you up,’ growled Fanfaronade.

The Princess, in great dismay, ran hither and thither all about the wood, tearing her dress, and hurting her pretty white hands with the thorns and brambles, but she could find nothing good to eat, and at last she had to go back sorrowfully to Fanfaronade. When he saw that she came empty-handed he got up and left her, grumbling to himself.

The next day they searched again, but with no better success.

‘Alas!’ said the Princess, ‘if only I could find something for you to eat, I should not mind being hungry myself.’

‘No, I should not mind that either,’ answered Fanfaronade.

‘Is it possible,’ said she, ‘that you would not care if I died of hunger? Oh, Fanfaronade, you said you loved me!’

‘That was when we were in quite another place and I was not hungry,’ said he. ‘It makes a great difference in one’s ideas to be dying of hunger and thirst on a desert island.’

At this the Princess was dreadfully vexed, and she sat down under a white rose bush and began to cry bitterly.

‘Happy roses,’ she thought to herself, ‘they have only to blossom in the sunshine and be admired, and there is nobody to be unkind to them.’ And the tears ran down her cheeks and splashed on to the rose-tree roots. Presently she was surprised to see the whole bush rustling and shaking, and a soft little voice from the prettiest rosebud said:

‘Poor Princess! look in the trunk of that tree, and you will find a honeycomb, but don’t be foolish enough to share it with Fanfaronade.’

Mayblossom ran to the tree, and sure enough there was the honey. Without losing a moment she ran with it to Fanfaronade, crying gaily:

‘See, here is a honeycomb that I have found. I might have eaten it up all by myself, but I had rather share it with you.’

But without looking at her or thanking her he snatched the honey comb out of her hands and ate it all up—every bit, without offering her a morsel. Indeed, when she humbly asked for some he said mockingly that it was too sweet for her, and would spoil her teeth.

Mayblossom, more downcast than ever, went sadly away and sat down under an oak tree, and her tears and sighs were so piteous that the oak fanned her with his rustling leaves, and said:

‘Take courage, pretty Princess, all is not lost yet. Take this pitcher of milk and drink it up, and whatever you do, don’t leave a drop for Fanfaronade.’

The Princess, quite astonished, looked round, and saw a big pitcher full of milk, but before she could raise it to her lips the thought of how thirsty Fanfaronade must be, after eating at least fifteen pounds of honey, made her run back to him and say:

‘Here is a pitcher of milk; drink some, for you must be thirsty I am sure; but pray save a little for me, as I am dying of hunger and thirst.’

But he seized the pitcher and drank all it contained at a single draught, and then broke it to atoms on the nearest stone, saying with a malicious smile: ‘As you have not eaten anything you cannot be thirsty.’

‘Ah!’ cried the Princess, ‘I am well punished for disappointing the King and Queen, and running away with this Ambassador about whom I knew nothing.’

And so saying she wandered away into the thickest part of the wood, and sat down under a thorn tree, where a nightingale was singing. Presently she heard him say: ‘Search under the bush Princess; you will find some sugar, almonds, and some tarts there But don’t be silly enough to offer Fanfaronade any.’ And this time the Princess, who was fainting with hunger, took the nightingale’s advice, and ate what she found all by herself. But Fanfaronade, seeing that she had found something good, and was not going to share it with him, ran after her in such a fury that she

hastily drew out the Queen's carbuncle, which had the property of rendering people invisible if they were in danger, and when she was safely hidden from him she reproached him gently for his unkindness.

Meanwhile Admiral Cocked-Hat had despatched Jack-the-Chatterer-of-the-Straw-Boots, Courier in Ordinary to the Prime Minister, to tell the King that the Princess and the Ambassador had landed on Squirrel Island, but that not knowing the country he had not pursued them, for fear of being captured by concealed enemies. Their Majesties were overjoyed at the news, and the King sent for a great book, each leaf of which was eight ells long. It was the work of a very clever Fairy, and contained a description of the whole earth. He very soon found that Squirrel Island was uninhabited.

'Go,' said he, to Jack-the-Chatterer, 'tell the Admiral from me to land at once. I am surprised at his not having done so sooner.' As soon as this message reached the fleet, every preparation was made for war, and the noise was so great that it reached the ears of the Princess, who at once flew to protect her lover. As he was not very brave he accepted her aid gladly.

'You stand behind me,' said she, 'and I will hold the carbuncle which will make us invisible, and with the King's dagger I can protect you from the enemy.' So when the soldiers landed they could see nothing, but the Princess touched them one after another with the dagger, and they fell insensible upon the sand, so that at last the Admiral, seeing that there was some enchantment, hastily gave orders for a retreat to be sounded, and got his men back into their boats in great confusion.

Fanfaronade, being once more left with the Princess, began to think that if he could get rid of her, and possess himself of the carbuncle and the dagger, he would be able to make his escape. So as they walked back over the cliffs he gave the Princess a great push, hoping she would fall into the sea; but she stepped aside so quickly that he only succeeded in overbalancing himself, and over he went, and sank to the bottom of the sea like a lump of lead, and was never heard of any more. While the Princess was still looking after him in horror, her attention was attracted by a rushing noise over her head, and looking up she saw two chariots approaching rapidly from opposite directions. One was bright and glittering, and drawn by swans and peacocks, while the Fairy who sat in it was beautiful as a sunbeam; but the other was drawn by bats and ravens,

and contained a frightful little Dwarf, who was dressed in a snake's skin, and wore a great toad upon her head for a hood. The chariots met with a frightful crash in mid-air, and the Princess looked on in breathless anxiety while a furious battle took place between the lovely Fairy with her golden lance, and the hideous little Dwarf and her rusty pike. But very soon it was evident that the Beauty had the best of it, and the Dwarf turned her bats' heads and flickered away in great confusion, while the Fairy came down to where the Princess stood, and said, smiling, 'You see Princess, I have completely routed that malicious old Carabosse. Will you believe it! she actually wanted to claim authority over you for ever, because you came out of the tower four days before the twenty years were ended. However, I think I have settled her pretensions, and I hope you will be very happy and enjoy the freedom I have won for you.'

The Princess thanked her heartily, and then the Fairy despatched one of her peacocks to her palace to bring a gorgeous robe for Mayblossom, who certainly needed it, for her own was torn to shreds by the thorns and briars. Another peacock was sent to the Admiral to tell him that he could now land in perfect safety, which he at once did, bringing all his men with him, even to Jack-the-Chatterer, who, happening to pass the spit upon which the Admiral's dinner was roasting, snatched it up and brought it with him.

Admiral Cocked-Hat was immensely surprised when he came upon the golden chariot, and still more so to see two lovely ladies walking under the trees a little farther away. When he reached them, of course he recognised the Princess, and he went down on his knees and kissed her hand quite joyfully. Then she presented him to the Fairy, and told him how Carabosse had been finally routed, and he thanked and congratulated the Fairy, who was most gracious to him. While they were talking she cried suddenly:

'I declare I smell a savoury dinner.'

'Why yes, Madam, here it is,' said Jack-the-Chatterer, holding up the spit, where all the pheasants and partridges were frizzling. 'Will your Highness please to taste any of them?'

'By all means,' said the Fairy, 'especially as the Princess will certainly be glad of a good meal.'

So the Admiral sent back to his ship for everything that was needful, and they feasted merrily under the trees. By the time they had finished the peacock had come back with a robe for the Princess, in which the Fairy

arrayed her. It was of green and gold brocade, embroidered with pearls and rubies, and her long golden hair was tied back with strings of diamonds and emeralds, and crowned with flowers. The Fairy made her mount beside her in the golden chariot, and took her on board the Admiral's ship, where she bade her farewell, sending many messages of friendship to the Queen, and bidding the Princess tell her that she was the fifth Fairy who had attended the christening. Then salutes were fired, the fleet weighed anchor, and very soon they reached the port. Here the King and Queen were waiting, and they received the Princess with such joy and kindness that she could not get a word in edgewise, to say how sorry she was for having run away with such a very poor spirited Ambassador. But, after all, it must have been all Carabosse's fault. Just at this lucky moment who should arrive but King Merlin's son, who had become uneasy at not receiving any news from his Ambassador, and so had started himself with a magnificent escort of a thousand horsemen, and thirty body-guards in gold and scarlet uniforms, to see what could have happened. As he was a hundred times handsomer and braver than the Ambassador, the Princess found she could like him very much. So the wedding was held at once, with so much splendour and rejoicing that all the previous misfortunes were quite forgotten.[1]

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1. La Princesse Printaniere. Par Mme. d'Aulnoy.

SORIA MORIA CASTLE

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There was once upon a time a couple of folks who had a son called Halvor. Ever since he had been a little boy he had been unwilling to do any work, and had just sat raking about among the ashes. His parents sent him away to learn several things, but Halvor stayed nowhere, for when he had been gone two or three days he always ran away from his master, hurried off home, and sat down in the chimney corner to grub among the ashes again.

One day, however, a sea captain came and asked Halvor if he hadn't a fancy to come with him and go to sea, and behold foreign lands. And Halvor had a fancy for that, so he was not long in getting ready.

How long they sailed I have no idea, but after a long, long time there was a terrible storm, and when it was over and all had become calm again, they knew not where they were, for they had been driven away to a strange coast of which none of them had any knowledge.

As there was no wind at all they lay there becalmed, and Halvor asked the skipper to give him leave to go on shore to look about him, for he would much rather do that than lie there and sleep.

'Dost thou think that thou art fit to go where people can see thee?' said the skipper; 'thou hast no clothes but those rags thou art going about in!'

Halvor still begged for leave, and at last got it, but he was to come back at once if the wind began to rise.

So he went on shore, and it was a delightful country; whithersoever he went there were wide plains with fields and meadows, but as for people, there were none to be seen. The wind began to rise, but Halvor thought that he had not seen enough yet, and that he would like to walk about a little longer, to try if he could not meet somebody. So after a while he came to a great highway, which was so smooth that an egg might have been rolled along it without breaking. Halvor followed this, and when evening drew near he saw a big castle far away in the distance, and there were lights in it. So as he had now been walking the whole day and had not brought

anything to eat away with him, he was frightfully hungry. Nevertheless, the nearer he came to the castle the more afraid he was.

A fire was burning in the castle, and Halvor went into the kitchen, which was more magnificent than any kitchen he had ever yet beheld. There were vessels of gold and silver, but not one human being was to be seen. When Halvor had stood there for some time, and no one had come out, he went in and opened a door, and inside a Princess was sitting at her wheel spinning.

‘Nay!’ she cried, ‘can Christian folk dare to come hither? But the best thing that you can do is to go away again, for if not the Troll will devour you. A Troll with three heads lives here.’

‘I should have been just as well pleased if he had had four heads more, for I should have enjoyed seeing the fellow,’ said the youth; ‘and I won’t go away, for I have done no harm, but you must give me something to eat, for I am frightfully hungry.’

When Halvor had eaten his fill, the Princess told him to try if he could wield the sword which was hanging on the wall, but he could not wield it, nor could he even lift it up.

‘Well, then, you must take a drink out of that bottle which is hanging by its side, for that’s what the Troll does whenever he goes out and wants to use the sword,’ said the Princess.

Halvor took a draught, and in a moment he was able to swing the sword about with perfect ease. And now he thought it was high time for the Troll to make his appearance, and at that very moment he came, panting for breath.

Halvor got behind the door.

‘Hutetu!’ said the Troll as he put his head in at the door. ‘It smells just as if there were Christian man’s blood here!’

‘Yes, you shall learn that there is!’ said Halvor, and cut off all his heads.

The Princess was so rejoiced to be free that she danced and sang, but then she remembered her sisters, and said: ‘If my sisters were but free too!’

‘Where are they?’ asked Halvor.

So she told him where they were. One of them had been taken away by a Troll to his castle, which was six miles off, and the other had been

carried off to a castle which was nine miles farther off still.

‘But now,’ said she, ‘you must first help me to get this dead body away from here.’

Halvor was so strong that he cleared everything away, and made all clean and tidy very quickly. So then they ate and drank, and were happy, and next morning he set off in the grey light of dawn. He gave himself no rest, but walked or ran the livelong day. When he came in sight of the castle he was again just a little afraid. It was much more splendid than the other, but here too there was not a human being to be seen. So Halvor went into the kitchen, and did not linger there either, but went straight in.

‘Nay! do Christian folk dare to come here?’ cried the second Princess. ‘I know not how long it is since I myself came, but during all that time I have never seen a Christian man. It will be better for you to depart at once, for a Troll lives here who has six heads.’

‘No, I shall not go,’ said Halvor; ‘even if he had six more I would not.’

‘He will swallow you up alive,’ said the Princess.

But she spoke to no purpose, for Halvor would not go; he was not afraid of the Troll, but he wanted some meat and drink, for he was hungry after his journey. So she gave him as much as he would have, and then she once more tried to make him go away.

‘No,’ said Halvor, ‘I will not go, for I have not done anything wrong, and I have no reason to be afraid.’

‘He won’t ask any questions about that,’ said the Princess, ‘for he will take you without leave or right; but as you will not go, try if you can wield that sword which the Troll uses in battle.’

He could not brandish the sword; so the Princess said that he was to take a draught from the flask which hung by its side, and when he had done that he could wield the sword.

Soon afterwards the Troll came, and he was so large and stout that he was forced to go sideways to get through the door. When the Troll got his first head in he cried: ‘Hutetu! It smells of a Christian man’s blood here!’

With that Halvor cut off the first head, and so on with all the rest. The Princess was now exceedingly delighted, but then she remembered her sisters, and wished that they too were free. Halvor thought that might be managed, and wanted to set off immediately; but first he had to help the

Princess to remove the Troll's body, so it was not until morning that he set forth on his way.

It was a long way to the castle, and he both walked and ran to get there in time. Late in the evening he caught sight of it, and it was very much more magnificent than either of the others. And this time he was not in the least afraid, but went into the kitchen, and then straight on inside the castle. There a Princess was sitting, who was so beautiful that there was never anyone to equal her. She too said what the others had said, that no Christian folk had ever been there since she had come, and entreated him to go away again, or else the Troll would swallow him up alive. The Troll had nine heads, she told him.

'Yes, and if he had nine added to the nine, and then nine more still, I would not go away,' said Halvor, and went and stood by the stove.

The Princess begged him very prettily to go lest the Troll should devour him; but Halvor said, 'Let him come when he will.'

So she gave him the Troll's sword, and bade him take a drink from the flask to enable him to wield it.

At that same moment the Troll came, breathing hard, and he was ever so much bigger and stouter than either of the others, and he too was forced to go sideways to get in through the door.

'Hutetu! what a smell of Christian blood there is here!' said he.

Then Halvor cut off the first head, and after that the others, but the last was the toughest of them all, and it was the hardest work that Halvor had ever done to get it off, but he still believed that he would have strength enough to do it.

And now all the Princesses came to the castle, and were together again, and they were happier than they had ever been in their lives; and they were delighted with Halvor, and he with them, and he was to choose the one he liked best; but of the three sisters the youngest loved him best.

But Halvor went about and was so strange and so mournful and quiet that the Princesses asked what it was that he longed for, and if he did not like to be with them. He said that he did like to be with them, for they had enough to live on, and he was very comfortable there; but he longed to go home, for his father and mother were alive, and he had a great desire to see them again.

They thought that this might easily be done.

‘You shall go and return in perfect safety if you will follow our advice,’ said the Princesses.

So he said that he would do nothing that they did not wish.

Then they dressed him so splendidly that he was like a King’s son; and they put a ring on his finger, and it was one which would enable him to go there and back again by wishing, but they told him that he must not throw it away, or name their names; for if he did, all his magnificence would be at an end, and then he would never see them more.

‘If I were but at home again, or if home were but here!’ said Halvor, and no sooner had he wished this than it was granted. Halvor was standing outside his father and mother’s cottage before he knew what he was about. The darkness of night was coming on, and when the father and mother saw such a splendid and stately stranger walk in, they were so startled that they both began to bow and curtsey.

Halvor then inquired if he could stay there and have lodging for the night. No, that he certainly could not. ‘We can give you no such accommodation,’ they said, ‘for we have none of the things that are needful when a great lord like you is to be entertained. It will be better for you to go up to the farm. It is not far off, you can see the chimney-pots from here, and there they have plenty of everything.’

Halvor would not hear of that, he was absolutely determined to stay where he was; but the old folks stuck to what they had said, and told him that he was to go to the farm, where he could get both meat and drink, whereas they themselves had not even a chair to offer him.

‘No,’ said Halvor, ‘I will not go up there till early to-morrow morning; let me stay here to-night. I can sit down on the hearth.’

They could say nothing against that, so Halvor sat down on the hearth, and began to rake about among the ashes just as he had done before, when he lay there idling away his time.

They chattered much about many things, and told Halvor of this and of that, and at last he asked them if they had never had any child.

‘Yes,’ they said; they had had a boy who was called Halvor, but they did not know where he had gone, and they could not even say whether he were dead or alive.

‘Could I be he?’ said Halvor.

‘I should know him well enough,’ said the old woman rising. ‘Our Halvor was so idle and slothful that he never did anything at all, and he was so ragged that one hole ran into another all over his clothes. Such a fellow as he was could never turn into such a man as you are, sir.’

In a short time the old woman had to go to the fireplace to stir the fire, and when the blaze lit up Halvor, as it used to do when he was at home raking up the ashes, she knew him again.

‘Good Heavens! is that you, Halvor?’ said she, and such great gladness fell on the old parents that there were no bounds to it. And now he had to relate everything that had befallen him, and the old woman was so delighted with him that she would take him up to the farm at once to show him to the girls who had formerly looked down on him so. She went there first, and Halvor followed her. When she got there she told them how Halvor had come home again, and now they should just see how magnificent he was. ‘He looks like a prince,’ she said.

‘We shall see that he is just the same ragamuffin that he was before,’ said the girls, tossing their heads.

At that same moment Halvor entered, and the girls were so astonished that they left their kirtles lying in the chimney corner, and ran away in nothing but their petticoats. When they came in again they were so shamefaced that they hardly dared to look at Halvor, towards whom they had always been so proud and haughty before.

‘Ay, ay! you have always thought that you were so pretty and dainty that no one was equal to you,’ said Halvor, ‘but you should just see the eldest Princess whom I set free. You look like herds-women compared with her, and the second Princess is also much prettier than you; but the youngest, who is my sweetheart, is more beautiful than either sun or moon. I wish to Heaven they were here, and then you would see them.’

Scarcely had he said this before they were standing by his side, but then he was very sorrowful, for the words which they had said to him came to his mind.

Up at the farm a great feast was made ready for the Princesses, and much respect paid to them, but they would not stay there.

‘We want to go down to your parents,’ they said to Halvor, ‘so we will go out and look about us.’

He followed them out, and they came to a large pond outside the farm-house. Very near the water there was a pretty green bank, and there the Princesses said they would sit down and while away an hour, for they thought that it would be pleasant to sit and look out over the water, they said.

There they sat down, and when they had sat for a short time the youngest Princess said, ‘I may as well comb your hair a little, Halvor.’

So Halvor laid his head down on her lap, and she combed it, and it was not long before he fell asleep. Then she took her ring from him and put another in its place, and then she said to her sisters: ‘Hold me as I am holding you. I would that we were at Soria Moria Castle.’

When Halvor awoke he knew that he had lost the Princesses, and began to weep and lament, and was so unhappy that he could not be comforted. In spite of all his father’s and mother’s entreaties, he would not stay, but bade them farewell, saying that he would never see them more, for if he did not find the Princess again he did not think it worth while to live.

He again had three hundred dollars, which he put into his pocket and went on his way. When he had walked some distance he met a man with a tolerably good horse. Halvor longed to buy it, and began to bargain with the man.

‘Well, I have not exactly been thinking of selling him,’ said the man, ‘but if we could agree, perhaps——’

Halvor inquired how much he wanted to have for the horse.

‘I did not give much for him, and he is not worth much; he is a capital horse to ride, but good for nothing at drawing; but he will always be able to carry your bag of provisions and you too, if you walk and ride by turns.’ At last they agreed about the price, and Halvor laid his bag on the horse, and sometimes he walked and sometimes he rode. In the evening he came to a green field, where stood a great tree, under which he seated himself. Then he let the horse loose and lay down to sleep, but before he did that he took his bag off the horse. At daybreak he set off again, for he did not feel as if he could take any rest. So he walked and rode the whole day, through a great wood where there were many green places which gleamed very prettily among the trees. He did not know where he was or whither he was going, but he never lingered longer in any place than was enough to let his

horse get a little food when they came to one of these green spots, while he himself took out his bag of provisions.

So he walked and he rode, and it seemed to him that the wood would never come to an end. But on the evening of the second day he saw a light shining through the trees.

‘If only there were some people up there I might warm myself and get something to eat,’ thought Halvor.

When he got to the place where the light had come from, he saw a wretched little cottage, and through a small pane of glass he saw a couple of old folks inside. They were very old, and as grey-headed as a pigeon, and the old woman had such a long nose that she sat in the chimney corner and used it to stir the fire.

‘Good evening! good evening!’ said the old hag; ‘but what errand have you that can bring you here? No Christian folk have been here for more than a hundred years.’

So Halvor told her that he wanted to get to Soria Moria Castle, and inquired if she knew the way thither.

‘No,’ said the old woman, ‘that I do not, but the Moon will be here presently, and I will ask her, and she will know. She can easily see it, for she shines on all things.’

So when the Moon stood clear and bright above the tree-tops the old woman went out. ‘Moon! Moon!’ she screamed. ‘Canst thou tell me the way to Soria Moria Castle?’

‘No,’ said the Moon, ‘that I can’t, for when I shone there, there was a cloud before me.’

‘Wait a little longer,’ said the old woman to Halvor, ‘for the West Wind will presently be here, and he will know it, for he breathes gently or blows into every corner.’

‘What! have you a horse too?’ she said when she came in again. ‘Oh! let the poor creature loose in our bit of fenced-in pasture, and don’t let it stand there starving at our very door. But won’t you exchange him with me? We have a pair of old boots here with which you can go fifteen quarters of a mile at each step. You shall have them for the horse, and then you will be able to get sooner to Soria Moria Castle.’

Halvor consented to this at once, and the old woman was so delighted with the horse that she was ready to dance. ‘For now I, too, shall be able to

ride to church,’ she said. Halvor could take no rest, and wanted to set off immediately; but the old woman said that there was no need to hasten. ‘Lie down on the bench and sleep a little, for we have no bed to offer you,’ said she, ‘and I will watch for the coming of the West Wind.’

Ere long came the West Wind, roaring so loud that the walls creaked.

The old woman went out and cried:

‘West Wind! West Wind! Canst thou tell me the way to Soria Moria Castle? Here is one who would go thither.’

‘Yes, I know it well,’ said the West Wind. ‘I am just on my way there to dry the clothes for the wedding which is to take place. If he is fleet of foot he can go with me.’

Out ran Halvor.

‘You will have to make haste if you mean to go with me,’ said the West Wind; and away it went over hill and dale, and moor and morass, and Halvor had enough to do to keep up with it.

‘Well, now I have no time to stay with you any longer,’ said the West Wind, ‘for I must first go and tear down a bit of spruce fir before I go to the bleaching-ground to dry the clothes; but just go along the side of the hill, and you will come to some girls who are standing there washing clothes, and then you will not have to walk far before you are at Soria Moria Castle.’

Shortly afterwards Halvor came to the girls who were standing washing, and they asked him if he had seen anything of the West Wind, who was to come there to dry the clothes for the wedding.

‘Yes,’ said Halvor, ‘he has only gone to break down a bit of spruce fir. It won’t be long before he is here.’ And then he asked them the way to Soria Moria Castle. They put him in the right way, and when he came in front of the castle it was so full of horses and people that it swarmed with them. But Halvor was so ragged and torn with following the West Wind through bushes and bogs that he kept on one side, and would not go among the crowd until the last day, when the feast was to be held at noon.

So when, as was the usage and custom, all were to drink to the bride and the young girls who were present, the cup-bearer filled the cup for each in turn, both bride and bridegroom, and knights and servants, and at last, after a very long time, he came to Halvor. He drank their health, and then slipped the ring which the Princess had put on his finger when they

were sitting by the waterside into the glass, and ordered the cup-bearer to carry the glass to the bride from him and greet her.

Then the Princess at once rose up from the table, and said, ‘Who is most worthy to have one of us—he who has delivered us from the Trolls or he who is sitting here as bridegroom?’

There could be but one opinion as to that, everyone thought, and when Halvor heard what they said he was not long in flinging off his beggar’s rags and arraying himself as a bridegroom.

‘Yes, he is the right one,’ cried the youngest Princess when she caught sight of him; so she flung the other out of the window and held her wedding with Halvor.[2]

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2. From P. C. Asbjornsen.

THE DEATH OF KOSHCHEI THE DEATHLESS

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In a certain kingdom there lived a Prince Ivan. He had three sisters. The first was the Princess Marya, the second the Princess Olga, the third the Princess Anna. When their father and mother lay at the point of death, they had thus enjoined their son: ‘Give your sisters in marriage to the very first suitors who come to woo them. Don’t go keeping them by you!’

They died, and the Prince buried them, and then, to solace his grief, he went with his sisters into the garden green to stroll. Suddenly the sky was covered by a black cloud; a terrible storm arose.

‘Let us go home, sisters!’ he cried.

Hardly had they got into the palace, when the thunder pealed, the ceiling split open, and into the room where they were came flying a falcon bright. The Falcon smote upon the ground, became a brave youth, and said:

‘Hail, Prince Ivan! Before I came as a guest, but now I have come as a wooer! I wish to propose for your sister, the Princess Marya.’

‘If you find favour in the eyes of my sister, I will not interfere with her wishes. Let her marry you, in God’s name!’

The Princess Marya gave her consent; the Falcon married her and bore her away into his own realm.

Days follow days, hours chase hours; a whole year goes by. One day Prince Ivan and his two sisters went out to stroll in the garden green. Again there arose a storm-cloud, with whirlwind and lightning.

‘Let us go home, sisters!’ cries the Prince. Scarcely had they entered the palace when the thunder crashed, the roof burst into a blaze, the ceiling split in twain, and in flew an eagle. The Eagle smote upon the ground and became a brave youth.

‘Hail, Prince Ivan! I Before I came as a guest, but now I have come as a wooer!’

And he asked for the hand of the Princess Olga. Prince Ivan replied:

‘If you find favour in the eyes of the Princess Olga, then let her marry you. I will not interfere with her liberty of choice.’

The Princess Olga gave her consent and married the Eagle. The Eagle took her and carried her off to his own kingdom.

Another year went by. Prince Ivan said to his youngest sister:

‘Let us go out and stroll in the garden green!’

They strolled about for a time. Again there arose a storm-cloud, with whirlwind and lightning.

‘Let us return home, sister!’ said he.

They returned home, but they hadn’t had time to sit down when the thunder crashed, the ceiling split open, and in flew a raven. The Raven smote upon the floor and became a brave youth. The former youths had been handsome, but this one was handsomer still.

‘Well, Prince Ivan! Before I came as a guest, but now I have come as a wooer! Give me the Princess Anna to wife.’

‘I won’t interfere with my sister’s freedom. If you gain her affections, let her marry you.’

So the Princess Anna married the Raven, and he bore her away into his own realm. Prince Ivan was left alone. A whole year he lived without his sisters; then he grew weary, and said:

‘I will set out in search of my sisters.’

He got ready for the journey, he rode and rode, and one day he saw a whole army lying dead on the plain. He cried aloud, ‘If there be a living man there, let him make answer! Who has slain this mighty host?’

There replied unto him a living man:

‘All this mighty host has been slain by the fair Princess Marya Morevna.’

Prince Ivan rode further on, and came to a white tent, and forth came to meet him the fair Princess Marya Morevna.

‘Hail, Prince!’ says she; ‘whither does God send you? and is it of your free will or against your will?’

Prince Ivan replied, ‘Not against their will do brave youths ride!’

‘Well, if your business be not pressing, tarry awhile in my tent.’

Thereat was Prince Ivan glad. He spent two nights in the tent, and he found favour in the eyes of Marya Morevna, and she married him. The fair Princess, Marya Morevna, carried him off into her own realm.

They spent some time together, and then the Princess took it into her head to go a warring. So she handed over all the house-keeping affairs to Prince Ivan, and gave him these instructions:

‘Go about everywhere, keep watch over everything; only do not venture to look into that closet there.’

He couldn’t help doing so. The moment Marya Morevna had gone he rushed to the closet, pulled open the door, and looked in—there hung Koshchei the Deathless, fettered by twelve chains. Then Koshchei entreated Prince Ivan, saying:

‘Have pity upon me and give me to drink! Ten years long have I been here in torment, neither eating nor drinking; my throat is utterly dried up.’

The Prince gave him a bucketful of water; he drank it up and asked for more, saying:

‘A single bucket of water will not quench my thirst; give me more!’

The Prince gave him a second bucketful. Koshchei drank it up and asked for a third, and when he had swallowed the third bucketful, he regained his former strength, gave his chains a shake, and broke all twelve at once.

‘Thanks, Prince Ivan!’ cried Koshchei the Deathless, ‘now you will sooner see your own ears than Marya Morevna!’ and out of the window he flew in the shape of a terrible whirlwind. And he came up with the fair Princess Marya Morevna as she was going her way, laid hold of her and carried her off home with him. But Prince Ivan wept full sore, and he arrayed himself and set out a-wandering, saying to himself, ‘Whatever happens, I will go and look for Marya Morevna!’

One day passed, another day passed; at the dawn of the third day he saw a wondrous palace, and by the side of the palace stood an oak, and on the oak sat a falcon bright. Down flew the Falcon from the oak, smote upon the ground, turned into a brave youth, and cried aloud:

‘Ha, dear brother-in-law! how deals the Lord with you?’

Out came running the Princess Marya, joyfully greeted her brother Ivan, and began inquiring after his health, and telling him all about herself. The Prince spent three days with them; then he said:

‘I cannot abide with you; I must go in search of my wife, the fair Princess Marya Morevna.’

‘Hard will it be for you to find her,’ answered the Falcon. ‘At all events leave with us your silver spoon. We will look at it and remember you.’ So Prince Ivan left his silver spoon at the Falcon’s, and went on his way again.

On he went one day, on he went another day, and by the dawn of the third day he saw a palace still grander than the former one and hard by the palace stood an oak, and on the oak sat an eagle. Down flew the Eagle from the oak, smote upon the ground, turned into a brave youth, and cried aloud:

‘Rise up, Princess Olga! Hither comes our brother dear!’

The Princess Olga immediately ran to meet him, and began kissing him and embracing him, asking after his health, and telling him all about herself. With them Prince Ivan stopped three days; then he said:

‘I cannot stay here any longer. I am going to look for my wife, the fair Princess Marya Morevna.’

‘Hard will it be for you to find her,’ replied the Eagle. ‘Leave with us a silver fork. We will look at it and remember you.’

He left a silver fork behind, and went his way. He travelled one day, he travelled two days; at daybreak on the third day he saw a palace grander than the first two, and near the palace stood an oak, and on the oak sat a raven. Down flew the Raven from the oak, smote upon the ground, turned into a brave youth, and cried aloud:

‘Princess Anna, come forth quickly! our brother is coming.’

Out ran the Princess Anna, greeted him joyfully, and began kissing and embracing him, asking after his health and telling him all about herself. Prince Ivan stayed with them three days; then he said:

‘Farewell! I am going to look for my wife, the fair Princess Marya Morevna.’

‘Hard will it be for you to find her,’ replied the Raven. ‘Anyhow, leave your silver snuff-box with us. We will look at it and remember you.’

The Prince handed over his silver snuff-box, took his leave, and went his way. One day he went, another day he went, and on the third day he came to where Marya Morevna was. She caught sight of her love, flung her arms around his neck, burst into tears, and exclaimed:

‘Oh, Prince Ivan! why did you disobey me and go looking into the closet and letting out Koshchei the Deathless?’

‘Forgive me, Marya Morevna! Remember not the past; much better fly with me while Koshchei the Deathless is out of sight. Perhaps he won’t catch us.’

So they got ready and fled. Now Koshchei was out hunting. Towards evening he was returning home, when his good steed stumbled beneath him.

‘Why stumblest thou, sorry jade? Scentest thou some ill?’ The steed replied:

‘Prince Ivan has come and carried off Marya Morevna.’ ‘Is it possible to catch them?’

‘It is possible to sow wheat, to wait till it grows up, to reap it and thresh it, to grind it to flour, to make five pies of it, to eat those pies, and then to start in pursuit—and even then to be in time.’ Koshchei galloped off and caught up Prince Ivan.

‘Now,’ says he, ‘this time I will forgive you, in return for your kindness in giving me water to drink. And a second time I will forgive you; but the third time beware! I will cut you to bits.’

Then he took Marya Morevna from him, and carried her off. But Prince Ivan sat down on a stone and burst into tears. He wept and wept—and then returned back again to Marya Morevna. Now Koshchei the Deathless happened not to be at home.

‘Let us fly, Marya Morevna!’

‘Ah, Prince Ivan! he will catch us.’

‘Suppose he does catch us. At all events we shall have spent an hour or two together.’

So they got ready and fled. As Koshchei the Deathless was returning home, his good steed stumbled beneath him.

‘Why stumblest thou, sorry jade? Scentest thou some ill?’

‘Prince Ivan has come and carried off Marya Morevna.’

‘Is it possible to catch them?’

‘It is possible to sow barley, to wait till it grows up, to reap it and thresh it, to brew beer, to drink ourselves drunk on it, to sleep our fill, and then to set off in pursuit—and yet to be in time.’

Koshchei galloped off, caught up Prince Ivan:

‘Didn’t I tell you that you should not see Marya Morevna any more than your own ears?’

And he took her away and carried her off home with him.

Prince Ivan was left there alone. He wept and wept; then he went back again after Marya Morevna. Koshchei happened to be away from home at that moment.

‘Let us fly, Marya Morevna!’

‘Ah, Prince Ivan! he is sure to catch us and hew you in pieces.’

‘Let him hew away! I cannot live without you.

So they got ready and fled.

Koshchei the Deathless was returning home when his good steed stumbled beneath him.

‘Why stumblest thou? Scentest thou any ill?’

‘Prince Ivan has come and has carried off Marya Morevna.’

Koshchei galloped off, caught Prince Ivan, chopped him into little pieces, put them into a barrel, smeared it with pitch and bound it with iron hoops, and flung it into the blue sea. But Marya Morevna he carried off home.

At that very time the silver articles turned black which Prince Ivan had left with his brothers-in-law.

‘Ah!’ said they, ‘the evil is accomplished sure enough!’

Then the Eagle hurried to the blue sea, caught hold of the barrel, and dragged it ashore; the Falcon flew away for the Water of Life, and the Raven for the Water of Death.

Afterwards they all three met, broke open the barrel, took out the remains of Prince Ivan, washed them, and put them together in fitting order. The Raven sprinkled them with the Water of Death—the pieces joined together, the body became whole. The Falcon sprinkled it with the Water of Life—Prince Ivan shuddered, stood up, and said:

‘Ah! what a time I’ve been sleeping!’

‘You’d have gone on sleeping a good deal longer if it hadn’t been for us,’ replied his brothers-in-law. ‘Now come and pay us a visit.’

‘Not so, brothers; I shall go and look for Marya Morevna.’

And when he had found her, he said to her:

‘Find out from Koshchei the Deathless whence he got so good a steed.’

So Marya Morevna chose a favourable moment, and began asking Koshchei about it. Koshchei replied:

‘Beyond thrice nine lands, in the thirtieth kingdom, on the other side of the fiery river, there lives a Baba Yaga. She has so good a mare that she flies right round the world on it every day. And she has many other splendid mares. I watched her herds for three days without losing a single mare, and in return for that the Baba Yaga gave me a foal.’

‘But how did you get across the fiery river?’

‘Why, I’ve a handkerchief of this kind—when I wave it thrice on the right hand, there springs up a very lofty bridge, and the fire cannot reach it.’

Marya Morevna listened to all this, and repeated it to Prince Ivan, and she carried off the handkerchief and gave it to him. So he managed to get across the fiery river, and then went on to the Baba Yaga’s. Long went he on without getting anything either to eat or to drink. At last he came across an outlandish bird and its young ones. Says Prince Ivan:

‘I’ll eat one of these chickens.’

‘Don’t eat it, Prince Ivan!’ begs the outlandish bird; ‘some time or other I’ll do you a good turn.’

He went on farther and saw a hive of bees in the forest.

‘I’ll get a bit of honeycomb,’ says he.

‘Don’t disturb my honey, Prince Ivan!’ exclaims the queen-bee; ‘some time or other I’ll do you a good turn.’

So he didn’t disturb it, but went on. Presently there met him a lioness with her cub.

‘Anyhow, I’ll eat this lion cub,’ says he; ‘I’m so hungry I feel quite unwell!’

‘Please let us alone, Prince Ivan!’ begs the lioness; ‘some time or other I’ll do you a good turn.’

‘Very well; have it your own way,’ says he.

Hungry and faint he wandered on, walked farther and farther, and at last came to where stood the house of the Baba Yaga. Round the house were set twelve poles in a circle, and on each of eleven of these poles was stuck a human head; the twelfth alone remained unoccupied.

‘Hail, granny!’

‘Hail, Prince Ivan! wherefore have you come? Is it of your own accord, or on compulsion?’

‘I have come to earn from you an heroic steed.’

‘So be it, Prince! You won’t have to serve a year with me, but just three days. If you take good care of my mares, I’ll give you an heroic steed. But if you don’t—why, then you mustn’t be annoyed at finding your head stuck on top of the last pole up there.’

Prince Ivan agreed to these terms. The Baba Yaga gave him food and drink, and bade him set about his business. But the moment he had driven the mares afield, they cocked up their tails, and away they tore across the meadows in all directions. Before the Prince had time to look round they were all out of sight. Thereupon he began to weep and to disquiet himself, and then he sat down upon a stone and went to sleep. But when the sun was near its setting the outlandish bird came flying up to him, and awakened him, saying:

‘Arise, Prince Ivan! The mares are at home now.’

The Prince arose and returned home. There the Baba Yaga was storming and raging at her mares, and shrieking:

‘Whatever did ye come home for?’

‘How could we help coming home?’ said they. ‘There came flying birds from every part of the world, and all but pecked our eyes out.’

‘Well, well! to-morrow don’t go galloping over the meadows, but disperse amid the thick forests.’

Prince Ivan slept all night. In the morning the Baba Yaga says to him:

‘Mind, Prince! if you don’t take good care of the mares, if you lose merely one of them—your bold head will be stuck on that pole!’

He drove the mares afield. Immediately they cocked up their tails and dispersed among the thick forests. Again did the Prince sit down on the stone, weep and weep, and then go to sleep. The sun went down behind the forest. Up came running the lioness.

‘Arise, Prince Ivan! The mares are all collected.’

Prince Ivan arose and went home. More than ever did the Baba Yaga storm at her mares and shriek:

‘Whatever did ye come back home for?’

‘How could we help coming back? Beasts of prey came running at us from all parts of the world, and all but tore us utterly to pieces.’

‘Well, to-morrow run off into the blue sea.’

Again did Prince Ivan sleep through the night. Next morning the Baba Yaga sent him forth to watch the mares.

‘If you don’t take good care of them,’ says she, ‘your bold head will be stuck on that pole!’

He drove the mares afield. Immediately they cocked up their tails, disappeared from sight, and fled into the blue sea. There they stood, up to their necks in water. Prince Ivan sat down on the stone, wept, and fell asleep. But when the sun had set behind the forest, up came flying a bee, and said:

‘Arise, Prince! The mares are all collected. But when you get home, don’t let the Baba Yaga set eyes on you, but go into the stable and hide behind the mangers. There you will find a sorry colt rolling in the muck. Do you steal it, and at the dead of night ride away from the house.’

Prince Ivan arose, slipped into the stable, and lay down behind the mangers, while the Baba Yaga was storming away at her mares and shrieking:

‘Why did ye come back?’

‘How could we help coming back? There came flying bees in countless numbers from all parts of the world, and began stinging us on all sides till the blood came!’

The Baba Yaga went to sleep. In the dead of the night Prince Ivan stole the sorry colt, saddled it, jumped on its back, and galloped away to the fiery river. When he came to that river he waved the handkerchief three times on the right hand, and suddenly, springing goodness knows whence, there hung across the river, high in the air, a splendid bridge. The Prince rode across the bridge and waved the handkerchief twice only on the left hand; there remained across the river a thin, ever so thin a bridge!

When the Baba Yaga got up in the morning the sorry colt was not to be seen! Off she set in pursuit. At full speed did she fly in her iron mortar, urging it on with the pestle, sweeping away her traces with the broom. She dashed up to the fiery river, gave a glance, and said, ‘A capital bridge!’ She drove on to the bridge, but had only got half-way when the bridge broke in two, and the Baba Yaga went flop into the river. There truly did she meet with a cruel death!

Prince Ivan fattened up the colt in the green meadows, and it turned into a wondrous steed. Then he rode to where Marya Morevna was. She came running out, and flung herself on his neck, crying:

‘By what means has God brought you back to life?’

‘Thus and thus,’ says he. ‘Now come along with me.’

‘I am afraid, Prince Ivan! If Koshchei catches us you will be cut in pieces again.’

‘No, he won’t catch us! I have a splendid heroic steed now; it flies just like a bird.’ So they got on its back and rode away.

Koshchei the Deathless was returning home when his horse stumbled beneath him.

‘What art thou stumbling for, sorry jade? Dost thou scent any ill?’

‘Prince Ivan has come and carried off Marya Morevna.’

‘Can we catch them?’

‘God knows! Prince Ivan has a horse now which is better than I.’

‘Well, I can’t stand it,’ says Koshchei the Deathless. ‘I will pursue.’

After a time he came up with Prince Ivan, lighted on the ground, and was going to chop him up with his sharp sword. But at that moment Prince Ivan’s horse smote Koshchei the Deathless full swing with its hoof, and cracked his skull, and the Prince made an end of him with a club. Afterwards the Prince heaped up a pile of wood, set fire to it, burnt Koshchei the Deathless on the pyre, and scattered his ashes to the wind. Then Marya Morevna mounted Koshchei’s horse and Prince Ivan got on his own, and they rode away to visit first the Raven, and then the Eagle, and then the Falcon. Wherever they went they met with a joyful greeting.

‘Ah, Prince Ivan! why, we never expected to see you again. Well, it wasn’t for nothing that you gave yourself so much trouble. Such a beauty as Marya Morevna one might search for all the world over—and never find one like her!’

And so they visited, and they feasted; and afterwards they went off to their own realm.[3]

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3. Ralston.

THE BLACK THIEF AND KNIGHT OF THE GLEN.

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In times of yore there was a King and a Queen in the south of Ireland who had three sons, all beautiful children; but the Queen, their mother, sickened unto death when they were yet very young, which caused great grief throughout the Court, particularly to the King, her husband, who could in no wise be comforted. Seeing that death was drawing near her, she called the King to her and spoke as follows:

‘I am now going to leave you, and as you are young and in your prime, of course after my death you will marry again. Now all the request I ask of you is that you will build a tower in an island in the sea, wherein you will keep your three sons until they are come of age and fit to do for themselves; so that they may not be under the power or jurisdiction of any other woman. Neglect not to give them education suitable to their birth, and let them be trained up to every exercise and pastime requisite for king’s sons to learn. This is all I have to say, so farewell.’

The King had scarce time, with tears in his eyes, to assure her she should be obeyed in everything, when she, turning herself in her bed, with a smile gave up the ghost. Never was greater mourning seen than was throughout the Court and the whole kingdom; for a better woman than the Queen, to rich and poor, was not to be found in the world. She was interred with great pomp and magnificence, and the King, her husband, became in a manner inconsolable for the loss of her. However, he caused the tower to be built and his sons placed in it, under proper guardians, according to his promise.

In process of time the lords and knights of the kingdom counselled the King (as he was young) to live no longer as he had done, but to take a wife; which counsel prevailing, they chose him a rich and beautiful princess to be his consort—a neighbouring King’s daughter, of whom he was very fond. Not long after, the Queen had a fine son, which caused great feasting and rejoicing at the Court, insomuch that the late Queen, in

a manner, was entirely forgotten. That fared well, and King and Queen lived happy together for several years.

At length the Queen, having some business with the hen-wife, went herself to her, and, after a long conference passed, was taking leave of her, when the hen-wife prayed that if ever she should come back to her again she might break her neck. The Queen, greatly incensed at such a daring insult from one of her meanest subjects, demanded immediately the reason, or she would have her put to death.

‘It was worth your while, madam,’ says the hen-wife, ‘to pay me well for it, for the reason I prayed so on you concerns you much.’

‘What must I pay you?’ asked the Queen.

‘You must give me,’ says she, ‘the full of a pack of wool, and I have an ancient crock which you must fill with butter, likewise a barrel which you must fill for me full of wheat.’

‘How much wool will it take to the pack?’ says the Queen.

‘It will take seven herds of sheep,’ said she, ‘and their increase for seven years.’

‘How much butter will it take to fill your crock?’

‘Seven dairies,’ said she, ‘and their increase for seven years.’

‘And how much will it take to fill the barrel you have?’ says the Queen.

‘It will take the increase of seven barrels of wheat for seven years.’

‘That is a great quantity,’ says the Queen; ‘but the reason must be extraordinary, and before I want it, I will give you all you demand.’

‘Well,’ says the hen-wife, ‘it is because you are so stupid that you don’t observe or find out those affairs that are so dangerous and hurtful to yourself and your child.’

‘What is that?’ says the Queen.

‘Why,’ says she, ‘the King your husband has three fine sons he had by the late Queen, whom he keeps shut up in a tower until they come of age, intending to divide the kingdom between them, and let your son push his fortune; now, if you don’t find some means of destroying them; your child and perhaps yourself will be left desolate in the end.’

‘And what would you advise me to do?’ said she; ‘I am wholly at a loss in what manner to act in this affair.’

‘You must make known to the King,’ says the hen-wife, ‘that you heard of his sons, and wonder greatly that he concealed them all this time from you; tell him you wish to see them, and that it is full time for them to be liberated, and that you would be desirous he would bring them to the Court. The King will then do so, and there will be a great feast prepared on that account, and also diversions of every sort to amuse the people; and in these sports,’ said she, ‘ask the King’s sons to play a game at cards with you, which they will not refuse. Now,’ says the hen-wife, ‘you must make a bargain, that if you win they must do whatever you command them, and if they win, that you must do whatever they command you to do; this bargain must be made before the assembly, and here is a pack of cards,’ says she, ‘that I am thinking you will not lose by.’

The Queen immediately took the cards, and, after returning the hen-wife thanks for her kind instruction, went back to the palace, where she was quite uneasy until she got speaking to the King in regard of his children; at last she broke it off to him in a very polite and engaging manner, so that he could see no muster or design in it. He readily consented to her desire, and his sons were sent for to the tower, who gladly came to Court, rejoicing that they were freed from such confinement. They were all very handsome, and very expert in all arts and exercises, so that they gained the love and esteem of all that had seen them.

The Queen, more jealous with them than ever, thought it an age until all the feasting and rejoicing was over, that she might get making her proposal, depending greatly on the power of the hen-wife’s cards. At length this royal assembly began to sport and play at all kinds of diversions, and the Queen very cunningly challenged the three Princes to play at cards with her, making bargain with them as she had been instructed.

They accepted the challenge, and the eldest son and she played the first game, which she won; then the second son played, and she won that game likewise; the third son and she then played the last game, and he won it, which sorely grieved her that she had not him in her power as well as the rest, being by far the handsomest and most beloved of the three.

However, everyone was anxious to hear the Queen’s commands in regard to the two Princes, not thinking that she had any ill design in her head against them. Whether it was the hen-wife instructed her, or whether

it was from her own knowledge, I cannot tell; but she gave out they must go and bring her the Knight of the Glen's wild Steed of Bells, or they should lose their heads.

The young Princes were not in the least concerned, not knowing what they had to do; but the whole Court was amazed at her demand, knowing very well that it was impossible for them ever to get the steed, as all that ever sought him perished in the attempt. However, they could not retract the bargain, and the youngest Prince was desired to tell what demand he had on the Queen, as he had won his game.

'My brothers,' says he, 'are now going to travel, and, as I understand, a perilous journey wherein they know not what road to take or what may happen them. I am resolved, therefore, not to stay here, but to go with them, let what will betide; and I request and command, according to my bargain, that the Queen shall stand on the highest tower of the palace until we come back (or find out that we are certainly dead), with nothing but sheaf corn for her food and cold water for her drink, if it should be for seven years and longer.'

All things being now fixed, the three princes departed the Court in search of the Knight of the Glen's palace, and travelling along the road they came up with a man who was a little lame, and seemed to be somewhat advanced in years; they soon fell into discourse, and the youngest of the princes asked the stranger his name, or what was the reason he wore so remarkable a black cap as he saw on him.

'I am called,' said he, 'the Thief of Sloan, and sometimes the Black Thief from my cap; 'and so telling the prince the most of his adventures, he asked him again where they were bound for, or what they were about.

The prince, willing to gratify his request, told him their affairs from the beginning to the end. 'And now,' said he, 'we are travelling, and do not know whether we are on the right road or not.'

'Ah! my brave fellows,' says the Black Thief, 'you little know the danger you run. I am after that steed myself these seven years, and can never steal him on account of a silk covering he has on him in the stable, with sixty bells fixed to it, and whenever you approach the place he quickly observes it and shakes himself; which, by the sound of the bells, not only alarms the prince and his guards, but the whole country round, so

that it is impossible ever to get him, and those that are so unfortunate as to be taken by the Knight of the Glen are boiled in a red-hot fiery furnace.'

'Bless me,' says the young prince, 'what will we do? If we return without the steed we will lose our heads, so I see we are ill fixed on both sides.'

'Well,' says the Thief of Sloan, 'if it were my case I would rather die by the Knight than by the wicked Queen; besides, I will go with you myself and show you the road, and whatever fortune you will have, I will take chance of the same.'

They returned him sincere thanks for his kindness, and he, being well acquainted with the road, in a short time brought them within view of the knight's castle.

'Now,' says he, 'we must stay here till night comes; for I know all the ways of the place, and if there be any chance for it, it is when they are all at rest; for the steed is all the watch the knight keeps there.'

Accordingly, in the dead hour of the night, the King's three sons and the Thief of Sloan attempted the Steed of Bells in order to carry him away, but before they could reach the stables the steed neighed most terribly and shook himself so, and the bells rung with such noise, that the knight and all his men were up in a moment.

The Black Thief and the King's sons thought to make their escape, but they were suddenly surrounded by the knight's guards and taken prisoners; where they were brought into that dismal part of the palace where the knight kept a furnace always boiling, in which he threw all offenders that ever came in his way, which in a few moments would entirely consume them.

'Audacious villains!' says the Knight of the Glen, 'how dare you attempt so bold an action as to steal my steed? See, now, the reward of your folly; for your greater punishment I will not boil you all together, but one after the other, so that he that survives may witness the dire afflictions of his unfortunate companions.'

So saying he ordered his servants to stir up the fire: 'We will boil the eldest-looking of these young men first,' said he, 'and so on to the last, which will be this old champion with the black cap. He seems to be the captain, and looks as if he had come through many toils.'

‘I was as near death once as the prince is yet,’ says the Black Thief, ‘and escaped; and so will he too.’

‘No, you never were,’ said the knight; ‘for he is within two or three minutes of his latter end.’

‘But,’ says the Black Thief, ‘I was within one moment of my death, and I am here yet.’

‘How was that?’ says the knight; ‘I would be glad to hear it, for it seems impossible.’

‘If you think, sir knight,’ says the Black Thief, ‘that the danger I was in surpasses that of this young man, will you pardon him his crime?’

‘I will,’ says the knight, ‘so go on with your story.’

‘I was, sir,’ says he, ‘a very wild boy in my youth, and came through many distresses; once in particular, as I was on my rambling, I was benighted and could find no lodging. At length I came to an old kiln, and being much fatigued I went up and lay on the ribs. I had not been long there when I saw three witches coming in with three bags of gold. Each put their bags of gold under their heads, as if to sleep. I heard one of them say to the other that if the Black Thief came on them while they slept, he would not leave them a penny. I found by their discourse that everybody had got my name into their mouth, though I kept silent as death during their discourse. At length they fell fast asleep, and then I stole softly down, and seeing some turf convenient, I placed one under each of their heads, and off I went, with their gold, as fast as I could.

‘I had not gone far,’ continued the Thief of Sloan, ‘until I saw a grey-hound, a hare, and a hawk in pursuit of me, and began to think it must be the witches that had taken the shapes in order that I might not escape them unseen either by land or water. Seeing they did not appear in any formidable shape, I was more than once resolved to attack them, thinking that with my broad sword I could easily destroy them. But considering again that it was perhaps still in their power to become alive again, I gave over the attempt and climbed with difficulty up a tree, bringing my sword in my hand and all the gold along with me. However, when they came to the tree they found what I had done, and making further use of their hellish art, one of them was changed into a smith’s anvil and another into a piece of iron, of which the third soon made a hatchet. Having the hatchet made, she fell to cutting down the tree, and in the course of an hour it began to

shake with me. At length it began to bend, and I found that one or two blows at the most would put it down. I then began to think that my death was inevitable, considering that those who were capable of doing so much would soon end my life; but just as she had the stroke drawn that would terminate my fate, the cock crew, and the witches disappeared, having resumed their natural shapes for fear of being known, and I got safe off with my bags of gold.

‘Now, sir,’ says he to the Knight of the Glen, ‘if that be not as great an adventure as ever you heard, to be within one blow of a hatchet of my end, and that blow even drawn, and after all to escape, I leave it to yourself.’

‘Well, I cannot say but it is very extraordinary,’ says the Knight of the Glen, ‘and on that account pardon this young man his crime; so stir up the fire, till I boil this second one.’

‘Indeed,’ says the Black Thief, ‘I would fain think he would not die this time either.’

‘How so?’ says the knight; ‘it is impossible for him to escape.’

‘I escaped death more wonderfully myself,’ says the Thief of Sloan, ‘than if you had him ready to throw into the furnace, and I hope it will be the case with him likewise.’

‘Why, have you been in another great danger?’ says the knight. ‘I would be glad to hear the story too, and if it be as wonderful as the last, I will pardon this young man as I did the other.’

‘My way of living, sir,’ says the Black Thief, ‘was not good, as I told you before; and being at a certain time fairly run out of cash, and meeting with no enterprise worthy of notice, I was reduced to great straits. At length a rich bishop died in the neighbourhood I was then in, and I heard he was interred with a great deal of jewels and rich robes upon him, all which I intended in a short time to be master of. Accordingly that very night I set about it, and coming to the place, I understood he was placed at the further end of a long dark vault, which I slowly entered. I had not gone in far until I heard a foot coming towards me with a quick pace, and although naturally bold and daring, yet, thinking of the deceased bishop and the crime I was engaged in, I lost courage, and ran towards the entrance of the vault. I had retreated but a few paces when I observed, between me and the light, the figure of a tall black man standing in the entrance. Being in great fear and not knowing how to pass, I fired a pistol

at him, and he immediately fell across the entrance. Perceiving he still retained the figure of a mortal man, I began to imagine that it could not be the bishop's ghost; recovering myself therefore from the fear I was in, I ventured to the upper end of the vault, where I found a large bundle, and upon further examination I found that the corpse was already rifled, and that which I had taken to be a ghost was no more than one of his own clergy. I was then very sorry that I had the misfortune to kill him, but it then could not be helped. I took up the bundle that contained everything belonging to the corpse that was valuable, intending to take my departure from this melancholy abode; but just as I came to the mouth of the entrance I saw the guards of the place coming towards me, and distinctly heard them saying that they would look in the vault, for that the Black Thief would think little of robbing the corpse if he was anywhere in the place. I did not then know in what manner to act, for if I was seen I would surely lose my life, as everybody had a look-out at that time, and because there was no person bold enough to come in on me. I knew very well on the first sight of me that could be got, I would be shot like a dog. However, I had not time to lose. I took and raised up the man which I had killed, as if he was standing on his feet, and I, crouching behind him, bore him up as well as I could, so that the guards readily saw him as they came up to the vault. Seeing the man in black, one of the men cried that was the Black Thief, and, presenting his piece, fired at the man, at which I let him fall, and crept into a little dark corner myself, that was at the entrance of the place. When they saw the man fall, they ran all into the vault, and never stopped until they were at the end of it, for fear, as I thought, that there might be some others along with him that was killed. But while they were busy inspecting the corpse and the vault to see what they could miss, I slipped out, and, once away, and still away; but they never had the Black Thief in their power since.'

'Well, my brave fellow,' says the Knight of the Glen, 'I see you have come through many dangers: you have freed these two princes by your stories; but I am sorry myself that this young prince has to suffer for all. Now, if you could tell me something as wonderful as you have told already, I would pardon him likewise; I pity this youth and do not want to put him to death if I could help it.'

‘That happens well,’ says the Thief of Sloan, ‘for I like him best myself, and have reserved the most curious passage for the last on his account.’

‘Well, then,’ says the knight, ‘let us hear it.’

‘I was one day on my travels,’ says the Black Thief, ‘and I came into a large forest, where I wandered a long time, and could not get out of it. At length I came to a large castle, and fatigue obliged me to call in the same, where I found a young woman and a child sitting on her knee, and she crying. I asked her what made her cry, and where the lord of the castle was, for I wondered greatly that I saw no stir of servants or any person about the place.

‘“It is well for you,” says the young woman, “that the lord of this castle is not at home at present; for he is a monstrous giant, with but one eye on his forehead, who lives on human flesh. He brought me this child,” says she, “I do not know where he got it, and ordered me to make it into a pie, and I cannot help crying at the command.”

‘I told her that if she knew of any place convenient that I could leave the child safely I would do it, rather than it should be killed by such a monster.

‘She told me of a house a distance off where I would get a woman who would take care of it. “But what will I do in regard of the pie?”

‘“Cut a finger off it,” said I, “and I will bring you in a young wild pig out of the forest, which you may dress as if it was the child, and put the finger in a certain place, that if the giant doubts anything about it you may know where to turn it over at the first, and when he sees it he will be fully satisfied that the pie is made of the child.”

‘She agreed to the scheme I proposed, and, cutting off the child’s finger, by her direction I soon had it at the house she told me of, and brought her the little pig in the place of it. She then made ready the pie, and after eating and drinking heartily myself, I was just taking my leave of the young woman when we observed the giant coming through the castle gates.

‘“Bless me,” said she, “what will you do now? Run away and lie down among the dead bodies that he has in the room (showing me the place), and strip off your clothes that he may not know you from the rest if he has occasion to go that way.”

‘I took her advice, and laid myself down among the rest, as if dead, to see how he would behave. The first thing I heard was him calling for his pie. When she set it down before him he swore it smelled like swine’s flesh, but knowing where to find the finger, she immediately turned it up, which fairly convinced him of the contrary. The pie only served to sharpen his appetite, and I heard him sharpening his knife and saying he must have a collop or two, for he was not near satisfied. But what was my terror when I heard the giant groping among the bodies, and, fancying myself, cut the half of my hip off, and took it with him to be roasted. You may be certain I was in great pain, but the fear of being killed prevented me from making any complaint. However, when he had eaten all he began to drink hot liquors in great abundance, so that in a short time he could not hold up his head, but threw himself on a large creel he had made for the purpose, and fell fast asleep. When I heard him snoring, as I was I went up and caused the woman to bind my wound with a handkerchief; and, taking the giant’s spit, reddened it in the fire, and ran it through the eye, but was not able to kill him.

‘However, I left the spit sticking in his head, and took to my heels; but I soon found he was in pursuit of me, although blind; and having an enchanted ring he threw it at me, and it fell on my big toe and remained fastened to it.

‘The giant then called to the ring, where it was, and to my great surprise it made him answer on my foot; and he, guided by the same, made a leap at me which I had the good luck to observe, and fortunately escaped the danger. However, I found running was of no use in saving me, as long as I had the ring on my foot; so I took my sword and cut off the toe it was fastened on, and threw both into a large fish-pond that was convenient. The giant called again to the ring, which by the power of enchantment always made him answer; but he, not knowing what I had done, imagined it was still on some part of me, and made a violent leap to seize me, when he went into the pond, over head and ears, and was drowned. Now, sir knight,’ says the Thief of Sloan, ‘you see what dangers I came through and always escaped; but, indeed, I am lame for the want of my toe ever since.’

‘My lord and master,’ says an old woman that was listening all the time, ‘that story is but too true, as I well know, for I am the very woman that was in the giant’s castle, and you, my lord, the child that I was to

make into a pie; and this is the very man that saved your life, which you may know by the want of your finger that was taken off, as you have heard, to deceive the giant.'

The Knight of the Glen, greatly surprised at what he had heard the old woman tell, and knowing he wanted his finger from his childhood, began to understand that the story was true enough.

'And is this my deliverer?' says he. 'O brave fellow, I not only pardon you all, but will keep you with myself while you live, where you shall feast like princes, and have every attendance that I have myself.'

They all returned thanks on their knees, and the Black Thief told him the reason they attempted to steal the Steed of Bells, and the necessity they were under in going home.

'Well,' says the Knight of the Glen, 'if that's the case I bestow you my steed rather than this brave fellow should die; so you may go when you please, only remember to call and see me betimes, that we may know each other well.'

They promised they would, and with great joy they set off for the King their father's palace, and the Black Thief along with them.

The wicked Queen was standing all this time on the tower, and, hearing the bells ringing at a great distance off, knew very well it was the princes coming home, and the steed with them, and through spite and vexation precipitated herself from the tower and was shattered to pieces.

The three princes lived happy and well during their father's reign, and always keeping the Black Thief along with them; but how they did after the old King's death is not known.[4]

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4. The Hibernian Tales.

THE MASTER THIEF

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There was once upon a time a husbandman who had three sons. He had no property to bequeath to them, and no means of putting them in the way of getting a living, and did not know what to do, so he said that they had his leave to take to anything they most fancied, and go to any place they best liked. He would gladly accompany them for some part of their way, he said, and that he did. He went with them till they came to a place where three roads met, and there each of them took his own way, and the father bade them farewell and returned to his own home again. What became of the two elder I have never been able to discover, but the youngest went both far and wide.

It came to pass, one night, as he was going through a great wood, that a terrible storm came on. It blew so hard and rained so heavily that he could scarcely keep his eyes open, and before he was aware of it he had got quite out of the track, and could neither find road nor path. But he went on, and at last he saw a light far away in the wood. Then he thought he must try and get to it, and after a long, long time he did reach it. There was a large house, and the fire was burning so brightly inside that he could tell that the people were not in bed. So he went in, and inside there was an old woman who was busy about some work.

‘Good evening, mother!’ said the youth.

‘Good evening!’ said the old woman.

‘Hutetu! it is terrible weather outside to-night,’ said the young fellow.

‘Indeed it is,’ said the old woman.

‘Can I sleep here, and have shelter for the night?’ asked the youth.

‘It wouldn’t be good for you to sleep here,’ said the old hag, ‘for if the people of the house come home and find you, they will kill both you and me.’

‘What kind of people are they then, who dwell here?’ said the youth.

‘Oh! robbers, and rabble of that sort,’ said the old woman; ‘they stole me away when I was little, and I have had to keep house for them ever

since.’

‘I still think I will go to bed, all the same,’ said the youth. ‘No matter what happens, I’ll not go out to-night in such weather as this.’

‘Well, then, it will be the worse for yourself,’ said the old woman.

The young man lay down in a bed which stood near, but he dared not go to sleep: and it was better that he didn’t, for the robbers came, and the old woman said that a young fellow who was a stranger had come there, and she had not been able to get him to go away again.

‘Did you see if he had any money?’ said the robbers.

‘He’s not one to have money, he is a tramp! If he has a few clothes to his back, that is all.’

Then the robbers began to mutter to each other apart about what they should do with him, whether they should murder him, or what else they should do. In the meantime the boy got up and began to talk to them, and ask them if they did not want a man-servant, for he could find pleasure enough in serving them.

‘Yes,’ said they, ‘if you have a mind to take to the trade that we follow, you may have a place here.’

‘It’s all the same to me what trade I follow,’ said the youth, ‘for when I came away from home my father gave me leave to take to any trade I fancied.’

‘Have you a fancy for stealing, then?’ said the robbers.

‘Yes,’ said the boy, for he thought that was a trade which would not take long to learn.

Not very far off there dwelt a man who had three oxen, one of which he was to take to the town to sell. The robbers had heard of this, so they told the youth that if he were able to steal the ox from him on the way, without his knowing, and without doing him any harm, he should have leave to be their servant-man. So the youth set off, taking with him a pretty shoe with a silver buckle that was lying about in the house. He put this in the road by which the man must go with his ox, and then went into the wood and hid himself under a bush. When the man came up he at once saw the shoe.

‘That’s a brave shoe,’ said he. ‘If I had but the fellow to it, I would carry it home with me, and then I should put my old woman into a good humour for once.’

For he had a wife who was so cross and ill-tempered that the time between the beatings she gave him was very short. But then he bethought himself that he could do nothing with one shoe if he had not the fellow to it, so he journeyed onwards and let it lie where it was. Then the youth picked up the shoe and hurried off away through the wood as fast as he was able, to get in front of the man, and then put the shoe in the road before him again.

When the man came with the ox and saw the shoe, he was quite vexed at having been so stupid as to leave the fellow to it lying where it was, instead of bringing it on with him.

‘I will just run back again and fetch it now,’ he said to himself, ‘and then I shall take back a pair of good shoes to the old woman, and she may perhaps throw a kind word to me for once.’

So he went and searched and searched for the other shoe for a long, long time, but no shoe was to be found, and at last he was forced to go back with the one which he had.

In the meantime the youth had taken the ox and gone off with it. When the man got there and found that his ox was gone, he began to weep and wail, for he was afraid that when his old woman got to know she would be the death of him. But all at once it came into his head to go home and get the other ox, and drive it to the town, and take good care that his old wife knew nothing about it. So he did this; he went home and took the ox without his wife’s knowing about it, and went on his way to the town with it. But the robbers they knew it well, because they got out their magic. So they told the youth that if he could take this ox also without the man knowing anything about it, and without doing him any hurt, he should then be on an equality with them.

‘Well, that will not be a very hard thing to do,’ thought the youth.

This time he took with him a rope and put it under his arms and tied himself up to a tree, which hung over the road that the man would have to take. So the man came with his ox, and when he saw the body hanging there he felt a little queer.

‘What a hard lot yours must have been to make you hang yourself!’ said he. ‘Ah, well! you may hang there for me; I can’t breathe life into you again.’

So on he went with his ox. Then the youth sprang down from the tree, ran by a short cut and got before him, and once more hung himself up on a tree in the road before the man.

‘How I should like to know if you really were so sick at heart that you hanged yourself there, or if it is only a hobgoblin that’s before me!’ said the man. ‘Ah, well! you may hang there for me, whether you are a hobgoblin or not,’ and on he went with his ox.

Once more the youth did just as he had done twice already; jumped down from the tree, ran by a short cut through the wood, and again hanged himself in the very middle of the road before him.

But when the man once more saw this he said to himself, ‘What a bad business this is! Can they all have been so heavy-hearted that they have all three hanged themselves? No, I can’t believe that it is anything but witchcraft! But I will know the truth,’ he said; ‘if the two others are still hanging there it is true but if they are not it’s nothing else but witchcraft.’

So he tied up his ox and ran back to see if they really were hanging there. While he was going, and looking up at every tree as he went, the youth leapt down and took his ox and went off with it. Any one may easily imagine what a fury the man fell into when he came back and saw that his ox was gone. He wept and he raged, but at last he took comfort and told himself that the best thing to do was to go home and take the third ox, without letting his wife know anything about it, and then try to sell it so well that he got a good sum of money for it. So he went home and took the third ox, and drove it off without his wife knowing anything about it. But the robbers knew all about it, and they told the youth that if he could steal this as he had stolen the two others, he should be master of the whole troop. So the youth set out and went to the wood, and when the man was coming along with the ox he began to bellow loudly, just like a great ox somewhere inside the wood. When the man heard that he was right glad, for he fancied he recognised the voice of his big bullock, and thought that now he should find both of them again. So he tied up the third, and ran away off the road to look for them in the wood. In the meantime the youth went away with the third ox. When the man returned and found that he had lost that too, he fell into such a rage that there was no bounds to it. He wept and lamented, and for many days he did not dare to go home again, for he was afraid that the old woman would slay him outright. The robbers,

also, were not very well pleased at this, for they were forced to own that the youth was at the head of them all. So one day they made up their minds to set to work to do something which it was not in his power to accomplish, and they all took to the road together, and left him at home alone. When they were well out of the house, the first thing that he did was to drive the oxen out on the road, whereupon they all ran home again to the man from whom he had stolen them, and right glad was the husbandman to see them. Then he brought out all the horses the robbers had, and loaded them with the most valuable things which he could find—vessels of gold and of silver, and clothes and other magnificent things—and then he told the old woman to greet the robbers from him and thank them from him, and say that he had gone away, and that they would have a great deal of difficulty in finding him again, and with that he drove the horses out of the courtyard. After a long, long time he came to the road on which he was travelling when he came to the robbers. And when he had got very near home, and was in sight of the house where his father lived, he put on a uniform which he had found among the things he had taken from the robbers, and which was made just like a general's, and drove into the yard just as if he were a great man. Then he entered the house and asked if he could find a lodging there.

'No, indeed you can't!' said his father. 'How could I possibly be able to lodge such a great gentleman as you? It is all that I can do to find clothes and bedding for myself, and wretched they are.'

'You were always a hard man,' said the youth, 'and hard you are still if you refuse to let your own son come into your house.'

'Are you my son?' said the man.

'Do you not know me again then?' said the youth.

Then he recognised him and said, 'But what trade have you taken to that has made you such a great man in so short a time?'

'Oh, that I will tell you,' answered the youth. 'You said that I might take to anything I liked, so I apprenticed myself to some thieves and robbers, and now I have served my time and have become Master Thief.'

Now the Governor of the province lived by his father's cottage, and this Governor had such a large house and so much money that he did not even know how much it was, and he had a daughter too who was both pretty and dainty, and good and wise. So the Master Thief was determined

to have her to wife, and told his father that he was to go to the Governor, and ask for his daughter for him. ‘If he asks what trade I follow, you may say that I am a Master Thief,’ said he.

‘I think you must be crazy,’ said the man, ‘for you can’t be in your senses if you think of anything so foolish.’

‘You must go to the Governor and beg for his daughter—there is no help,’ said the youth.

‘But I dare not go to the Governor and say this. He is so rich and has so much wealth of all kinds,’ said the man.

‘There is no help for it,’ said the Master Thief; ‘go you must, whether you like it or not. If I can’t get you to go by using good words, I will soon make you go with bad ones.’

But the man was still unwilling, so the Master Thief followed him, threatening him with a great birch stick, till he went weeping and wailing through the door to the Governor of the province.

‘Now, my man, and what’s amiss with you?’ said the Governor.

So he told him that he had three sons who had gone away one day, and how he had given them permission to go where they chose, and take to whatsoever work they fancied. ‘Now,’ he said, ‘the youngest of them has come home, and has threatened me till I have come to you to ask for your daughter for him, and I am to say that he is a Master Thief,’ and again the man fell a-weeping and lamenting.

‘Console yourself, my man,’ said the Governor, laughing. ‘You may tell him from me that he must first give me some proof of this. If he can steal the joint off the spit in the kitchen on Sunday, when every one of us is watching it, he shall have my daughter. Will you tell him that?’

The man did tell him, and the youth thought it would be easy enough to do it. So he set himself to work to catch three hares alive, put them in a bag, clad himself in some old rags so that he looked so poor and wretched that it was quite pitiable to see him, and in this guise on Sunday forenoon he sneaked into the passage with his bag, like any beggar boy. The Governor himself and every one in the house was in the kitchen, keeping watch over the joint. While they were doing this the youth let one of the hares slip out of his bag, and off it set and began to run round the yard.

‘Just look at that hare,’ said the people in the kitchen, and wanted to go out and catch it.

The Governor saw it too, but said, ‘Oh, let it go! it’s no use to think of catching a hare when it’s running away.’

It was not long before the youth let another hare out, and the people in the kitchen saw this too, and thought that it was the same. So again they wanted to go out and catch it, but the Governor again told them that it was of no use to try.

Very soon afterwards, however, the youth let slip the third hare, and it set off and ran round and round the courtyard. The people in the kitchen saw this too, and believed that it was still the same hare that was running about, so they wanted to go out and catch it.

‘It’s a remarkably fine hare!’ said the Governor. ‘Come and let us see if we can get hold of it.’ So out he went, and the others with him, and away went the hare, and they after it, in real earnest.

In the meantime, however, the Master Thief took the joint and ran off with it, and whether the Governor got any roast meat for his dinner that day I know not, but I know that he had no roast hare, though he chased it till he was both hot and tired. At noon came the Priest, and when the Governor had told him of the trick played by the Master Thief there was no end to the ridicule he cast on the Governor.

‘For my part,’ said the Priest, ‘I can’t imagine myself being made a fool of by such a fellow as that!’

‘Well, I advise you to be careful,’ said the Governor, ‘for he may be with you before you are at all aware.’

But the Priest repeated what he had said, and mocked the Governor for having allowed himself to be made such a fool of.

Later in the afternoon the Master Thief came and wanted to have the Governor’s daughter as he had promised.

‘You must first give some more samples of your skill,’ said the Governor, trying to speak him fair, ‘for what you did to-day was no such very great thing after all. Couldn’t you play off a really good trick on the Priest? for he is sitting inside there and calling me a fool for having let myself be taken in by such a fellow as you.’

‘Well, it wouldn’t be very hard to do that,’ said the Master Thief. So he dressed himself up like a bird, and threw a great white sheet over himself; broke off a goose’s wings, and set them on his back; and in this attire climbed into a great maple tree which stood in the Priest’s garden. So

when the Priest returned home in the evening the youth began to cry, ‘Father Lawrence! Father Lawrence! ‘for the Priest was called Father Lawrence.

‘Who is calling me?’ said the Priest.

‘I am an angel sent to announce to thee that because of thy piety thou shalt be taken away alive into heaven,’ said the Master Thief. ‘Wilt thou hold thyself in readiness to travel away next Monday night? for then will I come and fetch thee, and bear thee away with me in a sack, and thou must lay all thy gold and silver, and whatsoever thou may ‘st possess of this world’s wealth, in a heap in thy best parlour.’

So Father Lawrence fell down on his knees before the angel and thanked him, and the following Sunday he preached a farewell sermon, and gave out that an angel had come down into the large maple tree in his garden, and had announced to him that, because of his righteousness, he should be taken up alive into heaven, and as he thus preached and told them this everyone in the church, old or young, wept.

On Monday night the Master Thief once more came as an angel, and before the Priest was put into the sack he fell on his knees and thanked him; but no sooner was the Priest safely inside it than the Master Thief began to drag him away over stocks and stones.

‘Oh! oh! ‘cried the Priest in the sack. ‘Where are you taking me?’

‘This is the way to heaven. The way to heaven is not an easy one,’ said the Master Thief, and dragged him along till he all but killed him.

At last he flung him into the Governor’s goose-house, and the geese began to hiss and peck at him, till he felt more dead than alive.

‘Oh! oh! oh! Where am I now?’ asked the Priest.

‘Now you are in Purgatory,’ said the Master Thief, and off he went and took the gold and the silver and all the precious things which the Priest had laid together in his best parlour.

Next morning, when the goose-girl came to let out the geese, she heard the Priest bemoaning himself as he lay in the sack in the goose-house.

‘Oh, heavens! who is that, and what ails you?’ said she.

‘Oh,’ said the Priest, ‘if you are an angel from heaven do let me out and let me go back to earth again, for no place was ever so bad as this—the little fiends nip me so with their tongs.’

‘I am no angel,’ said the girl, and helped the Priest out of the sack. ‘I only look after the Governor’s geese, that’s what I do, and they are the little fiends which have pinched your reverence.’

‘This is the Master Thief’s doing! Oh, my gold and my silver and my best clothes!’ shrieked the Priest, and, wild with rage, he ran home so fast that the goose-girl thought he had suddenly gone mad.

When the Governor learnt what had happened to the Priest he laughed till he nearly killed himself, but when the Master Thief came and wanted to have his daughter according to promise, he once more gave him nothing but fine words, and said, ‘You must give me one more proof of your skill, so that I can really judge of your worth. I have twelve horses in my stable, and I will put twelve stable boys in it, one on each horse. If you are clever enough to steal the horses from under them, I will see what I can do for you.’

‘What you set me to do can be done,’ said the Master Thief, ‘but am I certain to get your daughter when it is?’

‘Yes; if you can do that I will do my best for you,’ said the Governor.

So the Master Thief went to a shop, and bought enough brandy to fill two pocket flasks, and he put a sleeping drink into one of these, but into the other he poured brandy only. Then he engaged eleven men to lie that night in hiding behind the Governor’s stable. After this, by fair words and good payment, he borrowed a ragged gown and a jerkin from an aged woman, and then, with a staff in his hand and a poke on his back, he hobbled off as evening came on towards the Governor’s stable. The stable boys were just watering the horses for the night, and it was quite as much as they could do to attend to that.

‘What on earth do you want here?’ said one of them to the old woman.

‘Oh dear! oh dear! How cold it is!’ she said, sobbing, and shivering with cold. ‘Oh dear! oh dear! it’s cold enough to freeze a poor old body to death!’ and she shivered and shook again, and said, ‘For heaven’s sake give me leave to stay here and sit just inside the stable door.’

‘You will get nothing of the kind! Be off this moment! If the Governor were to catch sight of you here, he would lead us a pretty dance,’ said one.

‘Oh! what a poor helpless old creature!’ said another, who felt sorry for her. ‘That poor old woman can do no harm to anyone. She may sit there and welcome.’

The rest of them thought that she ought not to stay, but while they were disputing about this and looking after the horses, she crept farther and farther into the stable, and at last sat down behind the door, and when once she was inside no one took any more notice of her.

As the night wore on the stable boys found it rather cold work to sit still on horseback.

‘Hutetu! But it is fearfully cold!’ said one, and began to beat his arms backwards and forwards across his breast.

‘Yes, I am so cold that my teeth are chattering,’ said another.

‘If one had but a little tobacco,’ said a third.

Well, one of them had a little, so they shared it among them, though there was very little for each man, but they chewed it. This was some help to them, but very soon they were just as cold as before.

‘Hutetu!’ said one of them, shivering again.

‘Hutetu!’ said the old woman, gnashing her teeth together till they chattered inside her mouth; and then she got out the flask which contained nothing but brandy, and her hands trembled so that she shook the bottle about, and when she drank it made a great gulp in her throat.

‘What is that you have in your flask, old woman?’ asked one of the stable boys.

‘Oh, it’s only a little drop of brandy, your honour,’ she said.

‘Brandy! What! Let me have a drop! Let me have a drop!’ screamed all the twelve at once.

‘Oh, but what I have is so little,’ whimpered the old woman. ‘It will not even wet your mouths.’

But they were determined to have it, and there was nothing to be done but give it; so she took out the flask with the sleeping drink and put it to the lips of the first of them; and now she shook no more, but guided the flask so that each of them got just as much as he ought, and the twelfth had not done drinking before the first was already sitting snoring. Then the Master Thief flung off his beggar’s rags, and took one stable boy after the other and gently set him astride on the partitions which divided the stalls, and then he called his eleven men who were waiting outside, and they rode off with the Governor’s horses.

In the morning when the Governor came to look after his stable boys they were just beginning to come to again. They were driving their spurs

into the partition till the splinters flew about, and some of the boys fell off, and some still hung on and sat looking like fools. ‘Ah, well,’ said the Governor, ‘it is easy to see who has been here; but what a worthless set of fellows you must be to sit here and let the Master Thief steal the horses from under you!’ And they all got a beating for not having kept watch better.

Later in the day the Master Thief came and related what he had done, and wanted to have the Governor’s daughter as had been promised. But the Governor gave him a hundred dollars, and said that he must do something that was better still.

‘Do you think you can steal my horse from under me when I am out riding on it?’ said he.

‘Well, it might be done,’ said the Master Thief, ‘if I were absolutely certain that I should get your daughter.’

So the Governor said that he would see what he could do, and then he said that on a certain day he would ride out to a great common where they drilled the soldiers.

So the Master Thief immediately got hold of an old worn-out mare, and set himself to work to make a collar for it of green withies and branches of broom; bought a shabby old cart and a great cask, and then he told a poor old beggar woman that he would give her ten dollars if she would get into the cask and keep her mouth wide-open beneath the tap-hole, into which he was going to stick his finger. No harm should happen to her, he said; she should only be driven about a little, and if he took his finger out more than once, she should have ten dollars more. Then he dressed himself in rags, dyed himself with soot, and put on a wig and a great beard of goat’s hair, so that it was impossible to recognise him, and went to the parade ground, where the Governor had already been riding about a long time.

When the Master Thief got there the mare went along so slowly and quietly that the cart hardly seemed to move from the spot. The mare pulled it a little forward, and then a little back, and then it stopped quite short. Then the mare pulled a little forward again, and it moved with such difficulty that the Governor had not the least idea that this was the Master Thief. He rode straight up to him, and asked if he had seen anyone hiding anywhere about in a wood that was close by.

‘No,’ said the man, ‘that have I not.’

‘Hark you,’ said the Governor. ‘If you will ride into that wood, and search it carefully to see if you can light upon a fellow who is hiding in there, you shall have the loan of my horse and a good present of money for your trouble.’

‘I am not sure that I can do it,’ said the man, ‘for I have to go to a wedding with this cask of mead which I have been to fetch, and the tap has fallen out on the way, so now I have to keep my finger in the tap-hole as I drive.’

‘Oh, just ride off,’ said the Governor, ‘and I will look after the cask and the horse too.’

So the man said that if he would do that he would go, but he begged the Governor to be very careful to put his finger into the tap-hole the moment he took his out.

So the Governor said that he would do his very best, and the Master Thief got on the Governor’s horse.

But time passed, and it grew later and later, and still the man did not come back, and at last the Governor grew so weary of keeping his finger in the tap-hole that he took it out.

‘Now I shall have ten dollars more!’ cried the old woman inside the cask; so he soon saw what kind of mead it was, and set out homewards. When he had gone a very little way he met his servant bringing him the horse, for the Master Thief had already taken it home.

The following day he went to the Governor and wanted to have his daughter according to promise. But the Governor again put him off with fine words, and only gave him three hundred dollars, saying that he must do one more masterpiece of skill, and if he were but able to do that he should have her.

Well, the Master Thief thought he might if he could hear what it was.

‘Do you think you can steal the sheet off our bed, and my wife’s night-gown?’ said the Governor.

‘That is by no means impossible,’ said the Master Thief. ‘I only wish I could get your daughter as easily.’

So late at night the Master Thief went and cut down a thief who was hanging on the gallows, laid him on his own shoulders, and took him away with him. Then he got hold of a long ladder, set it up against the

Governor’s bedroom window, and climbed up and moved the dead man’s head up and down, just as if he were some one who was standing outside and peeping in.

‘There’s the Master Thief, mother!’ said the Governor, nudging his wife. ‘Now I’ll just shoot him, that I will!’

So he took up a rifle which he had laid at his bedside.

‘Oh no, you must not do that,’ said his wife; ‘you yourself arranged that he was to come here.’

‘Yes, mother, I will shoot him,’ said he, and lay there aiming, and then aiming again, for no sooner was the head up and he caught sight of it than it was gone again. At last he got a chance and fired, and the dead body fell with a loud thud to the ground, and down went the Master Thief too, as fast as he could.

‘Well,’ said the Governor, ‘I certainly am the chief man about here, but people soon begin to talk, and it would be very unpleasant if they were to see this dead body; the best thing that I can do is to go out and bury him.’

‘Just do what you think best, father,’ said his wife.

So the Governor got up and went downstairs, and as soon as he had gone out through the door, the Master Thief stole in and went straight upstairs to the woman.

‘Well, father dear,’ said she, for she thought it was her husband. ‘Have you got done already?’

‘Oh yes, I only put him into a hole,’ said he, ‘and raked a little earth over him; that’s all I have been able to do to-night, for it is fearful weather outside. I will bury him better afterwards, but just let me have the sheet to wipe myself with, for he was bleeding, and I have got covered with blood with carrying him.’

So she gave him the sheet.

‘You will have to let me have your night-gown too,’ he said, ‘for I begin to see that the sheet won’t be enough.’

Then she gave him her night-gown, but just then it came into his head that he had forgotten to lock the door, and he was forced to go downstairs and do it before he could lie down in bed again. So off he went with the sheet, and the night-gown too.

An hour later the real Governor returned.

‘Well, what a time it has taken to lock the house door, father!’ said his wife, ‘and what have you done with the sheet and the night-gown?’

‘What do you mean?’ asked the Governor.

‘Oh, I am asking you what you have done with the night-gown and sheet that you got to wipe the blood off yourself with,’ said she.

‘Good heavens!’ said the Governor, ‘has he actually got the better of me again?’

When day came the Master Thief came too, and wanted to have the Governor’s daughter as had been promised, and the Governor dared do no otherwise than give her to him, and much money besides, for he feared that if he did not the Master Thief might steal the very eyes out of his head, and that he himself would be ill spoken of by all men. The Master Thief lived well and happily from that time forth, and whether he ever stole any more or not I cannot tell you, but if he did it was but for pastime.[5]

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5. From P. C. Asbjornsen.

BROTHER AND SISTER

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Brother took sister by the hand and said: ‘Look here; we haven’t had one single happy hour since our mother died. That stepmother of ours beats us regularly every day, and if we dare go near her she kicks us away. We never get anything but hard dry crusts to eat—why, the dog under the table is better off than we are. She does throw him a good morsel or two now and then. Oh dear! if our own dear mother only knew all about it! Come along, and let us go forth into the wide world together.’

So off they started through fields and meadows, over hedges and ditches, and walked the whole day long, and when it rained sister said:

‘Heaven and our hearts are weeping together.’

Towards evening they came to a large forest, and were so tired out with hunger and their long walk, as well as all their trouble, that they crept into a hollow tree and soon fell fast asleep.

Next morning, when they woke up, the sun was already high in the heavens and was shining down bright and warm into the tree. Then said brother:

‘I’m so thirsty, sister; if I did but know where to find a little stream, I’d go and have a drink. I do believe I hear one.’ He jumped up, took sister by the hand, and they set off to hunt for the brook.

Now their cruel stepmother was in reality a witch, and she knew perfectly well that the two children had run away. She had crept secretly after them, and had cast her spells over all the streams in the forest.

Presently the children found a little brook dancing and glittering over the stones, and brother was eager to drink of it, but as it rushed past sister heard it murmuring:

‘Who drinks of me will be a tiger! who drinks of me will be a tiger!’

So she cried out, ‘Oh! dear brother, pray don’t drink, or you’ll be turned into a wild beast and tear me to pieces.’

Brother was dreadfully thirsty, but he did not drink.

‘Very well,’ said he, ‘I’ll wait till we come to the next spring.’

When they came to the second brook, sister heard it repeating too:

‘Who drinks of me will be a wolf I who drinks of me will be a wolf!’

And she cried, ‘Oh! brother, pray don’t drink here either, or you’ll be turned into a wolf and eat me up.’

Again brother did not drink, but he said:

‘Well, I’ll wait a little longer till we reach the next stream, but then, whatever you may say, I really must drink, for I can bear this thirst no longer.’

And when they got to the third brook, sister heard it say as it rushed past:

‘Who drinks of me will be a roe! who drinks of me will be a roe!’

And she begged, ‘Ah! brother, don’t drink yet, or you’ll become a roe and run away from me.’

But her brother was already kneeling by the brook and bending over it to drink, and, sure enough, no sooner had his lips touched the water than he fell on the grass transformed into a little Roebuck.

Sister cried bitterly over her poor bewitched brother, and the little Roe wept too, and sat sadly by her side. At last the girl said:

‘Never mind, dear little fawn, I will never forsake you,’ and she took off her golden garter and tied it round the Roe’s neck.

Then she plucked rushes and plaited a soft cord of them, which she fastened to the collar. When she had done this she led the Roe farther and farther, right into the depths of the forest.

After they had gone a long, long way they came to a little house, and when the girl looked into it she found it was quite empty, and she thought ‘perhaps we might stay and live here.’

So she hunted up leaves and moss to make a soft bed for the little Roe, and every morning and evening she went out and gathered roots, nuts, and berries for herself, and tender young grass for the fawn. And he fed from her hand, and played round her and seemed quite happy. In the evening, when sister was tired, she said her prayers and then laid her head on the fawn’s back and fell sound asleep with it as a pillow. And if brother had but kept his natural form, really it would have been a most delightful kind of life.

They had been living for some time in the forest in this way, when it came to pass that the King of that country had a great hunt through the

woods. Then the whole forest rang with such a blowing of horns, baying of dogs, and joyful cries of huntsmen, that the little Roe heard it and longed to join in too.

‘Ah!’ said he to sister, ‘do let me go off to the hunt! I can’t keep still any longer.’

And he begged and prayed till at last she consented.

‘But,’ said she, ‘mind you come back in the evening. I shall lock my door fast for fear of those wild huntsmen; so, to make sure of my knowing you, knock at the door and say, “My sister dear, open; I’m here.” If you don’t speak I shan’t open the door.’

So off sprang the little Roe, and he felt quite well and happy in the free open air.

The King and his huntsmen soon saw the beautiful creature and started in pursuit, but they could not come up with it, and whenever they thought they were sure to catch it, it bounded off to one side into the bushes and disappeared. When night came on it ran home, and knocking at the door of the little house cried:

‘My sister dear, open; I’m here.’ The door opened, and he ran in and rested all night on his soft mossy bed.

Next morning the hunt began again, and as soon as the little Roe heard the horns and the ‘Ho! ho! ‘of the huntsmen, he could not rest another moment, and said:

‘Sister, open the door, I must get out.’

So sister opened the door and said, ‘Now mind and get back by nightfall, and say your little rhyme.’

As soon as the King and his huntsmen saw the Roe with the golden collar they all rode off after it, but it was far too quick and nimble for them. This went on all day, but as evening came on the huntsmen had gradually encircled the Roe, and one of them wounded it slightly in the foot, so that it limped and ran off slowly.

Then the huntsman stole after it as far as the little house, and heard it call out, ‘My sister dear, open; I’m here,’ and he saw the door open and close immediately the fawn had run in.

The huntsman remembered all this carefully, and went off straight to the King and told him all he had seen and heard.

‘To-morrow we will hunt again,’ said the King.

Poor sister was terribly frightened when she saw how her little Fawn had been wounded. She washed off the blood, bound up the injured foot with herbs, and said: ‘Now, dear, go and lie down and rest, so that your wound may heal.’

The wound was really so slight that it was quite well next day, and the little Roe did not feel it at all. No sooner did it hear the sounds of hunting in the forest than it cried:

‘I can’t stand this, I must be there too; I’ll take care they shan’t catch me.’

Sister began to cry, and said, ‘They are certain to kill you, and then I shall be left all alone in the forest and forsaken by everyone. I can’t and won’t let you out.’

‘Then I shall die of grief,’ replied the Roe, ‘for when I hear that horn I feel as if I must jump right out of my skin.’

So at last, when sister found there was nothing else to be done, she opened the door with a heavy heart, and the Roe darted forth full of glee and health into the forest.

As soon as the King saw the Roe, he said to his huntsman, ‘Now then, give chase to it all day till evening, but mind and be careful not to hurt it.’

When the sun had set the King said to his huntsman, ‘Now come and show me the little house in the wood.’

And when he got to the house he knocked at the door and said, ‘My sister dear, open; I’m here.’ Then the door opened and the King walked in, and there stood the loveliest maiden he had ever seen.

The girl was much startled when instead of the little Roe she expected she saw a man with a gold crown on his head walk in. But the King looked kindly at her, held out his hand, and said, ‘Will you come with me to my castle and be my dear wife?’

‘Oh yes!’ replied the maiden, ‘but you must let my Roe come too. I could not possibly forsake it.’

‘It shall stay with you as long as you live, and shall want for nothing,’ the King promised.

In the meantime the Roe came bounding in, and sister tied the rush cord once more to its collar, took the end in her hand, and so they left the little house in the forest together.

The King lifted the lonely maiden on to his horse, and led her to his castle, where the wedding was celebrated with the greatest splendour. The Roe was petted and caressed, and ran about at will in the palace gardens.

Now all this time the wicked stepmother, who had been the cause of these poor children's misfortunes and trying adventures, was feeling fully persuaded that sister had been torn to pieces by wild beasts, and brother shot to death in the shape of a Roe. When she heard how happy and prosperous they were, her heart was filled with envy and hatred, and she could think of nothing but how to bring some fresh misfortune on them. Her own daughter, who was as hideous as night and had only one eye, reproached her by saying, 'It is I who ought to have had this good luck and been Queen.'

'Be quiet, will you,' said the old woman; 'when the time comes I shall be at hand.'

Now after some time it happened one day when the King was out hunting that the Queen gave birth to a beautiful little boy. The old witch thought here was a good chance for her; so she took the form of the lady in waiting, and, hurrying into the room where the Queen lay in her bed, called out, 'The bath is quite ready; it will help to make you strong again. Come, let us be quick, for fear the water should get cold.' Her daughter was at hand, too, and between them they carried the Queen, who was still very weak, into the bath-room and laid her in the bath; then they locked the door and ran away.

They took care beforehand to make a blazing hot fire under the bath, so that the lovely young Queen might be suffocated.

As soon as they were sure this was the case, the old witch tied a cap on her daughter's head and laid her in the Queen's bed. She managed, too, to make her figure and general appearance look like the Queen's, but even her power could not restore the eye she had lost; so she made her lie on the side of the missing eye, in order to prevent the King's noticing anything.

In the evening, when the King came home and heard the news of his son's birth, he was full of delight, and insisted on going at once to his dear wife's bedside to see how she was getting on. But the old witch cried out, 'Take care and keep the curtains drawn; don't let the light get into the Queen's eyes; she must be kept perfectly quiet.' So the King went away and never knew that it was a false Queen who lay in the bed.

When midnight came and everyone in the palace was sound asleep, the nurse who alone watched by the baby's cradle in the nursery saw the door open gently, and who should come in but the real Queen. She lifted the child from its cradle, laid it on her arm, and nursed it for some time. Then she carefully shook up the pillows of the little bed, laid the baby down and tucked the coverlet in all round him. She did not forget the little Roe either, but went to the corner where it lay, and gently stroked its back. Then she silently left the room, and next morning when the nurse asked the sentries if they had seen any one go into the castle that night, they all said, 'No, we saw no one at all.'

For many nights the Queen came in the same way, but she never spoke a word, and the nurse was too frightened to say anything about her visits.

After some little time had elapsed the Queen spoke one night, and said:

'Is my child well? Is my Roe well?
I'll come back twice and then farewell.'

The nurse made no answer, but as soon as the Queen had disappeared she went to the King and told him all. The King exclaimed, 'Good heavens! what do you say? I will watch myself to-night by the child's bed.'

When the evening came he went to the nursery, and at midnight the Queen appeared and said:

'Is my child well? Is my Roe well?
I'll come back once and then farewell.'

And she nursed and petted the child as usual before she disappeared. The King dared not trust himself to speak to her, but the following night he kept watch again.

That night when the Queen came she said:

'Is my child well? Is my Roe well?
I've come this once, and now farewell.'

Then the King could restrain himself no longer, but sprang to her side and cried, 'You can be no one but my dear wife!'

‘Yes,’ said she, ‘I am your dear wife!’ and in the same moment she was restored to life, and was as fresh and well and rosy as ever. Then she told the King all the cruel things the wicked witch and her daughter had done. The King had them both arrested at once and brought to trial, and they were condemned to death. The daughter was led into the forest, where the wild beasts tore her to pieces, and the old witch was burnt at the stake.

As soon as she reduced to ashes the spell was taken off the little Roe, and he was restored to his natural shape once more, and so brother and sister lived happily ever after.[6]

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6. Grimm.

PRINCESS ROSETTE

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Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen who had two beautiful sons and one little daughter, who was so pretty that no one who saw her could help loving her. When it was time for the christening of the Princess, the Queen—as she always did—sent for all the fairies to be present at the ceremony, and afterwards invited them to a splendid banquet.

When it was over, and they were preparing to go away, the Queen said to them:

‘Do not forget your usual good custom. Tell me what is going to happen to Rosette.’

For that was the name they had given the Princess.

But the fairies said they had left their book of magic at home, and they would come another day and tell her.

‘Ah!’ said the Queen, ‘I know very well what that means—you have nothing good to say; but at least I beg that you will not hide anything from me.’

So, after a great deal of persuasion, they said:

‘Madam, we fear that Rosette may be the cause of great misfortunes to her brothers; they may even meet with their death through her; that is all we have been able to foresee about your dear little daughter. We are very sorry to have nothing better to tell you.’

Then they went away, leaving the Queen very sad, so sad that the King noticed it, and asked her what was the matter.

The Queen said that she had been sitting too near the fire, and had burnt all the flax that was upon her distaff.

‘Oh! is that all?’ said the King, and he went up into the garret and brought her down more flax than she could spin in a hundred years. But the Queen still looked sad, and the King asked her again what was the matter. She answered that she had been walking by the river and had dropped one of her green satin slippers into the water.

‘Oh! if that’s all,’ said the King, and he sent to all the shoe-makers in his kingdom, and they very soon made the Queen ten thousand green satin slippers, but still she looked sad. So the King asked her again what was the matter, and this time she answered that in eating her porridge too hastily she had swallowed her wedding-ring. But it so happened that the King knew better, for he had the ring himself, and he said:

‘Oh I you are not telling me the truth, for I have your ring here in my purse.’

Then the Queen was very much ashamed, and she saw that the King was vexed with her; so she told him all that the fairies had predicted about Rosette, and begged him to think how the misfortunes might be prevented.

Then it was the King’s turn to look sad, and at last he said:

‘I see no way of saving our sons except by having Rosette’s head cut off while she is still little.’

But the Queen cried that she would far rather have her own head cut off, and that he had better think of something else, for she would never consent to such a thing. So they thought and thought, but they could not tell what to do, until at last the Queen heard that in a great forest near the castle there was an old hermit, who lived in a hollow tree, and that people came from far and near to consult him; so she said:

‘I had better go and ask his advice; perhaps he will know what to do to prevent the misfortunes which the fairies foretold.’

She set out very early the next morning, mounted upon a pretty little white mule, which was shod with solid gold, and two of her ladies rode behind her on beautiful horses. When they reached the forest they dismounted, for the trees grew so thickly that the horses could not pass, and made their way on foot to the hollow tree where the hermit lived. At first when he saw them coming he was vexed, for he was not fond of ladies; but when he recognised the Queen, he said:

‘You are welcome, Queen. What do you come to ask of me?’

Then the Queen told him all the fairies had foreseen for Rosette, and asked what she should do, and the hermit answered that she must shut the Princess up in a tower and never let her come out of it again. The Queen thanked and rewarded him, and hastened back to the castle to tell the King. When he heard the news he had a great tower built as quickly as possible, and there the Princess was shut up, and the King and Queen and her two

brothers went to see her every day that she might not be dull. The eldest brother was called ‘the Great Prince,’ and the second ‘the Little Prince.’ They loved their sister dearly, for she was the sweetest, prettiest princess who was ever seen, and the least little smile from her was worth more than a hundred pieces of gold. When Rosette was fifteen years old the Great Prince went to the King and asked if it would not soon be time for her to be married, and the Little Prince put the same question to the Queen.

Their majesties were amused at them for thinking of it, but did not make any reply, and soon after both the King and the Queen were taken ill, and died on the same day. Everybody was sorry, Rosette especially, and all the bells in the kingdom were tolled.

Then all the dukes and counsellors put the Great Prince upon a golden throne, and crowned him with a diamond crown, and they all cried, ‘Long live the King!’ And after that there was nothing but feasting and rejoicing.

The new King and his brother said to one another:

‘Now that we are the masters, let us take our sister out of that dull tower which she is so tired of.’

They had only to go across the garden to reach the tower, which was very high, and stood up in a corner. Rosette was busy at her embroidery, but when she saw her brothers she got up, and taking the King’s hand cried:

‘Good morning, dear brother. Now that you are King, please take me out of this dull tower, for I am so tired of it.’

Then she began to cry, but the King kissed her and told her to dry her tears, as that was just what they had come for, to take her out of the tower and bring her to their beautiful castle, and the Prince showed her the pocketful of sugar plums he had brought for her, and said:

‘Make haste, and let us get away from this ugly tower, and very soon the King will arrange a grand marriage for you.’

When Rosette saw the beautiful garden, full of fruit and flowers, with green grass and sparkling fountains, she was so astonished that not a word could she say, for she had never in her life seen anything like it before. She looked about her, and ran hither and thither gathering fruit and flowers, and her little dog Frisk, who was bright green all over, and had but one ear, danced before her, crying ‘Bow-wow-wow,’ and turning head over heels in the most enchanting way.

Everybody was amused at Frisk’s antics, but all of a sudden he ran away into a little wood, and the Princess was following him, when, to her great delight, she saw a peacock, who was spreading his tail in the sunshine. Rosette thought she had never seen anything so pretty. She could not take her eyes off him, and there she stood entranced until the King and the Prince came up and asked what was amusing her so much. She showed them the peacock, and asked what it was, and they answered that it was a bird which people sometimes ate.

‘What!’ said the Princess, ‘do they dare to kill that beautiful creature and eat it? I declare that I will never marry any one but the King of the Peacocks, and when I am Queen I will take very good care that nobody eats any of my subjects.’

At this the King was very much astonished.

‘But, little sister,’ said he, ‘where shall we find the King of the Peacocks?’

‘Oh! wherever you like, sire,’ she answered, ‘but I will never marry any one else.’

After this they took Rosette to the beautiful castle, and the peacock was brought with her, and told to walk about on the terrace outside her windows, so that she might always see him, and then the ladies of the court came to see the Princess, and they brought her beautiful presents—dresses and ribbons and sweetmeats, diamonds and pearls and dolls and embroidered slippers, and she was so well brought up, and said, ‘Thank you!’ so prettily, and was so gracious, that everyone went away delighted with her.

Meanwhile the King and the Prince were considering how they should find the King of the Peacocks, if there was such a person in the world. And first of all they had a portrait made of the Princess, which was so like her that you really would not have been surprised if it had spoken to you. Then they said to her:

‘Since you will not marry anyone but the King of the Peacocks, we are going out together into the wide world to search for him. If we find him for you we shall be very glad. In the meantime, mind you take good care of our kingdom.’

Rosette thanked them for all the trouble they were taking on her account, and promised to take great care of the kingdom, and only to

amuse herself by looking at the peacock, and making Frisk dance while they were away.

So they set out, and asked everyone they met—

‘Do you know the King of the Peacocks?’

But the answer was always, ‘No, no.’

Then they went on and on, so far that no one has ever been farther, and at last they came to the Kingdom of the Cockchafers.

They had never before seen such a number of cockchafers, and the buzzing was so loud that the King was afraid he should be deafened by it. He asked the most distinguished-looking cockchafer they met if he knew where they could find the King of the Peacocks.

‘Sire,’ replied the cockchafer, ‘his kingdom is thirty thousand leagues from this; you have come the longest way.’

‘And how do you know that?’ said the King.

‘Oh!’ said the cockchafer, ‘we all know you very well, since we spend two or three months in your garden every year.’

Thereupon the King and the Prince made great friends with him, and they all walked arm-in-arm and dined together, and afterwards the cockchafer showed them all the curiosities of his strange country, where the tiniest green leaf costs a gold piece and more. Then they set out again to finish their journey, and this time, as they knew the way, they were not long upon the road. It was easy to guess that they had come to the right place, for they saw peacocks in every tree, and their cries could be heard a long way off:

When they reached the city they found it full of men and women who were dressed entirely in peacocks’ feathers, which were evidently thought prettier than anything else.

They soon met the King, who was driving about in a beautiful little golden carriage which glittered with diamonds, and was drawn at full speed by twelve peacocks. The King and the Prince were delighted to see that the King of the Peacocks was as handsome as possible. He had curly golden hair and was very pale, and he wore a crown of peacocks’ feathers.

When he saw Rosette’s brothers he knew at once that they were strangers, and stopping his carriage he sent for them to speak to him. When they had greeted him they said:

‘Sire, we have come from very far away to show you a beautiful portrait.’

So saying they drew from their travelling bag the picture of Rosette.

The King looked at it in silence a long time, but at last he said:

‘I could not have believed that there was such a beautiful Princess in the world!’

‘Indeed, she is really a hundred times as pretty as that,’ said her brothers.

‘I think you must be making fun of me,’ replied the King of the Peacocks.

‘Sire,’ said the Prince, ‘my brother is a King, like yourself. He is called “the King,” I am called “the Prince,” and that is the portrait of our sister, the Princess Rosette. We have come to ask if you would like to marry her. She is as good as she is beautiful, and we will give her a bushel of gold pieces for her dowry.’

‘Oh! with all my heart,’ replied the King, ‘and I will make her very happy. She shall have whatever she likes, and I shall love her dearly; only I warn you that if she is not as pretty as you have told me, I will have your heads cut off.’

‘Oh! certainly, we quite agree to that,’ said the brothers in one breath.

‘Very well. Off with you into prison, and stay there until the Princess arrives,’ said the King of the Peacocks.

And the Princes were so sure that Rosette was far prettier than her portrait that they went without a murmur. They were very kindly treated, and that they might not feel dull the King came often to see them. As for Rosette’s portrait that was taken up to the palace, and the King did nothing but gaze at it all day and all night.

As the King and the Prince had to stay in prison, they sent a letter to the Princess telling her to pack up all her treasures as quickly as possible, and come to them, as the King of the Peacocks was waiting to marry her; but they did not say that they were in prison, for fear of making her uneasy.

When Rosette received the letter she was so delighted that she ran about telling everyone that the King of the Peacocks was found, and she was going to marry him.

Guns were fired, and fireworks let off. Everyone had as many cakes and sweetmeats as he wanted. And for three days everybody who came to see the Princess was presented with a slice of bread-and-jam, a nightingale's egg, and some hippocras. After having thus entertained her friends, she distributed her dolls among them, and left her brother's kingdom to the care of the wisest old men of the city, telling them to take charge of everything, not to spend any money, but save it all up until the King should return, and above all, not to forget to feed her peacock. Then she set out, only taking with her her nurse, and the nurse's daughter, and the little green dog Frisk.

They took a boat and put out to sea, carrying with them the bushel of gold pieces, and enough dresses to last the Princess ten years if she wore two every day, and they did nothing but laugh and sing. The nurse asked the boatman:

'Can you take us, can you take us to the kingdom of the peacocks?'

But he answered:

'Oh no! oh no!'

Then she said:

'You must take us, you must take us.'

And he answered:

'Very soon, very soon.'

Then the nurse said:

'Will you take us? will you take us?'

And the boatman answered:

'Yes, yes.'

Then she whispered in his ear:

'Do you want to make your fortune?'

And he said:

'Certainly I do.'

'I can tell you how to get a bag of gold,' said she.

'I ask nothing better,' said the boatman.

'Well,' said the nurse, 'to-night, when the Princess is asleep, you must help me to throw her into the sea, and when she is drowned I will put her beautiful clothes upon my daughter, and we will take her to the King of the Peacocks, who will be only too glad to marry her, and as your reward you shall have your boat full of diamonds.'

The boatman was very much surprised at this proposal, and said:

‘But what a pity to drown such a pretty Princess!’

However, at last the nurse persuaded him to help her, and when the night came and the Princess was fast asleep as usual, with Frisk curled up on his own cushion at the foot of her bed, the wicked nurse fetched the boatman and her daughter, and between them they picked up the Princess, feather bed, mattress, pillows, blankets and all, and threw her into the sea, without even waking her. Now, luckily, the Princess’s bed was entirely stuffed with phoenix feathers, which are very rare, and have the property of always floating upon water, so Rosette went on swimming about as if she had been in a boat. After a little while she began to feel very cold, and turned round so often that she woke Frisk, who started up, and, having a very good nose, smelt the soles and herrings so close to him that he began to bark. He barked so long and so loud that he woke all the other fish, who came swimming up round the Princess’s bed, and poking at it with their great heads. As for her, she said to herself:

‘How our boat does rock upon the water! I am really glad that I am not often as uncomfortable as I have been to-night.’

The wicked nurse and the boatman, who were by this time quite a long way off, heard Frisk barking, and said to each other:

‘That horrid little animal and his mistress are drinking our health in sea-water now. Let us make haste to land, for we must be quite near the city of the King of the Peacocks.’

The King had sent a hundred carriages to meet them, drawn by every kind of strange animal. There were lions, bears, wolves, stags, horses, buffaloes, eagles, and peacocks. The carriage intended for the Princess Rosette had six blue monkeys, which could turn summer-saults, and dance on a tight-rope, and do many other charming tricks. Their harness was all of crimson velvet with gold buckles, and behind the carriage walked sixty beautiful ladies chosen by the King to wait upon Rosette and amuse her.

The nurse had taken all the pains imaginable to deck out her daughter. She put on her Rosette’s prettiest frock, and covered her with diamonds from head to foot. But she was so ugly that nothing could make her look nice, and what was worse, she was sulky and ill-tempered, and did nothing but grumble all the time.

When she stepped from the boat and the escort sent by the King of the Peacocks caught sight of her, they were so surprised that they could not say a single word.

‘Now then, look alive,’ cried the false Princess. ‘If you don’t bring me something to eat I will have all your heads cut off!’

Then they whispered one to another:

‘Here’s a pretty state of things! she is as wicked as she is ugly. What a bride for our poor King! She certainly was not worth bringing from the other end of the world!’

But she went on ordering them all about, and for no fault at all would give slaps and pinches to everyone she could reach.

As the procession was so long it advanced but slowly, and the nurse’s daughter sat up in her carriage trying to look like a Queen. But the peacocks, who were sitting upon every tree waiting to salute her, and who had made up their minds to cry, ‘Long live our beautiful Queen!’ when they caught sight of the false bride could not help crying instead:

‘Oh! how ugly she is!’

Which offended her so much that she said to the guards:

‘Make haste and kill all these insolent peacocks who have dared to insult me.’

But the peacocks only flew away, laughing at her.

The rogue of a boatman, who noticed all this, said softly to the nurse:

‘This is a bad business for us, gossip; your daughter ought to have been prettier.’

But she answered:

‘Be quiet, stupid, or you will spoil everything.’

Now they told the King that the Princess was approaching.

‘Well,’ said he, ‘did her brothers tell me truly? Is she prettier than her portrait?’

‘Sire,’ they answered, ‘if she were as pretty that would do very well.’

‘That’s true,’ said the King; ‘I for one shall be quite satisfied if she is. Let us go and meet her.’ For they knew by the uproar that she had arrived, but they could not tell what all the shouting was about. The King thought he could hear the words:

‘How ugly she is! How ugly she is!’ and he fancied they must refer to some dwarf the Princess was bringing with her. It never occurred to him

that they could apply to the bride herself.

The Princess Rosette's portrait was carried at the head of the procession, and after it walked the King surrounded by his courtiers. He was all impatience to see the lovely Princess, but when he caught sight of the nurse's daughter he was furiously angry, and would not advance another step. For she was really ugly enough to have frightened anybody.

'What!' he cried, 'have the two rascals who are my prisoners dared to play me such a trick as this? Do they propose that I shall marry this hideous creature? Let her be shut up in my great tower, with her nurse and those who brought her here; and as for them, I will have their heads cut off.'

Meanwhile the King and the Prince, who knew that their sister must have arrived, had made themselves smart, and sat expecting every minute to be summoned to greet her. So when the gaoler came with soldiers, and carried them down into a black dungeon which swarmed with toads and bats, and where they were up to their necks in water, nobody could have been more surprised and dismayed than they were.

'This is a dismal kind of wedding,' they said; 'what can have happened that we should be treated like this? They must mean to kill us.'

And this idea annoyed them very much. Three days passed before they heard any news, and then the King of the Peacocks came and berated them through a hole in the wall.

'You have called yourselves King and Prince,' he cried, 'to try and make me marry your sister, but you are nothing but beggars, not worth the water you drink. I mean to make short work with you, and the sword is being sharpened that will cut off your heads!'

'King of the Peacocks,' answered the King angrily, 'you had better take care what you are about. I am as good a King as yourself, and have a splendid kingdom and robes and crowns, and plenty of good red gold to do what I like with. You are pleased to jest about having our heads cut off; perhaps you think we have stolen something from you?'

At first the King of the Peacocks was taken aback by this bold speech, and had half a mind to send them all away together; but his Prime Minister declared that it would never do to let such a trick as that pass unpunished, everybody would laugh at him; so the accusation was drawn up against them, that they were impostors, and that they had promised the King a

beautiful Princess in marriage who, when she arrived, proved to be an ugly peasant girl.

This accusation was read to the prisoners, who cried out that they had spoken the truth, that their sister was indeed a Princess more beautiful than the day, and that there was some mystery about all this which they could not fathom. Therefore they demanded seven days in which to prove their innocence, The King of the Peacocks was so angry that he would hardly even grant them this favour, but at last he was persuaded to do so.

While all this was going on at court, let us see what had been happening to the real Princess. When the day broke she and Frisk were equally astonished at finding themselves alone upon the sea, with no boat and no one to help them. The Princess cried and cried, until even the fishes were sorry for her.

‘Alas!’ she said, ‘the King of the Peacocks must have ordered me to be thrown into the sea because he had changed his mind and did not want to marry me. But how strange of him, when I should have loved him so much, and we should have been so happy together!’

And then she cried harder than ever, for she could not help still loving him. So for two days they floated up and down the sea, wet and shivering with the cold, and so hungry that when the Princess saw some oysters she caught them, and she and Frisk both ate some, though they didn’t like them at all. When night came the Princess was so frightened that she said to Frisk:

‘Oh! Do please keep on barking for fear the soles should come and eat us up!’

Now it happened that they had floated close in to the shore, where a poor old man lived all alone in a little cottage. When he heard Frisk’s barking he thought to himself:

‘There must have been a shipwreck!’ (for no dogs ever passed that way by any chance), and he went out to see if he could be of any use. He soon saw the Princess and Frisk floating up and down, and Rosette, stretching out her hands to him, cried:

‘Oh! Good old man, do save me, or I shall die of cold and hunger!’

When he heard her cry out so piteously he was very sorry for her, and ran back into his house to fetch a long boat-hook. Then he waded into the water up to his chin, and after being nearly drowned once or twice he at

last succeeded in getting hold of the Princess's bed and dragging it on shore.

Rosette and Frisk were joyful enough to find themselves once more on dry land, and the Princess thanked the old man heartily; then, wrapping herself up in her blankets, she daintily picked her way up to the cottage on her little bare feet. There the old man lighted a fire of straw, and then drew from an old box his wife's dress and shoes, which the Princess put on, and thus roughly clad looked as charming as possible, and Frisk danced his very best to amuse her.

The old man saw that Rosette must be some great lady, for her bed coverings were all of satin and gold. He begged that she would tell him all her history, as she might safely trust him. The Princess told him everything, weeping bitterly again at the thought that it was by the King's orders that she had been thrown overboard.

'And now, my daughter, what is to be done?' said the old man. 'You are a great Princess, accustomed to fare daintily, and I have nothing to offer you but black bread and radishes, which will not suit you at all. Shall I go and tell the King of the Peacocks that you are here? If he sees you he will certainly wish to marry you.'

'Oh no!' cried Rosette, 'he must be wicked, since he tried to drown me. Don't let us tell him, but if you have a little basket give it to me.'

The old man gave her a basket, and tying it round Frisk's neck she said to him: 'Go and find out the best cooking-pot in the town and bring the contents to me.'

Away went Frisk, and as there was no better dinner cooking in all the town than the King's, he adroitly took the cover off the pot and brought all it contained to the Princess, who said:

'Now go back to the pantry, and bring the best of everything you find there.'

So Frisk went back and filled his basket with white bread, and red wine, and every kind of sweetmeat, until it was almost too heavy for him to carry.

When the King of the Peacocks wanted his dinner there was nothing in the pot and nothing in the pantry. All the courtiers looked at one another in dismay, and the King was terribly cross.

‘Oh well! ‘he said, ‘if there is no dinner I cannot dine, but take care that plenty of things are roasted for supper.’

When evening came the Princess said to Frisk:

‘Go into the town and find out the best kitchen, and bring me all the nicest morsels that are being roasted upon the spit.’

Frisk did as he was told, and as he knew of no better kitchen than the King’s, he went in softly, and when the cook’s back was turned took everything that was upon the spit, As it happened it was all done to a turn, and looked so good that it made him hungry only to see it. He carried his basket to the Princess, who at once sent him back to the pantry to bring all the tarts and sugar plums that had been prepared for the King’s supper.

The King, as he had had no dinner, was very hungry and wanted his supper early, but when he asked for it, lo and behold it was all gone, and he had to go to bed half-starved and in a terrible temper. The next day the same thing happened, and the next, so that for three days the King got nothing at all to eat, because just when the dinner or the supper was ready to be served it mysteriously disappeared. At last the Prime Minister began to be afraid that the King would be starved to death, so he resolved to hide himself in some dark corner of the kitchen, and never take his eyes off the cooking-pot. His surprise was great when he presently saw a little green dog with one ear slip softly into the kitchen, uncover the pot, transfer all its contents to his basket, and run off. The Prime Minister followed hastily, and tracked him all through the town to the cottage of the good old man; then he ran back to the King and told him that he had found out where all his dinners and suppers went. The King, who was very much astonished, said he should like to go and see for himself. So he set out, accompanied by the Prime Minister and a guard of archers, and arrived just in time to find the old man and the Princess finishing his dinner.

The King ordered that they should be seized and bound with ropes, and Frisk also.

When they were brought back to the palace some one told the King, who said:

‘To-day is the last day of the respite granted to those impostors; they shall have their heads cut off at the same time as these stealers of my dinner.’ Then the old man went down on his knees before the King and begged for time to tell him everything. While he spoke the King for the

first time looked attentively at the Princess, because he was sorry to see how she cried, and when he heard the old man saying that her name was Rosette, and that she had been treacherously thrown into the sea, he turned head over heels three times without stopping, in spite of being quite weak from hunger, and ran to embrace her, and untied the ropes which bound her with his own hands, declaring that he loved her with all his heart.

Messengers were sent to bring the Princes out of prison, and they came very sadly, believing that they were to be executed at once: the nurse and her daughter and the boatman were brought also. As soon as they came in Rosette ran to embrace her brothers, while the traitors threw themselves down before her and begged for mercy. The King and the Princess were so happy that they freely forgave them, and as for the good old man he was splendidly rewarded, and spent the rest of his days in the palace. The King of the Peacocks made ample amends to the King and Prince for the way in which they had been treated, and did everything in his power to show how sorry he was.

The nurse restored to Rosette all her dresses and jewels, and the bushel of gold pieces; the wedding was held at once, and they all lived happily ever after—even to Frisk, who enjoyed the greatest luxury, and never had anything worse than the wing of a partridge for dinner all the rest of his life.[7]

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7. Madame d’Aulnoy.

THE ENCHANTED PIG

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Once upon a time there lived a King who had three daughters. Now it happened that he had to go out to battle, so he called his daughters and said to them:

‘My dear children, I am obliged to go to the wars. The enemy is approaching us with a large army. It is a great grief to me to leave you all. During my absence take care of yourselves and be good girls; behave well and look after everything in the house. You may walk in the garden, and you may go into all the rooms in the palace, except the room at the back in the right-hand corner; into that you must not enter, for harm would befall you.’

‘You may keep your mind easy, father,’ they replied. ‘We have never been disobedient to you. Go in peace, and may heaven give you a glorious victory!’

When everything was ready for his departure, the King gave them the keys of all the rooms and reminded them once more of what he had said. His daughters kissed his hands with tears in their eyes, and wished him prosperity, and he gave the eldest the keys.

Now when the girls found themselves alone they felt so sad and dull that they did not know what to do. So, to pass the time, they decided to work for part of the day, to read for part of the day, and to enjoy themselves in the garden for part of the day. As long as they did this all went well with them. But this happy state of things did not last long. Every day they grew more and more curious, and you will see what the end of that was.

‘Sisters,’ said the eldest Princess, ‘all day long we sew, spin, and read. We have been several days quite alone, and there is no corner of the garden that we have not explored. We have been in all the rooms of our father’s palace, and have admired the rich and beautiful furniture: why should not we go into the room that our father forbad us to enter?’

Sister,’ said the youngest, ‘I cannot think how you can tempt us to break our father’s command. When he told us not to go into that room he must have known what he was saying, and have had a good reason for saying it.’

‘Surely the sky won’t fall about our heads if we DO go in,’ said the second Princess. ‘Dragons and such like monsters that would devour us will not be hidden in the room. And how will our father ever find out that we have gone in?’

While they were speaking thus, encouraging each other, they had reached the room; the eldest fitted the key into the lock, and snap! the door stood open.

The three girls entered, and what do you think they saw?

The room was quite empty, and without any ornament, but in the middle stood a large table, with a gorgeous cloth, and on it lay a big open book.

Now the Princesses were curious to know what was written in the book, especially the eldest, and this is what she read:

‘The eldest daughter of this King will marry a prince from the East.’

Then the second girl stepped forward, and turning over the page she read:

‘The second daughter of this King will marry a prince from the West.’

The girls were delighted, and laughed and teased each other.

But the youngest Princess did not want to go near the table or to open the book. Her elder sisters however left her no peace, and will she, nill she, they dragged her up to the table, and in fear and trembling she turned over the page and read:

‘The youngest daughter of this King will be married to a pig from the North.’

Now if a thunderbolt had fallen upon her from heaven it would not have frightened her more.

She almost died of misery, and if her sisters had not held her up, she would have sunk to the ground and cut her head open.

When she came out of the fainting fit into which she had fallen in her terror, her sisters tried to comfort her, saying:

‘How can you believe such nonsense? When did it ever happen that a king’s daughter married a pig?’

‘What a baby you are!’ said the other sister; ‘has not our father enough soldiers to protect you, even if the disgusting creature did come to woo you?’

The youngest Princess would fain have let herself be convinced by her sisters’ words, and have believed what they said, but her heart was heavy. Her thoughts kept turning to the book, in which stood written that great happiness waited her sisters, but that a fate was in store for her such as had never before been known in the world.

Besides, the thought weighed on her heart that she had been guilty of disobeying her father. She began to get quite ill, and in a few days she was so changed that it was difficult to recognise her; formerly she had been rosy and merry, now she was pale and nothing gave her any pleasure. She gave up playing with her sisters in the garden, ceased to gather flowers to put in her hair, and never sang when they sat together at their spinning and sewing.

In the meantime the King won a great victory, and having completely defeated and driven off the enemy, he hurried home to his daughters, to whom his thoughts had constantly turned. Everyone went out to meet him with cymbals and fifes and drums, and there was great rejoicing over his victorious return. The King’s first act on reaching home was to thank Heaven for the victory he had gained over the enemies who had risen against him. He then entered his palace, and the three Princesses stepped forward to meet him. His joy was great when he saw that they were all well, for the youngest did her best not to appear sad.

In spite of this, however, it was not long before the King noticed that his third daughter was getting very thin and sad-looking. And all of a sudden he felt as if a hot iron were entering his soul, for it flashed through his mind that she had disobeyed his word. He felt sure he was right; but to be quite certain he called his daughters to him, questioned them, and ordered them to speak the truth. They confessed everything, but took good care not to say which had led the other two into temptation.

The King was so distressed when he heard it that he was almost overcome by grief. But he took heart and tried to comfort his daughters, who looked frightened to death. He saw that what had happened had happened, and that a thousand words would not alter matters by a hair’s-breadth.

Well, these events had almost been forgotten when one fine day a prince from the East appeared at the Court and asked the King for the hand of his eldest daughter. The King gladly gave his consent. A great wedding banquet was prepared, and after three days of feasting the happy pair were accompanied to the frontier with much ceremony and rejoicing.

After some time the same thing befell the second daughter, who was wooed and won by a prince from the West.

Now when the young Princess saw that everything fell out exactly as had been written in the book, she grew very sad. She refused to eat, and would not put on her fine clothes nor go out walking, and declared that she would rather die than become a laughing-stock to the world. But the King would not allow her to do anything so wrong, and he comforted her in all possible ways.

So the time passed, till lo and behold! one fine day an enormous pig from the North walked into the palace, and going straight up to the King said, ‘Hail! oh King. May your life be as prosperous and bright as sunrise on a clear day!’

‘I am glad to see you well, friend,’ answered the King, ‘but what wind has brought you hither?’

‘I come a-wooing,’ replied the Pig.

Now the King was astonished to hear so fine a speech from a Pig, and at once it occurred to him that something strange was the matter. He would gladly have turned the Pig’s thoughts in another direction, as he did not wish to give him the Princess for a wife; but when he heard that the Court and the whole street were full of all the pigs in the world he saw that there was no escape, and that he must give his consent. The Pig was not satisfied with mere promises, but insisted that the wedding should take place within a week, and would not go away till the King had sworn a royal oath upon it.

The King then sent for his daughter, and advised her to submit to fate, as there was nothing else to be done. And he added:

‘My child, the words and whole behaviour of this Pig are quite unlike those of other pigs. I do not myself believe that he always was a pig. Depend upon it some magic or witchcraft has been at work. Obey him, and do everything that he wishes, and I feel sure that Heaven will shortly send you release.’

‘If you wish me to do this, dear father, I will do it,’ replied the girl.

In the meantime the wedding-day drew near. After the marriage, the Pig and his bride set out for his home in one of the royal carriages. On the way they passed a great bog, and the Pig ordered the carriage to stop, and got out and rolled about in the mire till he was covered with mud from head to foot; then he got back into the carriage and told his wife to kiss him. What was the poor girl to do? She bethought herself of her father’s words, and, pulling out her pocket handkerchief, she gently wiped the Pig’s snout and kissed it.

By the time they reached the Pig’s dwelling, which stood in a thick wood, it was quite dark. They sat down quietly for a little, as they were tired after their drive; then they had supper together, and lay down to rest. During the night the Princess noticed that the Pig had changed into a man. She was not a little surprised, but remembering her father’s words, she took courage, determined to wait and see what would happen.

And now she noticed that every night the Pig became a man, and every morning he was changed into a Pig before she awoke. This happened several nights running, and the Princess could not understand it at all. Clearly her husband must be bewitched. In time she grew quite fond of him, he was so kind and gentle.

One fine day as she was sitting alone she saw an old witch go past. She felt quite excited, as it was so long since she had seen a human being, and she called out to the old woman to come and talk to her. Among other things the witch told her that she understood all magic arts, and that she could foretell the future, and knew the healing powers of herbs and plants.

‘I shall be grateful to you all my life, old dame,’ said the Princess, ‘if you will tell me what is the matter with my husband. Why is he a Pig by day and a human being by night?’

‘I was just going to tell you that one thing, my dear, to show you what a good fortune-teller I am. If you like, I will give you a herb to break the spell.’

‘If you will only give it to me,’ said the Princess, ‘I will give you anything you choose to ask for, for I cannot bear to see him in this state.’

‘Here, then, my dear child,’ said the witch, ‘take this thread, but do not let him know about it, for if he did it would lose its healing power. At night, when he is asleep, you must get up very quietly, and fasten the

thread round his left foot as firmly as possible; and you will see in the morning he will not have changed back into a Pig, but will still be a man. I do not want any reward. I shall be sufficiently repaid by knowing that you are happy. It almost breaks my heart to think of all you have suffered, and I only wish I had known it sooner, as I should have come to your rescue at once.'

When the old witch had gone away the Princess hid the thread very carefully, and at night she got up quietly, and with a beating heart she bound the thread round her husband's foot. Just as she was pulling the knot tight there was a crack, and the thread broke, for it was rotten.

Her husband awoke with a start, and said to her, 'Unhappy woman, what have you done? Three days more and this unholy spell would have fallen from me, and now, who knows how long I may have to go about in this disgusting shape? I must leave you at once, and we shall not meet again until you have worn out three pairs of iron shoes and blunted a steel staff in your search for me.' So saying he disappeared.

Now, when the Princess was left alone she began to weep and moan in a way that was pitiful to hear; but when she saw that her tears and groans did her no good, she got up, determined to go wherever fate should lead her.

On reaching a town, the first thing she did was to order three pairs of iron sandals and a steel staff, and having made these preparations for her journey, she set out in search of her husband. On and on she wandered over nine seas and across nine continents; through forests with trees whose stems were as thick as beer-barrels; stumbling and knocking herself against the fallen branches, then picking herself up and going on; the boughs of the trees hit her face, and the shrubs tore her hands, but on she went, and never looked back. At last, wearied with her long journey and worn out and overcome with sorrow, but still with hope at her heart, she reached a house.

Now who do you think lived there? The Moon.

The Princess knocked at the door, and begged to be let in that she might rest a little. The mother of the Moon, when she saw her sad plight, felt a great pity for her, and took her in and nursed and tended her. And while she was here the Princess had a little baby.

One day the mother of the Moon asked her:

‘How was it possible for you, a mortal, to get hither to the house of the Moon?’

Then the poor Princess told her all that happened to her, and added ‘I shall always be thankful to Heaven for leading me hither, and grateful to you that you took pity on me and on my baby, and did not leave us to die. Now I beg one last favour of you; can your daughter, the Moon, tell me where my husband is?’

‘She cannot tell you that, my child,’ replied the goddess, ‘but, if you will travel towards the East until you reach the dwelling of the Sun, he may be able to tell you something.’

Then she gave the Princess a roast chicken to eat, and warned her to be very careful not to lose any of the bones, because they might be of great use to her.

When the Princess had thanked her once more for her hospitality and for her good advice, and had thrown away one pair of shoes that were worn out, and had put on a second pair, she tied up the chicken bones in a bundle, and taking her baby in her arms and her staff in her hand, she set out once more on her wanderings.

On and on and on she went across bare sandy deserts, where the roads were so heavy that for every two steps that she took forwards she fell back one; but she struggled on till she had passed these dreary plains; next she crossed high rocky mountains, jumping from crag to crag and from peak to peak. Sometimes she would rest for a little on a mountain, and then start afresh always farther and farther on. She had to cross swamps and to scale mountain peaks covered with flints, so that her feet and knees and elbows were all torn and bleeding, and sometimes she came to a precipice across which she could not jump, and she had to crawl round on hands and knees, helping herself along with her staff. At length, wearied to death, she reached the palace in which the Sun lived. She knocked and begged for admission. The mother of the Sun opened the door, and was astonished at beholding a mortal from the distant earthly shores, and wept with pity when she heard of all she had suffered. Then, having promised to ask her son about the Princess’s husband, she hid her in the cellar, so that the Sun might notice nothing on his return home, for he was always in a bad temper when he came in at night.

The next day the Princess feared that things would not go well with her, for the Sun had noticed that some one from the other world had been in the palace. But his mother had soothed him with soft words, assuring him that this was not so. So the Princess took heart when she saw how kindly she was treated, and asked:

‘But how in the world is it possible for the Sun to be angry? He is so beautiful and so good to mortals.’

‘This is how it happens,’ replied the Sun’s mother. ‘In the morning when he stands at the gates of paradise he is happy, and smiles on the whole world, but during the day he gets cross, because he sees all the evil deeds of men, and that is why his heat becomes so scorching; but in the evening he is both sad and angry, for he stands at the gates of death; that is his usual course. From there he comes back here.’

She then told the Princess that she had asked about her hus-band, but that her son had replied that he knew nothing about him, and that her only hope was to go and inquire of the Wind.

Before the Princess left the mother of the Sun gave her a roast chicken to eat, and advised her to take great care of the bones, which she did, wrapping them up in a bundle. She then threw away her second pair of shoes, which were quite worn out, and with her child on her arm and her staff in her hand, she set forth on her way to the Wind.

In these wanderings she met with even greater difficulties than before, for she came upon one mountain of flints after another, out of which tongues of fire would flame up; she passed through woods which had never been trodden by human foot, and had to cross fields of ice and avalanches of snow. The poor woman nearly died of these hardships, but she kept a brave heart, and at length she reached an enormous cave in the side of a mountain. This was where the Wind lived. There was a little door in the railing in front of the cave, and here the Princess knocked and begged for admission. The mother of the Wind had pity on her and took her in, that she might rest a little. Here too she was hidden away, so that the Wind might not notice her.

The next morning the mother of the Wind told her that her husband was living in a thick wood, so thick that no axe had been able to cut a way through it; here he had built himself a sort of house by placing trunks of

trees together and fastening them with withes and here he lived alone, shunning human kind.

After the mother of the Wind had given the Princess a chicken to eat, and had warned her to take care of the bones, she advised her to go by the Milky Way, which at night lies across the sky, and to wander on till she reached her goal.

Having thanked the old woman with tears in her eyes for her hospitality, and for the good news she had given her, the Princess set out on her journey and rested neither night nor day, so great was her longing to see her husband again. On and on she walked until her last pair of shoes fell in pieces. So she threw them away and went on with bare feet, not heeding the bogs nor the thorns that wounded her, nor the stones that bruised her. At last she reached a beautiful green meadow on the edge of a wood. Her heart was cheered by the sight of the flowers and the soft cool grass, and she sat down and rested for a little. But hearing the birds chirping to their mates among the trees made her think with longing of her husband, and she wept bitterly, and taking her child in her arms, and her bundle of chicken bones on her shoulder, she entered the wood.

For three days and three nights she struggled through it, but could find nothing. She was quite worn out with weariness and hunger, and even her staff was no further help to her, for in her many wanderings it had become quite blunted. She almost gave up in despair, but made one last great effort, and suddenly in a thicket she came upon the sort of house that the mother of the Wind had described. It had no windows, and the door was up in the roof. Round the house she went, in search of steps, but could find none. What was she to do? How was she to get in? She thought and thought, and tried in vain to climb up to the door. Then suddenly she bethought her of the chicken bones that she had dragged all that weary way, and she said to herself: ‘They would not all have told me to take such good care of these bones if they had not had some good reason for doing so. Perhaps now, in my hour of need, they may be of use to me.’

So she took the bones out of her bundle, and having thought for a moment, she placed the two ends together. To her surprise they stuck tight; then she added the other bones, till she had two long poles the height of the house; these she placed against the wall, at a distance of a yard from one another. Across them she placed the other bones, piece by piece, like

the steps of a ladder. As soon as one step was finished she stood upon it and made the next one, and then the next, till she was close to the door. But just as she got near the top she noticed that there were no bones left for the last rung of the ladder. What was she to do? Without that last step the whole ladder was useless. She must have lost one of the bones. Then suddenly an idea came to her. Taking a knife she chopped off her little finger, and placing it on the last step, it stuck as the bones had done. The ladder was complete, and with her child on her arm she entered the door of the house. Here she found everything in perfect order. Having taken some food, she laid the child down to sleep in a trough that was on the floor, and sat down herself to rest.

When her husband, the Pig, came back to his house, he was startled by what he saw. At first he could not believe his eyes, and stared at the ladder of bones, and at the little finger on the top of it. He felt that some fresh magic must be at work, and in his terror he almost turned away from the house; but then a better idea came to him, and he changed himself into a dove, so that no witchcraft could have power over him, and flew into the room without touching the ladder. Here he found a woman rocking a child. At the sight of her, looking so changed by all that she had suffered for his sake, his heart was moved by such love and longing and by so great a pity that he suddenly became a man.

The Princess stood up when she saw him, and her heart beat with fear, for she did not know him. But when he had told her who he was, in her great joy she forgot all her sufferings, and they seemed as nothing to her. He was a very handsome man, as straight as a fir tree. They sat down together and she told him all her adventures, and he wept with pity at the tale. And then he told her his own history.

‘I am a King’s son. Once when my father was fighting against some dragons, who were the scourge of our country, I slew the youngest dragon. His mother, who was a witch, cast a spell over me and changed me into a Pig. It was she who in the disguise of an old woman gave you the thread to bind round my foot. So that instead of the three days that had to run before the spell was broken, I was forced to remain a Pig for three more years. Now that we have suffered for each other, and have found each other again, let us forget the past.’

And in their joy they kissed one another.

Next morning they set out early to return to his father's kingdom. Great was the rejoicing of all the people when they saw him and his wife; his father and his mother embraced them both, and there was feasting in the palace for three days and three nights.

Then they set out to see her father. The old King nearly went out of his mind with joy at beholding his daughter again. When she had told him all her adventures, he said to her:

'Did not I tell you that I was quite sure that that creature who wooed and won you as his wife had not been born a Pig? You see, my child, how wise you were in doing what I told you.'

And as the King was old and had no heirs, he put them on the throne in his place. And they ruled as only kings rule who have suffered many things. And if they are not dead they are still living and ruling happily.[8]

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8. Rumanische Marchen ubersetzt von Nite Kremnitz.

THE NORKA

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Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen. They had three sons, two of them with their wits about them, but the third a simpleton. Now the King had a deer park in which were quantities of wild animals of different kinds. Into that park there used to come a huge beast—Norka was its name—and do fearful mischief, devouring some of the animals every night. The King did all he could, but he was unable to destroy it. So at last he called his sons together and said, ‘Whoever will destroy the Norka, to him will I give the half of my kingdom.’

Well, the eldest son undertook the task. As soon as it was night, he took his weapons and set out. But before he reached the park, he went into a traktir (or tavern), and there he spent the whole night in revelry. When he came to his senses it was too late; the day had already dawned. He felt himself disgraced in the eyes of his father, but there was no help for it. The next day the second son went, and did just the same. Their father scolded them both soundly, and there was an end of it.

Well, on the third day the youngest son undertook the task. They all laughed him to scorn, because he was so stupid, feeling sure he wouldn’t do anything. But he took his arms, and went straight into the park, and sat down on the grass in such a position that the moment he went asleep his weapons would prick him, and he would awake.

Presently the midnight hour sounded. The earth began to shake, and the Norka came rushing up, and burst right through the fence into the park, so huge was it. The Prince pulled himself together, leapt to his feet, crossed himself, and went straight at the beast. It fled back, and the Prince ran after it. But he soon saw that he couldn’t catch it on foot, so he hastened to the stable, laid his hands on the best horse there, and set off in pursuit. Presently he came up with the beast, and they began a fight. They fought and fought; the Prince gave the beast three wounds. At last they were both utterly exhausted, so they lay down to take a short rest. But the moment the Prince closed his eyes, up jumped the beast and took to flight. The

Prince’s horse awoke him; up he jumped in a moment, and set off again in pursuit, caught up the beast, and again began fighting with it. Again the Prince gave the beast three wounds, and then he and the beast lay down again to rest. Thereupon away fled the beast as before. The Prince caught it up, and again gave it three wounds. But all of a sudden, just as the Prince began chasing it for the fourth time, the beast fled to a great white stone, tilted it up, and escaped into the other world, crying out to the Prince: ‘Then only will you overcome me, when you enter here.’

The Prince went home, told his father all that had happened, and asked him to have a leather rope plaited, long enough to reach to the other world. His father ordered this to be done. When the rope was made, the Prince called for his brothers, and he and they, having taken servants with them, and everything that was needed for a whole year, set out for the place where the beast had disappeared under the stone. When they got there, they built a palace on the spot, and lived in it for some time. But when everything was ready, the youngest brother said to the others: ‘Now, brothers, who is going to lift this stone?’

Neither of them could so much as stir it, but as soon as he touched it, away it flew to a distance, though it was ever so big—big as a hill. And when he had flung the stone aside, he spoke a second time to his brothers, saying:

‘Who is going into the other world, to overcome the Norka?’

Neither of them offered to do so. Then he laughed at them for being such cowards, and said:

‘Well, brothers, farewell! Lower me into the other world, and don’t go away from here, but as soon as the cord is jerked, pull it up.’

His brothers lowered him accordingly, and when he had reached the other world, underneath the earth, he went on his way. He walked and walked. Presently he espied a horse with rich trappings, and it said to him:

‘Hail, Prince Ivan! Long have I awaited thee!’

He mounted the horse and rode on—rode and rode, until he saw standing before him a palace made of copper. He entered the courtyard, tied up his horse, and went indoors. In one of the rooms a dinner was laid out. He sat down and dined, and then went into a bedroom. There he found a bed, on which he lay down to rest. Presently there came in a lady, more beautiful than can be imagined anywhere but in a fairy tale, who said:

‘Thou who art in my house, name thyself! If thou art an old man, thou shalt be my father; if a middle-aged man, my brother; but if a young man, thou shalt be my husband dear. And if thou art a woman, and an old one, thou shalt be my grandmother; if middle-aged, my mother; and if a girl, thou shalt be my own sister.’

Thereupon he came forth. And when she saw him she was delighted with him, and said:

‘Wherefore, O Prince Ivan—my husband dear shalt thou be!—wherefore hast thou come hither?’

Then he told her all that had happened, and she said:

‘That beast which thou wishest to overcome is my brother. He is staying just now with my second sister, who lives not far from here in a silver palace. I bound up three of the wounds which thou didst give him.’

Well, after this they drank, and enjoyed themselves, and held sweet converse together, and then the Prince took leave of her, and went on to the second sister, the one who lived in the silver palace, and with her also he stayed awhile. She told him that her brother Norka was then at her youngest sister’s. So he went on to the youngest sister, who lived in a golden palace. She told him that her brother was at that time asleep on the blue sea, and she gave him a sword of steel and a draught of the Water of Strength, and she told him to cut off her brother’s head at a single stroke. And when he had heard these things, he went his way.

And when the Prince came to the blue sea, he looked—there slept the Norka on a stone in the middle of the sea; and when it snored, the water was agitated for seven miles around. The Prince crossed himself, went up to it, and smote it on the head with his sword. The head jumped off, saying the while, ‘Well, I’m done for now!’ and rolled far away into the sea.

After killing the beast, the Prince went back again, picking up all the three sisters by the way, with the intention of taking them out into the upper world: for they all loved him and would not be separated from him. Each of them turned her palace into an egg—for they were all enchantresses—and they taught him how to turn the eggs into palaces, and back again, and they handed over the eggs to him. And then they all went to the place from which they had to be hoisted into the upper world. And when they came to where the rope was, the Prince took hold of it and made the maidens fast to it. Then he jerked away at the rope and his brothers

began to haul it up. And when they had hauled it up, and had set eyes on the wondrous maidens, they went aside and said: ‘Let’s lower the rope, pull our brother part of the way up, and then cut the rope. Perhaps he’ll be killed; but then if he isn’t, he’ll never give us these beauties as wives.’

So when they had agreed on this, they lowered the rope. But their brother was no fool; he guessed what they were at, so he fastened the rope to a stone, and then gave it a pull. His brothers hoisted the stone to a great height, and then cut the rope. Down fell the stone and broke in pieces; the Prince poured forth tears and went away. Well, he walked and walked. Presently a storm arose; the lightning flashed, the thunder roared, the rain fell in torrents. He went up to a tree in order to take shelter under it, and on that tree he saw some young birds which were being thoroughly drenched. So he took off his coat and covered them over with it, and he himself sat down under the tree. Presently there came flying a bird—such a big one that the light was blotted out by it. It had been dark there before, but now it became darker still. Now this was the mother of those small birds which the Prince had covered up. And when the bird had come flying up, she perceived that her little ones were covered over, and she said, ‘Who has wrapped up my nestlings?’ and presently, seeing the Prince, she added: ‘Didst thou do that? Thanks! In return, ask of me anything thou desirest. I will do anything for thee.’

‘Then carry me into the other world,’ he replied.

‘Make me a large vessel with a partition in the middle,’ she said; ‘catch all sorts of game, and put them into one half of it, and into the other half pour water; so that there may be meat and drink for me.’

All this the Prince did. Then the bird—having taken the vessel on her back, with the Prince sitting in the middle of it—began to fly. And after flying some distance she brought him to his journey’s end, took leave of him, and flew away back. But he went to the house of a certain tailor, and engaged himself as his servant. So much the worse for wear was he, so thoroughly had he altered in appearance, that nobody would have suspected him of being a Prince.

Having entered into the service of this master, the Prince began to ask what was going on in that country. And his master replied: ‘Our two Princes—for the third one has disappeared—have brought away brides from the other world, and want to marry them, but those brides refuse. For

they insist on having all their wedding-clothes made for them first, exactly like those which they used to have in the other world, and that without being measured for them. The King has called all the workmen together, but not one of them will undertake to do it.'

The Prince, having heard all this, said, 'Go to the King, master, and tell him that you will provide everything that's in your line.'

'However can I undertake to make clothes of that sort? I work for quite common folks,' says his master.

'Go along, master! I will answer for everything,' says the Prince.

So the tailor went. The King was delighted that at least one good workman had been found, and gave him as much money as ever he wanted. When his tailor had settled everything, he went home. And the Prince said to him:

'Now then, pray to God, and lie down to sleep; to-morrow all will be ready.' And the tailor followed his lad's advice, and went to bed.

Midnight sounded. The Prince arose, went out of the city into the fields, took out of his pocket the eggs which the maidens had given him, and, as they had taught him, turned them into three palaces. Into each of these he entered, took the maidens' robes, went out again, turned the palaces back into eggs, and went home. And when he got there he hung up the robes on the wall, and lay down to sleep.

Early in the morning his master awoke, and behold! there hung such robes as he had never seen before, all shining with gold and silver and precious stones. He was delighted, and he seized them and carried them off to the King. When the Princesses saw that the clothes were those which had been theirs in the other world, they guessed that Prince Ivan was in this world, so they exchanged glances with each other, but they held their peace. And the master, having handed over the clothes, went home, but he no longer found his dear journeyman there. For the Prince had gone to a shoemaker's, and him too he sent to work for the King; and in the same way he went the round of all the artificers, and they all proffered him thanks, inasmuch as through him they were enriched by the King.

By the time the princely workman had gone the round of all the artificers, the Princesses had received what they had asked for; all their clothes were just like what they had been in the other world. Then they wept bitterly because the Prince had not come, and it was impossible for

them to hold out any longer; it was necessary that they should be married. But when they were ready for the wedding, the youngest bride said to the King:

‘Allow me, my father, to go and give alms to the beggars.’

He gave her leave, and she went and began bestowing alms upon them, and examining them closely. And when she had come to one of them, and was going to give him some money, she caught sight of the ring which she had given to the Prince in the other world, and her sisters’ rings too—for it really was he. So she seized him by the hand, and brought him into the hall, and said to the King:

‘Here is he who brought us out of the other world. His brothers forbade us to say that he was alive, threatening to slay us if we did.’

Then the King was wroth with those sons, and punished them as he thought best. And afterwards three weddings were celebrated.

THE WONDERFUL BIRCH

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Once upon a time there were a man and a woman, who had an only daughter. Now it happened that one of their sheep went astray, and they set out to look for it, and searched and searched, each in a different part of the wood. Then the good wife met a witch, who said to her:

‘If you spit, you miserable creature, if you spit into the sheath of my knife, or if you run between my legs, I shall change you into a black sheep.’

The woman neither spat, nor did she run between her legs, but yet the witch changed her into a sheep. Then she made herself look exactly like the woman, and called out to the good man:

‘Ho, old man, halloa! I have found the sheep already!’

The man thought the witch was really his wife, and he did not know that his wife was the sheep; so he went home with her, glad at heart because his sheep was found. When they were safe at home the witch said to the man:

‘Look here, old man, we must really kill that sheep lest it run away to the wood again.’

The man, who was a peaceable quiet sort of fellow, made no objections, but simply said:

‘Good, let us do so.’

The daughter, however, had overheard their talk, and she ran to the flock and lamented aloud:

‘Oh, dear little mother, they are going to slaughter you!’

‘Well, then, if they do slaughter me,’ was the black sheep’s answer, ‘eat you neither the meat nor the broth that is made of me, but gather all my bones, and bury them by the edge of the field.’

Shortly after this they took the black sheep from the flock and slaughtered it. The witch made pease-soup of it, and set it before the daughter. But the girl remembered her mother’s warning. She did not touch the soup, but she carried the bones to the edge of the field and buried

them there; and there sprang up on the spot a birch tree—a very lovely birch tree.

Some time had passed away—who can tell how long they might have been living there?—when the witch, to whom a child had been born in the meantime, began to take an ill-will to the man's daughter, and to torment her in all sorts of ways.

Now it happened that a great festival was to be held at the palace, and the King had commanded that all the people should be invited, and that this proclamation should be made:

'Come, people all!
Poor and wretched, one and all!
Blind and crippled though ye be,
Mount your steeds or come by sea.'

And so they drove into the King's feast all the outcasts, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. In the good man's house, too, preparations were made to go to the palace. The witch said to the man:

'Go you on in front, old man, with our youngest; I will give the elder girl work to keep her from being dull in our absence.'

So the man took the child and set out. But the witch kindled a fire on the hearth, threw a potful of barleycorns among the cinders, and said to the girl:

'If you have not picked the barley out of the ashes, and put it all back in the pot before nightfall, I shall eat you up!'

Then she hastened after the others, and the poor girl stayed at home and wept. She tried to be sure to pick up the grains of barley, but she soon saw how useless her labour was; and so she went in her sore trouble to the birch tree on her mother's grave, and cried and cried, because her mother lay dead beneath the sod and could help her no longer. In the midst of her grief she suddenly heard her mother's voice speak from the grave, and say to her:

'Why do you weep, little daughter?'

'The witch has scattered barleycorns on the hearth, and bid me pick them out of the ashes,' said the girl; 'that is why I weep, dear little mother.'

‘Do not weep,’ said her mother consolingly. ‘Break off one of my branches, and strike the hearth with it crosswise, and all will be put right.’ The girl did so. She struck the hearth with the birchen branch, and lo! the barleycorns flew into the pot, and the hearth was clean. Then she went back to the birch tree and laid the branch upon the grave. Then her mother bade her bathe on one side of the stem, dry herself on another, and dress on the third. When the girl had done all that, she had grown so lovely that no one on earth could rival her. Splendid clothing was given to her, and a horse, with hair partly of gold, partly of silver, and partly of something more precious still.

The girl sprang into the saddle, and rode as swift as an arrow to the palace. As she turned into the courtyard of the castle the King’s son came out to meet her, tied her steed to a pillar, and led her in. He never left her side as they passed through the castle rooms; and all the people gazed at her, and wondered who the lovely maiden was, and from what castle she came; but no one knew her—no one knew anything about her. At the banquet the Prince invited her to sit next him in the place of honour; but the witch’s daughter gnawed the bones under the table. The Prince did not see her, and thinking it was a dog, he gave her such a push with his foot that her arm was broken. Are you not sorry for the witch’s daughter? It was not her fault that her mother was a witch.

Towards evening the good man’s daughter thought it was time to go home; but as she went, her ring caught on the latch of the door, for the King’s son had had it smeared with tar. She did not take time to pull it off, but, hastily unfastening her horse from the pillar, she rode away beyond the castle walls as swift as an arrow. Arrived at home, she took off her clothes by the birch tree, left her horse standing there, and hastened to her place behind the stove. In a short time the man and the woman came home again too, and the witch said to the girl:

‘Ah! you poor thing, there you are to be sure! You don’t know what fine times we have had at the palace! The King’s son carried my daughter about, but the poor thing fell and broke her arm.’

The girl knew well how matters really stood, but she pretended to know nothing about it, and sat dumb behind the stove.

The next day they were invited again to the King’s banquet.

‘Hey! old man,’ said the witch, ‘get on your clothes as quick as you can; we are bidden to the feast. Take you the child; I will give the other one work, lest she weary.’

She kindled the fire, threw a potful of hemp seed among the ashes, and said to the girl:

‘If you do not get this sorted, and all the seed back into the pot, I shall kill you!’

The girl wept bitterly; then she went to the birch tree, washed herself on one side of it and dried herself on the other; and this time still finer clothes were given to her, and a very beautiful steed. She broke off a branch of the birch tree, struck the hearth with it, so that the seeds flew into the pot, and then hastened to the castle.

Again the King’s son came out to meet her, tied her horse to a pillar, and led her into the banqueting hall. At the feast the girl sat next him in the place of honour, as she had done the day before. But the witch’s daughter gnawed bones under the table, and the Prince gave her a push by mistake, which broke her leg—he had never noticed her crawling about among the people’s feet. She was VERY unlucky!

The good man’s daughter hastened home again betimes, but the King’s son had smeared the door-posts with tar, and the girl’s golden circlet stuck to it. She had not time to look for it, but sprang to the saddle and rode like an arrow to the birch tree. There she left her horse and her fine clothes, and said to her mother:

‘I have lost my circlet at the castle; the door-post was tarred, and it stuck fast.’

‘And even had you lost two of them,’ answered her mother, ‘I would give you finer ones.’

Then the girl hastened home, and when her father came home from the feast with the witch, she was in her usual place behind the stove. Then the witch said to her:

‘You poor thing! what is there to see here compared with what WE have seen at the palace? The King’s son carried my daughter from one room to another; he let her fall, ‘tis true, and my child’s foot was broken.’

The man’s daughter held her peace all the time, and busied herself about the hearth.

The night passed, and when the day began to dawn, the witch awakened her husband, crying:

‘Hi! get up, old man! We are bidden to the royal banquet.’

So the old man got up. Then the witch gave him the child, saying:

‘Take you the little one; I will give the other girl work to do, else she will weary at home alone.’

She did as usual. This time it was a dish of milk she poured upon the ashes, saying:

‘If you do not get all the milk into the dish again before I come home, you will suffer for it.’

How frightened the girl was this time! She ran to the birch tree, and by its magic power her task was accomplished; and then she rode away to the palace as before. When she got to the courtyard she found the Prince waiting for her. He led her into the hall, where she was highly honoured; but the witch’s daughter sucked the bones under the table, and crouching at the people’s feet she got an eye knocked out, poor thing! Now no one knew any more than before about the good man’s daughter, no one knew whence she came; but the Prince had had the threshold smeared with tar, and as she fled her gold slippers stuck to it. She reached the birch tree, and laying aside her finery, she said:

‘Alas I dear little mother, I have lost my gold slippers!’

‘Let them be,’ was her mother’s reply; ‘if you need them I shall give you finer ones.’

Scarcely was she in her usual place behind the stove when her father came home with the witch. Immediately the witch began to mock her, saying:

‘Ah! you poor thing, there is nothing for you to see here, and WE—ah: what great things we have seen at the palace! My little girl was carried about again, but had the ill-luck to fall and get her eye knocked out. You stupid thing, you, what do you know about anything?’

‘Yes, indeed, what can I know?’ replied the girl; ‘I had enough to do to get the hearth clean.’

Now the Prince had kept all the things the girl had lost, and he soon set about finding the owner of them. For this purpose a great banquet was given on the fourth day, and all the people were invited to the palace. The witch got ready to go too. She tied a wooden beetle on where her child’s

foot should have been, a log of wood instead of an arm, and stuck a bit of dirt in the empty socket for an eye, and took the child with her to the castle. When all the people were gathered together, the King's son stepped in among the crowd and cried:

'The maiden whose finger this ring slips over, whose head this golden hoop encircles, and whose foot this shoe fits, shall be my bride.'

What a great trying on there was now among them all! The things would fit no one, however.

'The cinder wench is not here,' said the Prince at last; 'go and fetch her, and let her try on the things.'

So the girl was fetched, and the Prince was just going to hand the ornaments to her, when the witch held him back, saying:

'Don't give them to her; she soils everything with cinders; give them to my daughter rather.'

Well, then the Prince gave the witch's daughter the ring, and the woman filed and pared away at her daughter's finger till the ring fitted. It was the same with the circlet and the shoes of gold. The witch would not allow them to be handed to the cinder wench; she worked at her own daughter's head and feet till she got the things forced on. What was to be done now? The Prince had to take the witch's daughter for his bride whether he would or no; he sneaked away to her father's house with her, however, for he was ashamed to hold the wedding festivities at the palace with so strange a bride. Some days passed, and at last he had to take his bride home to the palace, and he got ready to do so. Just as they were taking leave, the kitchen wench sprang down from her place by the stove, on the pretext of fetching something from the cowhouse, and in going by she whispered in the Prince's ear as he stood in the yard:

'Alas! dear Prince, do not rob me of my silver and my gold.'

Thereupon the King's son recognised the cinder wench; so he took both the girls with him, and set out. After they had gone some little way they came to the bank of a river, and the Prince threw the witch's daughter across to serve as a bridge, and so got over with the cinder wench. There lay the witch's daughter then, like a bridge over the river, and could not stir, though her heart was consumed with grief. No help was near, so she cried at last in her anguish:

‘May there grow a golden hemlock out of my body! perhaps my mother will know me by that token.’

Scarcely had she spoken when a golden hemlock sprang up from her, and stood upon the bridge.

Now, as soon as the Prince had got rid of the witch’s daughter he greeted the cinder wench as his bride, and they wandered together to the birch tree which grew upon the mother’s grave. There they received all sorts of treasures and riches, three sacks full of gold, and as much silver, and a splendid steed, which bore them home to the palace. There they lived a long time together, and the young wife bore a son to the Prince. Immediately word was brought to the witch that her daughter had borne a son—for they all believed the young King’s wife to be the witch’s daughter.

‘So, so,’ said the witch to herself; ‘I had better away with my gift for the infant, then.’

And so saying she set out. Thus it happened that she came to the bank of the river, and there she saw the beautiful golden hemlock growing in the middle of the bridge, and when she began to cut it down to take to her grandchild, she heard a voice moaning:

‘Alas! dear mother, do not cut me so!’

‘Are you here?’ demanded the witch.

‘Indeed I am, dear little mother,’ answered the daughter ‘They threw me across the river to make a bridge of me.’

In a moment the witch had the bridge shivered to atoms, and then she hastened away to the palace. Stepping up to the young Queen’s bed, she began to try her magic arts upon her, saying:

‘Spit, you wretch, on the blade of my knife; bewitch my knife’s blade for me, and I shall change you into a reindeer of the forest.’

‘Are you there again to bring trouble upon me?’ said the young woman.

She neither spat nor did anything else, but still the witch changed her into a reindeer, and smuggled her own daughter into her place as the Prince’s wife. But now the child grew restless and cried, because it missed its mother’s care. They took it to the court, and tried to pacify it in every conceivable way, but its crying never ceased.

‘What makes the child so restless?’ asked the Prince, and he went to a wise widow woman to ask her advice.

‘Ay, ay, your own wife is not at home,’ said the widow woman; ‘she is living like a reindeer in the wood; you have the witch’s daughter for a wife now, and the witch herself for a mother-in-law.’

‘Is there any way of getting my own wife back from the wood again?’ asked the Prince.

‘Give me the child,’ answered the widow woman. ‘I’ll take it with me to-morrow when I go to drive the cows to the wood. I’ll make a rustling among the birch leaves and a trembling among the aspens—perhaps the boy will grow quiet when he hears it.’

‘Yes, take the child away, take it to the wood with you to quiet it,’ said the Prince, and led the widow woman into the castle.

‘How now? you are going to send the child away to the wood?’ said the witch in a suspicious tone, and tried to interfere.

But the King’s son stood firm by what he had commanded, and said:

‘Carry the child about the wood; perhaps that will pacify it.’

So the widow woman took the child to the wood. She came to the edge of a marsh, and seeing a herd of reindeer there, she began all at once to sing—

‘Little Bright-eyes, little Redskin,
Come nurse the child you bore!
That bloodthirsty monster,
That man-eater grim,
Shall nurse him, shall tend him no more.
They may threaten and force as they will,
He turns from her, shrinks from her still,’

and immediately the reindeer drew near, and nursed and tended the child the whole day long; but at nightfall it had to follow the herd, and said to the widow woman:

‘Bring me the child to-morrow, and again the following day; after that I must wander with the herd far away to other lands.’

The following morning the widow woman went back to the castle to fetch the child. The witch interfered, of course, but the Prince said:

‘Take it, and carry it about in the open air; the boy is quieter at night, to be sure, when he has been in the wood all day.’

So the widow took the child in her arms, and carried it to the marsh in the forest. There she sang as on the preceding day—

‘Little Bright-eyes, little Redskin,
Come nurse the child you bore!
That bloodthirsty monster,
That man-eater grim,
Shall nurse him, shall tend him no more.
They may threaten and force as they will,
He turns from her, shrinks from her still,’

and immediately the reindeer left the herd and came to the child, and tended it as on the day before. And so it was that the child throve, till not a finer boy was to be seen anywhere. But the King’s son had been pondering over all these things, and he said to the widow woman:

‘Is there no way of changing the reindeer into a human being again?’

‘I don’t rightly know,’ was her answer. ‘Come to the wood with me, however; when the woman puts off her reindeer skin I shall comb her head for her; whilst I am doing so you must burn the skin.’

Thereupon they both went to the wood with the child; scarcely were they there when the reindeer appeared and nursed the child as before. Then the widow woman said to the reindeer:

‘Since you are going far away to-morrow, and I shall not see you again, let me comb your head for the last time, as a remembrance of you.’

Good; the young woman stript off the reindeer skin, and let the widow woman do as she wished. In the meantime the King’s son threw the reindeer skin into the fire unobserved.

‘What smells of singeing here?’ asked the young woman, and looking round she saw her own husband. ‘Woe is me! you have burnt my skin. Why did you do that?’

‘To give you back your human form again.’

‘Alack-a-day! I have nothing to cover me now, poor creature that I am!’ cried the young woman, and transformed herself first into a distaff, then into a wooden beetle, then into a spindle, and into all imaginable

shapes. But all these shapes the King’s son went on destroying till she stood before him in human form again.

Alas! wherefore take me home with you again,’ cried the young woman, ‘since the witch is sure to eat me up?’

‘She will not eat you up,’ answered her husband; and they started for home with the child.

But when the witch wife saw them she ran away with her daughter, and if she has not stopped she is running still, though at a great age. And the Prince, and his wife, and the baby lived happy ever afterwards.[9]

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9. From the Russo-Karelian.

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

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JACK SELLS THE COW

Once upon a time there was a poor widow who lived in a little cottage with her only son Jack.

Jack was a giddy, thoughtless boy, but very kind-hearted and affectionate. There had been a hard winter, and after it the poor woman had suffered from fever and ague. Jack did no work as yet, and by degrees they grew dreadfully poor. The widow saw that there was no means of keeping Jack and herself from starvation but by selling her cow; so one morning she said to her son, ‘I am too weak to go myself, Jack, so you must take the cow to market for me, and sell her.’

Jack liked going to market to sell the cow very much; but as he was on the way, he met a butcher who had some beautiful beans in his hand. Jack stopped to look at them, and the butcher told the boy that they were of great value, and persuaded the silly lad to sell the cow for these beans.

When he brought them home to his mother instead of the money she expected for her nice cow, she was very vexed and shed many tears, scolding Jack for his folly. He was very sorry, and mother and son went to bed very sadly that night; their last hope seemed gone.

At daybreak Jack rose and went out into the garden.

‘At least,’ he thought, ‘I will sow the wonderful beans. Mother says that they are just common scarlet-runners, and nothing else; but I may as well sow them.’

So he took a piece of stick, and made some holes in the ground, and put in the beans.

That day they had very little dinner, and went sadly to bed, knowing that for the next day there would be none and Jack, unable to sleep from grief and vexation, got up at day-dawn and went out into the garden.

What was his amazement to find that the beans had grown up in the night, and climbed up and up till they covered the high cliff that sheltered

the cottage, and disappeared above it! The stalks had twined and twisted themselves together till they formed quite a ladder.

‘It would be easy to climb it,’ thought Jack.

And, having thought of the experiment, he at once resolved to carry it out, for Jack was a good climber. However, after his late mistake about the cow, he thought he had better consult his mother first.

WONDERFUL GROWTH OF THE BEANSTALK

So Jack called his mother, and they both gazed in silent wonder at the Beanstalk, which was not only of great height, but was thick enough to bear Jack’s weight.

‘I wonder where it ends,’ said Jack to his mother; ‘I think I will climb up and see.’

His mother wished him not to venture up this strange ladder, but Jack coaxed her to give her consent to the attempt, for he was certain there must be something wonderful in the Beanstalk; so at last she yielded to his wishes.

Jack instantly began to climb, and went up and up on the ladder-like bean till everything he had left behind him—the cottage, the village, and even the tall church tower—looked quite little, and still he could not see the top of the Beanstalk.

Jack felt a little tired, and thought for a moment that he would go back again; but he was a very persevering boy, and he knew that the way to succeed in anything is not to give up. So after resting for a moment he went on.

After climbing higher and higher, till he grew afraid to look down for fear he should be giddy, Jack at last reached the top of the Beanstalk, and found himself in a beautiful country, finely wooded, with beautiful meadows covered with sheep. A crystal stream ran through the pastures; not far from the place where he had got off the Beanstalk stood a fine, strong castle.

Jack wondered very much that he had never heard of or seen this castle before; but when he reflected on the subject, he saw that it was as much

separated from the village by the perpendicular rock on which it stood as if it were in another land.

While Jack was standing looking at the castle, a very strange-looking woman came out of the wood, and advanced towards him.

She wore a pointed cap of quilted red satin turned up with ermine, her hair streamed loose over her shoulders, and she walked with a staff. Jack took off his cap and made her a bow.

‘If you please, ma’am,’ said he, ‘is this your house?’

‘No,’ said the old lady. ‘Listen, and I will tell you the story of that castle.

‘Once upon a time there was a noble knight, who lived in this castle, which is on the borders of Fairyland. He had a fair and beloved wife and several lovely children: and as his neighbours, the little people, were very friendly towards him, they bestowed on him many excellent and precious gifts.

‘Rumour whispered of these treasures; and a monstrous giant, who lived at no great distance, and who was a very wicked being, resolved to obtain possession of them.

‘So he bribed a false servant to let him inside the castle, when the knight was in bed and asleep, and he killed him as he lay. Then he went to the part of the castle which was the nursery, and also killed all the poor little ones he found there.

‘Happily for her, the lady was not to be found. She had gone with her infant son, who was only two or three months old, to visit her old nurse, who lived in the valley; and she had been detained all night there by a storm.

‘The next morning, as soon as it was light, one of the servants at the castle, who had managed to escape, came to tell the poor lady of the sad fate of her husband and her pretty babes. She could scarcely believe him at first, and was eager at once to go back and share the fate of her dear ones; but the old nurse, with many tears, besought her to remember that she had still a child, and that it was her duty to preserve her life for the sake of the poor innocent.

‘The lady yielded to this reasoning, and consented to remain at her nurse’s house as the best place of concealment; for the servant told her that the giant had vowed, if he could find her, he would kill both her and

her baby. Years rolled on. The old nurse died, leaving her cottage and the few articles of furniture it contained to her poor lady, who dwelt in it, working as a peasant for her daily bread. Her spinning-wheel and the milk of a cow, which she had purchased with the little money she had with her, sufficed for the scanty subsistence of herself and her little son. There was a nice little garden attached to the cottage, in which they cultivated peas, beans, and cabbages, and the lady was not ashamed to go out at harvest time, and glean in the fields to supply her little son's wants.

'Jack, that poor lady is your mother. This castle was once your father's, and must again be yours.'

Jack uttered a cry of surprise.

'My mother! oh, madam, what ought I to do? My poor father! My dear mother!'

'Your duty requires you to win it back for your mother. But the task is a very difficult one, and full of peril, Jack. Have you courage to undertake it?'

'I fear nothing when I am doing right,' said Jack.

'Then,' said the lady in the red cap, 'you are one of those who slay giants. You must get into the castle, and if possible possess yourself of a hen that lays golden eggs, and a harp that talks. Remember, all the giant possesses is really yours.' As she ceased speaking, the lady of the red hat suddenly disappeared, and of course Jack knew she was a fairy.

Jack determined at once to attempt the adventure; so he advanced, and blew the horn which hung at the castle portal. The door was opened in a minute or two by a frightful giantess, with one great eye in the middle of her forehead.

As soon as Jack saw her he turned to run away, but she caught him, and dragged him into the castle.

'Ho, ho!' she laughed terribly. 'You didn't expect to see me here, that is clear! No, I shan't let you go again. I am weary of my life. I am so overworked, and I don't see why I should not have a page as well as other ladies. And you shall be my boy. You shall clean the knives, and black the boots, and make the fires, and help me generally when the giant is out. When he is at home I must hide you, for he has eaten up all my pages hitherto, and you would be a dainty morsel, my little lad.'

While she spoke she dragged Jack right into the castle. The poor boy was very much frightened, as I am sure you and I would have been in his place. But he remembered that fear disgraces a man; so he struggled to be brave and make the best of things.

‘I am quite ready to help you, and do all I can to serve you, madam,’ he said, ‘only I beg you will be good enough to hide me from your husband, for I should not like to be eaten at all.’

‘That’s a good boy,’ said the Giantess, nodding her head; ‘it is lucky for you that you did not scream out when you saw me, as the other boys who have been here did, for if you had done so my husband would have awakened and have eaten you, as he did them, for breakfast. Come here, child; go into my wardrobe: he never ventures to open THAT; you will be safe there.’

And she opened a huge wardrobe which stood in the great hall, and shut him into it. But the keyhole was so large that it ad-mitted plenty of air, and he could see everything that took place through it. By-and-by he heard a heavy tramp on the stairs, like the lumbering along of a great cannon, and then a voice like thunder cried out;

‘Fe, fa, fi-fo-fum,
I smell the breath of an Englishman.
Let him be alive or let him be dead,
I’ll grind his bones to make my bread.’

‘Wife,’ cried the Giant, ‘there is a man in the castle. Let me have him for breakfast.’

‘You are grown old and stupid,’ cried the lady in her loud tones. ‘It is only a nice fresh steak off an elephant, that I have cooked for you, which you smell. There, sit down and make a good breakfast.’

And she placed a huge dish before him of savoury steaming meat, which greatly pleased him, and made him forget his idea of an Englishman being in the castle. When he had breakfasted he went out for a walk; and then the Giantess opened the door, and made Jack come out to help her. He helped her all day. She fed him well, and when evening came put him back in the wardrobe.

THE HEN THAT LAYS GOLDEN EGGS.

The Giant came in to supper. Jack watched him through the keyhole, and was amazed to see him pick a wolf's bone, and put half a fowl at a time into his capacious mouth.

When the supper was ended he bade his wife bring him his hen that laid the golden eggs.

'It lays as well as it did when it belonged to that paltry knight,' he said; 'indeed I think the eggs are heavier than ever.'

The Giantess went away, and soon returned with a little brown hen, which she placed on the table before her husband. 'And now, my dear,' she said, 'I am going for a walk, if you don't want me any longer.'

'Go,' said the Giant; 'I shall be glad to have a nap by-and-by.'

Then he took up the brown hen and said to her:

'Lay!' And she instantly laid a golden egg.

'Lay!' said the Giant again. And she laid another.

'Lay!' he repeated the third time. And again a golden egg lay on the table.

Now Jack was sure this hen was that of which the fairy had spoken.

By-and-by the Giant put the hen down on the floor, and soon after went fast asleep, snoring so loud that it sounded like thunder.

Directly Jack perceived that the Giant was fast asleep, he pushed open the door of the wardrobe and crept out; very softly he stole across the room, and, picking up the hen, made haste to quit the apartment. He knew the way to the kitchen, the door of which he found was left ajar; he opened it, shut and locked it after him, and flew back to the Beanstalk, which he descended as fast as his feet would move.

When his mother saw him enter the house she wept for joy, for she had feared that the fairies had carried him away, or that the Giant had found him. But Jack put the brown hen down before her, and told her how he had been in the Giant's castle, and all his adventures. She was very glad to see the hen, which would make them rich once more.

THE MONEY BAGS.

Jack made another journey up the Beanstalk to the Giant's castle one day while his mother had gone to market; but first he dyed his hair and disguised himself. The old woman did not know him again, and dragged him in as she had done before, to help her to do the work; but she heard her husband coming, and hid him in the wardrobe, not thinking that it was the same boy who had stolen the hen. She bade him stay quite still there, or the Giant would eat him.

Then the Giant came in saying:

'Fe, fa, fi-fo-fum,
I smell the breath of an Englishman.
Let him be alive or let him be dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread.'

'Nonsense!' said the wife, 'it is only a roasted bullock that I thought would be a tit-bit for your supper; sit down and I will bring it up at once.' The Giant sat down, and soon his wife brought up a roasted bullock on a large dish, and they began their supper. Jack was amazed to see them pick the bones of the bullock as if it had been a lark. As soon as they had finished their meal, the Giantess rose and said:

'Now, my dear, with your leave I am going up to my room to finish the story I am reading. If you want me call for me.'

'First,' answered the Giant, 'bring me my money bags, that I may count my golden pieces before I sleep.' The Giantess obeyed. She went and soon returned with two large bags over her shoulders, which she put down by her husband.

'There,' she said; 'that is all that is left of the knight's money. When you have spent it you must go and take another baron's castle.'

'That he shan't, if I can help it,' thought Jack.

The Giant, when his wife was gone, took out heaps and heaps of golden pieces, and counted them, and put them in piles, till he was tired of the amusement. Then he swept them all back into their bags, and leaning back in his chair fell fast asleep, snoring so loud that no other sound was audible.

Jack stole softly out of the wardrobe, and taking up the bags of money (which were his very own, because the Giant had stolen them from his

father), he ran off, and with great difficulty descending the Beanstalk, laid the bags of gold on his mother's table. She had just returned from town, and was crying at not finding Jack.

'There, mother, I have brought you the gold that my father lost.'

'Oh, Jack! you are a very good boy, but I wish you would not risk your precious life in the Giant's castle. Tell me how you came to go there again.'

And Jack told her all about it.

Jack's mother was very glad to get the money, but she did not like him to run any risk for her.

But after a time Jack made up his mind to go again to the Giant's castle.

THE TALKING HARP.

So he climbed the Beanstalk once more, and blew the horn at the Giant's gate. The Giantess soon opened the door; she was very stupid, and did not know him again, but she stopped a minute before she took him in. She feared another robbery; but Jack's fresh face looked so innocent that she could not resist him, and so she bade him come in, and again hid him away in the wardrobe.

By-and-by the Giant came home, and as soon as he had crossed the threshold he roared out:

'Fe, fa, fi-fo-fum,
I smell the breath of an Englishman.
Let him be alive or let him be dead,
I'll grind his bones to make my bread.'

'You stupid old Giant,' said his wife, 'you only smell a nice sheep, which I have grilled for your dinner.'

And the Giant sat down, and his wife brought up a whole sheep for his dinner. When he had eaten it all up, he said:

'Now bring me my harp, and I will have a little music while you take your walk.'

The Giantess obeyed, and returned with a beautiful harp. The framework was all sparkling with diamonds and rubies, and the strings were all of gold.

‘This is one of the nicest things I took from the knight,’ said the Giant. ‘I am very fond of music, and my harp is a faithful servant.’

So he drew the harp towards him, and said:

‘Play!’

And the harp played a very soft, sad air.

‘Play something merrier!’ said the Giant.

And the harp played a merry tune.

‘Now play me a lullaby,’ roared the Giant; and the harp played a sweet lullaby, to the sound of which its master fell asleep.

Then Jack stole softly out of the wardrobe, and went into the huge kitchen to see if the Giantess had gone out; he found no one there, so he went to the door and opened it softly, for he thought he could not do so with the harp in his hand.

Then he entered the Giant’s room and seized the harp and ran away with it; but as he jumped over the threshold the harp called out:

‘MASTER! MASTER!’

And the Giant woke up.

With a tremendous roar he sprang from his seat, and in two strides had reached the door.

But Jack was very nimble. He fled like lightning with the harp, talking to it as he went (for he saw it was a fairy), and telling it he was the son of its old master, the knight.

Still the Giant came on so fast that he was quite close to poor Jack, and had stretched out his great hand to catch him. But, luckily, just at that moment he stepped upon a loose stone, stumbled, and fell flat on the ground, where he lay at his full length.

This accident gave Jack time to get on the Beanstalk and hasten down it; but just as he reached their own garden he beheld the Giant descending after him.

‘Mother I mother!’ cried Jack, ‘make haste and give me the axe.’

His mother ran to him with a hatchet in her hand, and Jack with one tremendous blow cut through all the Beanstalks except one.

‘Now, mother, stand out of the way!’ said he.

THE GIANT BREAKS HIS NECK.

Jack's mother shrank back, and it was well she did so, for just as the Giant took hold of the last branch of the Beanstalk, Jack cut the stem quite through and darted from the spot.

Down came the Giant with a terrible crash, and as he fell on his head, he broke his neck, and lay dead at the feet of the woman he had so much injured.

Before Jack and his mother had recovered from their alarm and agitation, a beautiful lady stood before them.

'Jack,' said she, 'you have acted like a brave knight's son, and deserve to have your inheritance restored to you. Dig a grave and bury the Giant, and then go and kill the Giantess.'

'But,' said Jack, 'I could not kill anyone unless I were fighting with him; and I could not draw my sword upon a woman. Moreover, the Giantess was very kind to me.'

The Fairy smiled on Jack.

'I am very much pleased with your generous feeling,' she said. 'Nevertheless, return to the castle, and act as you will find needful.'

Jack asked the Fairy if she would show him the way to the castle, as the Beanstalk was now down. She told him that she would drive him there in her chariot, which was drawn by two peacocks. Jack thanked her, and sat down in the chariot with her.

The Fairy drove him a long distance round, till they reached a village which lay at the bottom of the hill. Here they found a number of miserable-looking men assembled. The Fairy stopped her carriage and addressed them:

'My friends,' said she, 'the cruel giant who oppressed you and ate up all your flocks and herds is dead, and this young gentleman was the means of your being delivered from him, and is the son of your kind old master, the knight.'

The men gave a loud cheer at these words, and pressed forward to say that they would serve Jack as faithfully as they had served his father. The Fairy bade them follow her to the castle, and they marched thither in a body, and Jack blew the horn and demanded admittance.

The old Giantess saw them coming from the turret loop-hole. She was very much frightened, for she guessed that something had happened to her husband; and as she came downstairs very fast she caught her foot in her dress, and fell from the top to the bottom and broke her neck.

When the people outside found that the door was not opened to them, they took crowbars and forced the portal. Nobody was to be seen, but on leaving the hall they found the body of the Giantess at the foot of the stairs.

Thus Jack took possession of the castle. The Fairy went and brought his mother to him, with the hen and the harp. He had the Giantess buried, and endeavoured as much as lay in his power to do right to those whom the Giant had robbed.

Before her departure for fairyland, the Fairy explained to Jack that she had sent the butcher to meet him with the beans, in order to try what sort of lad he was.

If you had looked at the gigantic Beanstalk and only stupidly wondered about it,' she said, 'I should have left you where misfortune had placed you, only restoring her cow to your mother. But you showed an inquiring mind, and great courage and enterprise, therefore you deserve to rise; and when you mounted the Beanstalk you climbed the Ladder of Fortune.'

She then took her leave of Jack and his mother.

THE LITTLE GOOD MOUSE

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Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen who loved each other so much that they were never happy unless they were together. Day after day they went out hunting or fishing; night after night they went to balls or to the opera; they sang, and danced, and ate sugar-plums, and were the gayest of the gay, and all their subjects followed their example so that the kingdom was called the Joyous Land. Now in the next kingdom everything was as different as it could possibly be. The King was sulky and savage, and never enjoyed himself at all. He looked so ugly and cross that all his subjects feared him, and he hated the very sight of a cheerful face; so if he ever caught anyone smiling he had his head cut off that very minute. This kingdom was very appropriately called the Land of Tears. Now when this wicked King heard of the happiness of the Jolly King, he was so jealous that he collected a great army and set out to fight him, and the news of his approach was soon brought to the King and Queen. The Queen, when she heard of it, was frightened out of her wits, and began to cry bitterly. ‘Sire,’ she said, ‘let us collect all our riches and run away as far as ever we can, to the other side of the world.’

But the King answered:

‘Fie, madam! I am far too brave for that. It is better to die than to be a coward.’

Then he assembled all his armed men, and after bidding the Queen a tender farewell, he mounted his splendid horse and rode away. When he was lost to sight the Queen could do nothing but weep, and wring her hands, and cry.

‘Alas! If the King is killed, what will become of me and of my little daughter?’ and she was so sorrowful that she could neither eat nor sleep.

The King sent her a letter every day, but at last, one morning, as she looked out of the palace window, she saw a messenger approaching in hot haste.

‘What news, courier? What news?’ cried the Queen, and he answered:

‘The battle is lost and the King is dead, and in another moment the enemy will be here.’

The poor Queen fell back insensible, and all her ladies carried her to bed, and stood round her weeping and wailing. Then began a tremendous noise and confusion, and they knew that the enemy had arrived, and very soon they heard the King himself stamping about the palace seeking the Queen. Then her ladies put the little Princess into her arms, and covered her up, head and all, in the bedclothes, and ran for their lives, and the poor Queen lay there shaking, and hoping she would not be found. But very soon the wicked King clattered into the room, and in a fury because the Queen would not answer when he called to her, he tore back her silken coverings and tweaked off her lace cap, and when all her lovely hair came tumbling down over her shoulders, he wound it three times round his hand and threw her over his shoulder, where he carried her like a sack of flour.

The poor Queen held her little daughter safe in her arms and shrieked for mercy, but the wicked King only mocked her, and begged her to go on shrieking, as it amused him, and so mounted his great black horse, and rode back to his own country. When he got there he declared that he would have the Queen and the little Princess hanged on the nearest tree; but his courtiers said that seemed a pity, for when the baby grew up she would be a very nice wife for the King’s only son.

The King was rather pleased with this idea, and shut the Queen up in the highest room of a tall tower, which was very tiny, and miserably furnished with a table and a very hard bed upon the floor. Then he sent for a fairy who lived near his kingdom, and after receiving her with more politeness than he generally showed, and entertaining her at a sumptuous feast, he took her up to see the Queen. The fairy was so touched by the sight of her misery that when she kissed her hand she whispered:

‘Courage, madam! I think I see a way to help you.’

The Queen, a little comforted by these words, received her graciously, and begged her to take pity upon the poor little Princess, who had met with such a sudden reverse of fortune. But the King got very cross when he saw them whispering together, and cried harshly:

‘Make an end of these fine speeches, madam. I brought you here to tell me if the child will grow up pretty and fortunate.’

Then the Fairy answered that the Princess would be as pretty, and clever, and well brought up as it was possible to be, and the old King growled to the Queen that it was lucky for her that it was so, as they would certainly have been hanged if it were otherwise. Then he stamped off, taking the Fairy with him, and leaving the poor Queen in tears.

‘How can I wish my little daughter to grow up pretty if she is to be married to that horrid little dwarf, the King’s son,’ she said to herself, ‘and yet, if she is ugly we shall both be killed. If I could only hide her away somewhere, so that the cruel King could never find her.’

As the days went on, the Queen and the little Princess grew thinner and thinner, for their hard-hearted gaoler gave them every day only three boiled peas and a tiny morsel of black bread, so they were always terribly hungry. At last, one evening, as the Queen sat at her spinning-wheel—for the King was so avaricious that she was made to work day and night—she saw a tiny, pretty little mouse creep out of a hole, and said to it:

‘Alas, little creature! what are you coming to look for here? I only have three peas for my day’s provision, so unless you wish to fast you must go elsewhere.’

But the mouse ran hither and thither, and danced and capered so prettily, that at last the Queen gave it her last pea, which she was keeping for her supper, saying: ‘Here, little one, eat it up; I have nothing better to offer you, but I give this willingly in return for the amusement I have had from you.’

She had hardly spoken when she saw upon the table a delicious little roast partridge, and two dishes of preserved fruit. ‘Truly,’ said she, ‘a kind action never goes unrewarded; ‘and she and the little Princess ate their supper with great satisfaction, and then the Queen gave what was left to the little mouse, who danced better than ever afterwards. The next morning came the gaoler with the Queen’s allowance of three peas, which he brought in upon a large dish to make them look smaller; but as soon as he set it down the little mouse came and ate up all three, so that when the Queen wanted her dinner there was nothing left for her. Then she was quite provoked, and said:

‘What a bad little beast that mouse must be! If it goes on like this I shall be starved.’ But when she glanced at the dish again it was covered with all sorts of nice things to eat, and the Queen made a very good dinner,

and was gayer than usual over it. But afterwards as she sat at her spinning-wheel she began to consider what would happen if the little Princess did not grow up pretty enough to please the King, and she said to herself:

‘Oh! if I could only think of some way of escaping.’

As she spoke she saw the little mouse playing in a corner with some long straws. The Queen took them and began to plait them, saying:

‘If only I had straws enough I would make a basket with them, and let my baby down in it from the window to any kind passer-by who would take care of her.’

By the time the straws were all plaited the little mouse had dragged in more and more, until the Queen had plenty to make her basket, and she worked at it day and night, while the little mouse danced for her amusement; and at dinner and supper time the Queen gave it the three peas and the bit of black bread, and always found something good in the dish in their place. She really could not imagine where all the nice things came from. At last one day when the basket was finished, the Queen was looking out of the window to see how long a cord she must make to lower it to the bottom of the tower, when she noticed a little old woman who was leaning upon her stick and looking up at her. Presently she said:

‘I know your trouble, madam. If you like I will help you.’

‘Oh! my dear friend,’ said the Queen. ‘If you really wish to be of use to me you will come at the time that I will appoint, and I will let down my poor little baby in a basket. If you will take her, and bring her up for me, when I am rich I will reward you splendidly.’

‘I don’t care about the reward,’ said the old woman, ‘but there is one thing I should like. You must know that I am very particular about what I eat, and if there is one thing that I fancy above all others, it is a plump, tender little mouse. If there is such a thing in your garret just throw it down to me, and in return I will promise that your little daughter shall be well taken care of.’

The Queen when she heard this began to cry, but made no answer, and the old woman after waiting a few minutes asked her what was the matter.

‘Why,’ said the Queen, ‘there is only one mouse in this garret, and that is such a dear, pretty little thing that I cannot bear to think of its being killed.’

‘What!’ cried the old woman, in a rage. ‘Do you care more for a miserable mouse than for your own baby? Good-bye, madam! I leave you to enjoy its company, and for my own part I thank my stars that I can get plenty of mice without troubling you to give them to me.’

And she hobbled off grumbling and growling. As to the Queen, she was so disappointed that, in spite of finding a better dinner than usual, and seeing the little mouse dancing in its merriest mood, she could do nothing but cry. That night when her baby was fast asleep she packed it into the basket, and wrote on a slip of paper, ‘This unhappy little girl is called Delicia!’ This she pinned to its robe, and then very sadly she was shutting the basket, when in sprang the little mouse and sat on the baby’s pillow.

‘Ah! little one,’ said the Queen, ‘it cost me dear to save your life. How shall I know now whether my Delicia is being taken care of or no? Anyone else would have let the greedy old woman have you, and eat you up, but I could not bear to do it.’ Whereupon the Mouse answered:

‘Believe me, madam, you will never repent of your kindness.’

The Queen was immensely astonished when the Mouse began to speak, and still more so when she saw its little sharp nose turn to a beautiful face, and its paws to hands and feet; then it suddenly grew tall, and the Queen recognised the Fairy who had come with the wicked King to visit her.

The Fairy smiled at her astonished look, and said:

‘I wanted to see if you were faithful and capable of feeling a real friendship for me, for you see we fairies are rich in everything but friends, and those are hard to find.’

‘It is not possible that YOU should want for friends, you charming creature,’ said the Queen, kissing her.

‘Indeed it is so,’ the Fairy said. ‘For those who are only friendly with me for their own advantage, I do not count at all. But when you cared for the poor little mouse you could not have known there was anything to be gained by it, and to try you further I took the form of the old woman whom you talked to from the window, and then I was convinced that you really loved me.’ Then, turning to the little Princess, she kissed her rosy lips three times, saying:

‘Dear little one, I promise that you shall be richer than your father, and shall live a hundred years, always pretty and happy, without fear of old age and wrinkles.’

The Queen, quite delighted, thanked the Fairy gratefully, and begged her to take charge of the little Delicia and bring her up as her own daughter. This she agreed to do, and then they shut the basket and lowered it carefully, baby and all, to the ground at the foot of the tower. The Fairy then changed herself back into the form of a mouse, and this delayed her a few seconds, after which she ran nimbly down the straw rope, but only to find when she got to the bottom that the baby had disappeared.

In the greatest terror she ran up again to the Queen, crying:

‘All is lost! my enemy Cancaline has stolen the Princess away. You must know that she is a cruel fairy who hates me, and as she is older than I am and has more power, I can do nothing against her. I know no way of rescuing Delicia from her clutches.’

When the Queen heard this terrible news she was heart-broken, and begged the Fairy to do all she could to get the poor little Princess back again. At this moment in came the gaoler, and when he missed the little Princess he at once told the King, who came in a great fury asking what the Queen had done with her. She answered that a fairy, whose name she did not know, had come and carried her off by force. Upon this the King stamped upon the ground, and cried in a terrible voice:

‘You shall be hung! I always told you you should.’ And without another word he dragged the unlucky Queen out into the nearest wood, and climbed up into a tree to look for a branch to which he could hang her. But when he was quite high up, the Fairy, who had made herself invisible and followed them, gave him a sudden push, which made him lose his footing and fall to the ground with a crash and break four of his teeth, and while he was trying to mend them the fairy carried the Queen off in her flying chariot to a beautiful castle, where she was so kind to her that but for the loss of Delicia the Queen would have been perfectly happy. But though the good little mouse did her very utmost, they could not find out where Cancaline had hidden the little Princess.

Thus fifteen years went by, and the Queen had somewhat recovered from her grief, when the news reached her that the son of the wicked King wished to marry the little maiden who kept the turkeys, and that she had refused him; the wedding-dresses had been made, nevertheless, and the festivities were to be so splendid that all the people for leagues round were flocking in to be present at them. The Queen felt quite curious about a

little turkey-maiden who did not wish to be a Queen, so the little mouse conveyed herself to the poultry-yard to find out what she was like.

She found the turkey-maiden sitting upon a big stone, barefooted, and miserably dressed in an old, coarse linen gown and cap; the ground at her feet was all strewn with robes of gold and silver, ribbons and laces, diamonds and pearls, over which the turkeys were stalking to and fro, while the King's ugly, disagreeable son stood opposite her, declaring angrily that if she would not marry him she should be killed.

The Turkey-maiden answered proudly:

'I never will marry you! you are too ugly and too much like your cruel father. Leave me in peace with my turkeys, which I like far better than all your fine gifts.'

The little mouse watched her with the greatest admiration, for she was as beautiful as the spring; and as soon as the wicked Prince was gone, she took the form of an old peasant woman and said to her:

'Good day, my pretty one! you have a fine flock of turkeys there.'

The young Turkey-maiden turned her gentle eyes upon the old woman, and answered:

'Yet they wish me to leave them to become a miserable Queen! what is your advice upon the matter?'

'My child,' said the Fairy, 'a crown is a very pretty thing, but you know neither the price nor the weight of it.'

'I know so well that I have refused to wear one,' said the little maiden, 'though I don't know who was my father, or who was my mother, and I have not a friend in the world.'

'You have goodness and beauty, which are of more value than ten kingdoms,' said the wise Fairy. 'But tell me, child, how came you here, and how is it you have neither father, nor mother, nor friend?'

'A Fairy called Cancaline is the cause of my being here,' answered she, 'for while I lived with her I got nothing but blows and harsh words, until at last I could bear it no longer, and ran away from her without knowing where I was going, and as I came through a wood the wicked Prince met me, and offered to give me charge of the poultry-yard. I accepted gladly, not knowing that I should have to see him day by day. And now he wants to marry me, but that I will never consent to.'

Upon hearing this the Fairy became convinced that the little Turkey-maiden was none other than the Princess Delicia.

‘What is your name, my little one?’ said she.

‘I am called Delicia, if it please you,’ she answered.

Then the Fairy threw her arms round the Princess’s neck, and nearly smothered her with kisses, saying:

‘Ah, Delicia! I am a very old friend of yours, and I am truly glad to find you at last; but you might look nicer than you do in that old gown, which is only fit for a kitchen-maid. Take this pretty dress and let us see the difference it will make.’

So Delicia took off the ugly cap, and shook out all her fair shining hair, and bathed her hands and face in clear water from the nearest spring till her cheeks were like roses, and when she was adorned with the diamonds and the splendid robe the Fairy had given her, she looked the most beautiful Princess in the world, and the Fairy with great delight cried:

‘Now you look as you ought to look, Delicia: what do you think about it yourself?’

And Delicia answered:

‘I feel as if I were the daughter of some great king.’

‘And would you be glad if you were?’ said the Fairy.

‘Indeed I should,’ answered she.

‘Ah, well,’ said the Fairy, ‘to-morrow I may have some pleasant news for you.’

So she hurried back to her castle, where the Queen sat busy with her embroidery, and cried:

‘Well, madam! will you wager your thimble and your golden needle that I am bringing you the best news you could possibly hear?’

‘Alas!’ sighed the Queen, ‘since the death of the Jolly King and the loss of my Delicia, all the news in the world is not worth a pin to me.

‘There, there, don’t be melancholy,’ said the Fairy. ‘I assure you the Princess is quite well, and I have never seen her equal for beauty. She might be a Queen to-morrow if she chose; ‘and then she told all that had happened, and the Queen first rejoiced over the thought of Delicia’s beauty, and then wept at the idea of her being a Turkey-maiden.

‘I will not hear of her being made to marry the wicked King’s son,’ she said. ‘Let us go at once and bring her here.’

In the meantime the wicked Prince, who was very angry with Delicia, had sat himself down under a tree, and cried and howled with rage and spite until the King heard him, and cried out from the window:

‘What is the matter with you, that you are making all this disturbance?’

The Prince replied:

‘It is all because our Turkey-maiden will not love me!’

‘Won’t love you? eh!’ said the King. ‘We’ll very soon see about that!’ So he called his guards and told them to go and fetch Delicia. ‘See if I don’t make her change her mind pretty soon!’ said the wicked King with a chuckle.

Then the guards began to search the poultry-yard, and could find nobody there but Delicia, who, with her splendid dress and her crown of diamonds, looked such a lovely Princess that they hardly dared to speak to her. But she said to them very politely:

‘Pray tell me what you are looking for here?’

‘Madam,’ they answered, ‘we are sent for an insignificant little person called Delicia.’

‘Alas!’ said she, ‘that is my name. What can you want with me?’

So the guards tied her hands and feet with thick ropes, for fear she might run away, and brought her to the King, who was waiting with his son.

When he saw her he was very much astonished at her beauty, which would have made anyone less hard-hearted sorry for her. But the wicked King only laughed and mocked at her, and cried: ‘Well, little fright, little toad! why don’t you love my son, who is far too handsome and too good for you? Make haste and begin to love him this instant, or you shall be tarred and feathered.’

Then the poor little Princess, shaking with terror, went down on her knees, crying:

‘Oh, don’t tar and feather me, please! It would be so uncomfortable. Let me have two or three days to make up my mind, and then you shall do as you like with me.’

The wicked Prince would have liked very much to see her tarred and feathered, but the King ordered that she should be shut up in a dark dungeon. It was just at this moment that the Queen and the Fairy arrived in

the flying chariot, and the Queen was dreadfully distressed at the turn affairs had taken, and said miserably that she was destined to be unfortunate all her days. But the Fairy bade her take courage.

‘I’ll pay them out yet,’ said she, nodding her head with an air of great determination.

That very same night, as soon as the wicked King had gone to bed, the Fairy changed herself into the little mouse, and creeping up on to his pillow nibbled his ear, so that he squealed out quite loudly and turned over on his other side; but that was no good, for the little mouse only set to work and gnawed away at the second ear until it hurt more than the first one.

Then the King cried ‘Murder!’ and ‘Thieves!’ and all his guards ran to see what was the matter, but they could find nothing and nobody, for the little mouse had run off to the Prince’s room and was serving him in exactly the same way. All night long she ran from one to the other, until at last, driven quite frantic by terror and want of sleep, the King rushed out of the palace crying:

‘Help! help! I am pursued by rats.’

The Prince when he heard this got up also, and ran after the King, and they had not gone far when they both fell into the river and were never heard of again.

Then the good Fairy ran to tell the Queen, and they went together to the black dungeon where Delicia was imprisoned. The Fairy touched each door with her wand, and it sprang open instantly, but they had to go through forty before they came to the Princess, who was sitting on the floor looking very dejected. But when the Queen rushed in, and kissed her twenty times in a minute, and laughed, and cried, and told Delicia all her history, the Princess was wild with delight. Then the Fairy showed her all the wonderful dresses and jewels she had brought for her, and said:

‘Don’t let us waste time; we must go and harangue the people.’

So she walked first, looking very serious and dignified, and wearing a dress the train of which was at least ten ells long. Behind her came the Queen wearing a blue velvet robe embroidered with gold, and a diamond crown that was brighter than the sun itself. Last of all walked Delicia, who was so beautiful that it was nothing short of marvellous.

They proceeded through the streets, returning the salutations of all they met, great or small, and all the people turned and followed them, wondering who these noble ladies could be.

When the audience hall was quite full, the Fairy said to the subjects of the Wicked King that if they would accept Delicia, who was the daughter of the Jolly King, as their Queen, she would undertake to find a suitable husband for her, and would promise that during their reign there should be nothing but rejoicing and merry-making, and all dismal things should be entirely banished. Upon this the people cried with one accord, ‘We will, we will! we have been gloomy and miserable too long already.’ And they all took hands and danced round the Queen, and Delicia, and the good Fairy, singing: ‘Yes, yes; we will, we will!’

Then there were feasts and fireworks in every street in the town, and early the next morning the Fairy, who had been all over the world in the night, brought back with her, in her flying chariot, the most handsome and good-tempered Prince she could find anywhere. He was so charming that Delicia loved him from the moment their eyes met, and as for him, of course he could not help thinking himself the luckiest Prince in the world. The Queen felt that she had really come to the end of her misfortunes at last, and they all lived happily ever after.[10]

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10. La bonne vetite Souris’ par Madame d’Aulnoy.

GRACIOSA AND PERCINET

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Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen who had one charming daughter. She was so graceful and pretty and clever that she was called Graciosa, and the Queen was so fond of her that she could think of nothing else.

Everyday she gave the Princess a lovely new frock of gold brocade, or satin, or velvet, and when she was hungry she had bowls full of sugar-plums, and at least twenty pots of jam. Everybody said she was the happiest Princess in the world. Now there lived at this same court a very rich old duchess whose name was Grumbly. She was more frightful than tongue can tell; her hair was red as fire, and she had but one eye, and that not a pretty one! Her face was as broad as a full moon, and her mouth was so large that everybody who met her would have been afraid they were going to be eaten up, only she had no teeth. As she was as cross as she was ugly, she could not bear to hear everyone saying how pretty and how charming Graciosa was; so she presently went away from the court to her own castle, which was not far off. But if anybody who went to see her happened to mention the charming Princess, she would cry angrily:

‘It’s not true that she is lovely. I have more beauty in my little finger than she has in her whole body.’

Soon after this, to the great grief of the Princess, the Queen was taken ill and died, and the King became so melancholy that for a whole year he shut himself up in his palace. At last his physicians, fearing that he would fall ill, ordered that he should go out and amuse himself; so a hunting party was arranged, but as it was very hot weather the King soon got tired, and said he would dismount and rest at a castle which they were passing.

This happened to be the Duchess Grumbly’s castle, and when she heard that the King was coming she went out to meet him, and said that the cellar was the coolest place in the whole castle if he would condescend to come down into it. So down they went together, and the King seeing about

two hundred great casks ranged side by side, asked if it was only for herself that she had this immense store of wine.

‘Yes, sire,’ answered she, ‘it is for myself alone, but I shall be most happy to let you taste some of it. Which do you like, canary, St. Julien, champagne, hermitage sack, raisin, or cider?’

‘Well,’ said the King, ‘since you are so kind as to ask me, I prefer champagne to anything else.’

Then Duchess Grumbly took up a little hammer and tapped upon the cask twice, and out came at least a thousand crowns.

‘What’s the meaning of this?’ said she smiling.

Then she tapped the next cask, and out came a bushel of gold pieces.

‘I don’t understand this at all,’ said the Duchess, smiling more than before.

Then she went on to the third cask, tap, tap, and out came such a stream of diamonds and pearls that the ground was covered with them.

‘Ah!’ she cried, ‘this is altogether beyond my comprehension, sire. Someone must have stolen my good wine and put all this rubbish in its place.’

‘Rubbish, do you call it, Madam Grumbly?’ cried the King. ‘Rubbish! why there is enough there to buy ten kingdoms.’

‘Well,’ said she, ‘you must know that all those casks are full of gold and jewels, and if you like to marry me it shall all be yours.’

Now the King loved money more than anything else in the world, so he cried joyfully:

‘Marry you? why with all my heart! to-morrow if you like.’

‘But I make one condition,’ said the Duchess; ‘I must have entire control of your daughter to do as I please with her.’

‘Oh certainly, you shall have your own way; let us shake hands upon the bargain,’ said the King.

So they shook hands and went up out of the cellar of treasure together, and the Duchess locked the door and gave the key to the King.

When he got back to his own palace Graciosa ran out to meet him, and asked if he had had good sport.

‘I have caught a dove,’ answered he.

‘Oh! do give it to me,’ said the Princess, ‘and I will keep it and take care of it.’

‘I can hardly do that,’ said he, ‘for, to speak more plainly, I mean that I met the Duchess Grumbly, and have promised to marry her.’

‘And you call her a dove?’ cried the Princess. ‘*I* should have called her a screech owl.’

‘Hold your tongue,’ said the King, very crossly. ‘I intend you to behave prettily to her. So now go and make yourself fit to be seen, as I am going to take you to visit her.’

So the Princess went very sorrowfully to her own room, and her nurse, seeing her tears, asked what was vexing her.

‘Alas! who would not be vexed?’ answered she, ‘for the King intends to marry again, and has chosen for his new bride my enemy, the hideous Duchess Grumbly.’

‘Oh, well!’ answered the nurse, ‘you must remember that you are a Princess, and are expected to set a good example in making the best of whatever happens. You must promise me not to let the Duchess see how much you dislike her.’

At first the Princess would not promise, but the nurse showed her so many good reasons for it that in the end she agreed to be amiable to her step-mother.

Then the nurse dressed her in a robe of pale green and gold brocade, and combed out her long fair hair till it floated round her like a golden mantle, and put on her head a crown of roses and jasmine with emerald leaves.

When she was ready nobody could have been prettier, but she still could not help looking sad.

Meanwhile the Duchess Grumbly was also occupied in attiring herself. She had one of her shoe heels made an inch or so higher than the other, that she might not limp so much, and put in a cunningly made glass eye in the place of the one she had lost. She dyed her red hair black, and painted her face. Then she put on a gorgeous robe of lilac satin lined with blue, and a yellow petticoat trimmed with violet ribbons, and because she had heard that queens always rode into their new dominions, she ordered a horse to be made ready for her to ride.

While Graciosa was waiting until the King should be ready to set out, she went down all alone through the garden into a little wood, where she sat down upon a mossy bank and began to think. And her thoughts were so

doleful that very soon she began to cry, and she cried, and cried, and forgot all about going back to the palace, until she suddenly saw a handsome page standing before her. He was dressed in green, and the cap which he held in his hand was adorned with white plumes. When Graciosa looked at him he went down on one knee, and said to her:

‘Princess, the King awaits you.’

The Princess was surprised, and, if the truth must be told, very much delighted at the appearance of this charming page, whom she could not remember to have seen before. Thinking he might belong to the household of the Duchess, she said:

‘How long have you been one of the King’s pages?’

‘I am not in the service of the King, madam,’ answered he, ‘but in yours.’

‘In mine?’ said the Princess with great surprise. ‘Then how is it that I have never seen you before?’

‘Ah, Princess!’ said he, ‘I have never before dared to present myself to you, but now the King’s marriage threatens you with so many dangers that I have resolved to tell you at once how much I love you already, and I trust that in time I may win your regard. I am Prince Percinet, of whose riches you may have heard, and whose fairy gift will, I hope, be of use to you in all your difficulties, if you will permit me to accompany you under this disguise.’

‘Ah, Percinet!’ cried the Princess, ‘is it really you? I have so often heard of you and wished to see you. If you will indeed be my friend, I shall not be afraid of that wicked old Duchess any more.’

So they went back to the palace together, and there Graciosa found a beautiful horse which Percinet had brought for her to ride. As it was very spirited he led it by the bridle, and this arrangement enabled him to turn and look at the Princess often, which he did not fail to do. Indeed, she was so pretty that it was a real pleasure to look at her. When the horse which the Duchess was to ride appeared beside Graciosa’s, it looked no better than an old cart horse, and as to their trappings, there was simply no comparison between them, as the Princess’s saddle and bridle were one glittering mass of diamonds. The King had so many other things to think of that he did not notice this, but all his courtiers were entirely taken up with admiring the Princess and her charming Page in green, who was more

handsome and distinguished-looking than all the rest of the court put together.

When they met the Duchess Grumbly she was seated in an open carriage trying in vain to look dignified. The King and the Princess saluted her, and her horse was brought forward for her to mount. But when she saw Graciosa's she cried angrily:

'If that child is to have a better horse than mine, I will go back to my own castle this very minute. What is the good of being a Queen if one is to be slighted like this?'

Upon this the King commanded Graciosa to dismount and to beg the Duchess to honour her by mounting her horse. The Princess obeyed in silence, and the Duchess, without looking at her or thanking her, scrambled up upon the beautiful horse, where she sat looking like a bundle of clothes, and eight officers had to hold her up for fear she should fall off.

Even then she was not satisfied, and was still grumbling and muttering, so they asked her what was the matter.

'I wish that Page in green to come and lead the horse, as he did when Graciosa rode it,' said she very sharply.

And the King ordered the Page to come and lead the Queen's horse. Percinet and the Princess looked at one another, but said never a word, and then he did as the King commanded, and the procession started in great pomp. The Duchess was greatly elated, and as she sat there in state would not have wished to change places even with Graciosa. But at the moment when it was least expected the beautiful horse began to plunge and rear and kick, and finally to run away at such a pace that it was impossible to stop him.

At first the Duchess clung to the saddle, but she was very soon thrown off and fell in a heap among the stones and thorns, and there they found her, shaken to a jelly, and collected what was left of her as if she had been a broken glass. Her bonnet was here and her shoes there, her face was scratched, and her fine clothes were covered with mud. Never was a bride seen in such a dismal plight. They carried her back to the palace and put her to bed, but as soon as she recovered enough to be able to speak, she began to scold and rage, and declared that the whole affair was Graciosa's fault, that she had contrived it on purpose to try and get rid of her, and that

if the King would not have her punished, she would go back to her castle and enjoy her riches by herself.

At this the King was terribly frightened, for he did not at all want to lose all those barrels of gold and jewels. So he hastened to appease the Duchess, and told her she might punish Graciosa in any way she pleased.

Thereupon she sent for Graciosa, who turned pale and trembled at the summons, for she guessed that it promised nothing agreeable for her. She looked all about for Percinet, but he was nowhere to be seen; so she had no choice but to go to the Duchess Grumbly's room. She had hardly got inside the door when she was seized by four waiting women, who looked so tall and strong and cruel that the Princess shuddered at the sight of them, and still more when she saw them arming themselves with great bundles of rods, and heard the Duchess call out to them from her bed to beat the Princess without mercy. Poor Graciosa wished miserably that Percinet could only know what was happening and come to rescue her. But no sooner did they begin to beat her than she found, to her great relief, that the rods had changed to bundles of peacock's feathers, and though the Duchess's women went on till they were so tired that they could no longer raise their arms from their sides, yet she was not hurt in the least. However, the Duchess thought she must be black and blue after such a beating; so Graciosa, when she was released, pretended to feel very bad, and went away into her own room, where she told her nurse all that had happened, and then the nurse left her, and when the Princess turned round there stood Percinet beside her. She thanked him gratefully for helping her so cleverly, and they laughed and were very merry over the way they had taken in the Duchess and her waiting-maids; but Percinet advised her still to pretend to be ill for a few days, and after promising to come to her aid whenever she needed him, he disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

The Duchess was so delighted at the idea that Graciosa was really ill, that she herself recovered twice as fast as she would have done otherwise, and the wedding was held with great magnificence. Now as the King knew that, above all other things, the Queen loved to be told that she was beautiful, he ordered that her portrait should be painted, and that a tournament should be held, at which all the bravest knights of his court should maintain against all comers that Grumbly was the most beautiful princess in the world.

Numbers of knights came from far and wide to accept the challenge, and the hideous Queen sat in great state in a balcony hung with cloth of gold to watch the contests, and Graciosa had to stand up behind her, where her loveliness was so conspicuous that the combatants could not keep their eyes off her. But the Queen was so vain that she thought all their admiring glances were for herself, especially as, in spite of the badness of their cause, the King's knights were so brave that they were the victors in every combat.

However, when nearly all the strangers had been defeated, a young unknown knight presented himself. He carried a portrait, enclosed in a bow encrusted with diamonds, and he declared himself willing to maintain against them all that the Queen was the ugliest creature in the world, and that the Princess whose portrait he carried was the most beautiful.

So one by one the knights came out against him, and one by one he vanquished them all, and then he opened the box, and said that, to console them, he would show them the portrait of his Queen of Beauty, and when he did so everyone recognised the Princess Graciosa. The unknown knight then saluted her gracefully and retired, without telling his name to anybody. But Graciosa had no difficulty in guessing that it was Percinet.

As to the Queen, she was so furiously angry that she could hardly speak; but she soon recovered her voice, and overwhelmed Graciosa with a torrent of reproaches.

'What!' she said, 'do you dare to dispute with me for the prize of beauty, and expect me to endure this insult to my knights? But I will not bear it, proud Princess. I will have my revenge.'

'I assure you, Madam,' said the Princess, 'that I had nothing to do with it and am quite willing that you shall be declared Queen of Beauty

'Ah! you are pleased to jest, popinjay!' said the Queen, 'but it will be my turn soon!'

The King was speedily told what had happened, and how the Princess was in terror of the angry Queen, but he only said: 'The Queen must do as she pleases. Graciosa belongs to her!'

The wicked Queen waited impatiently until night fell, and then she ordered her carriage to be brought. Graciosa, much against her will, was forced into it, and away they drove, and never stopped until they reached a great forest, a hundred leagues from the palace. This forest was so gloomy,

and so full of lions, tigers, bears and wolves, that nobody dared pass through it even by daylight, and here they set down the unhappy Princess in the middle of the black night, and left her in spite of all her tears and entreaties. The Princess stood quite still at first from sheer bewilderment, but when the last sound of the retreating carriages died away in the distance she began to run aimlessly hither and thither, sometimes knocking herself against a tree, sometimes tripping over a stone, fearing every minute that she would be eaten up by the lions. Presently she was too tired to advance another step, so she threw herself down upon the ground and cried miserably:

'Oh, Percinet! where are you? Have you forgotten me altogether?'

She had hardly spoken when all the forest was lighted up with a sudden glow. Every tree seemed to be sending out a soft radiance, which was clearer than moonlight and softer than daylight, and at the end of a long avenue of trees opposite to her the Princess saw a palace of clear crystal which blazed like the sun. At that moment a slight sound behind her made her start round, and there stood Percinet himself.

'Did I frighten you, my Princess?' said he. 'I come to bid you welcome to our fairy palace, in the name of the Queen, my mother, who is prepared to love you as much as I do.' The Princess joyfully mounted with him into a little sledge, drawn by two stags, which bounded off and drew them swiftly to the wonderful palace, where the Queen received her with the greatest kindness, and a splendid banquet was served at once. Graciosa was so happy to have found Percinet, and to have escaped from the gloomy forest and all its terrors, that she was very hungry and very merry, and they were a gay party. After supper they went into another lovely room, where the crystal walls were covered with pictures, and the Princess saw with great surprise that her own history was represented, even down to the moment when Percinet found her in the forest.

'Your painters must indeed be diligent,' she said, pointing out the last picture to the Prince.

'They are obliged to be, for I will not have anything forgotten that happens to you,' he answered.

When the Princess grew sleepy, twenty-four charming maidens put her to bed in the prettiest room she had ever seen, and then sang to her so sweetly that Graciosa's dreams were all of mermaids, and cool sea waves,

and caverns, in which she wandered with Percinet; but when she woke up again her first thought was that, delightful as this fairy palace seemed to her, yet she could not stay in it, but must go back to her father. When she had been dressed by the four-and-twenty maidens in a charming robe which the Queen had sent for her, and in which she looked prettier than ever, Prince Percinet came to see her, and was bitterly disappointed when she told him what she had been thinking. He begged her to consider again how unhappy the wicked Queen would make her, and how, if she would but marry him, all the fairy palace would be hers, and his one thought would be to please her. But, in spite of everything he could say, the Princess was quite determined to go back, though he at last persuaded her to stay eight days, which were so full of pleasure and amusement that they passed like a few hours. On the last day, Graciosa, who had often felt anxious to know what was going on in her father's palace, said to Percinet that she was sure that he could find out for her, if he would, what reason the Queen had given her father for her sudden disappearance. Percinet at first offered to send his courier to find out, but the Princess said:

'Oh! isn't there a quicker way of knowing than that?'

'Very well,' said Percinet, 'you shall see for yourself.'

So up they went together to the top of a very high tower, which, like the rest of the castle, was built entirely of rock-crystal.

There the Prince held Graciosa's hand in his, and made her put the tip of her little finger into her mouth, and look towards the town, and immediately she saw the wicked Queen go to the King, and heard her say to him, 'That miserable Princess is dead, and no great loss either. I have ordered that she shall be buried at once.'

And then the Princess saw how she dressed up a log of wood and had it buried, and how the old King cried, and all the people murmured that the Queen had killed Graciosa with her cruelties, and that she ought to have her head cut off. When the Princess saw that the King was so sorry for her pretended death that he could neither eat nor drink, she cried:

'Ah, Percinet! take me back quickly if you love me.'

And so, though he did not want to at all, he was obliged to promise that he would let her go.

'You may not regret me, Princess,' he said sadly, 'for I fear that you do not love me well enough; but I foresee that you will more than once regret

that you left this fairy palace where we have been so happy.'

But, in spite of all he could say, she bade farewell to the Queen, his mother, and prepared to set out; so Percinet, very unwillingly, brought the little sledge with the stags and she mounted beside him. But they had hardly gone twenty yards when a tremendous noise behind her made Graciosa look back, and she saw the palace of crystal fly into a million splinters, like the spray of a fountain, and vanish.

'Oh, Percinet!' she cried, 'what has happened? The palace is gone.'

'Yes,' he answered, 'my palace is a thing of the past; you will see it again, but not until after you have been buried.'

'Now you are angry with me,' said Graciosa in her most coaxing voice, 'though after all I am more to be pitied than you are.'

When they got near the palace the Prince made the sledge and themselves invisible, so the Princess got in unobserved, and ran up to the great hall where the King was sitting all by himself. At first he was very much startled by Graciosa's sudden appearance, but she told him how the Queen had left her out in the forest, and how she had caused a log of wood to be buried. The King, who did not know what to think, sent quickly and had it dug up, and sure enough it was as the Princess had said. Then he caressed Graciosa, and made her sit down to supper with him, and they were as happy as possible. But someone had by this time told the wicked Queen that Graciosa had come back, and was at supper with the King, and in she flew in a terrible fury. The poor old King quite trembled before her, and when she declared that Graciosa was not the Princess at all, but a wicked impostor, and that if the King did not give her up at once she would go back to her own castle and never see him again, he had not a word to say, and really seemed to believe that it was not Graciosa after all. So the Queen in great triumph sent for her waiting women, who dragged the unhappy Princess away and shut her up in a garret; they took away all her jewels and her pretty dress, and gave her a rough cotton frock, wooden shoes, and a little cloth cap. There was some straw in a corner, which was all she had for a bed, and they gave her a very little bit of black bread to eat. In this miserable plight Graciosa did indeed regret the fairy palace, and she would have called Percinet to her aid, only she felt sure he was still vexed with her for leaving him, and thought that she could not expect him to come.

Meanwhile the Queen had sent for an old Fairy, as malicious as herself, and said to her:

‘You must find me some task for this fine Princess which she cannot possibly do, for I mean to punish her, and if she does not do what I order, she will not be able to say that I am unjust.’ So the old Fairy said she would think it over, and come again the next day. When she returned she brought with her a skein of thread, three times as big as herself; it was so fine that a breath of air would break it, and so tangled that it was impossible to see the beginning or the end of it.

The Queen sent for Graciosa, and said to her:

‘Do you see this skein? Set your clumsy fingers to work upon it, for I must have it disentangled by sunset, and if you break a single thread it will be the worse for you.’ So saying she left her, locking the door behind her with three keys.

The Princess stood dismayed at the sight of the terrible skein. If she did but turn it over to see where to begin, she broke a thousand threads, and not one could she disentangle. At last she threw it into the middle of the floor, crying:

‘Oh, Percinet! this fatal skein will be the death of me if you will not forgive me and help me once more.’

And immediately in came Percinet as easily as if he had all the keys in his own possession.

‘Here I am, Princess, as much as ever at your service,’ said he, ‘though really you are not very kind to me.’

Then he just stroked the skein with his wand, and all the broken threads joined themselves together, and the whole skein wound itself smoothly off in the most surprising manner, and the Prince, turning to Graciosa, asked if there was nothing else that she wished him to do for her, and if the time would never come when she would wish for him for his own sake.

‘Don’t be vexed with me, Percinet,’ she said. ‘I am unhappy enough without that.’

‘But why should you be unhappy, my Princess?’ cried he. ‘Only come with me and we shall be as happy as the day is long together.’

‘But suppose you get tired of me?’ said Graciosa.

The Prince was so grieved at this want of confidence that he left her without another word.

The wicked Queen was in such a hurry to punish Graciosa that she thought the sun would never set; and indeed it was before the appointed time that she came with her four Fairies, and as she fitted the three keys into the locks she said:

‘I’ll venture to say that the idle minx has not done anything at all—she prefers to sit with her hands before her to keep them white.’

But, as soon as she entered, Graciosa presented her with the ball of thread in perfect order, so that she had no fault to find, and could only pretend to discover that it was soiled, for which imaginary fault she gave Graciosa a blow on each cheek, that made her white and pink skin turn green and yellow. And then she sent her back to be locked into the garret once more.

Then the Queen sent for the Fairy again and scolded her furiously. ‘Don’t make such a mistake again; find me something that it will be quite impossible for her to do,’ she said.

So the next day the Fairy appeared with a huge barrel full of the feathers of all sorts of birds. There were nightingales, canaries, goldfinches, linnets, tomtits, parrots, owls, sparrows, doves, ostriches, bustards, peacocks, larks, partridges, and everything else that you can think of. These feathers were all mixed up in such confusion that the birds themselves could not have chosen out their own. ‘Here,’ said the Fairy, ‘is a little task which it will take all your prisoner’s skill and patience to accomplish. Tell her to pick out and lay in a separate heap the feathers of each bird. She would need to be a fairy to do it.’

The Queen was more than delighted at the thought of the despair this task would cause the Princess. She sent for her, and with the same threats as before locked her up with the three keys, ordering that all the feathers should be sorted by sunset. Graciosa set to work at once, but before she had taken out a dozen feathers she found that it was perfectly impossible to know one from another.

‘Ah! well,’ she sighed, ‘the Queen wishes to kill me, and if I must die I must. I cannot ask Percinet to help me again, for if he really loved me he would not wait till I called him, he would come without that.’

‘I am here, my Graciosa,’ cried Percinet, springing out of the barrel where he had been hiding. ‘How can you still doubt that I love you with all my heart?’

Then he gave three strokes of his wand upon the barrel, and all the feathers flew out in a cloud and settled down in neat little separate heaps all round the room.

‘What should I do without you, Percinet?’ said Graciosa gratefully. But still she could not quite make up her mind to go with him and leave her father’s kingdom for ever; so she begged him to give her more time to think of it, and he had to go away disappointed once more.

When the wicked Queen came at sunset she was amazed and infuriated to find the task done. However, she complained that the heaps of feathers were badly arranged, and for that the Princess was beaten and sent back to her garret. Then the Queen sent for the Fairy once more, and scolded her until she was fairly terrified, and promised to go home and think of another task for Graciosa, worse than either of the others.

At the end of three days she came again, bringing with her a box.

‘Tell your slave,’ said he, ‘to carry this wherever you please, but on no account to open it. She will not be able to help doing so, and then you will be quite satisfied with the result.’ So the Queen came to Graciosa, and said:

‘Carry this box to my castle, and place it upon the table in my own room. But I forbid you on pain of death to look at what it contains.’

Graciosa set out, wearing her little cap and wooden shoes and the old cotton frock, but even in this disguise she was so beautiful that all the passers-by wondered who she could be. She had not gone far before the heat of the sun and the weight of the box tired her so much that she sat down to rest in the shade of a little wood which lay on one side of a green meadow. She was carefully holding the box upon her lap when she suddenly felt the greatest desire to open it.

‘What could possibly happen if I did?’ she said to herself. ‘I should not take anything out. I should only just see what was there.’

And without farther hesitation she lifted the cover.

Instantly out came swarms of little men and women, no taller than her finger, and scattered themselves all over the meadow, singing and dancing, and playing the merriest games, so that at first Graciosa was delighted and

watched them with much amusement. But presently, when she was rested and wished to go on her way, she found that, do what she would, she could not get them back into their box. If she chased them in the meadow they fled into the wood, and if she pursued them into the wood they dodged round trees and behind sprigs of moss, and with peals of elfin laughter scampered back again into the meadow.

At last, weary and terrified, she sat down and cried.

‘It is my own fault,’ she said sadly. ‘Percinet, if you can still care for such an imprudent Princess, do come and help me once more.’

Immediately Percinet stood before her.

‘Ah, Princess!’ he said, ‘but for the wicked Queen I fear you would never think of me at all.’

‘Indeed I should,’ said Graciosa; ‘I am not so ungrateful as you think. Only wait a little and I believe I shall love you quite dearly.’

Percinet was pleased at this, and with one stroke of his wand compelled all the wilful little people to come back to their places in the box, and then rendering the Princess invisible he took her with him in his chariot to the castle.

When the Princess presented herself at the door, and said that the Queen had ordered her to place the box in her own room, the governor laughed heartily at the idea.

‘No, no, my little shepherdess,’ said he, ‘that is not the place for you. No wooden shoes have ever been over that floor yet.’

Then Graciosa begged him to give her a written message telling the Queen that he had refused to admit her. This he did, and she went back to Percinet, who was waiting for her, and they set out together for the palace. You may imagine that they did not go the shortest way, but the Princess did not find it too long, and before they parted she had promised that if the Queen was still cruel to her, and tried again to play her any spiteful trick, she would leave her and come to Percinet for ever.

When the Queen saw her returning she fell upon the Fairy, whom she had kept with her, and pulled her hair, and scratched her face, and would really have killed her if a Fairy could be killed. And when the Princess presented the letter and the box she threw them both upon the fire without opening them, and looked very much as if she would like to throw the Princess after them. However, what she really did do was to have a great

hole as deep as a well dug in her garden, and the top of it covered with a flat stone. Then she went and walked near it, and said to Graciosa and all her ladies who were with her:

‘I am told that a great treasure lies under that stone; let us see if we can lift it.’

So they all began to push and pull at it, and Graciosa among the others, which was just what the Queen wanted; for as soon as the stone was lifted high enough, she gave the Princess a push which sent her down to the bottom of the well, and then the stone was let fall again, and there she was a prisoner. Graciosa felt that now indeed she was hopelessly lost, surely not even Percinet could find her in the heart of the earth.

‘This is like being buried alive,’ she said with a shudder. ‘Oh, Percinet! if you only knew how I am suffering for my want of trust in you! But how could I be sure that you would not be like other men and tire of me from the moment you were sure I loved you?’

As she spoke she suddenly saw a little door open, and the sunshine blazed into the dismal well. Graciosa did not hesitate an instant, but passed through into a charming garden. Flowers and fruit grew on every side, fountains plashed, and birds sang in the branches overhead, and when she reached a great avenue of trees and looked up to see where it would lead her, she found herself close to the palace of crystal. Yes! there was no mistaking it, and the Queen and Percinet were coming to meet her.

‘Ah, Princess!’ said the Queen, ‘don’t keep this poor Percinet in suspense any longer. You little guess the anxiety he has suffered while you were in the power of that miserable Queen.’

The Princess kissed her gratefully, and promised to do as she wished in everything, and holding out her hand to Percinet, with a smile, she said:

‘Do you remember telling me that I should not see your palace again until I had been buried? I wonder if you guessed then that, when that happened, I should tell you that I love you with all my heart, and will marry you whenever you like?’

Prince Percinet joyfully took the hand that was given him, and, for fear the Princess should change her mind, the wedding was held at once with the greatest splendour, and Graciosa and Percinet lived happily ever after.[11]

11. Gracieuse et Percinet. Mdme. d’Aulnoy.

THE THREE PRINCESSES OF WHITELAND

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There was once upon a time a fisherman, who lived hard by a palace and fished for the King's table. One day he was out fishing, but caught nothing at all. Let him do what he might with rod and line, there was never even so much as a sprat on his hook; but when the day was well nigh over, a head rose up out of the water, and said: 'If you will give me what your wife shows you when you go home, you shall catch fish enough.'

So the man said 'Yes' in a moment, and then he caught fish in plenty; but when he got home at night, and his wife showed him a baby which had just been born, and fell a-weeping and wailing when he told her of the promise which he had given, he was very unhappy.

All this was soon told to the King up at the palace, and when he heard what sorrow the woman was in, and the reason of it, he said that he himself would take the child and see if he could not save it. The baby was a boy, and the King took him at once and brought him up as his own son until the lad grew up. Then one day he begged to have leave to go out with his father to fish; he had a strong desire to do this, he said. The King was very unwilling to permit it, but at last the lad got leave. He stayed with his father, and all went prosperously and well with them the whole day, until they came back to land in the evening. Then the lad found that he had lost his pocket-handkerchief, and would go out in the boat after it; but no sooner had he got into the boat than it began to move off with him so quickly that the water foamed all round about, and all that the lad did to keep the boat back with the oars was done to no purpose, for it went on and on the whole night through, and at last he came to a white strand that lay far, far away. There he landed, and when he had walked on for some distance he met an old man with a long white beard.

'What is the name of this country?' said the youth.

'Whiteland,' answered the man, and then he begged the youth to tell him whence he came and what he was going to do, and the youth did so.

‘Well, then,’ said the man, ‘if you walk on farther along the seashore here, you will come to three princesses who are standing in the earth so that their heads alone are out of it. Then the first of them will call you—she is the eldest—and will beg you very prettily to come to her and help her, and the second will do the same, but you must not go near either of them. Hurry past, as if you neither saw nor heard them; but you shall go to the third and do what she bids you; it will bring you good fortune.’

When the youth came to the first princess, she called to him and begged him to come to her very prettily, but he walked on as if he did not even see her, and he passed by the second in the same way, but he went up to the third.

‘If thou wilt do what I tell thee, thou shalt choose among us three,’ said the Princess.

So the lad said that he was most willing, and she told him that three Trolls had planted them all three there in the earth, but that formerly they had dwelt in the castle which he could see at some distance in the wood.

‘Now,’ she said, ‘thou shalt go into the castle, and let the Trolls beat thee one night for each of us, and if thou canst but endure that, thou wilt set us free.’

‘Yes,’ answered the lad, ‘I will certainly try to do so.’

‘When thou goest in,’ continued the Princess, ‘two lions will stand by the doorway, but if thou only goest straight between them they will do thee no harm; go straight forward into a small dark chamber; there thou shalt lie down. Then the Troll will come and beat thee, but thou shalt take the flask which is hanging on the wall, and anoint thyself wheresoever he has wounded thee, after which thou shalt be as well as before. Then lay hold of the sword which is hanging by the side of the flask, and smite the Troll dead.’

So he did what the Princess had told him. He walked straight in between the lions just as if he did not see them, and then into the small chamber, and lay down on the bed.

The first night a Troll came with three heads and three rods, and beat the lad most unmercifully; but he held out until the Troll was done with him, and then he took the flask and rubbed himself. Having done this, he grasped the sword and smote the Troll dead.

In the morning when he went to the sea-shore the Princesses were out of the earth as far as their waists.

The next night everything happened in the same way, but the Troll who came then had six heads and six rods, and he beat him much more severely than the first had done but when the lad went out of doors next morning, the Princesses were out of the earth as far as their knees.

On the third night a Troll came who had nine heads and nine rods, and he struck the lad and flogged him so long, that at last he swooned away; so the Troll took him up and flung him against the wall, and this made the flask of ointment fall down, and it splashed all over him, and he became as strong as ever again.

Then, without loss of time, he grasped the sword and struck the Troll dead, and in the morning when he went out of the castle the Princesses were standing there entirely out of the earth. So he took the youngest for his Queen, and lived with her very happily for a long time.

At last, however, he took a fancy to go home for a short time to see his parents. His Queen did not like this, but when his longing grew so great that he told her he must and would go, she said to him:

‘One thing shalt thou promise me, and that is, to do what thy father bids thee, but not what thy mother bids thee,’ and this he promised.

So she gave him a ring, which enabled him who wore it to obtain two wishes.

He wished himself at home, and instantly found himself there; but his parents were so amazed at the splendour of his apparel that their wonder never ceased.

When he had been at home for some days his mother wanted him to go up to the palace, to show the King what a great man he had become.

The father said, ‘No; he must not do that, for if he does we shall have no more delight in him this time; ‘but he spoke in vain, for the mother begged and prayed until at last he went.

When he arrived there he was more splendid, both in raiment and in all else, than the other King, who did not like it, and said:

‘Well, you can see what kind of Queen mine is, but I can’t see yours. I do not believe you have such a pretty Queen as I have.’

‘Would to heaven she were standing here, and then you would be able to see!’ said the young King, and in an instant she was standing there.

But she was very sorrowful, and said to him, ‘Why didst thou not remember my words, and listen only to what thy father said? Now must I go home again at once, and thou hast wasted both thy wishes.’

Then she tied a ring in his hair, which had her name upon it, and wished herself at home again.

And now the young King was deeply afflicted, and day out and day in went about thinking of naught else but how to get back again to his Queen. ‘I will try to see if there is any place where I can learn how to find Whiteland,’ he thought, and journeyed forth out into the world.

When he had gone some distance he came to a mountain, where he met a man who was Lord over all the beasts in the forest—for they all came to him when he blew a horn which he had. So the King asked where Whiteland was.

‘I do not know that,’ he answered, ‘but I will ask my beasts.’ Then he blew his horn and inquired whether any of them knew where Whiteland lay, but there was not one who knew that.

So the man gave him a pair of snow shoes. ‘When you have these on,’ he said, ‘you will come to my brother, who lives hundreds of miles from here; he is Lord over all the birds in the air—ask him. When you have got there, just turn the shoes so that the toes point this way, and then they will come home again of their own accord.’

When the King arrived there he turned the shoes as the Lord of the beasts had bidden him, and they went back.

And now he once more asked after Whiteland, and the man summoned all the birds together, and inquired if any of them knew where Whiteland lay. No, none knew this. Long after the others there came an old eagle. He had been absent ten whole years, but he too knew no more than the rest.

‘Well, well,’ said the man, ‘then you shall have the loan of a pair of snow shoes of mine. If you wear them you will get to my brother, who lives hundreds of miles from here. He is Lord of all the fish in the sea—you can ask him. But do not forget to turn the shoes round.’

The King thanked him, put on the shoes, and when he had got to him who was Lord of all the fish in the sea, he turned the snow shoes round, and back they went just as the others had gone, and he asked once more where Whiteland was.

The man called the fish together with his horn, but none of them knew anything about it. At last came an old, old pike, which he had great difficulty in bringing home to him.

When he asked the pike, it said, ‘Yes, Whiteland is well known to me, for I have been cook there these ten years. To-morrow morning I have to go back there, for now the Queen, whose King is staying away, is to marry some one else.’

‘If that be the case I will give you a piece of advice,’ said the man. ‘Not far from here on a moor stand three brothers, who have stood there a hundred years fighting for a hat, a cloak, and a pair of boots; if any one has these three things he can make himself invisible, and if he desires to go to any place, he has but to wish and he is there. You may tell them that you have a desire to try these things, and then you will be able to decide which of the men is to have them.’

So the King thanked him and went, and did what he had said.

‘What is this that you are standing fighting about for ever and ever?’ said he to the brothers; ‘let me make a trial of these things, and then I will judge between you.’

They willingly consented to this, but when he had got the hat, the cloak, and the boots, he said, ‘Next time we meet you shall have my decision,’ and hereupon he wished himself away.

While he was going quickly through the air he fell in with the North Wind.

‘And where may you be going?’ said the North Wind.

‘To Whiteland,’ said the King, and then he related what had happened to him.

‘Well,’ said the North Wind, ‘you can easily go a little quicker than I can, for I have to puff and blow into every corner; but when you get there, place yourself on the stairs by the side of the door, and then I will come blustering in as if I wanted to blow down the whole castle, and when the Prince who is to have your Queen comes out to see what is astir, just take him by the throat and fling him out, and then I will try to carry him away from court.’

As the North Wind had said, so did the King. He stood on the stairs, and when the North Wind came howling and roaring, and caught the roof and walls of the castle till they shook again, the Prince went out to see

what was the matter; but as soon as he came the King took him by the neck and flung him out, and then the North Wind laid hold of him and carried him off. And when he was rid of him the King went into the castle. At first the Queen did not know him, because he had grown so thin and pale from having travelled so long and so sorrowfully; but when she saw her ring she was heartily glad, and then the rightful wedding was held, and held in such a way that it was talked about far and wide.[12]

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12. From J. Moe.

THE VOICE OF DEATH

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Once upon a time there lived a man whose one wish and prayer was to get rich. Day and night he thought of nothing else, and at last his prayers were granted, and he became very wealthy. Now being so rich, and having so much to lose, he felt that it would be a terrible thing to die and leave all his possessions behind; so he made up his mind to set out in search of a land where there was no death. He got ready for his journey, took leave of his wife, and started. Whenever he came to a new country the first question that he asked was whether people died in that land, and when he heard that they did, he set out again on his quest. At last he reached a country where he was told that the people did not even know the meaning of the word death. Our traveller was delighted when he heard this, and said:

‘But surely there are great numbers of people in your land, if no one ever dies?’

‘No,’ they replied, ‘there are not great numbers, for you see from time to time a voice is heard calling first one and then another, and whoever hears that voice gets up and goes away, and never comes back.’

‘And do they see the person who calls them,’ he asked, ‘or do they only hear his voice?’

‘They both see and hear him,’ was the answer.

Well, the man was amazed when he heard that the people were stupid enough to follow the voice, though they knew that if they went when it called them they would never return. And he went back to his own home and got all his possessions together, and, taking his wife and family, he set out resolved to go and live in that country where the people did not die, but where instead they heard a voice calling them, which they followed into a land from which they never returned. For he had made up his own mind that when he or any of his family heard that voice they would pay no heed to it, however loudly it called.

After he had settled down in his new home, and had got everything in order about him, he warned his wife and family that, unless they wanted to die, they must on no account listen to a voice which they might some day hear calling them.

For some years everything went well with them, and they lived happily in their new home. But one day, while they were all sitting together round the table, his wife suddenly started up, exclaiming in a loud voice:

‘I am coming! I am coming!’

And she began to look round the room for her fur coat, but her husband jumped up, and taking firm hold of her by the hand, held her fast, and reproached her, saying:

‘Don’t you remember what I told you? Stay where you are unless you wish to die.’

‘But don’t you hear that voice calling me?’ she answered. ‘I am merely going to see why I am wanted. I shall come back directly.’

So she fought and struggled to get away from her husband, and to go where the voice summoned. But he would not let her go, and had all the doors of the house shut and bolted. When she saw that he had done this, she said:

‘Very well, dear husband, I shall do what you wish, and remain where I am.’

So her husband believed that it was all right, and that she had thought better of it, and had got over her mad impulse to obey the voice. But a few minutes later she made a sudden dash for one of the doors, opened it and darted out, followed by her husband. He caught her by the fur coat, and begged and implored her not to go, for if she did she would certainly never return. She said nothing, but let her arms fall backwards, and suddenly bending herself forward, she slipped out of the coat, leaving it in her husband’s hands. He, poor man, seemed turned to stone as he gazed after her hurrying away from him, and calling at the top of her voice, as she ran:

‘I am coming! I am coming!’

When she was quite out of sight her husband recovered his wits and went back into his house, murmuring:

‘If she is so foolish as to wish to die, I can’t help it. I warned and implored her to pay no heed to that voice, however loudly it might call.’

Well, days and weeks and months and years passed, and nothing happened to disturb the peace of the household. But one day the man was at the barber's as usual, being shaved. The shop was full of people, and his chin had just been covered with a lather of soap, when, suddenly starting up from the chair, he called out in a loud voice:

'I won't come, do you hear? I won't come!'

The barber and the other people in the shop listened to him with amazement. But again looking towards the door, he exclaimed:

'I tell you, once and for all, I do not mean to come, so go away.'

And a few minutes later he called out again:

'Go away, I tell you, or it will be the worse for you. You may call as much as you like but you will never get me to come.'

And he got so angry that you might have thought that some one was actually standing at the door, tormenting him. At last he jumped up, and caught the razor out of the barber's hand, exclaiming:

'Give me that razor, and I'll teach him to let people alone for the future.'

And he rushed out of the house as if he were running after some one, whom no one else saw. The barber, determined not to lose his razor, pursued the man, and they both continued running at full speed till they had got well out of the town, when all of a sudden the man fell head foremost down a precipice, and never was seen again. So he too, like the others, had been forced against his will to follow the voice that called him.

The barber, who went home whistling and congratulating himself on the escape he had made, described what had happened, and it was noised abroad in the country that the people who had gone away, and had never returned, had all fallen into that pit; for till then they had never known what had happened to those who had heard the voice and obeyed its call.

But when crowds of people went out from the town to examine the ill-fated pit that had swallowed up such numbers, and yet never seemed to be full, they could discover nothing. All that they could see was a vast plain, that looked as if it had been there since the beginning of the world. And from that time the people of the country began to die like ordinary mortals all the world over.[13]

13. Roumanian Tales from the German of Mite Thremnitz.

THE SIX SILLIES

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Once upon a time there was a young girl who reached the age of thirty-seven without ever having had a lover, for she was so foolish that no one wanted to marry her.

One day, however, a young man arrived to pay his addresses to her, and her mother, beaming with joy, sent her daughter down to the cellar to draw a jug of beer.

As the girl never came back the mother went down to see what had become of her, and found her sitting on the stairs, her head in her hands, while by her side the beer was running all over the floor, as she had forgotten to close the tap. ‘What are you doing there?’ asked the mother.

‘I was thinking what I shall call my first child after I am married to that young man. All the names in the calendar are taken already.’

The mother sat down on the staircase beside her daughter and said, ‘I will think about it with you, my dear.’

The father who had stayed upstairs with the young man was surprised that neither his wife nor his daughter came back, and in his turn went down to look for them. He found them both sitting on the stairs, while beside them the beer was running all over the ground from the tap, which was wide open.

‘What are you doing there? The beer is running all over the cellar.’

‘We were thinking what we should call the children that our daughter will have when she marries that young man. All the names in the calendar are taken already.’

‘Well,’ said the father, ‘I will think about it with you.’

As neither mother nor daughter nor father came upstairs again, the lover grew impatient, and went down into the cellar to see what they could all be doing. He found them all three sitting on the stairs, while beside them the beer was running all over the ground from the tap, which was wide open.

‘What in the world are you all doing that you don’t come upstairs, and that you let the beer run all over the cellar?’

‘Yes, I know, my boy,’ said the father, ‘but if you marry our daughter what shall you call your children? All the names in the calendar are taken.’

When the young man heard this answer he replied:

‘Well! good-bye, I am going away. When I shall have found three people sillier than you I will come back and marry your daughter.’

So he continued his journey, and after walking a long way he reached an orchard. Then he saw some people knocking down walnuts, and trying to throw them into a cart with a fork.

‘What are you doing there?’ he asked.

‘We want to load the cart with our walnuts, but we can’t manage to do it.’

The lover advised them to get a basket and to put the walnuts in it, so as to turn them into the cart.

‘Well,’ he said to himself, ‘I have already found someone more foolish than those three.’

So he went on his way, and by-and-by he came to a wood. There he saw a man who wanted to give his pig some acorns to eat, and was trying with all his might to make him climb up the oak-tree.

‘What are you doing, my good man?’ asked he.

‘I want to make my pig eat some acorns, and I can’t get him to go up the tree.’

‘If you were to climb up and shake down the acorns the pig would pick them up.’

‘Oh, I never thought of that.’

‘Here is the second idiot,’ said the lover to himself.

Some way farther along the road he came upon a man who had never worn any trousers, and who was trying to put on a pair. So he had fastened them to a tree and was jumping with all his might up in the air so that he should hit the two legs of the trousers as he came down.

‘It would be much better if you held them in your hands,’ said the young man, ‘and then put your legs one after the other in each hole.’

‘Dear me to be sure! You are sharper than I am, for that never occurred to me.’

And having found three people more foolish than his bride, or her father or her mother, the lover went back to marry the young lady.

And in course of time they had a great many children.

Story from Hainaut.

(M. Lemoine. La Tradition. No, 34,)

KARI WOODENGOWN

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There was once upon a time a King who had become a widower. His Queen had left one daughter behind her, and she was so wise and so pretty that it was impossible for any one to be wiser or prettier. For a long time the King went sorrowing for his wife, for he had loved her exceedingly; but at last he grew tired of living alone, and married a Queen who was a widow, and she also had a daughter, who was just as ill-favoured and wicked as the other was good and beautiful. The stepmother and her daughter were envious of the King's daughter because she was so pretty, but so long as the King was at home they dared do her no harm, because his love for her was so great.

Then there came a time when he made war on another King and went away to fight, and then the new Queen thought that she could do what she liked; so she both hungered and beat the King's daughter and chased her about into every corner. At last she thought that everything was too good for her, and set her to work to look after the cattle. So she went about with the cattle, and herded them in the woods and in the fields. Of food she got little or none, and grew pale and thin, and was nearly always weeping and sad. Among the herd there was a great blue bull, which always kept itself very smart and sleek, and often came to the King's daughter and let her stroke him. So one day, when she was again sitting crying and sorrowing, the Bull came up to her and asked why she was always so full of care? She made no answer, but continued to weep.

'Well,' said the Bull, 'I know what it is, though you will not tell me; you are weeping because the Queen is unkind to you, and because she wants to starve you to death. But you need be under no concern about food, for in my left ear there lies a cloth, and if you will but take it and spread it out, you can have as many dishes as you like.'

So she did this, and took the cloth and spread it out upon the grass, and then it was covered with the daintiest dishes that any one could desire, and there was wine, and mead, and cake. And now she became brisk and well

again, and grew so rosy, and plump, and fair that the Queen and her scraggy daughter turned blue and white with vexation at it. The Queen could not imagine how her step-daughter could look so well on such bad food, so she ordered one of her handmaidens to follow her into the wood and watch her, and see how it was, for she thought that some of the servants must be giving her food. So the maid followed her into the wood and watched, and saw how the step-daughter took the cloth out of the Blue Bull's ear, and spread it out, and how the cloth was then covered with the most delicate dishes, which the step-daughter ate and regaled herself with. So the waiting-maid went home and told the Queen.

And now the King came home, and he had conquered the other King with whom he had been at war. So there was great gladness in the palace, but no one was more glad than the King's daughter. The Queen, however, pretended to be ill, and gave the doctor much money to say that she would never be well again unless she had some of the flesh of the Blue Bull to eat. Both the King's daughter and the people in the palace asked the doctor if there were no other means of saving her, and begged for the Bull's life, for they were all fond of him, and they all declared that there was no such Bull in the whole country; but it was all in vain, he was to be killed, and should be killed, and nothing else would serve. When the King's daughter heard it she was full of sorrow, and went down to the byre to the Bull. He too was standing there hanging his head, and looking so downcast that she fell a-weeping over him.

'What are you weeping for?' said the Bull.

So she told him that the King had come home again, and that the Queen had pretended to be ill, and that she had made the doctor say that she could never be well again unless some of the flesh of the Blue Bull was given her to eat, and that now he was to be killed.

'When once they have taken my life they will soon kill you also,' said the Bull. 'If you are of the same mind with me, we will take our departure this very night.'

The King's daughter thought that it was bad to go and leave her father, but that it was worse still to be in the same house with the Queen, so she promised the Bull that she would come.

At night, when all the others had gone to bed, the King's daughter stole softly down to the byre to the Bull, and he took her on his back and got out

of the courtyard as quickly as he could. So at cock-crow next morning, when the people came to kill the Bull, he was gone, and when the King got up and asked for his daughter she was gone too. He sent forth messengers to all parts of the kingdom to search for them, and published his loss in all the parish churches, but there was no one who had seen anything of them.

In the meantime the Bull travelled through many lands with the King's daughter on his back, and one day they came to a great copper-wood, where the trees, and the branches, and the leaves, and the flowers, and everything else was of copper.

But before they entered the wood the Bull said to the King's daughter:

'When we enter into this wood, you must take the greatest care not to touch a leaf of it, or all will be over both with me and with you, for a Troll with three heads, who is the owner of the wood, lives here.'

So she said she would be on her guard, and not touch anything. And she was very careful, and bent herself out of the way of the branches, and put them aside with her hands; but it was so thickly wooded that it was all but impossible to get forward, and do what she might, she somehow or other tore off a leaf which got into her hand.

'Oh! oh! What have you done now?' said the Bull. 'It will now cost us a battle for life or death; but do be careful to keep the leaf.'

Very soon afterwards they came to the end of the wood, and the Troll with three heads came rushing up to them.

'Who is that who is touching my wood?' said the Troll.

'The wood is just as much mine as yours!' said the Bull.

'We shall have a tussle for that!' shrieked the Troll.

'That may be,' said the Bull.

So they rushed on each other and fought, and as for the Bull he butted and kicked with all the strength of his body, but the Troll fought quite as well as he did, and the whole day went by before the Bull put an end to him, and then he himself was so full of wounds and so worn out that he was scarcely able to move. So they had to wait a day, and the Bull told the King's daughter to take the horn of ointment which hung at the Troll's belt, and rub him with it; then he was himself again, and the next day they set off once more. And now they journeyed on for many, many days, and then after a long, long time they came to a silver wood. The trees, and the boughs, and the leaves, and the flowers, and everything else was of silver.

Before the Bull went into the wood, he said to the King's daughter: 'When we enter into this wood you must, for Heaven's sake, be very careful not to touch anything at all, and not to pluck off even so much as one leaf, or else all will be over both with you and with me. A Troll with six heads lives here, who is the owner of the wood, and I do not think I should be able to overcome him.'

'Yes,' said the King's daughter, 'I will take good care not to touch what you do not wish me to touch.'

But when they got into the wood it was so crowded, and the trees so close together, that they could scarcely get forward. She was as careful as she could be, and bent aside to get out of the way of the branches, and thrust them away from before her with her hands; but every instant a branch struck against her eyes, and in spite of all her care, she happened to pull off one leaf.

'Oh! oh! What have you done now?' said the Bull. It will now cost us a battle for life or death, for this Troll has six heads and is twice as strong as the other, but do be careful to keep the leaf.'

Just as he said this came the Troll. 'Who is that who is touching my wood?' he said.

'It is just as much mine as yours!'

'We shall have a tussle for that!' screamed the Troll.

'That may be,' said the Bull, and rushed at the Troll, and gored out his eyes, and drove his horns right through him so that his entrails gushed out, but the Troll fought just as well as he did, and it was three whole days before the Bull got the life out of him. But the Bull was then so weak and worn out that it was only with pain and effort that he could move, and so covered with wounds that the blood streamed from him. So he told the King's daughter to take the horn of ointment that was hanging at the Troll's belt, and anoint him with it. She did this, and then he came to himself again, but they had to stay there and rest for a week before the Bull was able to go any farther.

At last they set forth on their way again, but the Bull was still weak, and at first could not go quickly. The King's daughter wished to spare him, and said that she was so young and light of foot that she would willingly walk, but he would not give her leave to do that, and she was forced to seat herself on his back again. So they travelled for a long time, and through

many lands, and the King's daughter did not at all know where he was taking her, but after a long, long time they came to a gold wood. It was so golden that the gold dripped off it, and the trees, and the branches, and the flowers, and the leaves were all of pure gold. Here all happened just as it had happened in the copper wood and silver wood. The Bull told the King's daughter that on no account was she to touch it, for there was a Troll with nine heads who was the owner, and that he was much larger and stronger than both the others put together, and that he did not believe that he could overcome him. So she said that she would take great care not to touch anything, and he should see that she did. But when they got into the wood it was still thicker than the silver wood, and the farther they got into it the worse it grew. The wood became thicker and thicker, and closer and closer, and at last she thought there was no way whatsoever by which they could get forward; she was so terrified lest she should break anything off, that she sat and twisted, and turned herself on this side and on that, to get out of the way of the branches, and pushed them away from her with her hands, but every moment they struck against her eyes, so that she could not see what she was clutching at, and before she knew what she was doing she had a golden apple in her hands. She was now in such terror that she began to cry, and wanted to throw it away, but the Bull said that she was to keep it, and take the greatest care of it, and comforted her as well as he could, but he believed that it would be a hard struggle, and he doubted whether it would go well with him.

Just then the Troll with nine heads came, and he was so frightful that the King's daughter scarcely dared to look at him

'Who is this who is breaking my wood?' he screamed

'It is as much mine as yours!' said the Bull.

'We shall have a tussle for that!' screamed the Troll.

'That may be,' said the Bull; so they rushed at each other, and fought, and it was such a dreadful sight that the King's daughter very nearly swooned. The Bull gored the Troll's eyes out and ran his horns right through him, but the Troll fought as well as he did, and when the Bull had gored one head to death the other heads breathed life into it again, so it was a whole week before the Bull was able to kill him. But then he himself was so worn out and weak that he could not move at all. His body was all one wound, and he could not even so much as tell the King's daughter to

take the horn of ointment out of the Troll's belt and rub him with it. She did this without being told; so he came to himself again, but he had to lie there for three weeks and rest before he was in a state to move.

Then they journeyed onwards by degrees, for the Bull said that they had still a little farther to go, and in this way they crossed many high hills and thick woods. This lasted for a while, and then they came upon the fells.

'Do you see anything?' asked the Bull.

'No, I see nothing but the sky above and the wild fell side,' said the King's daughter.

Then they climbed up higher, and the fell grew more level, so that they could see farther around them.

'Do you see anything now?' said the Bull.

'Yes, I see a small castle, far, far away,' said the Princess.

'It is not so very little after all,' said the Bull.

After a long, long time they came to a high hill, where there was a precipitous wall of rock.

'Do you see nothing now?' said the Bull.

'Yes, now I see the castle quite near, and now it is much, much larger,' said the King's daughter.

'Thither shall you go,' said the Bull; 'immediately below the castle there is a pig-sty, where you shall dwell. When you get there, you will find a wooden gown which you are to put on, and then go to the castle and say that you are called Kari Woodengown, and that you are seeking a place. But now you must take out your little knife and cut off my head with it, and then you must flay me and roll up my hide and put it there under the rock, and beneath the hide you must lay the copper leaf, and the silver leaf, and the golden apple. Close beside the rock a stick is standing, and when you want me for anything you have only to knock at the wall of rock with that.'

At first she would not do it, but when the Bull said that this was the only reward that he would have for what he had done for her, she could do no otherwise. So though she thought it very cruel, she slaved on and cut at the great animal with the knife till she had cut off his head and hide, and then she folded up the hide and laid it beneath the mountain wall, and put the copper leaf, and the silver leaf, and the golden apple inside it.

When she had done that she went away to the pig-sty, but all the way as she went she wept, and was very sorrowful. Then she put on the wooden gown, and walked to the King's palace. When she got there she went into the kitchen and begged for a place, saying that her name was Kari Woodengown.

The cook told her that she might have a place and leave to stay there at once and wash up, for the girl who had done that before had just gone away. 'And as soon as you get tired of being here you will take yourself off too,' said he.

'No,' said she, 'that I shall certainly not.'

And then she washed up, and did it very tidily.

On Sunday some strangers were coming to the King's palace, so Kari begged to have leave to carry up the water for the Prince's bath, but the others laughed at her and said, 'What do you want there? Do you think the Prince will ever look at such a fright as you?'

She would not give it up, however, but went on begging until at last she got leave. When she was going upstairs her wooden gown made such a clatter that the Prince came out and said, 'What sort of a creature may you be?'

'I was to take this water to you,' said Kari.

'Do you suppose that I will have any water that you bring?' said the Prince, and emptied it over her.

She had to bear that, but then she asked permission to go to church. She got that, for the church was very near. But first she went to the rock and knocked at it with the stick which was standing there, as the Bull had told her to do. Instantly a man came forth and asked what she wanted. The King's daughter said that she had got leave to go to church and listen to the priest, but that she had no clothes to go in. So he brought her a gown that was as bright as the copper wood, and she got a horse and saddle too from him. When she reached the church she was so pretty and so splendidly dressed that every one wondered who she could be, and hardly anyone listened to what the priest was saying, for they were all looking far too much at her, and the Prince himself liked her so well that he could not take his eyes off her for an instant. As she was walking out of church the Prince followed her and shut the church door after her, and thus he kept

one of her gloves in his hand. Then she went away and mounted her horse again; the Prince again followed her, and asked her whence she came.

‘Oh! I am from Bathland,’ said Kari. And when the Prince took out the glove and wanted to give it back to her, she said:

‘Darkness behind me, but light on my way,
That the Prince may not see where I’m going to-day!’

The Prince had never seen the equal of that glove, and he went far and wide, asking after the country which the proud lady, who rode away without her glove, had said that she came from, but there was no one who could tell him where it lay.

Next Sunday some one had to take up a towel to the Prince.

‘Ah! may I have leave to go up with that?’ said Kari.

‘What would be the use of that?’ said the others who were in the kitchen; ‘you saw what happened last time.’

Kari would not give in, but went on begging for leave till she got it, and then she ran up the stairs so that her wooden gown clattered again. Out came the Prince, and when he saw that it was Kari, he snatched the towel from her and flung it right in her eyes.

‘Be off at once, you ugly Troll,’ said he; ‘do you think that I will have a towel that has been touched by your dirty fingers?’

After that the Prince went to church, and Kari also asked leave to go. They all asked how she could want to go to church when she had nothing to wear but that wooden gown, which was so black and hideous. But Kari said she thought the priest was such a good man at preaching that she got so much benefit from what he said, and at last she got leave.

She went to the rock and knocked, whereupon out came the man and gave her a gown which was much more magnificent than the first. It was embroidered with silver all over it, and it shone like the silver wood, and he gave her also a most beautiful horse, with housings embroidered with silver, and a bridle of silver too.

When the King’s daughter got to church all the people were standing outside upon the hillside, and all of them wondered who on earth she could be, and the Prince was on the alert in a moment, and came and wanted to hold her horse while she alighted. But she jumped off and said that there

was no need for that, for the horse was so well broken in that it stood still when she bade it and came when she called it. So they all went into the church together, but there was scarcely any one who listened to what the priest was saying, for they were all looking far too much at her, and the Prince fell much more deeply in love with her than he had been before.

When the sermon was over and she went out of the church, and was just going to mount her horse, the Prince again came and asked her where she came from.

'I am from Towelland,' said the King's daughter, and as she spoke she dropped her riding-whip, and while the Prince was stooping to pick it up she said:

'Darkness behind me, but light on my way,
That the Prince may not see where I'm going to-day!'

And she was gone again, neither could the Prince see what had become of her. He went far and wide to inquire for that country from whence she had said that she came, but there was no one who could tell him where it lay, so he was forced to have patience once more.

Next Sunday some one had to go to the Prince with a comb. Kari begged for leave to go with it, but the others reminded her of what had happened last time, and scolded her for wanting to let the Prince see her when she was so black and so ugly in her wooden gown, but she would not give up asking until they gave her leave to go up to the Prince with the comb. When she went clattering up the stairs again, out came the Prince and took the comb and flung it at her, and ordered her to be off as fast as she could. After that the Prince went to church, and Kari also begged for leave to go. Again they all asked what she would do there, she who was so black and ugly, and had no clothes that she could be seen in by other people. The Prince or some one else might very easily catch sight of her, they said, and then both she and they would suffer for it; but Kari said that they had something else to do than to look at her, and she never ceased begging until she got leave to go.

And now all happened just as it had happened twice already. She went away to the rock and knocked at it with the stick, and then the man came out and gave her a gown which was very much more magnificent than

either of the others. It was almost entirely made of pure gold and diamonds, and she also got a noble horse with housings embroidered with gold, and a golden bridle.

When the King's daughter came to the church the priest and people were all standing on the hillside waiting for her, and the Prince ran up and wanted to hold the horse, but she jumped off, saying:

'No, thank you, there is no need; my horse is so well broken in that it will stand still when I bid it.'

So they all hastened into the church together and the priest got into the pulpit, but no one listened to what he said, for they were looking far too much at her and wondering whence she came; and the Prince was far more in love than he had been on either of the former occasions, and he was mindful of nothing but of looking at her.

When the sermon was over and the King's daughter was about to leave the church, the Prince had caused a firkin of tar to be emptied out in the porch in order that he might go to help her over it; she, however, did not trouble herself in the least about the tar, but set her foot down in the middle of it and jumped over it, and thus one of her gold shoes was left sticking in it. When she had seated herself on the horse the Prince came running out of the church and asked her whence she came.

'From Combland,' said Kari. But when the Prince wanted to reach her her gold shoe, she said:

'Darkness behind me, but light on my way,
That the Prince may not see where I'm going to-day!'

The Prince did not know what had become of her, so he travelled for a long and wearisome time all over the world, asking where Combland was; but when no one could tell him where that country was, he caused it to be made known everywhere that he would marry any woman who could put on the gold shoe. So fair maidens and ugly maidens came thither from all regions, but there was none who had a foot so small that she could put on the gold shoe. After a long, long while came Kari Woodengown's wicked stepmother, with her daughter too, and the shoe fitted her. But she was so ugly and looked so loathsome that the Prince was very unwilling to do what he had promised. Nevertheless all was got ready for the wedding, and

she was decked out as a bride, but as they were riding to church a little bird sat upon a tree and sang:

‘A slice off her heel
And a slice off her toes,
Kari Woodengown’s shoe
Fills with blood as she goes!’

And when they looked to it the bird had spoken the truth, for blood was trickling out of the shoe. So all the waiting-maids, and all the womenkind in the castle had to come and try on the shoe, but there was not one whom it would fit.

‘But where is Kari Woodengown, then?’ asked the Prince, when all the others had tried on the shoe, for he understood the song of birds and it came to his mind what the bird had said.

‘Oh! that creature!’ said the others; ‘it’s not the least use for her to come here, for she has feet like a horse!’

‘That may be,’ said the Prince, ‘but as all the others have tried it, Kari may try it too.’

‘Kari!’ he called out through the door, and Kari came upstairs, and her wooden gown clattered as if a whole regiment of dragoons were coming up.

‘Now, you are to try on the gold shoe and be a Princess,’ said the other servants, and they laughed at her and mocked her. Kari took up the shoe, put her foot into it as easily as possible, and then threw off her wooden gown, and there she stood in the golden gown which flashed like rays of sunshine, and on her other foot she had the fellow to the gold shoe. The Prince knew her in a moment, and was so glad that he ran and took her in his arms and kissed her, and when he heard that she was a King’s daughter he was gladder still, and then they had the wedding.[14]

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14. From P. C. Asbjornsen.

DRAKESTAIL

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Drakestail was very little, that is why he was called Drakestail; but tiny as he was he had brains, and he knew what he was about, for having begun with nothing he ended by amassing a hundred crowns. Now the King of the country, who was very extravagant and never kept any money, having heard that Drakestail had some, went one day in his own person to borrow his hoard, and, my word, in those days Drakestail was not a little proud of having lent money to the King. But after the first and second year, seeing that they never even dreamed of paying the interest, he became uneasy, so much so that at last he resolved to go and see His Majesty himself, and get repaid. So one fine morning Drakestail, very spruce and fresh, takes the road, singing: ‘Quack, quack, quack, when shall I get my money back?’

He had not gone far when he met friend Fox, on his rounds that way.

‘Good-morning, neighbour,’ says the friend, ‘where are you off to so early?’

‘I am going to the King for what he owes me.’

‘Oh! take me with thee!’

Drakestail said to himself: ‘One can’t have too many friends.’ ... ‘I will,’ says he, ‘but going on all-fours you will soon be tired. Make yourself quite small, get into my throat—go into my gizzard and I will carry you.’

‘Happy thought!’ says friend Fox.

He takes bag and baggage, and, presto! is gone like a letter into the post.

And Drakestail is off again, all spruce and fresh, still singing: ‘Quack, quack, quack, when shall I have my money back?’

He had not gone far when he met his lady-friend Ladder, leaning on her wall.

‘Good morning, my duckling,’ says the lady friend, ‘whither away so bold?’

‘I am going to the King for what he owes me.’

‘Oh! take me with thee!’

Drakestail said to himself: ‘One can’t have too many friends.’ ... ‘I will,’ says he, ‘but with your wooden legs you will soon be tired. Make yourself quite small, get into my throat—go into my gizzard and I will carry you.’

‘Happy thought!’ says my friend Ladder, and nimble, bag and baggage, goes to keep company with friend Fox.

And ‘Quack, quack, quack.’ Drakestail is off again, singing and spruce as before. A little farther he meets his sweetheart, my friend River, wandering quietly in the sunshine.

‘Thou, my cherub,’ says she, ‘whither so lonesome, with arching tail, on this muddy road?’

‘I am going to the King, you know, for what he owes me.’

‘Oh! take me with thee!’

Drakestail said to himself: ‘We can’t be too many friends.’... ‘I will,’ says he, ‘but you who sleep while you walk will soon be tired. Make yourself quite small, get into my throat—go into my gizzard and I will carry you.’

‘Ah! happy thought!’ says my friend River.

She takes bag and baggage, and glou, glou, glou, she takes her place between friend Fox and my friend Ladder.

And ‘Quack, quack, quack.’ Drakestail is off again singing.

A little farther on he meets comrade Wasp’s-nest, manoeuvring his wasps.

‘Well, good-morning, friend Drakestail,’ said comrade Wasp’s-nest, ‘where are we bound for so spruce and fresh?’

‘I am going to the King for what he owes me.’

‘Oh! take me with thee!’

Drakestail said to himself, ‘One can’t have too many friends.’... ‘I will,’ says he, ‘but with your battalion to drag along, you will soon be tired. Make yourself quite small, go into my throat—get into my gizzard and I will carry you.’

‘By Jove I that’s a good idea!’ says comrade Wasp’s-nest.

And left file! he takes the same road to join the others with all his party. There was not much more room, but by closing up a bit they managed.... And Drakestail is off again singing.

He arrived thus at the capital, and threaded his way straight up the High Street, still running and singing ‘Quack, quack, quack, when shall I get my money back?’ to the great astonishment of the good folks, till he came to the King’s palace.

He strikes with the knocker: ‘Toc! toc!’

‘Who is there?’ asks the porter, putting his head out of the wicket.

‘’Tis I, Drakestail. I wish to speak to the King.’

‘Speak to the King!... That’s easily said. The King is dining, and will not be disturbed.’

‘Tell him that it is I, and I have come he well knows why.’

The porter shuts his wicket and goes up to say it to the King, who was just sitting down to dinner with a napkin round his neck, and all his ministers.

‘Good, good!’ said the King laughing. ‘I know what it is! Make him come in, and put him with the turkeys and chickens.’

The porter descends.

‘Have the goodness to enter.’

‘Good!’ says Drakestail to himself, ‘I shall now see how they eat at court.’

‘This way, this way,’ says the porter. ‘One step further.... There, there you are.’

‘How? what? in the poultry yard?’

Fancy how vexed Drakestail was!

‘Ah! so that’s it,’ says he. ‘Wait! I will compel you to receive me. Quack, quack, quack, when shall I get my money back?’ But turkeys and chickens are creatures who don’t like people that are not as themselves. When they saw the new-comer and how he was made, and when they heard him crying too, they began to look black at him.

‘What is it? what does he want?’

Finally they rushed at him all together, to overwhelm him with pecks.

‘I am lost!’ said Drakestail to himself, when by good luck he remembers his comrade friend Fox, and he cries:

‘Reynard, Reynard, come out of your earth, Or Drakestail’s life is of little worth.’

Then friend Fox, who was only waiting for these words, hastens out, throws himself on the wicked fowls, and quick! quack! he tears them to

pieces; so much so that at the end of five minutes there was not one left alive. And Drakestail, quite content, began to sing again, ‘Quack, quack, quack, when shall I get my money back?’

When the King who was still at table heard this refrain, and the poultry woman came to tell him what had been going on in the yard, he was terribly annoyed.

He ordered them to throw this tail of a drake into the well, to make an end of him.

And it was done as he commanded. Drakestail was in despair of getting himself out of such a deep hole, when he remembered his lady friend, the Ladder.

‘Ladder, Ladder, come out of thy hold,
Or Drakestail’s days will soon be told.’

My friend Ladder, who was only waiting for these words, hastens out, leans her two arms on the edge of the well, then Drakestail climbs nimbly on her back, and hop! he is in the yard, where he begins to sing louder than ever.

When the King, who was still at table and laughing at the good trick he had played his creditor, heard him again reclaiming his money, he became livid with rage.

He commanded that the furnace should be heated, and this tail of a drake thrown into it, because he must be a sorcerer.

The furnace was soon hot, but this time Drakestail was not so afraid; he counted on his sweetheart, my friend River.

‘River, River, outward flow,
Or to death Drakestail must go.’

My friend River hastens out, and errouf! throws herself into the furnace, which she floods, with all the people who had lighted it; after which she flowed growling into the hall of the palace to the height of more than four feet.

And Drakestail, quite content, begins to swim, singing deafeningly, ‘Quack, quack, quack, when shall I get my money back?’

The King was still at table, and thought himself quite sure of his game; but when he heard Drakestail singing again, and when they told him all that had passed, he became furious and got up from table brandishing his fists.

‘Bring him here, and I’ll cut his throat! bring him here quick!’ cried he.

And quickly two footmen ran to fetch Drakestail.

‘At last,’ said the poor chap, going up the great stairs, ‘they have decided to receive me.’

Imagine his terror when on entering he sees the King as red as a turkey cock, and all his ministers attending him standing sword in hand. He thought this time it was all up with him. Happily, he remembered that there was still one remaining friend, and he cried with dying accents:

‘Wasp’s-nest, Wasp’s-nest, make a sally,
Or Drakestail nevermore may rally.’

Hereupon the scene changes.

‘Bs, bs, bayonet them! ‘The brave Wasp’s-nest rushes out with all his wasps. They threw themselves on the infuriated King and his ministers, and stung them so fiercely in the face that they lost their heads, and not knowing where to hide themselves they all jumped pell-mell from the window and broke their necks on the pavement.

Behold Drakestail much astonished, all alone in the big saloon and master of the field. He could not get over it.

Nevertheless, he remembered shortly what he had come for to the palace, and improving the occasion, he set to work to hunt for his dear money. But in vain he rummaged in all the drawers; he found nothing; all had been spent.

And ferreting thus from room to room he came at last to the one with the throne in it, and feeling fatigued, he sat himself down on it to think over his adventure. In the meanwhile the people had found their King and his ministers with their feet in the air on the pavement, and they had gone into the palace to know how it had occurred. On entering the throne-room, when the crowd saw that there was already someone on the royal seat, they broke out in cries of surprise and joy:

‘The King is dead, long live the King!
Heaven has sent us down this thing.’

Drakestail, who was no longer surprised at anything, received the acclamations of the people as if he had never done anything else all his life.

A few of them certainly murmured that a Drakestail would make a fine King; those who knew him replied that a knowing Drakestail was a more worthy King than a spendthrift like him who was lying on the pavement. In short, they ran and took the crown off the head of the deceased, and placed it on that of Drakestail, whom it fitted like wax.

Thus he became King.

‘And now,’ said he after the ceremony, ‘ladies and gentlemen, let’s go to supper. I am so hungry!’[15]

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15. Contes of Ch. Marelles.

THE RATCATCHER

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A very long time ago the town of Hamel in Germany was invaded by bands of rats, the like of which had never been seen before nor will ever be again.

They were great black creatures that ran boldly in broad daylight through the streets, and swarmed so, all over the houses, that people at last could not put their hand or foot down anywhere without touching one. When dressing in the morning they found them in their breeches and petticoats, in their pockets and in their boots; and when they wanted a morsel to eat, the voracious horde had swept away everything from cellar to garret. The night was even worse. As soon as the lights were out, these untiring nibblers set to work. And everywhere, in the ceilings, in the floors, in the cupboards, at the doors, there was a chase and a rummage, and so furious a noise of gimlets, pincers, and saws, that a deaf man could not have rested for one hour together.

Neither cats nor dogs, nor poison nor traps, nor prayers nor candles burnt to all the saints—nothing would do anything. The more they killed the more came. And the inhabitants of Hamel began to go to the dogs (not that THEY were of much use), when one Friday there arrived in the town a man with a queer face, who played the bagpipes and sang this refrain:

‘Qui vivra verra:
Le voila,
Le preneur des rats.’

He was a great gawky fellow, dry and bronzed, with a crooked nose, a long rat-tail moustache, two great yellow piercing and mocking eyes, under a large felt hat set off by a scarlet cock’s feather. He was dressed in a green jacket with a leather belt and red breeches, and on his feet were sandals fastened by thongs passed round his legs in the gipsy fashion.

That is how he may be seen to this day, painted on a window of the cathedral of Hamel.

He stopped on the great market-place before the town hall, turned his back on the church and went on with his music, singing:

‘Who lives shall see:
This is he,
The ratcatcher.’

The town council had just assembled to consider once more this plague of Egypt, from which no one could save the town.

The stranger sent word to the counsellors that, if they would make it worth his while, he would rid them of all their rats before night, down to the very last.

‘Then he is a sorcerer!’ cried the citizens with one voice; ‘we must beware of him.’

The Town Counsellor, who was considered clever, reassured them.

He said: ‘Sorcerer or no, if this bagpiper speaks the truth, it was he who sent us this horrible vermin that he wants to rid us of to-day for money. Well, we must learn to catch the devil in his own snares. You leave it to me.’

‘Leave it to the Town Counsellor,’ said the citizens one to another.

And the stranger was brought before them.

‘Before night,’ said he, ‘I shall have despatched all the rats in Hamel if you will but pay me a gros a head.’

‘A gros a head!’ cried the citizens, ‘but that will come to millions of florins!’

The Town Counsellor simply shrugged his shoulders and said to the stranger:

‘A bargain! To work; the rats will be paid one gros a head as you ask.’

The bagpiper announced that he would operate that very evening when the moon rose. He added that the inhabitants should at that hour leave the streets free, and content themselves with looking out of their windows at what was passing, and that it would be a pleasant spectacle. When the people of Hamel heard of the bargain, they too exclaimed: ‘A gros a head! but this will cost us a deal of money!’

‘Leave it to the Town Counsellor,’ said the town council with a malicious air. And the good people of Hamel repeated with their

counsellors, ‘Leave it to the Town Counsellor.’

Towards nine at night the bagpiper re-appeared on the market place. He turned, as at first, his back to the church, and the moment the moon rose on the horizon, ‘Trarira, trari!’ the bagpipes resounded.

It was first a slow, caressing sound, then more and more lively and urgent, and so sonorous and piercing that it penetrated as far as the farthest alleys and retreats of the town.

Soon from the bottom of the cellars, the top of the garrets, from under all the furniture, from all the nooks and corners of the houses, out come the rats, search for the door, fling themselves into the street, and trip, trip, trip, begin to run in file towards the front of the town hall, so squeezed together that they covered the pavement like the waves of flooded torrent.

When the square was quite full the bagpiper faced about, and, still playing briskly, turned towards the river that runs at the foot of the walls of Hamel.

Arrived there he turned round; the rats were following.

‘Hop! hop!’ he cried, pointing with his finger to the middle of the stream, where the water whirled and was drawn down as if through a funnel. And hop! hop! without hesitating, the rats took the leap, swam straight to the funnel, plunged in head foremost and disappeared.

The plunging continued thus without ceasing till midnight.

At last, dragging himself with difficulty, came a big rat, white with age, and stopped on the bank.

It was the king of the band.

‘Are they all there, friend Blanchet?’ asked the bagpiper.

‘They are all there,’ replied friend Blanchet.

‘And how many were they?’

‘Nine hundred and ninety thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine.’

‘Well reckoned?’

‘Well reckoned.’

‘Then go and join them, old sire, and au revoir.’

Then the old white rat sprang in his turn into the river, swam to the whirlpool and disappeared.

When the bagpiper had thus concluded his business he went to bed at his inn. And for the first time during three months the people of Hamel slept quietly through the night.

The next morning, at nine o’clock, the bagpiper repaired to the town hall, where the town council awaited him.

‘All your rats took a jump into the river yesterday,’ said he to the counsellors, ‘and I guarantee that not one of them comes back. They were nine hundred and ninety thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine, at one gros a head. Reckon!’

‘Let us reckon the heads first. One gros a head is one head the gros. Where are the heads?’

The ratcatcher did not expect this treacherous stroke. He paled with anger and his eyes flashed fire.

‘The heads!’ cried he, ‘if you care about them, go and find them in the river.’

‘So,’ replied the Town Counsellor, ‘you refuse to hold to the terms of your agreement? We ourselves could refuse you all payment. But you have been of use to us, and we will not let you go without a recompense,’ and he offered him fifty crowns.

‘Keep your recompense for yourself,’ replied the ratcatcher proudly. ‘If you do not pay me I will be paid by your heirs.’

Thereupon he pulled his hat down over his eyes, went hastily out of the hall, and left the town without speaking to a soul.

When the Hamel people heard how the affair had ended they rubbed their hands, and with no more scruple than their Town Counsellor, they laughed over the ratcatcher, who, they said, was caught in his own trap. But what made them laugh above all was his threat of getting himself paid by their heirs. Ha! they wished that they only had such creditors for the rest of their lives.

Next day, which was a Sunday, they all went gaily to church, thinking that after Mass they would at last be able to eat some good thing that the rats had not tasted before them.

They never suspected the terrible surprise that awaited them on their return home. No children anywhere, they had all disappeared!

‘Our children! where are our poor children?’ was the cry that was soon heard in all the streets.

Then through the east door of the town came three little boys, who cried and wept, and this is what they told:

While the parents were at church a wonderful music had resounded. Soon all the little boys and all the little girls that had been left at home had gone out, attracted by the magic sounds, and had rushed to the great market-place. There they found the ratcatcher playing his bagpipes at the same spot as the evening before. Then the stranger had begun to walk quickly, and they had followed, running, singing and dancing to the sound of the music, as far as the foot of the mountain which one sees on entering Hamel. At their approach the mountain had opened a little, and the bagpiper had gone in with them, after which it had closed again. Only the three little ones who told the adventure had remained outside, as if by a miracle. One was bandy-legged and could not run fast enough; the other, who had left the house in haste, one foot shod the other bare, had hurt himself against a big stone and could not walk without difficulty; the third had arrived in time, but in harrying to go in with the others had struck so violently against the wall of the mountain that he fell backwards at the moment it closed upon his comrades.

At this story the parents redoubled their lamentations. They ran with pikes and mattocks to the mountain, and searched till evening to find the opening by which their children had disappeared, without being able to find it. At last, the night falling, they returned desolate to Hamel.

But the most unhappy of all was the Town Counsellor, for he lost three little boys and two pretty little girls, and to crown all, the people of Hamel overwhelmed him with reproaches, forgetting that the evening before they had all agreed with him.

What had become of all these unfortunate children?

The parents always hoped they were not dead, and that the rat-catcher, who certainly must have come out of the mountain, would have taken them with him to his country. That is why for several years they sent in search of them to different countries, but no one ever came on the trace of the poor little ones.

It was not till much later that anything was to be heard of them.

About one hundred and fifty years after the event, when there was no longer one left of the fathers, mothers, brothers or sisters of that day, there arrived one evening in Hamel some merchants of Bremen returning from the East, who asked to speak with the citizens. They told that they, in crossing Hungary, had sojourned in a mountainous country called

Transylvania, where the inhabitants only spoke German, while all around them nothing was spoken but Hungarian. These people also declared that they came from Germany, but they did not know how they chanced to be in this strange country. ‘Now,’ said the merchants of Bremen, ‘these Germans cannot be other than the descendants of the lost children of Hamel.’

The people of Hamel did not doubt it; and since that day they regard it as certain that the Transylvanians of Hungary are their country folk, whose ancestors, as children, were brought there by the ratcatcher. There are more difficult things to believe than that.[16]

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16. Ch. Marelles.

THE TRUE HISTORY OF LITTLE GOLDEN HOOD

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You know the tale of poor Little Red Riding-hood, that the Wolf deceived and devoured, with her cake, her little butter can, and her Grandmother; well, the true story happened quite differently, as we know now. And first of all the little girl was called and is still called Little Golden-hood; secondly, it was not she, nor the good grand-dame, but the wicked Wolf who was, in the end, caught and devoured.

Only listen.

The story begins something like the tale.

There was once a little peasant girl, pretty and nice as a star in its season. Her real name was Blanchette, but she was more often called Little Golden-hood, on account of a wonderful little cloak with a hood, gold- and fire-coloured, which she always had on. This little hood was given her by her Grandmother, who was so old that she did not know her age; it ought to bring her good luck, for it was made of a ray of sunshine, she said. And as the good old woman was considered something of a witch, everyone thought the little hood rather bewitched too.

And so it was, as you will see.

One day the mother said to the child: ‘Let us see, my little Golden-hood, if you know now how to find your way by yourself. You shall take this good piece of cake to your Grandmother for a Sunday treat to-morrow. You will ask her how she is, and come back at once, without stopping to chatter on the way with people you don’t know. Do you quite understand?’

‘I quite understand,’ replied Blanchette gaily. And off she went with the cake, quite proud of her errand.

But the Grandmother lived in another village, and there was a big wood to cross before getting there. At a turn of the road under the trees, suddenly ‘Who goes there?’

‘Friend Wolf.’

He had seen the child start alone, and the villain was waiting to devour her; when at the same moment he perceived some wood-cutters who might observe him, and he changed his mind. Instead of falling upon Blanchette he came frisking up to her like a good dog.

‘’Tis you! my nice Little Golden-hood,’ said he. So the little girl stops to talk with the Wolf, who, for all that, she did not know in the least.

‘You know me, then!’ said she; ‘what is your name?’

‘My name is friend Wolf. And where are you going thus, my pretty one, with your little basket on your arm?’

‘I am going to my Grandmother, to take her a good piece of cake for her Sunday treat to-morrow.’

‘And where does she live, your Grandmother?’

‘She lives at the other side of the wood, in the first house in the village, near the windmill, you know.’

‘Ah! yes! I know now,’ said the Wolf. ‘Well, that’s just where I’m going; I shall get there before you, no doubt, with your little bits of legs, and I’ll tell her you’re coming to see her; then she’ll wait for you.’

Thereupon the Wolf cuts across the wood, and in five minutes arrives at the Grandmother’s house.

He knocks at the door: toc, toc.

No answer.

He knocks louder.

Nobody.

Then he stands up on end, puts his two fore-paws on the latch and the door opens.

Not a soul in the house.

The old woman had risen early to sell herbs in the town, and she had gone off in such haste that she had left her bed unmade, with her great night-cap on the pillow.

‘Good!’ said the Wolf to himself, ‘I know what I’ll do.’

He shuts the door, pulls on the Grandmother’s night-cap down to his eyes, then he lies down all his length in the bed and draws the curtains.

In the meantime the good Blanchette went quietly on her way, as little girls do, amusing herself here and there by picking Easter daisies, watching the little birds making their nests, and running after the butterflies which fluttered in the sunshine.

At last she arrives at the door.

Knock, knock.

‘Who is there?’ says the Wolf, softening his rough voice as best he can.

‘It’s me, Granny, your little Golden-hood. I’m bringing you a big piece of cake for your Sunday treat to-morrow.’

‘Press your finger on the latch, then push and the door opens.’

‘Why, you’ve got a cold, Granny,’ said she, coming in.

‘Ahem! a little, a little...’ replies the Wolf, pretending to cough. ‘Shut the door well, my little lamb. Put your basket on the table, and then take off your frock and come and lie down by me: you shall rest a little.’

The good child undresses, but observe this! She kept her little hood upon her head. When she saw what a figure her Granny cut in bed, the poor little thing was much surprised.

‘Oh!’ cries she, ‘how like you are to friend Wolf, Grandmother!’

‘That’s on account of my night-cap, child,’ replies the Wolf.

‘Oh! what hairy arms you’ve got, Grandmother!’

‘All the better to hug you, my child.’

‘Oh! what a big tongue you’ve got, Grandmother!’

‘All the better for answering, child.’

‘Oh! what a mouthful of great white teeth you have, Grandmother!’

‘That’s for crunching little children with! ‘And the Wolf opened his jaws wide to swallow Blanchette.

But she put down her head crying:

‘Mamma! Mamma!’ and the Wolf only caught her little hood.

Thereupon, oh dear! oh dear! he draws back, crying and shaking his jaw as if he had swallowed red-hot coals.

It was the little fire-coloured hood that had burnt his tongue right down his throat.

The little hood, you see, was one of those magic caps that they used to have in former times, in the stories, for making oneself invisible or invulnerable.

So there was the Wolf with his throat burnt, jumping off the bed and trying to find the door, howling and howling as if all the dogs in the country were at his heels.

Just at this moment the Grandmother arrives, returning from the town with her long sack empty on her shoulder.

‘Ah, brigand!’ she cries, ‘wait a bit!’ Quickly she opens her sack wide across the door, and the maddened Wolf springs in head downwards.

It is he now that is caught, swallowed like a letter in the post.

For the brave old dame shuts her sack, so; and she runs and empties it in the well, where the vagabond, still howling, tumbles in and is drowned.

‘Ah, scoundrel! you thought you would crunch my little grandchild! Well, to-morrow we will make her a muff of your skin, and you yourself shall be crunched, for we will give your carcass to the dogs.’

Thereupon the Grandmother hastened to dress poor Blanchette, who was still trembling with fear in the bed.

‘Well,’ she said to her, ‘without my little hood where would you be now, darling?’ And, to restore heart and legs to the child, she made her eat a good piece of her cake, and drink a good draught of wine, after which she took her by the hand and led her back to the house.

And then, who was it who scolded her when she knew all that had happened?

It was the mother.

But Blanchette promised over and over again that she would never more stop to listen to a Wolf, so that at last the mother forgave her.

And Blanchette, the Little Golden-hood, kept her word. And in fine weather she may still be seen in the fields with her pretty little hood, the colour of the sun.

But to see her you must rise early.[17]

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17. Ch. Marelles

THE GOLDEN BRANCH

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Once upon a time there was a King who was so morose and disagreeable that he was feared by all his subjects, and with good reason, as for the most trifling offences he would have their heads cut off. This King Grumpy, as he was called, had one son, who was as different from his father as he could possibly be. No prince equalled him in cleverness and kindness of heart, but unfortunately he was most terribly ugly. He had crooked legs and squinting eyes, a large mouth all on one side, and a hunchback. Never was there a beautiful soul in such a frightful little body, but in spite of his appearance everybody loved him. The Queen, his mother, called him Curlicue, because it was a name she rather liked, and it seemed to suit him.

King Grumpy, who cared a great deal more for his own grandeur than for his son's happiness, wished to betroth the Prince to the daughter of a neighbouring King, whose great estates joined his own, for he thought that this alliance would make him more powerful than ever, and as for the Princess she would do very well for Prince Curlicue, for she was as ugly as himself. Indeed, though she was the most amiable creature in the world, there was no concealing the fact that she was frightful, and so lame that she always went about with a crutch, and people called her Princess Cabbage-Stalk.

The King, having asked for and received a portrait of this Princess, had it placed in his great hall under a canopy, and sent for Prince Curlicue, to whom he said that as this was the portrait of his future bride, he hoped the Prince found it charming.

The Prince after one glance at it turned away with a disdainful air, which greatly offended his father.

'Am I to understand that you are not pleased?' he said very sharply.

'No, sire,' replied the Prince. 'How could I be pleased to marry an ugly, lame Princess?'

‘Certainly it is becoming in YOU to object to that,’ said King Grumpy, ‘since you are ugly enough to frighten anyone yourself.’

‘That is the very reason,’ said the Prince, ‘that I wish to marry someone who is not ugly. I am quite tired enough of seeing myself.’

‘I tell you that you shall marry her,’ cried King Grumpy angrily.

And the Prince, seeing that it was of no use to remonstrate, bowed and retired.

As King Grumpy was not used to being contradicted in anything, he was very much displeased with his son, and ordered that he should be imprisoned in the tower that was kept on purpose for rebellious Princes, but had not been used for about two hundred years, because there had not been any. The Prince thought all the rooms looked strangely old-fashioned, with their antique furniture, but as there was a good library he was pleased, for he was very fond of reading, and he soon got permission to have as many books as he liked. But when he looked at them he found that they were written in a forgotten language, and he could not understand a single word, though he amused himself with trying.

King Grumpy was so convinced that Prince Curlicue would soon get tired of being in prison, and so consent to marry the Princess Cabbage-Stalk, that he sent ambassadors to her father proposing that she should come and be married to his son, who would make her perfectly happy.

The King was delighted to receive so good an offer for his unlucky daughter, though, to tell the truth, he found it impossible to admire the Prince’s portrait which had been sent to him. However, he had it placed in as favourable a light as possible, and sent for the Princess, but the moment she caught sight of it she looked the other way and began to cry. The King, who was very much annoyed to see how greatly she disliked it, took a mirror, and holding it up before the unhappy Princess, said:

‘I see you do not think the Prince handsome, but look at yourself, and see if you have any right to complain about that.’

‘Sire,’ she answered, ‘I do not wish to complain, only I beg of you do not make me marry at all. I had rather be the unhappy Princess Cabbage-Stalk all my life than inflict the sight of my ugliness on anyone else.’

But the King would not listen to her, and sent her away with the ambassadors.

In the meantime the Prince was kept safely locked up in his tower, and, that he might be as dull as possible, King Grumpy ordered that no one should speak to him, and that they should give him next to nothing to eat. But all the Princess guards were so fond of him that they did everything they dared, in spite of the King, to make the time pass pleasantly.

One day, as the Prince was walking up and down the great gallery, thinking how miserable it was to be so ugly, and to be forced to marry an equally frightful Princess, he looked up suddenly and noticed that the painted windows were particularly bright and beautiful, and for the sake of doing something that would change his sad thoughts he began to examine them attentively. He found that the pictures seemed to be scenes from the life of a man who appeared in every window, and the Prince, fancying that he saw in this man some resemblance to himself, began to be deeply interested. In the first window there was a picture of him in one of the turrets of the tower, farther on he was seeking something in a chink in the wall, in the next picture he was opening an old cabinet with a golden key, and so it went on through numbers of scenes, and presently the Prince noticed that another figure occupied the most important place in each scene, and this time it was a tall handsome young man: poor Prince Curlicue found it a pleasure to look at him, he was so straight and strong. By this time it had grown dark, and the Prince had to go back to his own room, and to amuse himself he took up a quaint old book and began to look at the pictures. But his surprise was great to find that they represented the same scenes as the windows of the gallery, and what was more, that they seemed to be alive. In looking at pictures of musicians he saw their hands move and heard sweet sounds; there was a picture of a ball, and the Prince could watch the little dancing people come and go. He turned a page, and there was an excellent smell of a savoury dinner, and one of the figures who sat at the feast looked at him and said:

‘We drink your health, Curlicue. Try to give us our Queen again, for if you do you will be rewarded; if not, it will be the worse for you.’

At these words the Prince, who had been growing more and more astonished, was fairly terrified, and dropping the book with a crash he sank back insensible. The noise he made brought his guards to his aid, and as soon as he revived they asked him what was the matter. He answered that he was so faint and giddy with hunger that he had imagined he saw and

heard all sorts of strange things. Thereupon, in spite of the King's orders, the guards gave him an excellent supper, and when he had eaten it he again opened his book, but could see none of the wonderful pictures, which convinced him that he must have been dreaming before.

However, when he went into he gallery next day and looked at the painted windows again, he found that they moved, and the figures came and went as if they had been alive, and after watching the one who was like himself find the key in the crack of the turret wall and open the old cabinet, he determined to go and examine the place himself, and try to find out what the mystery was. So he went up into the turret and began to search about and tap upon the walls, and all at once he came upon a place that sounded hollow. Taking a hammer he broke away a bit of the stone, and found behind it a little golden key. The next thing to do was to find the cabinet, and the Prince soon came to it, hidden away in a dark corner, though indeed it was so old and battered-looking that he would never have noticed it of his own accord. At first he could not see any keyhole, but after a careful search he found one hidden in the carving, and the golden key just fitted it; so the Prince gave it a vigorous turn and the doors flew open.

Ugly and old as the cabinet was outside, nothing could have been more rich and beautiful than what met the Prince's astonished eyes. Every drawer was made of crystal, of amber, or of some precious stone, and was quite full of every kind of treasure. Prince Curlicue was delighted; he opened one after another, until at last he came to one tiny drawer which contained only an emerald key.

'I believe that this must open that little golden door in the middle,' said the Prince to himself. And he fitted in the little key and turned it. The tiny door swung back, and a soft crimson light gleamed over the whole cabinet. The Prince found that it proceeded from an immense glowing carbuncle, made into a box, which lay before him. He lost no time in opening it, but what was his horror when he found that it contained a man's hand, which was holding a portrait. His first thought was to put back the terrible box and fly from the turret; but a voice in his ear said, 'This hand belonged to one whom you can help and restore. Look at this beautiful portrait, the original of which was the cause of all my misfortunes, and if you wish to help me, go without a moment's delay to

the great gallery, notice where the sun's rays fall most brightly, and if you seek there you will find my treasure.'

The voice ceased, and though the Prince in his bewilderment asked various questions, he received no answer. So he put back the box and locked the cabinet up again, and, having replaced the key in the crack in the wall, hastened down to the gallery.

When he entered it all the windows shook and clattered in the strangest way, but the Prince did not heed them; he was looking so carefully for the place where the sun shone most brightly, and it seemed to him that it was upon the portrait of a most splendidly handsome young man.

He went up and examined it, and found that it rested against the ebony and gold panelling, just like any of the other pictures in the gallery. He was puzzled, not knowing what to do next, until it occurred to him to see if the windows would help him, and, looking at the nearest, he saw a picture of himself lifting the picture from the wall.

The Prince took the hint, and lifting aside the picture without difficulty, found himself in a marble hall adorned with statues; from this he passed on through numbers of splendid rooms, until at last he reached one all hung with blue gauze. The walls were of turquoises, and upon a low couch lay a lovely lady, who seemed to be asleep. Her hair, black as ebony, was spread across the pillows, making her face look ivory white, and the Prince noticed that she was unquiet; and when he softly advanced, fearing to wake her, he could hear her sigh, and murmur to herself:

'Ah! how dared you think to win my love by separating me from my beloved Florimond, and in my presence cutting off that dear hand that even you should have feared and honoured?'

And then the tears rolled slowly down the lovely lady's cheeks, and Prince Curlicue began to comprehend that she was under an enchantment, and that it was the hand of her lover that he had found.

At this moment a huge Eagle flew into the room, holding in its talons a Golden Branch, upon which were growing what looked like clusters of cherries, only every cherry was a single glowing ruby.

This he presented to the Prince, who guessed by this time that he was in some way to break the enchantment that surrounded the sleeping lady. Taking the branch he touched her lightly with it, saying:

‘Fair one, I know not by what enchantment thou art bound, but in the name of thy beloved Florimond I conjure thee to come back to the life which thou hast lost, but not forgotten.’

Instantly the lady opened her lustrous eyes, and saw the Eagle hovering near.

‘Ah! stay, dear love, stay,’ she cried. But the Eagle, uttering a dolorous cry, fluttered his broad wings and disappeared. Then the lady turned to Prince Curlicue, and said:

‘I know that it is to you I owe my deliverance from an enchantment which has held me for two hundred years. If there is anything that I can do for you in return, you have only to tell me, and all my fairy power shall be used to make you happy.’

‘Madam,’ said Prince Curlicue, ‘I wish to be allowed to restore your beloved Florimond to his natural form, since I cannot forget the tears you shed for him.’

‘That is very amiable of you, dear Prince,’ said the Fairy, ‘but it is reserved for another person to do that. I cannot explain more at present. But is there nothing you wish for yourself?’

‘Madam,’ cried the Prince, flinging himself down at her feet, ‘only look at my ugliness. I am called Curlicue, and am an object of derision; I entreat you to make me less ridiculous.’

‘Rise, Prince,’ said the Fairy, touching him with the Golden Branch. ‘Be as accomplished as you are handsome, and take the name of Prince Peerless, since that is the only title which will suit you now.’

Silent from joy, the Prince kissed her hand to express his thanks, and when he rose and saw his new reflection in the mirrors which surrounded him, he understood that Curlicue was indeed gone for ever.

‘How I wish,’ said the Fairy, ‘that I dared to tell you what is in store for you, and warn you of the traps which lie in your path, but I must not. Fly from the tower, Prince, and remember that the Fairy Douceline will be your friend always.’

When she had finished speaking, the Prince, to his great astonishment, found himself no longer in the tower, but set down in a thick forest at least a hundred leagues away from it. And there we must leave him for the present, and see what was happening elsewhere.

When the guards found that the Prince did not ask for his supper as usual, they went into his room, and not finding him there, were very much alarmed, and searched the tower from turret to dungeon, but without success. Knowing that the King would certainly have their heads cut off for allowing the Prince to escape, they then agreed to say that he was ill, and after making the smallest among them look as much like Prince Curlicue as possible, they put him into his bed and sent to inform the King.

King Grumpy was quite delighted to hear that his son was ill, for he thought that he would all the sooner be brought to do as he wished, and marry the Princess. So he sent back to the guards to say that the Prince was to be treated as severely as before, which was just what they had hoped he would say. In the meantime the Princess Cabbage-Stalk had reached the palace, travelling in a litter.

King Grumpy went out to meet her, but when he saw her, with a skin like a tortoise's, her thick eyebrows meeting above her large nose, and her mouth from ear to ear, he could not help crying out:

'Well, I must say Curlicue is ugly enough, but I don't think YOU need have thought twice before consenting to marry him.'

'Sire,' she replied, 'I know too well what I am like to be hurt by what you say, but I assure you that I have no wish to marry your son I had rather be called Princess Cabbage-Stalk than Queen Curlicue.'

This made King Grumpy very angry.

'Your father has sent you here to marry my son,' he said, 'and you may be sure that I am not going to offend him by altering his arrangements.' So the poor Princess was sent away in disgrace to her own apartments, and the ladies who attended upon her were charged to bring her to a better mind.

At this juncture the guards, who were in great fear that they would be found out, sent to tell the King that his son was dead, which annoyed him very much. He at once made up his mind that it was entirely the Princess's fault, and gave orders that she should be imprisoned in the tower in Prince Curlicue's place. The Princess Cabbage-Stalk was immensely astonished at this unjust proceeding, and sent many messages of remonstrance to King Grumpy, but he was in such a temper that no one dared to deliver them, or to send the letters which the Princess wrote to her father. However, as she did not know this, she lived in hope of soon going back to

her own country, and tried to amuse herself as well as she could until the time should come. Every day she walked up and down the long gallery, until she too was attracted and fascinated by the ever-changing pictures in the windows, and recognised herself in one of the figures. ‘They seem to have taken a great delight in painting me since I came to this country,’ she said to herself. ‘One would think that I and my crutch were put in on purpose to make that slim, charming young shepherdess in the next picture look prettier by contrast. Ah! how nice it would be to be as pretty as that.’ And then she looked at herself in a mirror, and turned away quickly with tears in her eyes from the doleful sight. All at once she became aware that she was not alone, for behind her stood a tiny old woman in a cap, who was as ugly again as herself and quite as lame.

‘Princess,’ she said, ‘your regrets are so piteous that I have come to offer you the choice of goodness or beauty. If you wish to be pretty you shall have your way, but you will also be vain, capricious, and frivolous. If you remain as you are now, you shall be wise and amiable and modest.’

‘Alas I madam,’ cried the Princess, ‘is it impossible to be at once wise and beautiful?’

‘No, child,’ answered the old woman, ‘only to you it is decreed that you must choose between the two. See, I have brought with me my white and yellow muff. Breathe upon the yellow side and you will become like the pretty shepherdess you so much admire, and you will have won the love of the handsome shepherd whose picture I have already seen you studying with interest. Breathe upon the white side and your looks will not alter, but you will grow better and happier day by day. Now you may choose.’

‘Ah well,’ said the Princess, ‘I suppose one can’t have everything, and it’s certainly better to be good than pretty.’

And so she breathed upon the white side of the muff and thanked the old fairy, who immediately disappeared. The Princess Cabbage-Stalk felt very forlorn when she was gone, and began to think that it was quite time her father sent an army to rescue her.

‘If I could but get up into the turret,’ she thought, ‘to see if any one is coming.’ But to climb up there seemed impossible. Nevertheless she presently hit upon a plan. The great clock was in the turret, as she knew, though the weights hung down into the gallery. Taking one of them off the

rope, she tied herself on in its place, and when the clock was wound, up she went triumphantly into the turret. She looked out over the country the first thing, but seeing nothing she sat down to rest a little, and accidentally leant back against the wall which Curlicue, or rather Prince Peerless, had so hastily mended. Out fell the broken stone, and with it the golden key. The clatter it made upon the floor attracted the Princess Cabbage-Stalk's attention.

She picked it up, and after a moment's consideration decided that it must belong to the curious old cabinet in the corner, which had no visible keyhole. And then it was not long before she had it open, and was admiring the treasures it contained as much as Prince Peerless had done before her, and at last she came to the carbuncle box. No sooner had she opened it than with a shudder of horror she tried to throw it down, but found that some mysterious power compelled her to hold it against her will. And at this moment a voice in her ear said softly:

'Take courage, Princess; upon this adventure your future happiness depends.'

'What am I to do?' said the Princess trembling.

'Take the box,' replied the voice, 'and hide it under your pillow, and when you see an Eagle, give it to him without losing a moment.'

Terrified as the Princess was, she did not hesitate to obey, and hastened to put back all the other precious things precisely as she had found them. By this time her guards were seeking her everywhere, and they were amazed to find her up in the turret, for they said she could only have got there by magic. For three days nothing happened, but at last in the night the Princess heard something flutter against her window, and drawing back her curtains she saw in the moonlight that it was an Eagle.

Limping across at her utmost speed she threw the window open, and the great Eagle sailed in beating with his wings for joy. The Princess lost no time in offering it the carbuncle box, which it grasped in its talons, and instantly disappeared, leaving in its place the most beautiful Prince she had ever seen, who was splendidly dressed, and wore a diamond crown.

'Princess,' said he, 'for two hundred years has a wicked enchanter kept me here. We both loved the same Fairy, but she preferred me. However, he was more powerful than I, and succeeded, when for a moment I was off my guard, in changing me into an Eagle, while my Queen was left in an

enchanted sleep. I knew that after two hundred years a Prince would recall her to the light of day, and a Princess, in restoring to me the hand which my enemy had cut off, would give me back my natural form. The Fairy who watches over your destiny told me this, and it was she who guided you to the cabinet in the turret, where she had placed my hand. It is she also who permits me to show my gratitude to you by granting whatever favour you may ask of me. Tell me, Princess, what is it that you wish for most? Shall I make you as beautiful as you deserve to be?'

'Ah, if you only would!' cried the Princess, and at the same moment she heard a crick-cracking in all her bones. She grew tall and straight and pretty, with eyes like shining stars, and a skin as white as milk.

'Oh, wonderful! can this really be my poor little self?' she exclaimed, looking down in amazement at her tiny worn-out crutch as it lay upon the floor.

'Indeed, Princess,' replied Florimond, 'it is yourself, but you must have a new name, since the old one does not suit you now. Be called Princess Sunbeam, for you are bright and charming enough to deserve the name.'

And so saying he disappeared, and the Princess, without knowing how she got there, found herself walking under shady trees by a clear river. Of course, the first thing she did was to look at her own reflection in the water, and she was extremely surprised to find that she was exactly like the shepherdess she had so much admired, and wore the same white dress and flowery wreath that she had seen in the painted windows. To complete the resemblance, her flock of sheep appeared, grazing round her, and she found a gay crook adorned with flowers upon the bank of the river. Quite tired out by so many new and wonderful experiences, the Princess sat down to rest at the foot of a tree, and there she fell fast asleep. Now it happened that it was in this very country that Prince Peerless had been set down, and while the Princess Sunbeam was still sleeping peacefully, he came strolling along in search of a shady pasture for his sheep.

The moment he caught sight of the Princess he recognised her as the charming shepherdess whose picture he had seen so often in the tower, and as she was far prettier than he had remembered her, he was delighted that chance had led him that way.

He was still watching her admiringly when the Princess opened her eyes, and as she also recognised him they were soon great friends. The Princess asked Prince Peerless, as he knew the country better than she did, to tell her of some peasant who would give her a lodging, and he said he knew of an old woman whose cottage would be the very place for her, it was so nice and so pretty. So they went there together, and the Princess was charmed with the old woman and everything belonging to her. Supper was soon spread for her under a shady tree, and she invited the Prince to share the cream and brown bread which the old woman provided. This he was delighted to do, and having first fetched from his own garden all the strawberries, cherries, nuts and flowers he could find. they sat down together and were very merry. After this they met every day as they guarded their flocks, and were so happy that Prince Peerless begged the Princess to marry him, so that they might never be parted again. Now though the Princess Sunbeam appeared to be only a poor shepherdess, she never forgot that she was a real Princess, and she was not at all sure that she ought to marry a humble shepherd, though she knew she would like to do so very much.

So she resolved to consult an Enchanter of whom she had heard a great deal since she had been a shepherdess, and without saying a word to anybody she set out to find the castle in which he lived with his sister, who was a powerful Fairy. The way was long, and lay through a thick wood, where the Princess heard strange voices calling to her from every side, but she was in such a hurry that she stopped for nothing, and at last she came to the courtyard of the Enchanter’s castle.

The grass and briers were growing as high as if it were a hundred years since anyone had set foot there, but the Princess got through at last, though she gave herself a good many scratches by the way, and then she went into a dark, gloomy hall, where there was but one tiny hole in the wall through which the daylight could enter. The hangings were all of bats’ wings, and from the ceiling hung twelve cats, who filled the hall with their ear piercing yells. Upon the long table twelve mice were fastened by the tail, and just in front of each one’s nose, but quite beyond its reach, lay a tempting morsel of fat bacon. So the cats could always see the mice, but could not touch them, and the hungry mice were tormented by the sight and smell of the delicious morsels which they could never seize.

The Princess was looking at the poor creatures in dismay, when the Enchanter suddenly entered, wearing a long black robe and with a crocodile upon his head. In his hand he carried a whip made of twenty long snakes, all alive and writhing, and the Princess was so terrified at the sight that she heartily wished she had never come. Without saying a word she ran to the door, but it was covered with a thick spider's web, and when she broke it she found another, and another, and another. In fact, there was no end to them; the Princess's arms ached with tearing them down, and yet she was no nearer to getting out, and the wicked Enchanter behind her laughed maliciously. At last he said:

'You might spend the rest of your life over that without doing any good, but as you are young, and quite the prettiest creature I have seen for a long time, I will marry you if you like, and I will give you those cats and mice that you see there for your own. They are princes and princesses who have happened to offend me. They used to love one another as much as they now hate one another. Aha! It's a pretty little revenge to keep them like that.'

'Oh! If you would only change me into a mouse too,' cried the Princess.

'Oh! so you won't marry me?' said he. 'Little simpleton, you should have everything heart can desire.'

'No, indeed; nothing should make me marry you; in fact, I don't think I shall ever love anyone,' cried the Princess.

'In that case,' said the Enchanter, touching her, 'you had better become a particular kind of creature that is neither fish nor fowl; you shall be light and airy, and as green as the grass you live in. Off with you, Madam Grasshopper.' And the Princess, rejoicing to find herself free once more, skipped out into the garden, the prettiest little green Grasshopper in the world. But as soon as she was safely out she began to be rather sorry for herself.

'Ah! Florimond,' she sighed, 'is this the end of your gift? Certainly beauty is short-lived, and this funny little face and a green crape dress are a comical end to it. I had better have married my amiable shepherd. It must be for my pride that I am condemned to be a Grasshopper, and sing day and night in the grass by this brook, when I feel far more inclined to cry.'

In the meantime Prince Peerless had discovered the Princess's absence, and was lamenting over it by the river's brim, when he suddenly became aware of the presence of a little old woman. She was quaintly dressed in a ruff and farthingale, and a velvet hood covered her snow-white hair.

'You seem sorrowful, my son,' she said. 'What is the matter?'

'Alas! mother,' answered the Prince, 'I have lost my sweet shepherdess, but I am determined to find her again, though I should have to traverse the whole world in search of her.'

'Go that way, my son,' said the old woman, pointing towards the path that led to the castle. 'I have an idea that you will soon overtake her.'

The Prince thanked her heartily and set out. As he met with no hindrance, he soon reached the enchanted wood which surrounded the castle, and there he thought he saw the Princess Sunbeam gliding before him among the trees. Prince Peerless hastened after her at the top of his speed, but could not get any nearer; then he called to her:

'Sunbeam, my darling—only wait for me a moment.'

But the phantom did but fly the faster, and the Prince spent the whole day in this vain pursuit. When night came he saw the castle before him all lighted up, and as he imagined that the Princess must be in it, he made haste to get there too. He entered without difficulty, and in the hall the terrible old Fairy met him. She was so thin that the light shone through her, and her eyes glowed like lamps; her skin was like a shark's, her arms were thin as laths, and her fingers like spindles. Nevertheless she wore rouge and patches, a mantle of silver brocade and a crown of diamonds, and her dress was covered with jewels, and green and pink ribbons.

'At last you have come to see me, Prince,' said she. 'Don't waste another thought upon that little shepherdess, who is unworthy of your notice. I am the Queen of the Comets, and can bring you to great honour if you will marry me.'

'Marry you, Madam,' cried the Prince, in horror. 'No, I will never consent to that.'

Thereupon the Fairy, in a rage, gave two strokes of her wand and filled the gallery with horrible goblins, against whom the Prince had to fight for his life. Though he had only his dagger, he defended himself so well that he escaped without any harm, and presently the old Fairy stopped the fray and asked the Prince if he was still of the same mind. When he answered

firmly that he was, she called up the appearance of the Princess Sunbeam to the other end of the gallery, and said:

‘You see your beloved there? Take care what you are about, for if you again refuse to marry me she shall be torn in pieces by two tigers.’

The Prince was distracted, for he fancied he heard his dear shepherdess weeping and begging him to save her. In despair he cried:

‘Oh, Fairy Douceline, have you abandoned me after so many promises of friendship? Help, help us now!’

Immediately a soft voice said in his ear:

‘Be firm, happen what may, and seek the Golden Branch.’

Thus encouraged, the Prince persevered in his refusal, and at length the old Fairy in a fury cried:

‘Get out of my sight, obstinate Prince. Become a Cricket!’

And instantly the handsome Prince Peerless became a poor little black Cricket, whose only idea would have been to find himself a cosy cranny behind some blazing hearth, if he had not luckily remembered the Fairy Douceline’s injunction to seek the Golden Branch.

So he hastened to depart from the fatal castle, and sought shelter in a hollow tree, where he found a forlorn looking little Grasshopper crouching in a corner, too miserable to sing.

Without in the least expecting an answer, the Prince asked it:

‘And where may you be going, Gammer Grasshopper?’

‘Where are you going yourself, Gaffer Cricket?’ replied the Grasshopper.

‘What! can you speak?’ said he.

‘Why should I not speak as well as you? Isn’t a Grasshopper as good as a Cricket?’ said she.

‘I can talk because I was a Prince,’ said the Cricket.

‘And for that very same reason I ought to be able to talk more than you, for I was a Princess,’ replied the Grasshopper.

‘Then you have met with the same fate as I have,’ said he. ‘But where are you going now? Cannot we journey together?’

‘I seemed to hear a voice in the air which said: “Be firm, happen what may, and seek the Golden Branch,”’ answered the Grasshopper, ‘and I thought the command must be for me, so I started at once, though I don’t know the way.’

At this moment their conversation was interrupted by two mice, who, breathless from running, flung themselves headlong through the hole into the tree, nearly crushing the Grasshopper and the Cricket, though they got out of the way as fast as they could and stood up in a dark corner.

‘Ah, Madam,’ said the fatter of the two, ‘I have such a pain in my side from running so fast. How does your Highness find yourself?’

‘I have pulled my tail off,’ replied the younger Mouse, ‘but as I should still be on the sorcerer’s table unless I had, I do not regret it. Are we pursued, think you? How lucky we were to escape!’

‘I only trust that we may escape cats and traps, and reach the Golden Branch soon,’ said the fat Mouse.

‘You know the way then?’ said the other.

‘Oh dear, yes! as well as the way to my own house, Madam. This Golden Branch is indeed a marvel, a single leaf from it makes one rich for ever. It breaks enchantments, and makes all who approach it young and beautiful. We must set out for it at the break of day.’

‘May we have the honour of travelling with you—this respectable Cricket and myself?’ said the Grasshopper, stepping forward. ‘We also are on a pilgrimage to the Golden Branch.’

The Mice courteously assented, and after many polite speeches the whole party fell asleep. With the earliest dawn they were on their way, and though the Mice were in constant fear of being overtaken or trapped, they reached the Golden Branch in safety.

It grew in the midst of a wonderful garden, all the paths of which were strewn with pearls as big as peas. The roses were crimson diamonds, with emerald leaves. The pomegranates were garnets, the marigolds topazes, the daffodils yellow diamonds, the violets sapphires, the corn-flowers turquoises, the tulips amethysts, opals and diamonds, so that the garden borders blazed like the sun. The Golden Branch itself had become as tall as a forest tree, and sparkled with ruby cherries to its topmost twig. No sooner had the Grasshopper and the Cricket touched it than they were restored to their natural forms, and their surprise and joy were great when they recognised each other. At this moment Florimond and the Fairy Douceline appeared in great splendour, and the Fairy, as she descended from her chariot, said with a smile:

‘So you two have found one another again, I see, but I have still a surprise left for you. Don’t hesitate, Princess, to tell your devoted shepherd how dearly you love him, as he is the very Prince your father sent you to marry. So come here both of you and let me crown you, and we will have the wedding at once.’

The Prince and Princess thanked her with all their hearts, and declared that to her they owed all their happiness, and then the two Princesses, who had so lately been Mice, came and begged that the Fairy would use her power to release their unhappy friends who were still under the Enchanter’s spell.

‘Really,’ said the Fairy Douceline, ‘on this happy occasion I cannot find it in my heart to refuse you anything.’ And she gave three strokes of her wand upon the Golden Branch, and immediately all the prisoners in the Enchanter’s castle found themselves free, and came with all speed to the wonderful garden, where one touch of the Golden Branch restored each one to his natural form, and they greeted one another with many rejoicings. To complete her generous work the Fairy presented them with the wonderful cabinet and all the treasures it contained, which were worth at least ten kingdoms. But to Prince Peerless and the Princess Sunbeam she gave the palace and garden of the Golden Branch, where, immensely rich and greatly beloved by all their subjects, they lived happily ever after.[18]

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18. Le Rameau d’Or. Par Madame d’Aulnoy.

THE THREE DWARFS

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There was once upon a time a man who lost his wife, and a woman who lost her husband; and the man had a daughter and so had the woman. The two girls were great friends and used often to play together. One day the woman turned to the man's daughter and said:

'Go and tell your father that I will marry him, and then you shall wash in milk and drink wine, but my own daughter shall wash in water and drink it too.'

The girl went straight home and told her father what the woman had said.

'What am I to do?' he answered. 'Marriage is either a success or it is a failure.'

At last, being of an undecided character and not being able to make up his mind, he took off his boot, and handing it to his daughter, said:

'Take this boot which has a hole in the sole, hang it up on a nail in the hayloft, and pour water into it. If it holds water I will marry again, but if it doesn't I won't.' The girl did as she was bid, but the water drew the hole together and the boot filled up to the very top. So she went and told her father the result. He got up and went to see for himself, and when he saw that it was true and no mistake, he accepted his fate, proposed to the widow, and they were married at once.

On the morning after the wedding, when the two girls awoke, milk was standing for the man's daughter to wash in and wine for her to drink; but for the woman's daughter, only water to wash in and only water to drink. On the second morning, water to wash in and water to drink was standing for the man's daughter as well. And on the third morning, water to wash in and water to drink was standing for the man's daughter, and milk to wash in and wine to drink for the woman's daughter; and so it continued ever after. The woman hated her stepdaughter from the bottom of her heart, and did all she could to make her life miserable. She was as jealous as she

could possibly be, because the girl was so beautiful and charming, while her own daughter was both ugly and repulsive.

One winter's day when there was a hard frost, and mountain and valley were covered with snow, the woman made a dress of paper, and calling the girl to her said:

'There, put on this dress and go out into the wood and fetch me a basket of strawberries!'

'Now Heaven help us,' replied her stepdaughter; 'strawberries don't grow in winter; the earth is all frozen and the snow has covered up everything; and why send me in a paper dress? it is so cold outside that one's very breath freezes; the wind will whistle through my dress, and the brambles tear it from my body.'

'How dare you contradict me!' said her stepmother; 'be off with you at once, and don't show your face again till you have filled the basket with strawberries.'

Then she gave her a hard crust of bread, saying:

'That will be enough for you to-day,' and she thought to herself: 'The girl will certainly perish of hunger and cold outside, and I shan't be bothered with her any more.'

The girl was so obedient that she put on the paper dress and set out with her little basket. There was nothing but snow far and near, and not a green blade of grass to be seen anywhere. When she came to the wood she saw a little house, and out of it peeped three little dwarfs. She wished them good-day, and knocked modestly at the door. They called out to her to enter, so she stepped in and sat down on a seat by the fire, wishing to warm herself and eat her breakfast. The Dwarfs said at once: 'Give us some of your food!'

'Gladly,' she said, and breaking her crust in two, she gave them the half.

Then they asked her what she was doing in the depths of winter in her thin dress.

'Oh,' she answered, 'I have been sent to get a basketful of strawberries, and I daren't show my face again at home till I bring them with me.'

When she had finished her bread they gave her a broom and told her to sweep away the snow from the back door. As soon as she left the room to

do so, the three little men consulted what they should give her as a reward for being so sweet and good, and for sharing her last crust with them.

The first said: ‘Every day she shall grow prettier.’

The second: ‘Every time she opens her mouth a piece of gold shall fall out.’

And the third: ‘A King shall come and marry her.’

The girl in the meantime was doing as the Dwarfs had bidden her, and was sweeping the snow away from the back door, and what do you think she found there?—heaps of fine ripe strawberries that showed out dark red against the white snow. She joyfully picked enough to fill her basket, thanked the little men for their kindness, shook hands with them, and ran home to bring her stepmother what she had asked for. When she walked in and said; Good evening,’ a piece of gold fell out of her mouth. Then she told what had hap-pened to her in the wood, and at every word pieces of gold dropped from her mouth, so that the room was soon covered with them.

‘She’s surely more money than wit to throw gold about like that,’ said her stepsister, but in her secret heart she was very jealous, and determined that she too would go to the wood and look for strawberries. But her mother refused to let her go, saying:

‘My dear child, it is far too cold; you might freeze to death.’

The girl however left her no peace, so she was forced at last to give in, but she insisted on her putting on a beautiful fur cloak, and she gave her bread and butter and cakes to eat on the way.

The girl went straight to the little house in the wood, and as before the three little men were looking out of the window. She took no notice of them, and without as much as ‘By your leave,’ or ‘With your leave,’ she flounced into the room, sat herself down at the fire, and began to eat her bread and butter and cakes.

‘Give us some,’ cried the Dwarfs.

But she answered: ‘No, I won’t, it’s hardly enough for myself; so catch me giving you any.’

When she had finished eating they said:

‘There’s a broom for you, go and clear up our back door.’

‘I’ll see myself further,’ she answered rudely. ‘Do it yourselves; I’m not your servant.’

When she saw that they did not mean to give her anything, she left the house in no amiable frame of mind. Then the three little men consulted what they should do to her, because she was so bad and had such an evil, covetous heart, that she grudged everybody their good fortune.

The first said: ‘She shall grow uglier every day.’

The second: ‘Every time she speaks a toad shall jump out of her mouth.’

And the third: ‘She shall die a most miserable death.’

The girl searched for strawberries, but she found none, and returned home in a very bad temper. When she opened her mouth to tell her mother what had befallen her in the wood, a toad jumped out, so that everyone was quite disgusted with her.

Then the stepmother was more furious than ever, and did nothing but plot mischief against the man’s daughter, who was daily growing more and more beautiful. At last, one day the wicked woman took a large pot, put it on the fire and boiled some yarn in it. When it was well scalded she hung it round the poor girl’s shoulder, and giving her an axe, she bade her break a hole in the frozen river, and rinse the yarn in it. Her stepdaughter obeyed as usual, and went and broke a hole in the ice. When she was in the act of wringing out the yarn a magnificent carriage passed, and the King sat inside. The carriage stood still, and the King asked her:

‘My child, who are you, and what in the wide world are you doing here?’

‘I am only a poor girl,’ she answered, ‘and am rinsing out my yarn in the river.’ Then the King was sorry for her, and when he saw how beautiful she was he said:

‘Will you come away with me?’

‘Most gladly,’ she replied, for she knew how willingly she would leave her stepmother and sister, and how glad they would be to be rid of her.

So she stepped into the carriage and drove away with the King, and when they reached his palace the wedding was celebrated with much splendour. So all turned out just as the three little Dwarfs had said. After a year the Queen gave birth to a little son. When her stepmother heard of her good fortune she came to the palace with her daughter by way of paying a call, and took up her abode there. Now one day, when the King was out and nobody else near, the bad woman took the Queen by her head, and the

daughter took her by her heels, and they dragged her from her bed, and flung her out of the window into the stream which flowed beneath it. Then the stepmother laid her ugly daughter in the Queen's place, and covered her up with the clothes, so that nothing of her was seen. When the King came home and wished to speak to his wife the woman called out:

'Quietly, quietly I this will never do; your wife is very ill, you must let her rest all to-day.' The King suspected no evil, and didn't come again till next morning. When he spoke to his wife and she answered him, instead of the usual piece of gold a toad jumped out of her mouth. Then he asked what it meant, and the old woman told him it was nothing but weakness, and that she would soon be all right again.

But that same evening the scullion noticed a duck swimming up the gutter, saying as it passed:

'What does the King, I pray you tell,
Is he awake or sleeps he well?'

and receiving no reply, it continued:

'And all my guests, are they asleep?'

and the Scullion answered:

'Yes, one and all they slumber deep.'

Then the Duck went on:

'And what about my baby dear?'

and he answered:

'Oh, it sleeps soundly, never fear.'

Then the Duck assumed the Queen's shape, went up to the child's room, tucked him up comfortably in his cradle, and then swam back down

the gutter again, in the likeness of a Duck. This was repeated for two nights, and on the third the Duck said to the Scullion:

‘Go and tell the King to swing his sword three times over me on the threshold.’

The Scullion did as the creature bade him, and the King came with his sword and swung it three times over the bird, and lo and behold! his wife stood before him once more, alive, and as blooming as ever.

The King rejoiced greatly, but he kept the Queen in hiding till the Sunday on which the child was to be christened. After the christening he said:

‘What punishment does that person deserve who drags another out of bed, and throws him or her, as the case may be, into the water?’

Then the wicked old stepmother answered:

‘No better fate than to be put into a barrel lined with sharp nails, and to be rolled in it down the hill into the water.’

‘You have pronounced your own doom,’ said the King; and he ordered a barrel to be made lined with sharp nails, and in it he put the bad old woman and her daughter. Then it was fastened down securely, and the barrel was rolled down the hill till it fell into the river.[19]

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19. Grimm.

DAPPLEGRIM

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There was once upon a time a couple of rich folks who had twelve sons, and when the youngest was grown up he would not stay at home any longer, but would go out into the world and seek his fortune. His father and mother said that they thought he was very well off at home, and that he was welcome to stay with them; but he could not rest, and said that he must and would go, so at last they had to give him leave. When he had walked a long way, he came to a King's palace. There he asked for a place and got it.

Now the daughter of the King of that country had been carried off into the mountains by a Troll, and the King had no other children, and for this cause both he and all his people were full of sorrow and affliction, and the King had promised the Princess and half his kingdom to anyone who could set her free; but there was no one who could do it, though a great number had tried. So when the youth had been there for the space of a year or so, he wanted to go home again to pay his parents a visit; but when he got there his father and mother were dead, and his brothers had divided everything that their parents possessed between themselves, so that there was nothing at all left for him.

'Shall I, then, receive nothing at all of my inheritance?' asked the youth.

'Who could know that you were still alive—you who have been a wanderer so long?' answered the brothers. 'However, there are twelve mares upon the hills which we have not yet divided among us, and if you would like to have them for your share, you may take them.'

So the youth, well pleased with this, thanked them, and at once set off to the hill where the twelve mares were at pasture. When he got up there and found them, each mare had her foal, and by the side of one of them was a big dapple-grey foal as well, which was so sleek that it shone again.

'Well, my little foal, you are a fine fellow!' said the youth.

‘Yes, but if you will kill all the other little foals so that I can suck all the mares for a year, you shall see how big and handsome I shall be then!’ said the Foal.

So the youth did this—he killed all the twelve foals, and then went back again.

Next year, when he came home again to look after his mares and the foal, it was as fat as it could be, and its coat shone with brightness, and it was so big that the lad had the greatest difficulty in getting on its back, and each of the mares had another foal.

‘Well, it’s very evident that I have lost nothing by letting you suck all my mares,’ said the lad to the yearling; ‘but now you are quite big enough, and must come away with me.’

‘No,’ said the Colt, ‘I must stay here another year; kill the twelve little foals, and then I can suck all the mares this year also, and you shall see how big and handsome I shall be by summer.’

So the youth did it again, and when he went up on the hill next year to look after his colt and the mares, each of the mares had her foal again; but the dappled colt was so big that when the lad wanted to feel its neck to see how fat it was, he could not reach up to it, it was so high? and it was so bright that the light glanced off its coat.

‘Big and handsome you were last year, my colt, but this year you are ever so much handsomer,’ said the youth; ‘in all the King’s court no such horse is to be found. But now you shall come away with me.’

‘No,’ said the dappled Colt once more; ‘here I must stay for another year. Just kill the twelve little foals again, so that I can suck the mares this year also, and then come and look at me in the summer.’

So the youth did it—he killed all the little foals, and then went home again.

But next year, when he returned to look after the dappled colt and the mares, he was quite appalled. He had never imagined that any horse could become so big and overgrown, for the dappled horse had to lie down on all fours before the youth could get on his back, and it was very hard to do that even when it was lying down, and it was so plump that its coat shone and glistened just as if it had been a looking-glass. This time the dappled horse was not unwilling to go away with the youth, so he mounted it, and when he came riding home to his brothers they all smote their hands

together and crossed themselves, for never in their lives had they either seen or heard tell of such a horse as that.

‘If you will procure me the best shoes for my horse, and the most magnificent saddle and bridle that can be found,’ said the youth, ‘you may have all my twelve mares just as they are standing out on the hill, and their twelve foals into the bargain.’ For this year also each mare had her foal. The brothers were quite willing to do this; so the lad got such shoes for his horse that the sticks and stones flew high up into the air as he rode away over the hills, and such a gold saddle and such a gold bridle that they could be seen glittering and glancing from afar.

‘And now we will go to the King’s palace,’ said Dapplegrim—that was the horse’s name, ‘but bear in mind that you must ask the King for a good stable and excellent fodder for me.’

So the lad promised not to forget to do that. He rode to the palace, and it will be easily understood that with such a horse as he had he was not long on the way.

When he arrived there, the King was standing out on the steps, and how he did stare at the man who came riding up!

‘Nay,’ said he, ‘never in my whole life have I seen such a man and such a horse.’

And when the youth inquired if he could have a place in the King’s palace, the King was so delighted that he could have danced on the steps where he was standing, and there and then the lad was told that he should have a place.

‘Yes; but I must have a good stable and most excellent fodder for my horse,’ said he.

So they told him that he should have sweet hay and oats, and as much of them as the dappled horse chose to have, and all the other riders had to take their horses out of the stable that Dapplegrim might stand alone and really have plenty of room.

But this did not last long, for the other people in the King’s Court became envious of the lad, and there was no bad thing that they would not have done to him if they had but dared. At last they bethought themselves of telling the King that the youth had said that, if he chose, he was quite able to rescue the Princess who had been carried off into the mountain a long time ago by the Troll.

The King immediately summoned the lad into his presence, and said that he had been informed that he had said that it was in his power to rescue the Princess, so he was now to do it. If he succeeded in this, he no doubt knew that the King had promised his daughter and half the kingdom to anyone who set her free, which promise should be faithfully and honourably kept, but if he failed he should be put to death. The youth denied that he had said this, but all to no purpose, for the King was deaf to all his words; so there was nothing to be done but say that he would make the attempt.

He went down into the stable, and very sad and full of care he was. Then Dapplegrim inquired why he was so troubled, and the youth told him, and said that he did not know what to do, ‘for as to setting the Princess free, that was downright impossible.’

‘Oh, but it might be done,’ said Dapplegrim. ‘I will help you; but you must first have me well shod. You must ask for ten pounds of iron and twelve pounds of steel for the shoeing, and one smith to hammer and one to hold.’

So the youth did this, and no one said him nay. He got both the iron and the steel, and the smiths, and thus was Dapplegrim shod strongly and well, and when the youth went out of the King’s palace a cloud of dust rose up behind him. But when he came to the mountain into which the Princess had been carried, the difficulty was to ascend the precipitous wall of rock by which he was to get on to the mountain beyond, for the rock stood right up on end, as steep as a house side and as smooth as a sheet of glass. The first time the youth rode at it he got a little way up the precipice, but then both Dapplegrim’s fore legs slipped, and down came horse and rider with a sound like thunder among the mountains. The next time that he rode at it he got a little farther up, but then one of Dapplegrim’s fore legs slipped, and down they went with the sound of a landslip. But the third time Dapplegrim said: ‘Now we must show what we can do,’ and went at it once more till the stones sprang up sky high, and thus they got up. Then the lad rode into the mountain cleft at full gallop and caught up the Princess on his saddle-bow, and then out again before the Troll even had time to stand up, and thus the Princess was set free.

When the youth returned to the palace the King was both happy and delighted to get his daughter back again, as may easily be believed, but

somehow or other the people about the Court had so worked on him that he was angry with the lad too. ‘Thou shalt have my thanks for setting my Princess free,’ he said, when the youth came into the palace with her, and was then about to go away.

She ought to be just as much my Princess as she is yours now, for you are a man of your word,’ said the youth.

‘Yes, yes,’ said the King. ‘Have her thou shalt, as I have said it; but first of all thou must make the sun shine into my palace here.’

For there was a large and high hill outside the windows which overshadowed the palace so much that the sun could not shine in.

‘That was no part of our bargain,’ answered the youth. ‘But as nothing that I can say will move you, I suppose I shall have to try to do my best, for the Princess I will have.’

So he went down to Dapplegrim again and told him what the King desired, and Dapplegrim thought that it might easily be done; but first of all he must have new shoes, and ten pounds of iron and twelve pounds of steel must go to the making of them, and two smiths were also necessary, one to hammer and one to hold, and then it would be very easy to make the sun shine into the King’s palace.

The lad asked for these things and obtained them instantly, for the King thought that for very shame he could not refuse to give them, and so Dapplegrim got new shoes, and they were good ones. The youth seated himself on him, and once more they went their way, and for each hop that Dapplegrim made, down went the hill fifteen ells into the earth, and so they went on until there was no hill left for the King to see.

When the youth came down again to the King’s palace he asked the King if the Princess should not at last be his, for now no one could say that the sun was not shining into the palace. But the other people in the palace had again stirred up the King, and he answered that the youth should have her, and that he had never intended that he should not; but first of all he must get her quite as good a horse to ride to the wedding on as that which he had himself. The youth said that the King had never told him he was to do that, and it seemed to him that he had now really earned the Princess; but the King stuck to what he had said, and if the youth were unable to do it he was to lose his life, the King said. The youth went down to the stable again, and very sad and sorrowful he was, as anyone may well imagine.

Then he told Dapplegrim that the King had now required that he should get the Princess as good a bridal horse as that which the bridegroom had, or he should lose his life. ‘But that will be no easy thing to do,’ said he, ‘for your equal is not to be found in all the world.’

‘Oh yes, there is one to match me,’ said Dapplegrim. ‘But it will not be easy to get him, for he is underground. However, we will try. Now you must go up to the King and ask for new shoes for me, and for them we must again have ten pounds of iron, twelve pounds of steel, and two smiths, one to hammer and one to hold, but be very particular to see that the hooks are very sharp. And you must also ask for twelve barrels of rye, and twelve slaughtered oxen must we have with us, and all the twelve ox-hides with twelve hundred spikes set in each of them; all these things must we have, likewise a barrel of tar with twelve tons of tar in it. The youth went to the King and asked for all the things that Dapplegrim had named, and once more, as the King thought that it would be disgraceful to refuse them to him, he obtained them all.

So he mounted Dapplegrim and rode away from the Court, and when he had ridden for a long, long time over hills and moors, Dapplegrim asked: ‘Do you hear anything?’

‘Yes; there is such a dreadful whistling up above in the air that I think I am growing alarmed,’ said the youth.

‘That is all the wild birds in the forest flying about; they are sent to stop us,’ said Dapplegrim. ‘But just cut a hole in the corn sacks, and then they will be so busy with the corn that they will forget us.’

The youth did it. He cut holes in the corn sacks so that barley and rye ran out on every side, and all the wild birds that were in the forest came in such numbers that they darkened the sun. But when they caught sight of the corn they could not refrain from it, but flew down and began to scratch and pick at the corn and rye, and at last they began to fight among themselves, and forgot all about the youth and Dapplegrim, and did them no harm.

And now the youth rode onwards for a long, long time, over hill and dale, over rocky places and morasses, and then Dapplegrim began to listen again, and asked the youth if he heard anything now.

‘Yes; now I hear such a dreadful crackling and crashing in the forest on every side that I think I shall be really afraid,’ said the youth.

‘That is all the wild beasts in the forest,’ said Dapplegrim; ‘they are sent out to stop us. But just throw out the twelve carcasses of the oxen, and they will be so much occupied with them that they will quite forget us.’ So the youth threw out the carcasses of the oxen, and then all the wild beasts in the forest, both bears and wolves, and lions, and grim beasts of all kinds, came. But when they caught sight of the carcasses of the oxen they began to fight for them till the blood flowed, and they entirely forgot Dapplegrim and the youth.

So the youth rode onwards again, and many and many were the new scenes they saw, for travelling on Dapplegrim’s back was not travelling slowly, as may be imagined, and then Dapplegrim neighed.

‘Do you hear anything? he said.

‘Yes; I heard something like a foal neighing quite plainly a long, long way off,’ answered the youth.

‘That’s a full-grown colt,’ said Dapplegrim, ‘if you hear it so plainly when it is so far away from us.’

So they travelled onwards a long time, and saw one new scene after another once more. Then Dapplegrim neighed again.

‘Do you hear anything now?’ said he.

‘Yes; now I heard it quite distinctly, and it neighed like a full-grown horse,’ answered the youth.

‘Yes, and you will hear it again very soon,’ said Dapplegrim; ‘and then you will hear what a voice it has.’ So they travelled on through many more different kinds of country, and then Dapplegrim neighed for the third time; but before he could ask the youth if he heard anything, there was such a neighing on the other side of the heath that the youth thought that hills and rocks would be rent in pieces.

‘Now he is here!’ said Dapplegrim. ‘Be quick, and fling over me the ox-hides that have the spikes in them, throw the twelve tons of tar over the field, and climb up into that great spruce fir tree. When he comes, fire will spurt out of both his nostrils, and then the tar will catch fire. Now mark what I say—if the flame ascends I conquer, and if it sinks I fail; but if you see that I am winning, fling the bridle, which you must take off me, over his head, and then he will become quite gentle.’

Just as the youth had flung all the hides with the spikes over Dapplegrim, and the tar over the field, and had got safely up into the

spruce fir, a horse came with flame spouting from his nostrils, and the tar caught fire in a moment; and Dapplegrim and the horse began to fight until the stones leapt up to the sky. They bit, and they fought with their fore legs and their hind legs, and sometimes the youth looked at them. And sometimes he looked at the tar, but at last the flames began to rise, for wheresoever the strange horse bit or wheresoever he kicked he hit upon the spikes in the hides, and at length he had to yield. When the youth saw that, he was not long in getting down from the tree and flinging the bridle over the horse's head, and then he became so tame that he might have been led by a thin string.

This horse was dappled too, and so like Dapplegrim that no one could distinguish the one from the other. The youth seated himself on the dappled horse which he had captured, and rode home again to the King's palace, and Dapplegrim ran loose by his side. When he got there, the King was standing outside in the courtyard.

'Can you tell me which is the horse I have caught, and which is the one I had before?' said the youth. 'If you can't, I think your daughter is mine.'

The King went and looked at both the dappled horses; he looked high and he looked low, he looked before and he looked behind, but there was not a hair's difference between the two.

'No,' said the King; 'that I cannot tell thee, and as thou hast procured such a splendid bridal horse for my daughter thou shalt have her; but first we must have one more trial, just to see if thou art fated to have her. She shall hide herself twice, and then thou shalt hide thyself twice. If thou canst find her each time that she hides herself, and if she cannot find thee in thy hiding-places, then it is fated, and thou shalt have the Princess.'

'That, too, was not in our bargain,' said the youth. 'But we will make this trial since it must be so.'

So the King's daughter was to hide herself first.

Then she changed herself into a duck, and lay swimming in a lake that was just outside the palace. But the youth went down into the stable and asked Dapplegrim what she had done with herself.

'Oh, all that you have to do is to take your gun, and go down to the water and aim at the duck which is swimming about there, and she will soon discover herself,' said Dapplegrim.

The youth snatched up his gun and ran to the lake. ‘I will just have a shot at that duck,’ said he, and began to aim at it.

‘Oh, no, dear friend, don’t shoot! It is I,’ said the Princess. So he had found her once.

The second time the Princess changed herself into a loaf, and laid herself on the table among four other loaves; and she was so like the other loaves that no one could see any difference between them.

But the youth again went down to the stable to Dapplegrim, and told him that the Princess had hidden herself again, and that he had not the least idea what had become of her.

‘Oh, just take a very large bread-knife, sharpen it, and pretend that you are going to cut straight through the third of the four loaves which are lying on the kitchen table in the King’s palace—count them from right to left—and you will soon find her,’ said Dapplegrim.

So the youth went up to the kitchen, and began to sharpen the largest bread-knife that he could find; then he caught hold of the third loaf on the left-hand side, and put the knife to it as if he meant to cut it straight in two. ‘I will have a bit of this bread for myself,’ said he.

‘No, dear friend, don’t cut, it is I!’ said the Princess again; so he had found her the second time.

And now it was his turn to go and hide himself; but Dapplegrim had given him such good instructions that it was not easy to find him. First he turned himself into a horse-fly, and hid himself in Dapplegrim’s left nostril. The Princess went poking about and searching everywhere, high and low, and wanted to go into Dapplegrim’s stall too, but he began to bite and kick about so that she was afraid to go there, and could not find the youth. ‘Well,’ said she, ‘as I am unable to find you, you must show yourself; ‘whereupon the youth immediately appeared standing there on the stable floor.

Dapplegrim told him what he was to do the second time, and he turned himself into a lump of earth, and stuck himself between the hoof and the shoe on Dapplegrim’s left fore foot. Once more the King’s daughter went and sought everywhere, inside and outside, until at last she came into the stable, and wanted to go into the stall beside Dapplegrim. So this time he allowed her to go into it, and she peered about high and low, but she could

not look under his hoofs, for he stood much too firmly on his legs for that, and she could not find the youth.

‘Well, you will just have to show where you are yourself, for I can’t find you,’ said the Princess, and in an instant the youth was standing by her side on the floor of the stable.

‘Now you are mine!’ said he to the Princess.

‘Now you can see that it is fated that she should be mine,’ he said to the King.

‘Yes, fated it is,’ said the King. ‘So what must be, must.’

Then everything was made ready for the wedding with great splendour and promptitude, and the youth rode to church on Dapplegrim, and the King’s daughter on the other horse. So everyone must see that they could not be long on their way thither.[20]

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20. From J. Moe.

THE ENCHANTED CANARY

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I

Once upon a time, in the reign of King Cambrinus, there lived at Avesnes one of his lords, who was the finest man—by which I mean the fattest—in the whole country of Flanders. He ate four meals a day, slept twelve hours out of the twenty-four, and the only thing he ever did was to shoot at small birds with his bow and arrow.

Still, with all his practice he shot very badly, he was so fat and heavy, and as he grew daily fatter, he was at last obliged to give up walking, and be dragged about in a wheel-chair, and the people made fun of him, and gave him the name of my Lord Tubby.

Now, the only trouble that Lord Tubby had was about his son, whom he loved very much, although they were not in the least alike, for the young Prince was as thin as a cuckoo. And what vexed him more than all was, that though the young ladies throughout all his lands did their best to make the Prince fall in love with them, he would have nothing to say to any of them, and told his father he did not wish to marry.

Instead of chatting with them in the dusk, he wandered about the woods, whispering to the moon. No wonder the young ladies thought him very odd, but they liked him all the better for that; and as he had received at his birth the name of Desire, they all called him d'Amour Desire.

'What is the matter with you?' his father often said to him. 'You have everything you can possibly wish for: a good bed, good food, and tuns full of beer. The only thing you want, in order to become as fat as a pig, is a wife that can bring you broad, rich lands. So marry, and you will be perfectly happy.'

'I ask nothing better than to marry,' replied Desire, 'but I have never seen a woman that pleases me. All the girls here are pink and white, and I am tired to death of their eternal lilie and roses.

‘My faith!’ cried Tubby; ‘do you want to marry a negress, and give me grandchildren as ugly as monkeys and as stupid as owls?’

‘No, father, nothing of the sort. But there must be women somewhere in the world who are neither pink nor white, and I tell you, once for all, that I will never marry until I have found one exactly to my taste.’

II

Some time afterwards, it happened that the Prior of the Abbey of Saint Amand sent to the Lord of Avesnes a basket of oranges, with a beautifully-written letter saying that these golden fruit, then unknown in Flanders, came straight from a land where the sun always shone.

That evening Tubby and his son ate the golden apples at supper, and thought them delicious.

Next morning as the day dawned, Desire went down to the stable and saddled his pretty white horse. Then he went, all dressed for a journey, to the bedside of Tubby, and found him smoking his first pipe.

‘Father,’ he said gravely, ‘I have come to bid you farewell. Last night I dreamed that I was walking in a wood, where the trees were covered with golden apples. I gathered one of them, and when I opened it there came out a lovely princess with a golden skin. That is the wife I want, and I am going to look for her.’

The Lord of Avesnes was so much astonished that he let his pipe fall to the ground; then he became so diverted at the notion of his son marrying a yellow woman, and a woman shut up inside an orange, that he burst into fits of laughter.

Desire waited to bid him good-bye until he was quiet again; but as his father went on laughing and showed no signs of stopping, the young man took his hand, kissed it tenderly, opened the door, and in the twinkling of an eye was as at the bottom of the staircase. He jumped lightly on his horse, and was a mile from home before Tubby had ceased laughing.

‘A yellow wife! He must be mad! fit for a strait waistcoat!’ cried the good man, when he was able to speak. ‘Here! quick! bring him back to me.’

The servants mounted their horses and rode after the Prince; but as they did not know which road he had taken, they went all ways except the right one, and instead of bringing him back they returned themselves when it grew dark, with their horses worn out and covered with dust.

III

When Desire thought they could no longer catch him, he pulled his horse into a walk, like a prudent man who knows he has far to go. He travelled in this way for many weeks, passing by villages, towns, mountains, valleys, and plains, but always pushing south, where every day the sun seemed hotter and more brilliant.

At last one day at sunset Desire felt the sun so warm, that he thought he must now be near the place of his dream. He was at that moment close to the corner of a wood where stood a little hut, before the door of which his horse stopped of his own accord. An old man with a white beard was sitting on the doorstep enjoying the fresh air. The Prince got down from his horse and asked leave to rest.

‘Come in, my young friend,’ said the old man; ‘my house is not large, but it is big enough to hold a stranger.’

The traveller entered, and his host put before him a simple meal. When his hunger was satisfied the old man said to him:

‘If I do not mistake, you come from far. May I ask where you are going?’

‘I will tell you,’ answered Desire, ‘though most likely you will laugh at me. I dreamed that in the land of the sun there was a wood full of orange trees, and that in one of the oranges I should find a beautiful princess who is to be my wife. It is she I am seeking.’

‘Why should I laugh?’ asked the old man. ‘Madness in youth is true wisdom. Go, young man, follow your dream, and if you do not find the happiness that you seek, at any rate you will have had the happiness of seeking it.’

IV

The next day the Prince arose early and took leave of his host.

‘The wood that you saw in your dream is not far from here,’ said the old man. ‘It is in the depth of the forest, and this road will lead you there. You will come to a vast park surrounded by high walls. In the middle of the park is a castle, where dwells a horrible witch who allows no living being to enter the doors. Behind the castle is the orange grove. Follow the wall till you come to a heavy iron gate. Don’t try to press it open, but oil the hinges with this,’ and the old man gave him a small bottle.

‘The gate will open of itself,’ he continued, ‘and a huge dog which guards the castle will come to you with his mouth wide open, but just throw him this oat cake. Next, you will see a baking woman leaning over her heated oven. Give her this brush. Lastly, you will find a well on your left; do not forget to take the cord of the bucket and spread it in the sun. When you have done this, do not enter the castle, but go round it and enter the orange grove. Then gather three oranges, and get back to the gate as fast as you can. Once out of the gate, leave the forest by the opposite side.

‘Now, attend to this: whatever happens, do not open your oranges till you reach the bank of a river, or a fountain. Out of each orange will come a princess, and you can choose which you like for your wife. Your choice once made, be very careful never to leave your bride for an instant, and remember that the danger which is most to be feared is never the danger we are most afraid of.’

V

Desire thanked his host warmly, and took the road he pointed out. In less than an hour he arrived at the wall, which was very high indeed. He sprang to the ground, fastened his horse to a tree, and soon found the iron gate. Then he took out his bottle and oiled the hinges, when the gate opened of itself, and he saw an old castle standing inside. The Prince entered boldly into the courtyard.

Suddenly he heard fierce howls, and a dog as tall as a donkey, with eyes like billiard balls, came towards him, showing his teeth, which were like the prongs of a fork. Desire flung him the oat cake, which the great dog instantly snapped up, and the young Prince passed quietly on.

A few yards further he saw a huge oven, with a wide, red-hot gaping mouth. A woman as tall as a giant was leaning over the oven. Desire gave her the brush, which she took in silence.

Then he went on to the well, drew up the cord, which was half rotten, and stretched it out in the sun.

Lastly he went round the castle, and plunged into the orange grove. There he gathered the three most beautiful oranges he could find, and turned to go back to the gate.

But just at this moment the sun was darkened, the earth trembled, and Desire heard a voice crying:

‘Baker, baker, take him by his feet, and throw him into the oven!’

‘No,’ replied the baker; ‘a long time has passed since I first began to scour this oven with my own flesh. YOU never cared to give me a brush; but he has given me one, and he shall go in peace.’

‘Rope, O rope!’ cried the voice again, ‘twine yourself round his neck and strangle him.’

‘No,’ replied the rope; ‘you have left me for many years past to fall to pieces with the damp. He has stretched me out in the sun. Let him go in peace.’

‘Dog, my good dog,’ cried the voice, more and more angry, ‘jump at his throat and eat him up.’

‘No,’ replied the dog; ‘though I have served you long, you never gave me any bread. He has given me as much as I want. Let him go in peace.’

‘Iron gate, iron gate,’ cried the voice, growling like thunder, ‘fall on him and grind him to powder.’

‘No,’ replied the gate; ‘it is a hundred years since you left me to rust, and he has oiled me. Let him go in peace.’

VI

Once outside, the young adventurer put his oranges into a bag that hung from his saddle, mounted his horse, and rode quickly out of the forest.

Now, as he was longing to see the princesses, he was very anxious to come to a river or a fountain, but, though he rode for hours, a river or

fountain was nowhere to be seen. Still his heart was light, for he felt that he had got through the most difficult part of his task, and the rest was easy.

About mid-day he reached a sandy plain, scorching in the sun. Here he was seized with dreadful thirst; he took his gourd and raised it to his lips.

But the gourd was empty; in the excitement of his joy he had forgotten to fill it. He rode on, struggling with his sufferings, but at last he could bear it no longer.

He let himself slide to the earth, and lay down beside his horse, his throat burning, his chest heaving, and his head going round. Already he felt that death was near him, when his eyes fell on the bag where the oranges peeped out.

Poor Desire, who had braved so many dangers to win the lady of his dreams, would have given at this moment all the princesses in the world, were they pink or golden, for a single drop of water.

‘Ah!’ he said to himself. ‘If only these oranges were real fruit—fruit as refreshing as what I ate in Flanders! And, after all, who knows?’

This idea put some life into him. He had the strength to lift himself up and put his hand into his bag. He drew out an orange and opened it with his knife.

Out of it flew the prettiest little female canary that ever was seen.

‘Give me something to drink, I am dying of thirst,’ said the golden bird.

‘Wait a minute,’ replied Desire, so much astonished that he forgot his own sufferings; and to satisfy the bird he took a second orange, and opened it without thinking what he was doing. Out of it flew another canary, and she too began to cry:

‘I am dying of thirst; give me something to drink.’

Then Tubby’s son saw his folly, and while the two canaries flew away he sank on the ground, where, exhausted by his last effort, he lay unconscious.

VII

When he came to himself, he had a pleasant feeling of freshness all about him. It was night, the sky was sparkling with stars, and the earth was

covered with a heavy dew.

The traveller having recovered, mounted his horse, and at the first streak of dawn he saw a stream dancing in front of him, and stooped down and drank his fill.

He hardly had courage to open his last orange. Then he remembered that the night before he had disobeyed the orders of the old man. Perhaps his terrible thirst was a trick of the cunning witch, and suppose, even though he opened the orange on the banks of the stream, that he did not find in it the princess that he sought?

He took his knife and cut it open. Alas! out of it flew a little canary, just like the others, who cried:

‘I am thirsty; give me something to drink.’

Great was the disappointment of Desire. However, he was determined not to let this bird fly away; so he took up some water in the palm of his hand and held it to its beak.

Scarcely had the canary drunk when she became a beautiful girl, tall and straight as a poplar tree, with black eyes and a golden skin. Desire had never seen anyone half so lovely, and he stood gazing at her in delight.

On her side she seemed quite bewildered, but she looked about her with happy eyes, and was not at all afraid of her deliverer.

He asked her name. She answered that she was called the Princess Zizi; she was about sixteen years old, and for ten years of that time the witch had kept her shut up in an orange, in the shape of a canary.

‘Well, then, my charming Zizi,’ said the young Prince, who was longing to marry her, ‘let us ride away quickly so as to escape from the wicked witch.’

But Zizi wished to know where he meant to take her.

‘To my father’s castle,’ he said.

He mounted his horse and took her in front of him, and, holding her carefully in his arms, they began their journey.

VIII

Everything the Princess saw was new to her, and in passing through mountains, valleys, and towns, she asked a thousand questions. Desire was

charmed to answer them. It is so delightful to teach those one loves!

Once she inquired what the girls in his country were like.

‘They are pink and white,’ he replied, ‘and their eyes are blue.’

‘Do you like blue eyes?’ said the Princess; but Desire thought it was a good opportunity to find out what was in her heart, so he did not answer.

‘And no doubt,’ went on the Princess, ‘one of them is your intended bride?’

Still he was silent, and Zizi drew herself up proudly.

‘No,’ he said at last. ‘None of the girls of my own country are beautiful in my eyes, and that is why I came to look for a wife in the land of the sun. Was I wrong, my lovely Zizi?’

This time it was Zizi’s turn to be silent.

IX

Talking in this way they drew near to the castle. When they were about four stone-throws from the gates they dismounted in the forest, by the edge of a fountain.

‘My dear Zizi,’ said Tubby’s son, ‘we cannot present ourselves before my father like two common people who have come back from a walk. We must enter the castle with more ceremony. Wait for me here, and in an hour I will return with carriages and horses fit for a princess.’

‘Don’t be long,’ replied Zizi, and she watched him go with wistful eyes.

When she was left by herself the poor girl began to feel afraid. She was alone for the first time in her life, and in the middle of a thick forest.

Suddenly she heard a noise among the trees. Fearing lest it should be a wolf, she hid herself in the hollow trunk of a willow tree which hung over the fountain. It was big enough to hold her altogether, but she peeped out, and her pretty head was reflected in the clear water.

Then there appeared, not a wolf, but a creature quite as wicked and quite as ugly. Let us see who this creature was.

X

Not far from the fountain there lived a family of bricklayers. Now, fifteen years before this time, the father in walking through the forest found a little girl, who had been deserted by the gypsies. He carried her home to his wife, and the good woman was sorry for her, and brought her up with her own sons. As she grew older, the little gypsy became much more remarkable for strength and cunning than for sense or beauty. She had a low forehead, a flat nose, thick lips, coarse hair, and a skin not golden like that of Zizi, but the colour of clay.

As she was always being teased about her complexion, she got as noisy and cross as a titmouse. So they used to call her Titty.

Titty was often sent by the bricklayer to fetch water from the fountain, and as she was very proud and lazy the gypsy disliked this very much.

It was she who had frightened Zizi by appearing with her pitcher on her shoulder. Just as she was stooping to fill it, she saw reflected in the water the lovely image of the Princess.

‘What a pretty face!’ she exclaimed, ‘Why, it must be mine! How in the world can they call me ugly? I am certainly much too pretty to be their water carrier!’

So saying, she broke her pitcher and went home.

‘Where is your pitcher?’ asked the bricklayer.

‘Well, what do you expect? The pitcher may go many times to the well....’

‘But at last it is broken. Well, here is a bucket that will not break.’

The gypsy returned to the fountain, and addressing once more the image of Zizi, she said:

‘No; I don’t mean to be a beast of burden any longer.’ And she flung the bucket so high in the air that it stuck in the branches of an oak.

‘I met a wolf,’ she told the bricklayer, ‘and I broke the bucket across his nose.’

The bricklayer asked her no more questions, but took down a broom and gave her such a beating that her pride was humbled a little.

Then he handed to her an old copper milk-can, and said:

‘If you don’t bring it back full, your bones shall suffer for it.’

XI

Titty went off rubbing her sides; but this time she did not dare to disobey, and in a very bad temper stooped down over the well. It was not at all easy to fill the milk-can, which was large and round. It would not go down into the well, and the gypsy had to try again and again.

At last her arms grew so tired that when she did manage to get the can properly under the water she had no strength to pull it up, and it rolled to the bottom.

On seeing the can disappear, she made such a miserable face that Zizi, who had been watching her all this time, burst into fits of laughter.

Titty turned round and perceived the mistake she had made; and she felt so angry that she made up her mind to be revenged at once.

‘What are you doing there, you lovely creature?’ she said to Zizi.

‘I am waiting for my lover,’ Zizi replied; and then, with a simplicity quite natural in a girl who so lately had been a canary, she told all her story.

The gypsy had often seen the young Prince pass by, with his gun on his shoulder, when he was going after crows. She was too ugly and ragged for him ever to have noticed her, but Titty on her side had admired him, though she thought he might well have been a little fatter.

‘Dear, dear!’ she said to herself. ‘So he likes yellow women! Why, I am yellow too, and if I could only think of a way——’

It was not long before she did think of it.

‘What!’ cried the sly Titty, ‘they are coming with great pomp to fetch you, and you are not afraid to show yourself to so many fine lords and ladies with your hair down like that? Get down at once, my poor child, and let me dress your hair for you!’

The innocent Zizi came down at once, and stood by Titty. The gypsy began to comb her long brown locks, when suddenly she drew a pin from her stays, and, just as the titmouse digs its beak into the heads of linnets and larks, Titty dug the pin into the head of Zizi.

No sooner did Zizi feel the prick of the pin than she became a bird again, and, spreading her wings, she flew away.

‘That was neatly done,’ said the gypsy. ‘The Prince will be clever if he finds his bride.’ And, arranging her dress, she seated herself on the grass to await Desire.

XII

Meanwhile the Prince was coming as fast as his horse could carry him. He was so impatient that he was always full fifty yards in front of the lords and ladies sent by Tubby to bring back Zizi.

At the sight of the hideous gypsy he was struck dumb with surprise and horror.

‘Ah me!’ said Titty, ‘so you don’t know your poor Zizi? While you were away the wicked witch came, and turned me into this. But if you only have the courage to marry me I shall get back my beauty.’ And she began to cry bitterly.

Now the good-natured Desire was as soft-hearted as he was brave.

‘Poor girl,’ he thought to himself. ‘It is not her fault, after all, that she has grown so ugly, it is mine. Oh! why did I not follow the old man’s advice? Why did I leave her alone? And besides, it depends on me to break the spell, and I love her too much to let her remain like this.’

So he presented the gypsy to the lords and ladies of the Court, explaining to them the terrible misfortune which had befallen his beautiful bride.

They all pretended to believe it, and the ladies at once put on the false princess the rich dresses they had brought for Zizi.

She was then perched on the top of a magnificent ambling palfrey, and they set forth to the castle.

But unluckily the rich dress and jewels only made Titty look uglier still, and Desire could not help feeling hot and uncomfortable when he made his entry with her into the city.

Bells were pealing, chimes ringing, and the people filling the streets and standing at their doors to watch the procession go by, and they could hardly believe their eyes as they saw what a strange bride their Prince had chosen.

In order to do her more honour, Tubby came to meet her at the foot of the great marble staircase. At the sight of the hideous creature he almost fell backwards.

‘What!’ he cried. ‘Is this the wonderful beauty?’

‘Yes, father, it is she,’ replied Desire with a sheepish look. ‘But she has been bewitched by a wicked sorceress, and will not regain her beauty until she is my wife.’

‘Does she say so? Well, if you believe that, you may drink cold water and think it bacon,’ the unhappy Tubby answered crossly.

But all the same, as he adored his son, he gave the gypsy his hand and led her to the great hall, where the bridal feast was spread.

XIII

The feast was excellent, but Desire hardly touched anything. However, to make up, the other guests ate greedily, and, as for Tubby, nothing ever took away his appetite.

When the moment arrived to serve the roast goose, there was a pause, and Tubby took the opportunity to lay down his knife and fork for a little. But as the goose gave no sign of appearing, he sent his head carver to find out what was the matter in the kitchen.

Now this was what had happened.

While the goose was turning on the spit, a beautiful little canary hopped on to the sill of the open window.

‘Good-morning, my fine cook,’ she said in a silvery voice to the man who was watching the roast.

‘Good-morning, lovely golden bird,’ replied the chief of the scullions, who had been well brought up.

‘I pray that Heaven may send you to sleep,’ said the golden bird, ‘and that the goose may burn, so that there may be none left for Titty.’

And instantly the chief of the scullions fell fast asleep, and the goose was burnt to a cinder.

When he awoke he was horrified, and gave orders to pluck another goose, to stuff it with chestnuts, and put it on the spit.

While it was browning at the fire, Tubby inquired for his goose a second time. The Master Cook himself mounted to the hall to make his excuses, and to beg his lord to have a little patience. Tubby showed his patience by abusing his son.

‘As if it wasn’t enough,’ he grumbled between his teeth, ‘that the boy should pick up a hag without a penny, but the goose must go and burn now. It isn’t a wife he has brought me, it is Famine herself.’

XIV

While the Master Cook was upstairs, the golden bird came again to perch on the window-sill, and called in his clear voice to the head scullion, who was watching the spit:

‘Good-morning, my fine Scullion!’

‘Good-morning, lovely Golden Bird,’ replied the Scullion, whom the Master Cook had forgotten in his excitement to warn.

‘I pray Heaven,’ went on the Canary, ‘that it will send you to sleep, and that the goose may burn, so that there may be none left for Titty.’

And the Scullion fell fast asleep, and when the Master Cook came back he found the goose as black as the chimney.

In a fury he woke the Scullion, who in order to save himself from blame told the whole story.

‘That accursed bird,’ said the Cook; ‘it will end by getting me sent away. Come, some of you, and hide yourselves, and if it comes again, catch it and wring its neck.’

He spitted a third goose, lit a huge fire, and seated himself by it.

The bird appeared a third time, and said: ‘Good-morning, my fine Cook.’

‘Good-morning, lovely Golden Bird,’ replied the Cook, as if nothing had happened, and at the moment that the Canary was beginning, ‘I pray Heaven that it may send,’ a scullion who was hidden outside rushed out and shut the shutters. The bird flew into the kitchen. Then all the cooks and scullions sprang after it, knocking at it with their aprons. At length one of them caught it just at the very moment that Tubby entered the kitchen, waving his sceptre. He had come to see for himself why the goose had never made its appearance.

The Scullion stopped at once, just as he was about to wring the Canary’s neck.

XV

‘Will some one be kind enough to tell me the meaning of all this?’ cried the Lord of Avesnes.

‘Your Excellency, it is the bird,’ replied the Scullion, and he placed it in his hand.

‘Nonsense! What a lovely bird!’ said Tubby, and in stroking its head he touched a pin that was sticking between its feathers. He pulled it out, and lo! the Canary at once became a beautiful girl with a golden skin who jumped lightly to the ground.

‘Gracious! what a pretty girl!’ said Tubby.

‘Father! it is she! it is Zizi!’ exclaimed Desire, who entered at this moment.

And he took her in his arms, crying: ‘My darling Zizi, how happy I am to see you once more!’

‘Well, and the other one?’ asked Tubby.

The other one was stealing quietly to the door.

‘Stop her! called Tubby. ‘We will judge her cause at once.’

And he seated himself solemnly on the oven, and condemned Titty to be burned alive. After which the lords and cooks formed themselves in lines, and Tubby betrothed Desire to Zizi.

XVI

The marriage took place a few days later. All the boys in the country side were there, armed with wooden swords, and decorated with epaulets made of gilt paper.

Zizi obtained Titty’s pardon, and she was sent back to the brick-fields, followed and hooted at by all the boys. And this is why to-day the country boys always throw stones at a titmouse.

On the evening of the wedding-day all the larders, cellars, cupboards and tables of the people, whether rich or poor, were loaded as if by enchantment with bread, wine, beer, cakes and tarts, roast larks, and even geese, so that Tubby could not complain any more that his son had married Famine.

Since that time there has always been plenty to eat in that country, and since that time, too, you see in the midst of the fair-haired blue-eyed women of Flanders a few beautiful girls, whose eyes are black and whose skins are the colour of gold. They are the descendants of Zizi.[21]

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21. Charles Deulin, Contes du Roi Gambrinus.

THE TWELVE BROTHERS

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There were once upon a time a King and a Queen who lived happily together, and they had twelve children, all of whom were boys. One day the King said to his wife:

‘If our thirteenth child is a girl, all her twelve brothers must die, so that she may be very rich and the kingdom hers alone.’

Then he ordered twelve coffins to be made, and filled them with shavings, and placed a little pillow in each. These he put away in an empty room, and, giving the key to his wife, he bade her tell no one of it.

The Queen grieved over the sad fate of her sons and refused to be comforted, so much so that the youngest boy, who was always with her, and whom she had christened Benjamin, said to her one day:

‘Dear mother, why are you so sad?’

‘My child,’ she answered, ‘I may not tell you the reason.’

But he left her no peace, till she went and unlocked the room and showed him the twelve coffins filled with shavings, and with the little pillow laid in each.

Then she said: ‘My dearest Benjamin, your father has had these coffins made for you and your eleven brothers, because if I bring a girl into the world you are all to be killed and buried in them.’

She wept bitterly as she spoke, but her son comforted her and said:

‘Don’t cry, dear mother; we’ll manage to escape somehow, and will fly for our lives.’

‘Yes,’ replied his mother, ‘that is what you must do—go with your eleven brothers out into the wood, and let one of you always sit on the highest tree you can find, keeping watch on the tower of the castle. If I give birth to a little son I will wave a white flag, and then you may safely return; but if I give birth to a little daughter I will wave a red flag, which will warn you to fly away as quickly as you can, and may the kind Heaven have pity on you. Every night I will get up and pray for you, in winter that

you may always have a fire to warm yourselves by, and in summer that you may not languish in the heat.’

Then she blessed her sons and they set out into the wood. They found a very high oak tree, and there they sat, turn about, keeping their eyes always fixed on the castle tower. On the twelfth day, when the turn came to Benjamin, he noticed a flag waving in the air, but alas! it was not white, but blood red, the sign which told them they must all die. When the brothers heard this they were very angry, and said:

‘Shall we forsooth suffer death for the sake of a wretched girl? Let us swear vengeance, and vow that wherever and whenever we shall meet one of her sex, she shall die at our hands.’

Then they went their way deeper into the wood, and in the middle of it, where it was thickest and darkest, they came upon a little enchanted house which stood empty.

‘Here,’ they said, ‘let us take up our abode, and you, Benjamin, you are the youngest and weakest, you shall stay at home and keep house for us; we others will go out and fetch food.’ So they went forth into the wood, and shot hares and roe-deer, birds and wood-pigeons, and any other game they came across. They always brought their spoils home to Benjamin, who soon learnt to make them into dainty dishes. So they lived for ten years in this little house, and the time slipped merrily away.

In the meantime their little sister at home was growing up quickly. She was kind-hearted and of a fair countenance, and she had a gold star right in the middle of her forehead. One day a big washing was going on at the palace, and the girl looking down from her window saw twelve men’s shirts hanging up to dry, and asked her mother:

‘Who in the world do these shirts belong to? Surely they are far too small for my father?’

And the Queen answered sadly: ‘Dear child, they belong to your twelve brothers.’

‘But where are my twelve brothers?’ said the girl. ‘I have never even heard of them.’

‘Heaven alone knows in what part of the wide world they are wandering,’ replied her mother.

Then she took the girl and opened the locked-up room; she showed her the twelve coffins filled with shavings, and with the little pillow laid in

each.

‘These coffins,’ she said, ‘were intended for your brothers, but they stole secretly away before you were born.’

Then she to tell her all that had happened, and when she had finished her daughter said:

‘Do not cry, dearest mother; I will go and seek my brothers till I find them.’

So she took the twelve shirts and went on straight into the middle of the big wood. She walked all day long, and came in the evening to the little enchanted house. She stepped in and found a youth who, marvelling at her beauty, at the royal robes she wore, and at the golden star on her forehead, asked her where she came from and whither she was going.

‘I am a Princess,’ she answered, ‘and am seeking for my twelve brothers. I mean to wander as far as the blue sky stretches over the earth till I find them.’

Then she showed him the twelve shirts which she had taken with her, and Benjamin saw that it must be his sister, and said:

‘I am Benjamin, your youngest brother.’

So they wept for joy, and kissed and hugged each other again and again. After a time Benjamin said:

‘Dear sister, there is still a little difficulty, for we had all agreed that any girl we met should die at our hands, because it was for the sake of a girl that we had to leave our kingdom.’

‘But,’ she replied, ‘I will gladly die if by that means I can restore my twelve brothers to their own.’

‘No,’ he answered, ‘there is no need for that; only go and hide under that tub till our eleven brothers come in, and I’ll soon make matters right with them.’

She did as she was bid, and soon the others came home from the chase and sat down to supper.

‘Well, Benjamin, what’s the news?’ they asked. But he replied, ‘I like that; have you nothing to tell me?’

‘No,’ they answered.

Then he said: ‘Well, now, you’ve been out in the wood all the day and I’ve stayed quietly at home, and all the same I know more than you do.’

‘Then tell us,’ they cried.

But he answered: ‘Only on condition that you promise faithfully that the first girl we meet shall not be killed.’

‘She shall be spared,’ they promised, ‘only tell us the news.’

Then Benjamin said: ‘Our sister is here!’ and he lifted up the tub and the Princess stepped forward, with her royal robes and with the golden star on her forehead, looking so lovely and sweet and charming that they all fell in love with her on the spot.

They arranged that she should stay at home with Benjamin and help him in the house work, while the rest of the brothers went out into the wood and shot hares and roe-deer, birds and wood-pigeons. And Benjamin and his sister cooked their meals for them. She gathered herbs to cook the vegetables in, fetched the wood, and watched the pots on the fire, and always when her eleven brothers returned she had their supper ready for them. Besides this, she kept the house in order, tidied all the rooms, and made herself so generally useful that her brothers were delighted, and they all lived happily together.

One day the two at home prepared a fine feast, and when they were all assembled they sat down and ate and drank and made merry.

Now there was a little garden round the enchanted house, in which grew twelve tall lilies. The girl, wishing to please her brothers, plucked the twelve flowers, meaning to present one to each of them as they sat at supper. But hardly had she plucked the flowers when her brothers were turned into twelve ravens, who flew croaking over the wood, and the house and garden vanished also.

So the poor girl found herself left all alone in the wood, and as she looked round her she noticed an old woman standing close beside her, who said:

‘My child, what have you done? Why didn’t you leave the flowers alone? They were your twelve brothers. Now they are changed for ever into ravens.’

The girl asked, sobbing: ‘Is there no means of setting them free?’

‘No,’ said the old woman, ‘there is only one way in the whole world, and that is so difficult that you won’t free them by it, for you would have to be dumb and not laugh for seven years, and if you spoke a single word, though but an hour were wanting to the time, your silence would all have been in vain, and that one word would slay your brothers.’

Then the girl said to herself: ‘If that is all I am quite sure I can free my brothers.’ So she searched for a high tree, and when she had found one she climbed up it and spun all day long, never laughing or speaking one word.

Now it happened one day that a King who was hunting in the wood had a large greyhound, who ran sniffing to the tree on which the girl sat, and jumped round it, yelping and barking furiously. The King’s attention was attracted, and when he looked up and beheld the beautiful Princess with the golden star on her forehead, he was so enchanted by her beauty that he asked her on the spot to be his wife. She gave no answer, but nodded slightly with her head. Then he climbed up the tree himself, lifted her down, put her on his horse and bore her home to his palace.

The marriage was celebrated with much pomp and ceremony, but the bride neither spoke nor laughed.

When they had lived a few years happily together, the King’s mother, who was a wicked old woman, began to slander the young Queen, and said to the King:

‘She is only a low-born beggar maid that you have married; who knows what mischief she is up to? If she is deaf and can’t speak, she might at least laugh; depend upon it, those who don’t laugh have a bad conscience.’ At first the King paid no heed to her words, but the old woman harped so long on the subject, and accused the young Queen of so many bad things, that at last he let himself be talked over, and condemned his beautiful wife to death.

So a great fire was lit in the courtyard of the palace, where she was to be burnt, and the King watched the proceedings from an upper window, crying bitterly the while, for he still loved his wife dearly. But just as she had been bound to the stake, and the flames were licking her garments with their red tongues, the very last moment of the seven years had come. Then a sudden rushing sound was heard in the air, and twelve ravens were seen flying overhead. They swooped downwards, and as soon as they touched the ground they turned into her twelve brothers, and she knew that she had freed them.

They quenched the flames and put out the fire, and, unbinding their dear sister from the stake, they kissed and hugged her again and again. And now that she was able to open her mouth and speak, she told the King why she had been dumb and not able to laugh.

The King rejoiced greatly when he heard she was innocent, and they all lived happily ever afterwards.[22]

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22. Grimm.

RAPUNZEL

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Once upon a time there lived a man and his wife who were very unhappy because they had no children. These good people had a little window at the back of their house, which looked into the most lovely garden, full of all manner of beautiful flowers and vegetables; but the garden was surrounded by a high wall, and no one dared to enter it, for it belonged to a witch of great power, who was feared by the whole world. One day the woman stood at the window overlooking the garden, and saw there a bed full of the finest rampion: the leaves looked so fresh and green that she longed to eat them. The desire grew day by day, and just because she knew she couldn't possibly get any, she pined away and became quite pale and wretched. Then her husband grew alarmed and said:

'What ails you, dear wife?'

'Oh,' she answered, 'if I don't get some rampion to eat out of the garden behind the house, I know I shall die.'

The man, who loved her dearly, thought to himself, 'Come! rather than let your wife die you shall fetch her some rampion, no matter the cost.' So at dusk he climbed over the wall into the witch's garden, and, hastily gathering a handful of rampion leaves, he returned with them to his wife. She made them into a salad, which tasted so good that her longing for the forbidden food was greater than ever. If she were to know any peace of mind, there was nothing for it but that her husband should climb over the garden wall again, and fetch her some more. So at dusk over he got, but when he reached the other side he drew back in terror, for there, standing before him, was the old witch.

'How dare you,' she said, with a wrathful glance, 'climb into my garden and steal my rampion like a common thief? You shall suffer for your foolhardiness.'

'Oh!' he implored, 'pardon my presumption; necessity alone drove me to the deed. My wife saw your rampion from her window, and conceived

such a desire for it that she would certainly have died if her wish had not been gratified.' Then the Witch's anger was a little appeased, and she said:

'If it's as you say, you may take as much rampion away with you as you like, but on one condition only—that you give me the child your wife will shortly bring into the world. All shall go well with it, and I will look after it like a mother.'

The man in his terror agreed to everything she asked, and as soon as the child was born the Witch appeared, and having given it the name of Rapunzel, which is the same as rampion, she carried it off with her.

Rapunzel was the most beautiful child under the sun. When she was twelve years old the Witch shut her up in a tower, in the middle of a great wood, and the tower had neither stairs nor doors, only high up at the very top a small window. When the old Witch wanted to get in she stood underneath and called out:

'Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your golden hair,'

for Rapunzel had wonderful long hair, and it was as fine as spun gold. Whenever she heard the Witch's voice she unloosed her plaits, and let her hair fall down out of the window about twenty yards below, and the old Witch climbed up by it.

After they had lived like this for a few years, it happened one day that a Prince was riding through the wood and passed by the tower. As he drew near it he heard someone singing so sweetly that he stood still spell-bound, and listened. It was Rapunzel in her loneliness trying to while away the time by letting her sweet voice ring out into the wood. The Prince longed to see the owner of the voice, but he sought in vain for a door in the tower. He rode home, but he was so haunted by the song he had heard that he returned every day to the wood and listened. One day, when he was standing thus behind a tree, he saw the old Witch approach and heard her call out:

'Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your golden hair.'

Then Rapunzel let down her plaits, and the Witch climbed up by them.

‘So that’s the staircase, is it?’ said the Prince. ‘Then I too will climb it and try my luck.’

So on the following day, at dusk, he went to the foot of the tower and cried:

‘Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your golden hair,’

and as soon as she had let it down the Prince climbed up.

At first Rapunzel was terribly frightened when a man came in, for she had never seen one before; but the Prince spoke to her so kindly, and told her at once that his heart had been so touched by her singing, that he felt he should know no peace of mind till he had seen her. Very soon Rapunzel forgot her fear, and when he asked her to marry him she consented at once. ‘For,’ she thought, ‘he is young and handsome, and I’ll certainly be happier with him than with the old Witch.’ So she put her hand in his and said:

‘Yes, I will gladly go with you, only how am I to get down out of the tower? Every time you come to see me you must bring a skein of silk with you, and I will make a ladder of them, and when it is finished I will climb down by it, and you will take me away on your horse.’

They arranged that till the ladder was ready, he was to come to her every evening, because the old woman was with her during the day. The old Witch, of course, knew nothing of what was going on, till one day Rapunzel, not thinking of what she was about, turned to the Witch and said:

‘How is it, good mother, that you are so much harder to pull up than the young Prince? He is always with me in a moment.’

‘Oh! you wicked child,’ cried the Witch. ‘What is this I hear? I thought I had hidden you safely from the whole world, and in spite of it you have managed to deceive me.’

In her wrath she seized Rapunzel’s beautiful hair, wound it round and round her left hand, and then grasping a pair of scissors in her right, snip snap, off it came, and the beautiful plaits lay on the ground. And, worse

than this, she was so hard-hearted that she took Rapunzel to a lonely desert place, and there left her to live in loneliness and misery.

But on the evening of the day in which she had driven poor Rapunzel away, the Witch fastened the plaits on to a hook in the window, and when the Prince came and called out:

‘Rapunzel, Rapunzel,
Let down your golden hair,’

she let them down, and the Prince climbed up as usual, but instead of his beloved Rapunzel he found the old Witch, who fixed her evil, glittering eyes on him, and cried mockingly:

‘Ah, ah! you thought to find your lady love, but the pretty bird has flown and its song is dumb; the cat caught it, and will scratch out your eyes too. Rapunzel is lost to you for ever—you will never see her more.’

The Prince was beside himself with grief, and in his despair he jumped right down from the tower, and, though he escaped with his life, the thorns among which he fell pierced his eyes out. Then he wandered, blind and miserable, through the wood, eating nothing but roots and berries, and weeping and lamenting the loss of his lovely bride. So he wandered about for some years, as wretched and unhappy as he could well be, and at last he came to the desert place where Rapunzel was living. Of a sudden he heard a voice which seemed strangely familiar to him. He walked eagerly in the direction of the sound, and when he was quite close, Rapunzel recognised him and fell on his neck and wept. But two of her tears touched his eyes, and in a moment they became quite clear again, and he saw as well as he had ever done. Then he led her to his kingdom, where they were received and welcomed with great joy, and they lived happily ever after.[23]

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23. Grimm.

THE NETTLE SPINNER

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I

Once upon a time there lived at Quesnoy, in Flanders, a great lord whose name was Burchard, but whom the country people called Burchard the Wolf. Now Burchard had such a wicked, cruel heart, that it was whispered how he used to harness his peasants to the plough, and force them by blows from his whip to till his land with naked feet.

His wife, on the other hand, was always tender and pitiful to the poor and miserable.

Every time that she heard of another misdeed of her husband's she secretly went to repair the evil, which caused her name to be blessed throughout the whole country-side. This Countess was adored as much as the Count was hated.

II

One day when he was out hunting the Count passed through a forest, and at the door of a lonely cottage he saw a beautiful girl spinning hemp.

'What is your name?' he asked her.

'Renelde, my lord.'

'You must get tired of staying in such a lonely place?'

'I am accustomed to it, my lord, and I never get tired of it.'

'That may be so; but come to the castle, and I will make you lady's maid to the Countess.'

'I cannot do that, my lord. I have to look after my grandmother, who is very helpless.'

'Come to the castle, I tell you. I shall expect you this evening,' and he went on his way.

But Renelde, who was betrothed to a young wood-cutter called Guilbert, had no intention of obeying the Count, and she had, besides, to take care of her grandmother.

Three days later the Count again passed by.

‘Why didn’t you come?’ he asked the pretty spinner.

‘I told you, my lord, that I have to look after my grandmother.’ ‘Come to-morrow, and I will make you lady-in-waiting to the Countess,’ and he went on his way.

This offer produced no more effect than the other, and Renelde did not go to the castle.

‘If you will only come,’ said the Count to her when next he rode by, ‘I will send away the Countess, and will marry you.’

But two years before, when Renelde’s mother was dying of a long illness, the Countess had not forgotten them, but had given help when they sorely needed it. So even if the Count had really wished to marry Renelde, she would always have refused.

III

Some weeks passed before Burchard appeared again.

Renelde hoped she had got rid of him, when one day he stopped at the door, his duck-gun under his arm and his game-bag on his shoulder. This time Renelde was spinning not hemp, but flax.

‘What are you spinning?’ he asked in a rough voice.

‘My wedding shift, my lord.’

‘You are going to be married, then?’

‘Yes, my lord, by your leave.’

For at that time no peasant could marry without the leave of his master.

‘I will give you leave on one condition. Do you see those tall nettles that grow on the tombs in the churchyard? Go and gather them, and spin them into two fine shifts. One shall be your bridal shift, and the other shall be my shroud. For you shall be married the day that I am laid in my grave.’ And the Count turned away with a mocking laugh.

Renelde trembled. Never in all Locquignol had such a thing been heard of as the spinning of nettles.

And besides, the Count seemed made of iron and was very proud of his strength, often boasting that he should live to be a hundred.

Every evening, when his work was done, Guilbert came to visit his future bride. This evening he came as usual, and Renelde told him what Burchard had said.

‘Would you like me to watch for the Wolf, and split his skull with a blow from my axe?’

‘No,’ replied Renelde, ‘there must be no blood on my bridal bouquet. And then we must not hurt the Count. Remember how good the Countess was to my mother.’

An old, old woman now spoke: she was the mother of Renelde’s grandmother, and was more than ninety years old. All day long she sat in her chair nodding her head and never saying a word.

‘My children,’ she said, ‘all the years that I have lived in the world, I have never heard of a shift spun from nettles. But what God commands, man can do. Why should not Renelde try it?’

IV

Renelde did try, and to her great surprise the nettles when crushed and prepared gave a good thread, soft and light and firm. Very soon she had spun the first shift, which was for her own wedding. She wove and cut it out at once, hoping that the Count would not force her to begin the other. Just as she had finished sewing it, Burchard the Wolf passed by.

‘Well,’ said he, ‘how are the shifts getting on?’

‘Here, my lord, is my wedding garment,’ answered Renelde, showing him the shift, which was the finest and whitest ever seen.

The Count grew pale, but he replied roughly, ‘Very good. Now begin the other.’

The spinner set to work. As the Count returned to the castle, a cold shiver passed over him, and he felt, as the saying is, that some one was walking over his grave. He tried to eat his supper, but could not; he went to

bed shaking with fever. But he did not sleep, and in the morning could not manage to rise.

This sudden illness, which every instant became worse, made him very uneasy. No doubt Renelde's spinning-wheel knew all about it. Was it not necessary that his body, as well as his shroud, should be ready for the burial?

The first thing Burchard did was to send to Renelde and to stop her wheel.

Renelde obeyed, and that evening Guilbert asked her:

'Has the Count given his consent to our marriage?'

'No,' said Renelde.

'Continue your work, sweetheart. It is the only way of gaining it. You know he told you so himself.'

V

The following morning, as soon as she had put the house in order, the girl sat down to spin. Two hours after there arrived some soldiers, and when they saw her spinning they seized her, tied her arms and legs, and carried her to the bank of the river, which was swollen by the late rains.

When they reached the bank they flung her in, and watched her sink, after which they left her. But Renelde rose to the surface, and though she could not swim she struggled to land.

Directly she got home she sat down and began to spin.

Again came the two soldiers to the cottage and seized the girl, carried her to the river bank, tied a stone to her neck and flung her into the water.

The moment their backs were turned the stone untied itself. Renelde waded the ford, returned to the hut, and sat down to spin.

This time the Count resolved to go to Locquignol himself; but, as he was very weak and unable to walk, he had himself borne in a litter. And still the spinner spun.

When he saw her he fired a shot at her, as he would have fired at a wild beast. The bullet rebounded without harming the spinner, who still spun on.

Burchard fell into such a violent rage that it nearly killed him. He broke the wheel into a thousand pieces, and then fell fainting on the ground. He was carried back to the castle, unconscious.

The next day the wheel was mended, and the spinner sat down to spin. Feeling that while she was spinning he was dying, the Count ordered that her hands should be tied, and that they should not lose sight of her for one instant.

But the guards fell asleep, the bonds loosed themselves, and the spinner spun on.

Burchard had every nettle rooted up for three leagues round. Scarcely had they been torn from the soil when they sowed themselves afresh, and grew as you were looking at them.

They sprung up even in the well-trodden floor of the cottage, and as fast as they were uprooted the distaff gathered to itself a supply of nettles, crushed, prepared, and ready for spinning.

And every day Burchard grew worse, and watched his end approaching.

VI

Moved by pity for her husband, the Countess at last found out the cause of his illness, and entreated him to allow himself to be cured. But the Count in his pride refused more than ever to give his consent to the marriage.

So the lady resolved to go without his knowledge to pray for mercy from the spinner, and in the name of Renelde's dead mother she besought her to spin no more. Renelde gave her promise, but in the evening Guilbert arrived at the cottage. Seeing that the cloth was no farther advanced than it was the evening before, he inquired the reason. Renelde confessed that the Countess had prayed her not to let her husband die.

'Will he consent to our marriage?'

'No.'

'Let him die then.'

'But what will the Countess say?'

'The Countess will understand that it is not your fault; the Count alone is guilty of his own death.'

'Let us wait a little. Perhaps his heart may be softened.'

So they waited for one month, for two, for six, for a year. The spinner spun no more. The Count had ceased to persecute her, but he still refused his consent to the marriage. Guilbert became impatient.

The poor girl loved him with her whole soul, and she was more unhappy than she had been before, when Burchard was only tormenting her body.

‘Let us have done with it,’ said Guilbert.

‘Wait a little still,’ pleaded Renelde.

But the young man grew weary. He came more rarely to Locquignol, and very soon he did not come at all. Renelde felt as if her heart would break, but she held firm.

One day she met the Count. She clasped her hands as if in prayer, and cried:

‘My lord, have mercy!’

Burchard the Wolf turned away his head and passed on.

She might have humbled his pride had she gone to her spinning-wheel again, but she did nothing of the sort.

Not long after she learnt that Guilbert had left the country. He did not even come to say good-bye to her, but, all the same, she knew the day and hour of his departure, and hid herself on the road to see him once more.

When she came in she put her silent wheel into a corner, and cried for three days and three nights.

VII

So another year went by. Then the Count fell ill, and the Countess supposed that Renelde, weary of waiting, had begun her spinning anew; but when she came to the cottage to see, she found the wheel silent.

However, the Count grew worse and worse till he was given up by the doctors. The passing bell was rung, and he lay expecting Death to come for him. But Death was not so near as the doctors thought, and still he lingered.

He seemed in a desperate condition, but he got neither better nor worse. He could neither live nor die; he suffered horribly, and called loudly on Death to put an end to his pains.

In this extremity he remembered what he had told the little spinner long ago. If Death was so slow in coming, it was because he was not ready to follow him, having no shroud for his burial.

He sent to fetch Renelde, placed her by his bedside, and ordered her at once to go on spinning his shroud.

Hardly had the spinner begun to work when the Count began to feel his pains grow less.

Then at last his heart melted; he was sorry for all the evil he had done out of pride, and implored Renelde to forgive him. So Renelde forgave him, and went on spinning night and day.

When the thread of the nettles was spun she wove it with her shuttle, and then cut the shroud and began to sew it.

And as before, when she sewed the Count felt his pains grow less, and the life sinking within him, and when the needle made the last stitch he gave his last sigh.

VIII

At the same hour Guilbert returned to the country, and, as he had never ceased to love Renelde, he married her eight days later.

He had lost two years of happiness, but comforted himself with thinking that his wife was a clever spinner, and, what was much more rare, a brave and good woman.[24]

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24. Ch. Denlin.

FARMER WEATHERBEARD

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There was once upon a time a man and a woman who had an only son, and he was called Jack. The woman thought that it was his duty to go out to service, and told her husband that he was to take him somewhere.

‘You must get him such a good place that he will become master of all masters,’ she said, and then she put some food and a roll of tobacco into a bag for them.

Well, they went to a great many masters, but all said that they could make the lad as good as they were themselves, but better than that they could not make him. When the man came home to the old woman with this answer, she said, ‘I shall be equally well pleased whatever you do with him; but this I do say, that you are to have him made a master over all masters.’ Then she once more put some food and a roll of tobacco into the bag, and the man and his son had to set out again.

When they had walked some distance they got upon the ice, and there they met a man in a carriage who was driving a black horse.

‘Where are you going?’ he said.

‘I have to go and get my son apprenticed to someone who will be able to teach him a trade, for my old woman comes of such well-to-do folk that she insists on his being taught to be master of all masters,’ said the man.

‘We are not ill met, then,’ said the man who was driving, ‘for I am the kind of man who can do that, and I am just looking out for such an apprentice. Get up behind with you,’ he said to the boy, and off the horse went with them straight up into the air.

‘No, no, wait a little!’ screamed the father of the boy. ‘I ought to know what your name is and where you live.’

‘Oh, I am at home both in the north and the south and the east and the west, and I am called Farmer Weatherbeard,’ said the master. ‘You may come here again in a year’s time, and then I will tell you if the lad suits me.’ And then they set off again and were gone.

When the man got home the old woman inquired what had become of the son.

‘Ah! Heaven only knows what has become of him!’ said the man. ‘They went up aloft.’ And then he told her what had happened.

But when the woman heard that, and found that the man did not at all know either when their son would be out of his apprentice-ship, or where he had gone, she packed him off again to find out, and gave him a bag of food and a roll of tobacco to take away with him.

When he had walked for some time he came to a great wood, and it stretched before him all day long as he went on, and when night began to fall he saw a great light, and went towards it. After a long, long time he came to a small hut at the foot of a rock, outside which an old woman was standing drawing water up from a well with her nose, it was so long.

‘Good-evening, mother,’ said the man.

‘Good-evening to you too,’ said the old woman. ‘No one has called me mother this hundred years.’

‘Can I lodge here to-night?’ said the man.

‘No,’ said the old woman. But the man took out his roll of tobacco, lighted a little of it, and then gave her a whiff. Then she was so delighted that she began to dance, and thus the man got leave to stay the night there. It was not long before he asked about Farmer Weatherbeard.

She said that she knew nothing about him, but that she ruled over all the four-footed beasts, and some of them might know him. So she gathered them all together by blowing a whistle which she had, and questioned them, but there was not one of them which knew anything about Farmer Weatherbeard.

‘Well,’ said the old woman, ‘there are three of us sisters; it may be that one of the other two knows where he is to be found. You shall have the loan of my horse and carriage, and then you will get there by night; but her house is three hundred miles off, go the nearest way you will.’

The man set out and got there at night. When he arrived, this old woman also was standing drawing water out of the well with her nose.

‘Good-evening, mother,’ said the man.

‘Good-evening to you,’ said the old woman. ‘No one has ever called me mother this hundred years.’

‘Can I lodge here to-night?’ said the man.

‘No,’ said the old woman.

Then he took out the roll of tobacco, took a whiff, and gave the old woman some snuff on the back of her hand. Then she was so delighted that she began to dance, and the man got leave to stay all night. It was not long before he began to ask about Farmer Weatherbeard.

She knew nothing about him, but she ruled over all the fishes, she said, and perhaps some of them might know something. So she gathered them all together by blowing a whistle which she had, and questioned them, but there was not one of them which knew anything about Farmer Weatherbeard.

‘Well,’ said the old woman, ‘I have another sister; perhaps she may know something about him. She lives six hundred miles off, but you shall have my horse and carriage, and then you will get there by nightfall.’

So the man set off and he got there by nightfall. The old woman was standing raking the fire, and she was doing it with her nose, so long it was.

‘Good-evening, mother,’ said the man.

‘Good-evening to you,’ said the old woman. ‘No one has called me mother this hundred years.’

‘Can I lodge here to-night?’ said the man.

‘No,’ said the old woman. But the man pulled out his roll of tobacco again, and filled his pipe with some of it, and gave the old woman enough snuff to cover the back of her hand. Then she was so delighted that she began to dance, and the man got leave to stay in her house. It was not long before he asked about Farmer Weatherbeard. She knew nothing at all about him, she said, but she governed all the birds; and she gathered them together with her whistle. When she questioned them all, the eagle was not there, but it came soon afterwards, and when asked, it said that it had just come from Farmer Weatherbeard’s. Then the old woman said that it was to guide the man to him. But the eagle would have something to eat first, and then it wanted to wait until the next day, for it was so tired with the long journey that it was scarcely able to rise from the earth.

When the eagle had had plenty of food and rest, the old woman plucked a feather out of its tail, and set the man in the feather’s place, and then the bird flew away with him, but they did not get to Farmer Weatherbeard’s before midnight.

When they got there the Eagle said: ‘There are a great many dead bodies lying outside the door, but you must not concern yourself about them. The people who are inside the house are all so sound asleep that it will not be easy to awake them; but you must go straight to the table-drawer, and take out three bits of bread, and if you hear anyone snoring, pluck three feathers from his head; he will not waken for that.’

The man did this; when he had got the bits of bread he first plucked out one feather.

‘Oof!’ screamed Farmer Weatherbeard.

So the man plucked out another, and then Farmer Weatherbeard shrieked ‘Oof!’ again; but when the man had plucked the third, Farmer Weatherbeard screamed so loudly that the man thought that brick and mortar would be rent in twain, but for all that he went on sleeping. And now the Eagle told the man what he was to do next, and he did it. He went to the stable door, and there he stumbled against a hard stone, which he picked up, and beneath it lay three splinters of wood, which he also picked up. He knocked at the stable door and it opened at once. He threw down the three little bits of bread and a hare came out and ate them. He caught the hare. Then the Eagle told him to pluck three feathers out of its tail, and put in the hare, the stone, the splinters of wood and himself instead of them, and then he would be able to carry them all home.

When the Eagle had flown a long way it alighted on a stone.

‘Do you see anything?’ it asked.

‘Yes; I see a flock of crows coming flying after us,’ said the man.

‘Then we shall do well to fly on a little farther,’ said the Eagle, and off it set.

In a short time it asked again, ‘Do you see anything now?’

‘Yes; now the crows are close behind us,’ said the man.

‘Then throw down the three feathers which you plucked out of his head,’ said the Eagle.

So the man did this, and no sooner had he flung them down than the feathers became a flock of ravens, which chased the crows home again. Then the Eagle flew on much farther with the man, but at length it alighted on a stone for a while.

‘Do you see anything?’ it said.

‘I am not quite certain,’ said the man, ‘but I think I see something coming in the far distance.’

‘Then we shall do well to fly on a little farther,’ said the Eagle, and away it went.

‘Do you see anything now?’ it said, after some time had gone by.

‘Yes; now they are close behind us,’ said the man.

‘Then throw down the splinters of wood which you took from beneath the gray stone by the stable door,’ said the Eagle. The man did this, and no sooner had he flung them down than they grew up into a great thick wood, and Farmer Weatherbeard had to go home for an axe to cut his way through it. So the Eagle flew on a long, long way, but then it grew tired and sat down on a fir tree.

‘Do you see anything?’ it asked.

‘Yes; I am not quite certain,’ said the man, ‘but I think I can catch a glimpse of something far, far away.’

‘Then we shall do well to fly on a little farther,’ said the Eagle, and it set off again.

‘Do you see anything now?’ it said after some time had gone by.

‘Yes; he is close behind us now,’ said the man.

‘Then you must fling down the great stone which you took away from the stable door,’ said the Eagle.

The man did so, and it turned into a great high mountain of stone, which Farmer Weatherbeard had to break his way through before he could follow them. But when he had got to the middle of the mountain he broke one of his legs, so he had to go home to get it put right.

While he was doing this the Eagle flew off to the man’s home with him, and with the hare, and when they had got home the man went to the churchyard, and had some Christian earth laid upon the hare, and then it turned into his son Jack.

When the time came for the fair the youth turned himself into a light-coloured horse, and bade his father go to the market with him. ‘If anyone should come who wants to buy me,’ said he, ‘you are to tell him that you want a hundred dollars for me; but you must not forget to take off the halter, for if you do I shall never be able to get away from Farmer Weatherbeard, for he is the man who will come and bargain for me.’

And thus it happened. A horse-dealer came who had a great fancy to bargain for the horse, and the man got a hundred dollars for it, but when the bargain was made, and Jack's father had got the money, the horse-dealer wanted to have the halter.

'That was no part of our bargain,' said the man, 'and the halter you shall not have, for I have other horses which I shall have to sell.'

So each of them went his way. But the horse dealer had not got very far with Jack before he resumed his own form again, and when the man got home he was sitting on the bench by the stove.

The next day he changed himself into a brown horse and told his father that he was to set off to market with him. 'If a man should come who wants to buy me,' said Jack, 'you are to tell him that you want two hundred dollars, for that he will give, and treat you besides; but whatsoever you drink, and whatsoever you do, don't forget to take the halter off me, or you will never see me more.'

And thus it happened. The man got his two hundred dollars for the horse, and was treated as well, and when they parted from each other it was just as much as he could do to remember to take off the halter. But the buyer had not got far on his way before the youth took his own form again, and when the man reached home Jack was already sitting on the bench by the stove.

On the third day all happened in the same way. The youth changed himself into a great black horse, and told his father that if a man came and offered him three hundred dollars, and treated him well and handsomely into the bargain, he was to sell him, but whatsoever he did, or how much soever he drank, he must not forget to take off the halter, or else he himself would never get away from Farmer Weatherbeard as long as he lived.

'No,' said the man, 'I will not forget.'

When he got to the market, he received the three hundred dollars, but Farmer Weatherbeard treated him so handsomely that he quite forgot to take off the halter; so Farmer Weatherbeard went away with the horse.

When he had got some distance he had to go into an inn to get some more brandy; so he set a barrel full of red-hot nails under his horse's nose, and a trough filled with oats beneath its tail, and then he tied the halter fast to a hook and went away into the inn. So the horse stood there stamping,

and kicking, and snorting, and rearing, and out came a girl who thought it a sin and a shame to treat a horse so ill.

‘Ah, poor creature, what a master you must have to treat you thus!’ she said, and pushed the halter off the hook so that the horse might turn round and eat the oats.

‘I am here!’ shrieked Farmer Weatherbeard, rushing out of doors. But the horse had already shaken off the halter and flung himself into a goose-pond, where he changed himself into a little fish. Farmer Weatherbeard went after him, and changed himself into a great pike. So Jack turned himself into a dove, and Farmer Weatherbeard turned himself into a hawk, and flew after the dove and struck it. But a Princess was standing at a window in the King’s palace watching the struggle.

‘If thou didst but know as much as I know, thou wouldst fly in to me through the window,’ said the Princess to the dove.

So the dove came flying in through the window and changed itself into Jack again, and told her all as it had happened.

‘Change thyself into a gold ring, and set thyself on my finger,’ said the Princess.

‘No, that will not do,’ said Jack, ‘for then Farmer Weatherbeard will make the King fall sick, and there will be no one who can make him well again before Farmer Weatherbeard comes and cures him, and for that he will demand the gold ring.’

‘I will say that it was my mother’s, and that I will not part with it,’ said the Princess.

So Jack changed himself into a gold ring, and set himself on the Princess’s finger, and Farmer Weatherbeard could not get at him there. But then all that the youth had foretold came to pass.

The King became ill, and there was no doctor who could cure him till Farmer Weatherbeard arrived, and he demanded the ring which was on the Princess’s finger as a reward.

So the King sent a messenger to the Princess for the ring. She, however, refused to part with it, because she had inherited it from her mother. When the King was informed of this he fell into a rage, and said that he would have the ring, let her have inherited it from whom she might.

‘Well, it’s of no use to be angry about it,’ said the Princess, ‘for I can’t get it off. If you want the ring you will have to take the finger too!’

‘I will try, and then the ring will very soon come off,’ said Farmer Weatherbeard.

‘No, thank you, I will try myself,’ said the Princess, and she went away to the fireplace and put some ashes on the ring.

So the ring came off and was lost among the ashes.

Farmer Weatherbeard changed himself into a hare, which scratched and scraped about in the fireplace after the ring until the ashes were up to its ears. But Jack changed himself into a fox, and bit the hare’s head off, and if Farmer Weatherbeard was possessed by the evil one all was now over with him.[25]

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25. From P. C. Asbjornsen.

MOTHER HOLLE

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Once upon a time there was a widow who had two daughters; one of them was pretty and clever, and the other ugly and lazy. But as the ugly one was her own daughter, she liked her far the best of the two, and the pretty one had to do all the work of the house, and was in fact the regular maid of all work. Every day she had to sit by a well on the high road, and spin till her fingers were so sore that they often bled. One day some drops of blood fell on her spindle, so she dipped it into the well meaning to wash it, but, as luck would have it, it dropped from her hand and fell right in. She ran weeping to her stepmother, and told her what had happened, but she scolded her harshly, and was so merciless in her anger that she said:

‘Well, since you’ve dropped the spindle down, you must just go after it yourself, and don’t let me see your face again until you bring it with you.’

Then the poor girl returned to the well, and not knowing what she was about, in the despair and misery of her heart she sprang into the well and sank to the bottom. For a time she lost all consciousness, and when she came to herself again she was lying in a lovely meadow, with the sun shining brightly overhead, and a thousand flowers blooming at her feet. She rose up and wandered through this enchanted place, till she came to a baker’s oven full of bread, and the bread called out to her as she passed:

‘Oh! take me out, take me out, or I shall be burnt to a cinder. I am quite done enough.’

So she stepped up quickly to the oven and took out all the loaves one after the other. Then she went on a little farther and came to a tree laden with beautiful rosy-cheeked apples, and as she passed by it called out:

‘Oh I shake me, shake me, my apples are all quite ripe.’

She did as she was asked, and shook the tree till the apples fell like rain and none were left hanging. When she had gathered them all up into a heap she went on her way again, and came at length to a little house, at the door of which sat an old woman. The old dame had such large teeth that

the girl felt frightened and wanted to run away, but the old woman called after her:

‘What are you afraid of, dear child? Stay with me and be my little maid, and if you do your work well I will reward you handsomely; but you must be very careful how you make my bed—you must shake it well till the feathers fly; then people in the world below say it snows, for I am Mother Holle.’

She spoke so kindly that the girl took heart and agreed readily to enter her service. She did her best to please the old woman, and shook her bed with such a will that the feathers flew about like snow-flakes; so she led a very easy life, was never scolded, and lived on the fat of the land. But after she had been some time with Mother Holle she grew sad and depressed, and at first she hardly knew herself what was the matter. At last she discovered that she was homesick, so she went to Mother Holle and said:

‘I know I am a thousand times better off here than I ever was in my life before, but notwithstanding, I have a great longing to go home, in spite of all your kindness to me. I can remain with you no longer, but must return to my own people.’

‘Your desire to go home pleases me,’ said Mother Holle, ‘and because you have served me so faithfully, I will show you the way back into the world myself.’

So she took her by the hand and led her to an open door, and as the girl passed through it there fell a heavy shower of gold all over her, till she was covered with it from top to toe.

‘That’s a reward for being such a good little maid,’ said Mother Holle, and she gave her the spindle too that had fallen into the well. Then she shut the door, and the girl found herself back in the world again, not far from her own house; and when she came to the courtyard the old hen, who sat on the top of the wall, called out:

‘Click, clock, clack,
Our golden maid’s come back.’

Then she went in to her stepmother, and as she had returned covered with gold she was welcomed home.

She proceeded to tell all that had happened to her, and when the mother heard how she had come by her riches, she was most anxious to secure the same luck for her own idle, ugly daughter; so she told her to sit at the well and spin. In order to make her spindle bloody, she stuck her hand into a hedge of thorns and pricked her finger. Then she threw the spindle into the well, and jumped in herself after it. Like her sister she came to the beautiful meadow, and followed the same path. When she reached the baker's oven the bread called out as before:

'Oh! take me out, take me out, or I shall be burnt to a cinder. I am quite done enough.'

But the good-for-nothing girl answered:

'A pretty joke, indeed; just as if I should dirty my hands for you!'

And on she went. Soon she came to the apple tree, which cried:

'Oh! shake me, shake me, my apples are all quite ripe.'

'I'll see myself farther,' she replied, 'one of them might fall on my head.'

And so she pursued her way. When she came to Mother Holle's house she wasn't the least afraid, for she had been warned about her big teeth, and she readily agreed to become her maid. The first day she worked very hard, and did all her mistress told her, for she thought of the gold she would give her; but on the second day she began to be lazy, and on the third she wouldn't even get up in the morning. She didn't make Mother Holle's bed as she ought to have done, and never shook it enough to make the feathers fly. So her mistress soon grew weary of her, and dismissed her, much to the lazy creature's delight.

'For now,' she thought, 'the shower of golden rain will come.'

Mother Holle led her to the same door as she had done her sister, but when she passed through it, instead of the gold rain a kettle full of pitch came showering over her.

'That's a reward for your service,' said Mother Holle, and she closed the door behind her.

So the lazy girl came home all covered with pitch, and when the old hen on the top of the wall saw her, it called out:

'Click, clock, clack, Our dirty slut's come back.'

But the pitch remained sticking to her, and never as long as she lived could it be got off.[26]

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26. Grimm.

MINNIKIN

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There was once upon a time a couple of needy folk who lived in a wretched hut, in which there was nothing but black want; so they had neither food to eat nor wood to burn. But if they had next to nothing of all else they had the blessing of God so far as children were concerned, and every year brought them one more. The man was not overpleased at this. He was always going about grumbling and growling, and saying that it seemed to him that there might be such a thing as having too many of these good gifts; so shortly before another baby was born he went away into the wood for some firewood, saying that he did not want to see the new child; he would hear him quite soon enough when he began to squall for some food.

As soon as this baby was born it began to look about the room. ‘Ah, my dear mother!’ said he, ‘give me some of my brothers’ old clothes, and food enough for a few days, and I will go out into the world and seek my fortune, for, so far as I can see, you have children enough.’

‘Heaven help thee, my son!’ said the mother, ‘that will never do; thou art still far too little.’

But the little creature was determined to do it, and begged and prayed so long that the mother was forced to let him have some old rags, and tie up a little food for him, and then gaily and happily he went out into the world.

But almost before he was out of the house another boy was born, and he too looked about him, and said, ‘Ah, my dear mother! give me some of my brothers’ old clothes, and food for some days, and then I will go out into the world and find my twin brother, for you have children enough.’

‘Heaven help thee, little creature! thou art far too little for that,’ said the woman; ‘it would never do.’

But she spoke to no purpose, for the boy begged and prayed until he had got some old rags and a bundle of provisions, and then he set out manfully into the world to find his twin brother.

When the younger had walked for some time he caught sight of his brother a short distance in front of him, and called to him and bade him to stop.

‘Wait a minute,’ he said; ‘you are walking as if for a wager, but you ought to have stayed to see your younger brother before you hurried off into the world.’

So the elder stood still and looked back, and when the younger had got up to him, and had told him that he was his brother, he said: ‘But now, let us sit down and see what kind of food our mother has given us,’ and that they did.

When they had walked on a little farther they came to a brook which ran through a green meadow, and there the younger said that they ought to christen each other. ‘As we had to make such haste, and had no time to do it at home, we may as well do it here,’ said he.

‘What will you be called?’ asked the elder.

‘I will be called Minnikin,’ answered the second; ‘and you, what will you be called?’

‘I will be called King Pippin,’ answered the elder.

They christened each other and then went onwards. When they had walked for some time they came to a crossway, and there they agreed to part, and each take his own road. This they did, but no sooner had they walked a short distance than they met again. So they parted once more, and each took his own road, but in a very short time the same thing happened again—they met each other before they were at all aware, and so it happened the third time also. Then they arranged with each other that each should choose his own quarter, and one should go east and the other west.

‘But if ever you fall into any need or trouble,’ said the elder, ‘call me thrice, and I will come and help you; only you must not call me until you are in the utmost need.’

‘In that case we shall not see each other for some time,’ said Minnikin; so they bade farewell to each other, and Minnikin went east and King Pippin went west.

When Minnikin had walked a long way alone, he met an old, old crook-backed hag, who had only one eye. Minnikin stole it.

‘Oh! oh!’ cried the old hag, ‘what has become of my eye?’

‘What will you give me to get your eye back?’ said Minnikin.

‘I will give thee a sword which is such a sword that it can conquer a whole army, let it be ever so great,’ replied the woman.

‘Let me have it, then,’ said Minnikin.

The old hag gave him the sword, so she got her eye back. Then Minnikin went onwards, and when he had wandered on for some time he again met an old, old crook-backed hag, who had only one eye. Minnikin stole it before she was aware.

‘Oh! oh! what has become of my eye?’ cried the old hag.

‘What will you give me to get your eye back?’ said Minnikin.

‘I will give thee a ship which can sail over fresh water and salt water, over high hills and deep dales,’ answered the old woman.

‘Let me have it then,’ said Minnikin.

So the old woman gave him a little bit of a ship which was no bigger than he could put in his pocket, and then she got her eye back, and she went her way and Minnikin his. When he had walked on for a long time, he met for the third time an old, old crook-backed hag, who had only one eye. This eye also Minnikin stole, and when the woman screamed and lamented, and asked what had become of her eye, Minnikin said, ‘What will you give me to get your eye back?’

‘I will give thee the art to brew a hundred lasts of malt in one brewing.’

So, for teaching that art, the old hag got her eye back, and they both went away by different roads.

But when Minnikin had walked a short distance, it seemed to him that it might be worth while to see what his ship could do; so he took it out of his pocket, and first he put one foot into it, and then the other, and no sooner had he put one foot into the ship than it became much larger, and when he set the other foot into it, it grew as large as ships that sail on the sea.

Then Minnikin said: ‘Now go over fresh water and salt water, over high hills and deep dales, and do not stop until thou comest to the King’s palace.’

And in an instant the ship went away as swiftly as any bird in the air till it got just below the King’s palace, and there it stood still.

From the windows of the King’s palace many persons had seen Minnikin come sailing thither, and had stood to watch him; and they were all so astounded that they ran down to see what manner of man this could be who came sailing in a ship through the air. But while they were running down from the King’s palace, Minnikin had got out of the ship and had put it in his pocket again; for the moment he got out of it, it once more became as small as it had been when he got it from the old woman, and those who came from the King’s palace could see nothing but a ragged little boy who was standing down by the sea-shore. The King asked where he had come from, but the boy said he did not know, nor yet could he tell them how he had got there, but he begged very earnestly and prettily for a place in the King’s palace. If there was nothing else for him to do, he said he would fetch wood and water for the kitchen-maid, and that he obtained leave to do.

When Minnikin went up to the King’s palace he saw that everything there was hung with black both outside and inside, from the bottom to the top; so he asked the kitchen-maid what that meant.

‘Oh, I will tell you that,’ answered the kitchen-maid. ‘The King’s daughter was long ago promised away to three Trolls, and next Thursday evening one of them is to come to fetch her. Ritter Red has said that he will be able to set her free, but who knows whether he will be able to do it? so you may easily imagine what grief and distress we are in here.’

So when Thursday evening came, Ritter Red accompanied the Princess to the sea-shore; for there she was to meet the Troll, and Ritter Red was to stay with her and protect her. He, however, was very unlikely to do the Troll much injury, for no sooner had the Princess seated herself by the sea-shore than Ritter Red climbed up into a great tree which was standing there, and hid himself as well as he could among the branches.

The Princess wept, and begged him most earnestly not to go and leave her; but Ritter Red did not concern himself about that. ‘It is better that one should die than two,’ said he.

In the meantime Minnikin begged the kitchen-maid very prettily to give him leave to go down to the strand for a short time.

‘Oh, what could you do down at the strand?’ said the kitchen-maid. ‘You have nothing to do there.’

‘Oh yes, my dear, just let me go,’ said Minnikin. ‘I should so like to go and amuse myself with the other children.’

‘Well, well, go then!’ said the kitchen-maid, ‘but don’t let me find you staying there over the time when the pan has to be set on the fire for supper, and the roast put on the spit; and mind you bring back a good big armful of wood for the kitchen.’

Minnikin promised this, and ran down to the sea-shore.

Just as he got to the place where the King’s daughter was sitting, the Troll came rushing up with a great whistling and whirring, and he was so big and stout that he was terrible to see, and he had five heads.

‘Fire!’ screeched the Troll.

‘Fire yourself!’ said Minnikin.

‘Can you fight?’ roared the Troll.

‘If not, I can learn,’ said Minnikin.

So the Troll struck at him with a great thick iron bar which he had in his fist, till the sods flew five yards up into the air.

‘Fie!’ said Minnikin. ‘That was not much of a blow. Now you shall see one of mine.’

So he grasped the sword which he had got from the old crook-backed woman, and slashed at the Troll so that all five heads went flying away over the sands.

When the Princess saw that she was delivered she was so delighted that she did not know what she was doing, and skipped and danced.

‘Come and sleep a bit with your head in my lap,’ she said to Minnikin, and as he slept she put a golden dress on him.

But when Ritter Red saw that there was no longer any danger afoot, he lost no time in creeping down from the tree. He then threatened the Princess, until at length she was forced to promise to say that it was he who had rescued her, for he told her that if she did not he would kill her. Then he took the Troll’s lungs and tongue and put them in his pocket-handkerchief, and led the Princess back to the King’s palace; and whatsoever had been lacking to him in the way of honour before was lacking no longer, for the King did not know how to exalt him enough, and always set him on his own right hand at table.

As for Minnikin, first he went out on the Troll’s ship and took a great quantity of gold and silver hoops away with him, and then he trotted back

to the King’s palace.

When the kitchen-maid caught sight of all this gold and silver she was quite amazed, and said: ‘My dear friend Minnikin, where have you got all that from?’ for she was half afraid that he had not come by it honestly.

‘Oh,’ answered Minnikin, ‘I have been home a while, and these hoops had fallen off some of our buckets, so I brought them away with me for you.’

So when the kitchen-maid heard that they were for her, she asked no more questions about the matter. She thanked Minnikin, and everything was right again at once.

Next Thursday evening all went just the same, and everyone was full of grief and affliction, but Ritter Red said that he had been able to deliver the King’s daughter from one Troll, so that he could very easily deliver her from another, and he led her down to the sea-shore. But he did not do much harm to this Troll either, for when the time came when the Troll might be expected, he said as he had said before: ‘It is better that one should die than two,’ and then climbed up into the tree again.

Minnikin once more begged the cook’s leave to go down to the sea-shore for a short time.

‘Oh, what can you do there?’ said the cook.

‘My dear, do let me go!’ said Minnikin; ‘I should so like to go down there and amuse myself a little with the other children.’

So this time also she said that he should have leave to go, but he must first promise that he would be back by the time the joint was turned and that he would bring a great armful of wood with him.

No sooner had Minnikin got down to the strand than the Troll came rushing along with a great whistling and whirring, and he was twice as big as the first Troll, and he had ten heads.

‘Fire!’ shrieked the Troll.

‘Fire yourself!’ said Minnikin.

‘Can you fight?’ roared the Troll.

‘If not, I can learn,’ said Minnikin.

So the Troll struck at him with his iron club—which was still bigger than that which the first Troll had had—so that the earth flew ten yards up in the air.

‘Fie!’ said Minnikin. ‘That was not much of a blow. Now you shall see one of my blows.’

Then he grasped his sword and struck at the Troll, so that all his ten heads danced away over the sands.

And again the King’s daughter said to him, ‘Sleep a while on my lap,’ and while Minnikin lay there she drew some silver raiment over him.

As soon as Ritter Red saw that there was no longer any danger afoot, he crept down from the tree and threatened the Princess, until at last she was again forced to promise to say that it was he who had rescued her; after which he took the tongue and the lungs of the Troll and put them in his pocket-handkerchief, and then he conducted the Princess back to the palace. There was joy and gladness in the palace, as may be imagined, and the King did not know how to show enough honour and respect to Ritter Red.

Minnikin, however, took home with him an armful of gold and silver hoops from the Troll’s ship. When he came back to the King’s palace the kitchen-maid clapped her hands and wondered where he could have got all that gold and silver; but Minnikin answered that he had been home for a short time, and that it was only the hoops which had fallen off some pails, and that he had brought them away for the kitchen-maid.

When the third Thursday evening came, everything happened exactly as it had happened on the two former occasions. Everything in the King’s palace was hung with black, and everyone was sorrowful and distressed; but Ritter Red said that he did not think that they had much reason to be afraid—he had delivered the King’s daughter from two Trolls, so he could easily deliver her from the third as well.

He led her down to the strand, but when the time drew near for the Troll to come, he climbed up into the tree again and hid himself.

The Princess wept and entreated him to stay, but all to no purpose. He stuck to his old speech, ‘It is better that one life should be lost than two.’

This evening also, Minnikin begged for leave to go down to the sea-shore.

‘Oh, what can you do there?’ answered the kitchen-maid.

However, he begged until at last he got leave to go, but he was forced to promise that he would be back again in the kitchen when the roast had to be turned.

Almost immediately after he had got down to the sea-shore the Troll came with a great whizzing and whirring, and he was much, much bigger than either of the two former ones, and he had fifteen heads.

‘Fire!’ roared the Troll.

‘Fire yourself!’ said Minnikin.

‘Can you fight?’ screamed the Troll.

‘If not, I can learn,’ said Minnikin.

‘I will teach you,’ yelled the Troll, and struck at him with his iron club so that the earth flew up fifteen yards high into the air.

‘Fie!’ said Minnikin. ‘That was not much of a blow. Now I will let you see one of my blows.’

So saying he grasped his sword, and cut at the Troll in such a way that all his fifteen heads danced away over the sands.

Then the Princess was delivered, and she thanked Minnikin and blessed him for saving her.

‘Sleep a while now on my lap,’ said she, and while he lay there she put a garment of brass upon him.

‘But now, how shall we have it made known that it was you who saved me?’ said the King’s daughter.

‘That I will tell you,’ answered Minnikin. ‘When Ritter Red has taken you home again, and given out that it was he who rescued you, he will, as you know, have you to wife, and half the kingdom. But when they ask you on your wedding-day whom you will have to be your cup-bearer, you must say, “I will have the ragged boy who is in the kitchen, and carries wood and water for the kitchen-maid;” and when I am filling your cups for you, I will spill a drop upon his plate but none upon yours, and then he will be angry and strike me, and this will take place thrice. But the third time you must say, “Shame on you thus to smite the beloved of mine heart. It is he who delivered me from the Troll, and he is the one whom I will have.”’

Then Minnikin ran back to the King’s palace as he had done before, but first he went on board the Troll’s ship and took a great quantity of gold and silver and other precious things, and out of these he once more gave to the kitchen-maid a whole armful of gold and silver hoops.

No sooner did Ritter Red see that all danger was over than he crept down from the tree, and threatened the King’s daughter till he made her promise to say that he had rescued her. Then he conducted her back to the

King’s palace, and if honour enough had not been done him before it was certainly done now, for the King had no other thought than how to make much of the man who had saved his daughter from the three Trolls; and it was settled then that Ritter Red should marry her, and receive half the kingdom.

On the wedding-day, however, the Princess begged that she might have the little boy who was in the kitchen, and carried wood and water for the kitchen-maid, to fill the wine-cups at the wedding feast.

‘Oh, what can you want with that dirty, ragged boy, in here?’ said Ritter Red, but the Princess said that she insisted on having him as cup-bearer and would have no one else; and at last she got leave, and then everything was done as had been agreed on between the Princess and Minnikin. He spilt a drop on Ritter Red’s plate but none upon hers, and each time that he did it Ritter Red fell into a rage and struck him. At the first blow all the ragged garments which he had worn in the kitchen fell from off Minnikin, at the second blow the brass garments fell off, and at the third the silver raiment, and there he stood in the golden raiment, which was so bright and splendid that light flashed from it.

Then the King’s daughter said: ‘Shame on you thus to smite the beloved of my heart. It is he who delivered me from the Troll, and he is the one whom I will have.’

Ritter Red swore that he was the man who had saved her, but the King said: ‘He who delivered my daughter must have some token in proof of it.’

So Ritter Red ran off at once for his handkerchief with the lungs and tongue, and Minnikin went and brought all the gold and silver and precious things which he had taken out of the Trolls’ ships; and they each of them laid these tokens before the King.

‘He who has such precious things in gold and silver and diamonds,’ said the King, ‘must be the one who killed the Troll, for such things are not to be had anywhere else.’ So Ritter Red was thrown into the snake-pit, and Minnikin was to have the Princess, and half the kingdom.

One day the King went out walking with Minnikin, and Minnikin asked him if he had never had any other children.

‘Yes,’ said the King, ‘I had another daughter, but the Troll carried her away because there was no one who could deliver her. You are going to have one daughter of mine, but if you can set free the other, who has been

taken by the Troll, you shall willingly have her too, and the other half of the kingdom as well.'

'I may as well make the attempt,' said Minnikin, 'but I must have an iron rope which is five hundred ells long, and then I must have five hundred men with me, and provisions for five weeks, for I have a long voyage before me.'

So the King said he should have these things, but the King was afraid that he had no ship large enough to carry them all.

'But I have a ship of my own,' said Minnikin, and he took the one which the old woman had given him out of his pocket. The King laughed at him and thought that it was only one of his jokes, but Minnikin begged him just to give him what he had asked for, and then he should see something. Then all that Minnikin had asked for was brought; and first he ordered them to lay the cable in the ship, but there was no one who was able to lift it, and there was only room for one or two men at a time in the little bit of a ship. Then Minnikin himself took hold of the cable, and laid one or two links of it into the ship, and as he threw the links into it the ship grew bigger and bigger, and at last it was so large that the cable, and the five hundred men, and provisions, and Minnikin himself, had room enough.

'Now go over fresh water and salt water, over hill and dale, and do not stop until thou comest to where the King's daughter is,' said Minnikin to the ship, and off it went in a moment over land and water till the wind whistled and moaned all round about it.

When they had sailed thus a long, long way, the ship stopped short in the middle of the sea.

'Ah, now we have got there,' said Minnikin, 'but how we are to get back again is a very different thing.'

Then he took the cable and tied one end of it round his body. 'Now I must go to the bottom,' he said, 'but when I give a good jerk to the cable and want to come up again, you must all pull like one man, or there will be an end of all life both for you and for me.' So saying he sprang into the water, and yellow bubbles rose up all around him. He sank lower and lower, and at last he came to the bottom. There he saw a large hill with a door in it, and in he went. When he had got inside he found the other Princess sitting sewing, but when she saw Minnikin she clapped her hands.

‘Ah, heaven be praised!’ she cried, ‘I have not seen a Christian man since I came here.’

‘I have come for you,’ said Minnikin.

‘Alas! you will not be able to get me,’ said the King’s daughter. ‘It is no use even to think of that; if the Troll catches sight of you he will take your life.’

‘You had better tell me about him,’ said Minnikin. ‘Where is he gone? It would be amusing to see him.’

So the King’s daughter told Minnikin that the Troll was out trying to get hold of someone who could brew a hundred lasts of malt at one brewing, for there was to be a feast at the Troll’s, at which less than that would not be drunk.

‘I can do that,’ said Minnikin.

‘Ah! if only the Troll were not so quick-tempered I might have told him that,’ answered the Princess, ‘but he is so ill-natured that he will tear you to pieces, I fear, as soon as he comes in. But I will try to find some way of doing it. Can you hide yourself here in the cupboard? and then we will see what happens.’

Minnikin did this, and almost before he had crept into the cupboard and hidden himself, came the Troll.

‘Huf! What a smell of Christian man’s blood!’ said the Troll.

‘Yes, a bird flew over the roof with a Christian man’s bone in his bill, and let it fall down our chimney,’ answered the Princess. ‘I made haste enough to get it away again, but it must be that which smells so, notwithstanding.’

‘Yes, it must be that,’ said the Troll.

Then the Princess asked if he had got hold of anyone who could brew a hundred lasts of malt at one brewing.

‘No, there is no one who can do it,’ said the Troll.

‘A short time since there was a man here who said he could do it,’ said the King’s daughter.

‘How clever you always are!’ said the Troll. ‘How could you let him go away? You must have known that I was just wanting a man of that kind.’

‘Well, but I didn’t let him go, after all,’ said the Princess; ‘but father is so quick-tempered, so I hid him in the cupboard, but if father has not

found any one then the man is still here.'

'Let him come in,' said the Troll.

When Minnikin came, the Troll asked if it were true that he could brew a hundred lasts of malt at one brewing.

'Yes,' said Minnikin, 'it is.'

'It is well then that I have lighted on thee,' said the Troll. 'Fall to work this very minute, but Heaven help thee if thou dost not brew the ale strong.'

'Oh, it shall taste well,' said Minnikin, and at once set himself to work to brew.

'But I must have more trolls to help to carry what is wanted,' said Minnikin; 'these that I have are good for nothing.'

So he got more and so many that there was a swarm of them, and then the brewing went on. When the sweet-wort was ready they were all, as a matter of course, anxious to taste it, first the Troll himself and then the others; but Minnikin had brewed the wort so strong that they all fell down dead like so many flies as soon as they had drunk any of it. At last there was no one left but one wretched old hag who was lying behind the stove.

'Oh, poor old creature!' said Minnikin, 'you shall have a taste of the wort too like the rest.' So he went away and scooped up a little from the bottom of the brewing vat in a milk pan, and gave it to her, and then he was quit of the whole of them.

While Minnikin was now standing there looking about him, he cast his eye on a large chest. This he took and filled it with gold and silver, and then he tied the cable round himself and the Princess and the chest, and tugged at the rope with all his might, whereupon his men drew them up safe and sound.

As soon as Minnikin had got safely on his ship again, he said: 'Now go over salt water and fresh water, over hill and dale, and do not stop until thou comest unto the King's palace.' And in a moment the ship went off so fast that the yellow foam rose up all round about it.

When those who were in the King's palace saw the ship, they lost no time in going to meet him with song and music, and thus they marched up towards Minnikin with great rejoicings; but the gladdest of all was the King, for now he had got his other daughter back again.

But now Minnikin was not happy, for both the Princesses wanted to have him, and he wanted to have none other than the one whom he had first saved, and she was the younger. For this cause he was continually walking backwards and forwards, thinking how he could contrive to get her, and yet do nothing that was unkind to her sister. One day when he was walking about and thinking of this, it came into his mind that if he only had his brother, King Pippin, with him, who was so like himself that no one could distinguish the one from the other, he could let him have the elder Princess and half the kingdom; as for himself, he thought, the other half was quite enough. As soon as this thought occurred to him he went outside the palace and called for King Pippin, but no one came. So he called a second time, and a little louder, but no! still no one came. So Minnikin called for the third time, and with all his might, and there stood his brother by his side.

‘I told you that you were not to call me unless you were in the utmost need,’ he said to Minnikin, ‘and there is not even so much as a midge here who can do you any harm!’ and with that he gave Minnikin such a blow that he rolled over on the grass.

‘Shame on you to strike me!’ said Minnikin. ‘First have I won one Princess and half the kingdom, and then the other Princess and the other half of the kingdom; and now, when I was just thinking that I would give you one of the Princesses and one of the halves of the kingdom, do you think you have any reason to give me such a blow?’

When King Pippin heard that he begged his brother’s pardon, and they were reconciled at once and became good friends.

‘Now, as you know,’ said Minnikin, ‘we are so like each other that no one can tell one of us from the other; so just change clothes with me and go up to the palace, and then the Princesses will think that I am coming in, and the one who kisses you first shall be yours, and I will have the other.’ For he knew that the elder Princess was the stronger, so he could very well guess how things would go.

King Pippin at once agreed to this. He changed clothes with his brother, and went into the palace. When he entered the Princess’s apartments they believed that he was Minnikin, and both of them ran up to him at once; but the elder, who was bigger and stronger, pushed her sister aside, and threw her arms round King Pippin’s neck and kissed him; so he

got her to wife, and Minnikin the younger sister. It will be easy to understand that two weddings took place, and they were so magnificent that they were heard of and talked about all over seven kingdoms.[27]

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27. From J. Moe.

BUSHY BRIDE

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There was once on a time a widower who had a son and a daughter by his first wife. They were both good children, and loved each other with all their hearts. After some time had gone by the man married again, and he chose a widow with one daughter who was ugly and wicked, and her mother was ugly and wicked too. From the very day that the new wife came into the house there was no peace for the man's children, and not a corner to be found where they could get any rest; so the boy thought that the best thing he could do was to go out into the world and try to earn his own bread.

When he had roamed about for some time he came to the King's palace, where he obtained a place under the coachman; and very brisk and active he was, and the horses that he looked after were so fat and sleek, that they shone again.

But his sister, who was still at home, fared worse and worse. Both her step-mother and her step-sister were always finding fault with her, whatsoever she did and whithersoever she went, and they scolded her and abused her so that she never had an hour's peace. They made her do all the hard work, and hard words fell to her lot early and late, but little enough food accompanied them.

One day they sent her to the brook to fetch some water home, and an ugly and horrible head rose up out of the water, and said, 'Wash me, girl!'

'Yes, I will wash you with pleasure,' said the girl, and began to wash and scrub the ugly face, but she couldn't help thinking that it was a very unpleasant piece of work. When she had done it, and done it well, another head rose up out of the water, and this one was uglier still.

'Brush me, girl!' said the head.

'Yes, I will brush you with pleasure,' said the girl, and set to work with the tangled hair, and, as may be easily imagined, this too was by no means pleasant work.

When she had got it done, another and a much more ugly and horrible-looking head rose up out of the water.

‘Kiss me, girl!’ said the head.

‘Yes, I will kiss you,’ said the man’s daughter, and she did it, but she thought it was the worst bit of work that she had ever had to do in her life.

So the heads all began to talk to each other, and to ask what they should do for this girl who was so full of kindliness.

‘She shall be the prettiest girl that ever was, and fair and bright as the day,’ said the first head.

‘Gold shall drop from her hair whenever she brushes it,’ said the second.

‘Gold shall drop from her mouth whenever she speaks,’ said the third head.

So when the man’s daughter went home, looking as beautiful and bright as day, the step-mother and her daughter grew much more ill-tempered, and it was worse still when she began to talk, and they saw that golden coins dropped from her mouth. The step-mother fell into such a towering passion that she drove the man’s daughter into the pig-stye—she might stay there with her fine show of gold, the step-mother said, but she should not be permitted to set foot in the house.

It was not long before the mother wanted her own daughter to go to the stream to fetch some water.

When she got there with her pails, the first head rose up out of the water close to the bank. ‘Wash me, girl!’ it said.

‘Wash yourself!’ answered the woman’s daughter.

Then the second head appeared.

‘Brush me, girl!’ said the head.

‘Brush yourself!’ said the woman’s daughter.

So down it went to the bottom, and the third head came up.

‘Kiss me, girl!’ said the head.

‘As if I would kiss your ugly mouth!’ said the girl.

So again the heads talked together about what they should do for this girl who was so ill-tempered and full of her own importance, and they agreed that she should have a nose that was four ells long, and a jaw that was three ells, and a fir bush in the middle of her forehead, and every time she spoke ashes should fall from her mouth.

When she came back to the cottage door with her pails, she called to her mother who was inside, ‘Open the door!’

‘Open the door yourself, my own dear child!’ said the mother.

‘I can’t get near, because of my nose,’ said the daughter.

When the mother came and saw her you may imagine what a state of mind she was in, and how she screamed and lamented, but neither the nose nor the jaw grew any the less for that.

Now the brother, who was in service in the King’s palace, had taken a portrait of his sister, and he had carried the picture away with him, and every morning and evening he knelt down before it and prayed for his sister, so dearly did he love her.

The other stable-boys had heard him doing this, so they peeped through the key-hole into his room, and saw that he was kneeling there before a picture; so they told everyone that every morning and evening the youth knelt down and prayed to an idol which he had; and at last they went to the King himself, and begged that he too would peep through the key-hole, and see for himself what the youth did. At first the King would not believe this, but after a long, long time, they prevailed with him, and he crept on tip-toe to the door, peeped through, and saw the youth on his knees, with his hands clasped together before a picture which was hanging on the wall.

‘Open the door!’ cried the King, but the youth did not hear.

So the King called to him again, but the youth was praying so fervently that he did not hear him this time either.

‘Open the door, I say!’ cried the King again. ‘It is I! I want to come in.’

So the youth sprang to the door and unlocked it, but in his haste he forgot to hide the picture.

When the King entered and saw it, he stood still as if he were in fetters, and could not stir from the spot, for the picture seemed to him so beautiful.

‘There is nowhere on earth so beautiful a woman as this!’ said the King.

But the youth told him that she was his sister, and that he had painted her, and that if she was not prettier than the picture she was at all events not uglier.

‘Well, if she is as beautiful as that, I will have her for my Queen,’ said the King, and he commanded the youth to go home and fetch her without a moment’s delay, and to lose no time in coming back. The youth promised to make all the haste he could, and set forth from the King’s palace.

When the brother arrived at home to fetch his sister, her stepmother and step-sister would go too. So they all set out together, and the man’s daughter took with her a casket in which she kept her gold, and a dog which was called Little Snow. These two things were all that she had inherited from her mother. When they had travelled for some time they had to cross the sea, and the brother sat down at the helm, and the mother and the two half-sisters went to the fore-part of the vessel, and they sailed a long, long way. At last they came in sight of land.

‘Look at that white strand there; that is where we shall land,’ said the brother, pointing across the sea.

‘What is my brother saying?’ inquired the man’s daughter.

‘He says that you are to throw your casket out into the sea,’ answered the step-mother.

‘Well, if my brother says so, I must do it,’ said the man’s daughter, and she flung her casket into the sea.

When they had sailed for some time longer, the brother once more pointed over the sea. ‘There you may see the palace to which we are bound,’ said he.

‘What is my brother saying?’ asked the man’s daughter.

‘Now he says that you are to throw your dog into the sea,’ answered the step-mother.

The man’s daughter wept, and was sorely troubled, for Little Snow was the dearest thing she had on earth, but at last she threw him overboard.

‘If my brother says that, I must do it, but Heaven knows how unwilling I am to throw thee out, Little Snow!’ said she.

So they sailed onwards a long way farther.

‘There may’st thou see the King coming out to meet thee,’ said the brother, pointing to the sea-shore.

‘What is my brother saying?’ asked his sister again.

‘Now he says that you are to make haste and throw yourself overboard,’ answered the step-mother.

She wept and she wailed, but as her brother had said that, she thought she must do it; so she leaped into the sea.

But when they arrived at the palace, and the King beheld the ugly bride with a nose that was four ells long, a jaw that was three ells, and a forehead that had a bush in the middle of it, he was quite terrified; but the wedding feast was all prepared, as regarded brewing and baking, and all the wedding guests were sitting waiting, so, ugly as she was, the King was forced to take her.

But he was very wroth, and none can blame him for that; so he caused the brother to be thrown into a pit full of snakes.

On the first Thursday night after this, a beautiful maiden came into the kitchen of the palace, and begged the kitchen-maid, who slept there, to lend her a brush. She begged very prettily, and got it, and then she brushed her hair, and the gold dropped from it.

A little dog was with her, and she said to it, ‘Go out, Little Snow, and see if it will soon be day!’

This she said thrice, and the third time that she sent out the dog to see, it was very near dawn. Then she was forced to depart, but as she went she said:

‘Out on thee, ugly Bushy Bride,
Sleeping so soft by the young King’s side,
On sand and stones my bed I make,
And my brother sleeps with the cold snake,
Unpitied and unwept.’

I shall come twice more, and then never again,’ said she.

In the morning the kitchen-maid related what she had seen and heard, and the King said that next Thursday night he himself would watch in the kitchen and see if this were true, and when it had begun to grow dark he went out into the kitchen to the girl. But though he rubbed his eyes and did everything he could to keep himself awake it was all in vain, for the Bushy Bride crooned and sang till his eyes were fast closed, and when the beautiful young maiden came he was sound asleep and snoring.

This time also, as before, she borrowed a brush and brushed her hair with it, and the gold dropped down as she did it; and again she sent the dog

out three times, and when day dawned she departed, but as she was going she said as she had said before, ‘I shall come once more, and then never again.’

On the third Thursday night the King once more insisted on keeping watch. Then he set two men to hold him; each of them was to take an arm, and shake him and jerk him by the arm whenever he seemed to be going to fall asleep; and he set two men to watch his Bushy Bride. But as the night wore on the Bushy Bride again began to croon and to sing, so that his eyes began to close and his head to droop on one side. Then came the lovely maiden, and got the brush and brushed her hair till the gold dropped from it, and then she sent her Little Snow out to see if it would soon be day, and this she did three times. The third time it was just beginning to grow light, and then she said:

‘Out on thee, ugly Bushy Bride,
Sleeping so soft by the young King’s side,
On sand and stones my bed I make,
And my brother sleeps with the cold snake,
Unpitied and unwept.’

‘Now I shall never come again,’ she said, and then she turned to go. But the two men who were holding the King by the arms seized his hands and forced a knife into his grasp, and then made him cut her little finger just enough to make it bleed.

Thus the true bride was freed. The King then awoke, and she told him all that had taken place, and how her step-mother and step-sister had betrayed her. Then the brother was at once taken out of the snake-pit—the snakes had never touched him—and the step-mother and step-sister were flung down into it instead of him.

No one can tell how delighted the King was to get rid of that hideous Bushy Bride, and get a Queen who was bright and beautiful as day itself.

And now the real wedding was held, and held in such a way that it was heard of and spoken about all over seven kingdoms. The King and his bride drove to church, and Little Snow was in the carriage too. When the blessing was given they went home again, and after that I saw no more of them.[28]

28. From J. Moe.

SNOWDROP

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Once upon a time, in the middle of winter when the snow-flakes were falling like feathers on the earth, a Queen sat at a window framed in black ebony and sewed. And as she sewed and gazed out to the white landscape, she pricked her finger with the needle, and three drops of blood fell on the snow outside, and because the red showed out so well against the white she thought to herself:

‘Oh! what wouldn’t I give to have a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony!’

And her wish was granted, for not long after a little daughter was born to her, with a skin as white as snow, lips and cheeks as red as blood, and hair as black as ebony. They called her Snowdrop, and not long after her birth the Queen died.

After a year the King married again. His new wife was a beautiful woman, but so proud and overbearing that she couldn’t stand any rival to her beauty. She possessed a magic mirror, and when she used to stand before it gazing at her own reflection and ask:

‘Mirror, mirror, hanging there,
Who in all the land’s most fair?’

it always replied:

‘You are most fair, my Lady Queen,
None fairer in the land, I ween.’

Then she was quite happy, for she knew the mirror always spoke the truth.

But Snowdrop was growing prettier and prettier every day, and when she was seven years old she was as beautiful as she could be, and fairer even than the Queen herself. One day when the latter asked her mirror the usual question, it replied:

‘My Lady Queen, you are fair, ‘tis true,
But Snowdrop is fairer far than you.’

Then the Queen flew into the most awful passion, and turned every shade of green in her jealousy. From this hour she hated poor Snowdrop like poison, and every day her envy, hatred, and malice grew, for envy and jealousy are like evil weeds which spring up and choke the heart. At last she could endure Snowdrop’s presence no longer, and, calling a huntsman to her, she said:

‘Take the child out into the wood, and never let me see her face again. You must kill her, and bring me back her lungs and liver, that I may know for certain she is dead.’

The Huntsman did as he was told and led Snowdrop out into the wood, but as he was in the act of drawing out his knife to slay her, she began to cry, and said:

‘Oh, dear Huntsman, spare my life, and I will promise to fly forth into the wide wood and never to return home again.’

And because she was so young and pretty the Huntsman had pity on her, and said:

‘Well, run along, poor child.’ For he thought to himself: ‘The wild beasts will soon eat her up.’

And his heart felt lighter because he hadn’t had to do the deed himself. And as he turned away a young boar came running past, so he shot it, and brought its lungs and liver home to the Queen as a proof that Snowdrop was really dead. And the wicked woman had them stewed in salt, and ate them up, thinking she had made an end of Snowdrop for ever.

Now when the poor child found herself alone in the big wood the very trees around her seemed to assume strange shapes, and she felt so frightened she didn’t know what to do. Then she began to run over the sharp stones, and through the bramble bushes, and the wild beasts ran past her, but they did her no harm. She ran as far as her legs would carry her, and as evening approached she saw a little house, and she stepped inside to rest. Everything was very small in the little house, but cleaner and neater than anything you can imagine. In the middle of the room there stood a little table, covered with a white tablecloth, and seven little plates and forks and spoons and knives and tumblers. Side by side against the wall

there were seven little beds, covered with snow-white counterpanes. Snowdrop felt so hungry and so thirsty that she ate a bit of bread and a little porridge from each plate, and drank a drop of wine out of each tumbler. Then feeling tired and sleepy she lay down on one of the beds, but it wasn't comfortable; then she tried all the others in turn, but one was too long, and another too short, and it was only when she got to the seventh that she found one to suit her exactly. So she lay down upon it, said her prayers like a good child, and fell fast asleep.

When it got quite dark the masters of the little house returned. They were seven dwarfs who worked in the mines, right down deep in the heart of the mountain. They lighted their seven little lamps, and as soon as their eyes got accustomed to the glare they saw that someone had been in the room, for all was not in the same order as they had left it.

The first said:

'Who's been sitting on my little chair?'

The second said:

'Who's been eating my little loaf?'

The third said:

'Who's been tasting my porridge?'

The fourth said:

'Who's been eating out of my little plate?'

The fifth said:

'Who's been using my little fork?'

The sixth said:

'Who's been cutting with my little knife?'

The seventh said:

'Who's been drinking out of my little tumbler?'

Then the first Dwarf looked round and saw a little hollow in his bed, and he asked again:

'Who's been lying on my bed?'

The others came running round, and cried when they saw their beds:

'Somebody has lain on ours too.'

But when the seventh came to his bed, he started back in amazement, for there he beheld Snowdrop fast asleep. Then he called the others, who turned their little lamps full on the bed, and when they saw Snowdrop lying there they nearly fell down with surprise.

‘Goodness gracious!’ they cried, ‘what a beautiful child!’

And they were so enchanted by her beauty that they did not wake her, but let her sleep on in the little bed. But the seventh Dwarf slept with his companions one hour in each bed, and in this way he managed to pass the night.

In the morning Snowdrop awoke, but when she saw the seven little Dwarfs she felt very frightened. But they were so friendly and asked her what her name was in such a kind way, that she replied:

‘I am Snowdrop.’

‘Why did you come to our house?’ continued the Dwarfs.

Then she told them how her stepmother had wished her put to death, and how the Huntsman had spared her life, and how she had run the whole day till she had come to their little house. The Dwarfs, when they had heard her sad story, asked her:

‘Will you stay and keep house for us, cook, make the beds, the washing, sew and knit? and if you give satisfaction and keep everything neat and clean, you shall want for nothing.’

‘Yes,’ answered Snowdrop, ‘I will gladly do all you ask.’

And so she took up her abode with them. Every morning the Dwarfs went into the mountain to dig for gold, and in the evening, when they returned home, Snowdrop always had their supper ready for them. But during the day the girl was left quite alone, so the good Dwarfs warned her, saying:

‘Beware of your step-mother. She will soon find out you are here, and whatever you do don’t let anyone into the house.’

Now the Queen, after she thought she had eaten Snowdrop’s lungs and liver, never dreamed but that she was once more the most beautiful woman in the world; so stepping before her mirror one day she said:

‘Mirror, mirror, hanging there,
Who in all the land’s most fair?’

and the mirror replied:

‘My Lady Queen, you are fair, ‘tis true, But Snowdrop is fairer far than you. Snowdrop, who dwells with the seven little men, Is as fair as you, as fair again.’

When the Queen heard these words she was nearly struck dumb with horror, for the mirror always spoke the truth, and she knew now that the Huntsman must have deceived her, and that Snowdrop was still alive. She pondered day and night how she might destroy her, for as long as she felt she had a rival in the land her jealous heart left her no rest. At last she hit upon a plan. She stained her face and dressed herself up as an old peddler wife, so that she was quite unrecognisable. In this guise she went over the seven hills till she came to the house of the seven Dwarfs. There she knocked at the door, calling out at the same time:

‘Fine wares to sell, fine wares to sell!’

Snowdrop peeped out of the window, and called out:

‘Good-day, mother, what have you to sell?’

‘Good wares, fine wares,’ she answered; ‘laces of every shade and description,’ and she held one up that was made of some gay coloured silk.

‘Surely I can let the honest woman in,’ thought Snowdrop; so she unbarred the door and bought the pretty lace.

‘Good gracious! child,’ said the old woman, ‘what a figure you’ve got. Come! I’ll lace you up properly for once.’

Snowdrop, suspecting no evil, stood before her and let her lace her bodice up, but the old woman laced her so quickly and so tightly that it took Snowdrop’s breath away, and she fell down dead.

‘Now you are no longer the fairest,’ said the wicked old woman, and then she hastened away.

In the evening the seven Dwarfs came home, and you may think what a fright they got when they saw their dear Snowdrop lying on the floor, as still and motionless as a dead person. They lifted her up tenderly, and when they saw how tightly laced she was they cut the lace in two, and she began to breathe a little and gradually came back to life. When the Dwarfs heard what had happened, they said:

‘Depend upon it, the old peddler wife was none other than the old Queen. In future you must be sure to let no one in, if we are not at home.’

As soon as the wicked old Queen got home she went straight to her mirror, and said:

‘Mirror, mirror, hanging there,
Who in all the land’s most fair?’

and the mirror answered as before:

‘My Lady Queen, you are fair, ‘tis true,
But Snowdrop is fairer far than you.
Snowdrop, who dwells with the seven little men,
Is as fair as you, as fair again.’

When she heard this she became as pale as death, because she saw at once that Snowdrop must be alive again.

‘This time,’ she said to herself, ‘I will think of something that will make an end of her once and for all.’

And by the witchcraft which she understood so well she made a poisonous comb; then she dressed herself up and assumed the form of another old woman. So she went over the seven hills till she reached the house of the seven Dwarfs, and knocking at the door she called out:

‘Fine wares for sale.’

Snowdrop looked out of the window and said:

‘You must go away, for I may not let anyone in.’

‘But surely you are not forbidden to look out?’ said the old woman, and she held up the poisonous comb for her to see.

It pleased the girl so much that she let herself be taken in, and opened the door. When they had settled their bargain the old woman said:

‘Now I’ll comb your hair properly for you, for once in the way.’

Poor Snowdrop thought no evil, but hardly had the comb touched her hair than the poison worked and she fell down unconscious.

‘Now, my fine lady, you’re really done for this time,’ said the wicked woman, and she made her way home as fast as she could.

Fortunately it was now near evening, and the seven Dwarfs returned home. When they saw Snowdrop lying dead on the ground, they at once suspected that her wicked step-mother had been at work again; so they searched till they found the poisonous comb, and the moment they pulled it out of her head Snowdrop came to herself again, and told them what had happened. Then they warned her once more to be on her guard, and to open the door to no one.

As soon as the Queen got home she went straight to her mirror, and asked:

‘Mirror, mirror, hanging there,
Who in all the land’s most fair?’

and it replied as before:

‘My Lady Queen, you are fair, ‘tis true,
But Snowdrop is fairer far than you.
Snowdrop, who dwells with the seven little men,
Is as fair as you, as fair again.’

When she heard these words she literally trembled and shook with rage.

‘Snowdrop shall die,’ she cried; ‘yes, though it cost me my own life.’

Then she went to a little secret chamber, which no one knew of but herself, and there she made a poisonous apple. Outwardly it looked beautiful, white with red cheeks, so that everyone who saw it longed to eat it, but anyone who might do so would certainly die on the spot. When the apple was quite finished she stained her face and dressed herself up as a peasant, and so she went over the seven hills to the seven Dwarfs’. She knocked at the door, as usual, but Snowdrop put her head out of the window and called out:

‘I may not let anyone in, the seven Dwarfs have forbidden me to do so.’

‘Are you afraid of being poisoned?’ asked the old woman. ‘See, I will cut this apple in half. I’ll eat the white cheek and you can eat the red.’

But the apple was so cunningly made that only the red cheek was poisonous. Snowdrop longed to eat the tempting fruit, and when she saw that the peasant woman was eating it herself, she couldn’t resist the temptation any longer, and stretching out her hand she took the poisonous half. But hardly had the first bite passed her lips than she fell down dead on the ground. Then the eyes of the cruel Queen sparkled with glee, and laughing aloud she cried:

‘As white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony, this time the Dwarfs won’t be able to bring you back to life.’

When she got home she asked the mirror:

‘Mirror, mirror, hanging there,
Who in all the land’s most fair?’

and this time it replied:

‘You are most fair, my Lady Queen,
None fairer in the land, I ween.’

Then her jealous heart was at rest—at least, as much at rest as a jealous heart can ever be.

When the little Dwarfs came home in the evening they found Snowdrop lying on the ground, and she neither breathed nor stirred. They lifted her up, and looked round everywhere to see if they could find anything poisonous about. They unlaced her bodice, combed her hair, washed her with water and wine, but all in vain; the child was dead and remained dead. Then they placed her on a bier, and all the seven Dwarfs sat round it, weeping and sobbing for three whole days. At last they made up their minds to bury her, but she looked as blooming as a living being, and her cheeks were still such a lovely colour, that they said:

‘We can’t hide her away in the black ground.’

So they had a coffin made of transparent glass, and they laid her in it, and wrote on the lid in golden letters that she was a royal Princess. Then they put the coffin on the top of the mountain, and one of the Dwarfs always remained beside it and kept watch over it.

And the very birds of the air came and bewailed Snowdrop’s death, first an owl, and then a raven, and last of all a little dove.

Snowdrop lay a long time in the coffin, and she always looked the same, just as if she were fast asleep, and she remained as white as snow, as red as blood, and her hair as black as ebony.

Now it happened one day that a Prince came to the wood and passed by the Dwarfs’ house. He saw the coffin on the hill, with the beautiful Snowdrop inside it, and when he had read what was written on it in golden letters, he said to the Dwarf:

‘Give me the coffin. I’ll give you whatever you like for it.’

But the Dwarf said: ‘No; we wouldn’t part with it for all the gold in the world.’

‘Well, then,’ he replied, ‘give it to me, because I can’t live without Snowdrop. I will cherish and love it as my dearest possession.’

He spoke so sadly that the good Dwarfs had pity on him, and gave him the coffin, and the Prince made his servants bear it away on their shoulders. Now it happened that as they were going down the hill they stumbled over a bush, and jolted the coffin so violently that the poisonous bit of apple Snowdrop had swallowed fell out of her throat. She gradually opened her eyes, lifted up the lid of the coffin, and sat up alive and well.

‘Oh! dear me, where am I?’ she cried.

The Prince answered joyfully, ‘You are with me,’ and he told her all that had happened, adding, ‘I love you better than anyone in the whole wide world. Will you come with me to my father’s palace and be my wife?’

Snowdrop consented, and went with him, and the marriage was celebrated with great pomp and splendour.

Now Snowdrop’s wicked step-mother was one of the guests invited to the wedding feast. When she had dressed herself very gorgeously for the occasion, she went to the mirror, and said:

‘Mirror, mirror, hanging there,
Who in all the land’s most fair?’

and the mirror answered:

‘My Lady Queen, you are fair, ‘tis true,
But Snowdrop is fairer far than you.’

When the wicked woman heard these words she uttered a curse, and was beside herself with rage and mortification. At first she didn’t want to go to the wedding at all, but at the same time she felt she would never be happy till she had seen the young Queen. As she entered Snowdrop recognised her, and nearly fainted with fear; but red-hot iron shoes had been prepared for the wicked old Queen, and she was made to get into them and dance till she fell down dead.[29]

29. Grimm.

THE GOLDEN GOOSE

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There was once a man who had three sons. The youngest of them was called Dullhead, and was sneered and jeered at and snubbed on every possible opportunity.

One day it happened that the eldest son wished to go into the forest to cut wood, and before he started his mother gave him a fine rich cake and a bottle of wine, so that he might be sure not to suffer from hunger or thirst.

When he reached the forest he met a little old grey man who wished him ‘Good-morning,’ and said: ‘Do give me a piece of that cake you have got in your pocket, and let me have a draught of your wine—I am so hungry and thirsty.’

But this clever son replied: ‘If I give you my cake and wine I shall have none left for myself; you just go your own way;’ and he left the little man standing there and went further on into the forest. There he began to cut down a tree, but before long he made a false stroke with his axe, and cut his own arm so badly that he was obliged to go home and have it bound up.

Then the second son went to the forest, and his mother gave him a good cake and a bottle of wine as she had to his elder brother. He too met the little old grey man, who begged him for a morsel of cake and a draught of wine.

But the second son spoke most sensibly too, and said: ‘Whatever I give to you I deprive myself of. Just go your own way, will you?’ Not long after his punishment overtook him, for no sooner had he struck a couple of blows on a tree with his axe, than he cut his leg so badly that he had to be carried home.

So then Dullhead said: ‘Father, let me go out and cut wood.’

But his father answered: ‘Both your brothers have injured themselves. You had better leave it alone; you know nothing about it.’

But Dullhead begged so hard to be allowed to go that at last his father said: ‘Very well, then—go. Perhaps when you have hurt yourself, you may

learn to know better.’ His mother only gave him a very plain cake made with water and baked in the cinders, and a bottle of sour beer.

When he got to the forest, he too met the little grey old man, who greeted him and said: ‘Give me a piece of your cake and a draught from your bottle; I am so hungry and thirsty.’

And Dullhead replied: ‘I’ve only got a cinder-cake and some sour beer, but if you care to have that, let us sit down and eat.’

So they sat down, and when Dullhead brought out his cake he found it had turned into a fine rich cake, and the sour beer into excellent wine. Then they ate and drank, and when they had finished the little man said: ‘Now I will bring you luck, because you have a kind heart and are willing to share what you have with others. There stands an old tree; cut it down, and amongst its roots you’ll find something.’ With that the little man took leave.

Then Dullhead fell to at once to hew down the tree, and when it fell he found amongst its roots a goose, whose feathers were all of pure gold. He lifted it out, carried it off, and took it with him to an inn where he meant to spend the night.

Now the landlord of the inn had three daughters, and when they saw the goose they were filled with curiosity as to what this wonderful bird could be, and each longed to have one of its golden feathers.

The eldest thought to herself: ‘No doubt I shall soon find a good opportunity to pluck out one of its feathers,’ and the first time Dullhead happened to leave the room she caught hold of the goose by its wing. But, lo and behold! her fingers seemed to stick fast to the goose, and she could not take her hand away.

Soon after the second daughter came in, and thought to pluck a golden feather for herself too; but hardly had she touched her sister than she stuck fast as well. At last the third sister came with the same intentions, but the other two cried out: ‘Keep off! for Heaven’s sake, keep off!’

The younger sister could not imagine why she was to keep off, and thought to herself: ‘If they are both there, why should not I be there too?’

So she sprang to them; but no sooner had she touched one of them than she stuck fast to her. So they all three had to spend the night with the goose.

Next morning Dullhead tucked the goose under his arm and went off, without in the least troubling himself about the three girls who were hanging on to it. They just had to run after him right or left as best they could. In the middle of a field they met the parson, and when he saw this procession he cried: ‘For shame, you bold girls! What do you mean by running after a young fellow through the fields like that? Do you call that proper behaviour?’ And with that he caught the youngest girl by the hand to try and draw her away. But directly he touched her he hung on himself, and had to run along with the rest of them.

Not long after the clerk came that way, and was much surprised to see the parson following the footsteps of three girls. ‘Why, where is your reverence going so fast?’ cried he; ‘don’t forget there is to be a christening to-day;’ and he ran after him, caught him by the sleeve, and hung on to it himself: As the five of them trotted along in this fashion one after the other, two peasants were coming from their work with their hoes. On seeing them the parson called out and begged them to come and rescue him and the clerk. But no sooner did they touch the clerk than they stuck on too, and so there were seven of them running after Dullhead and his goose.

After a time they all came to a town where a King reigned whose daughter was so serious and solemn that no one could ever manage to make her laugh. So the King had decreed that whoever should succeed in making her laugh should marry her.

When Dullhead heard this he marched before the Princess with his goose and its appendages, and as soon as she saw these seven people continually running after each other she burst out laughing, and could not stop herself. Then Dullhead claimed her as his bride, but the King, who did not much fancy him as a son-in-law, made all sorts of objections, and told him he must first find a man who could drink up a whole cellarful of wine.

Dullhead bethought him of the little grey man, who could, he felt sure, help him; so he went off to the forest, and on the very spot where he had cut down the tree he saw a man sitting with a most dismal expression of face.

Dullhead asked him what he was taking so much to heart, and the man answered: ‘I don’t know how I am ever to quench this terrible thirst I am

suffering from. Cold water doesn't suit me at all. To be sure I've emptied a whole barrel of wine, but what is one drop on a hot stone?'

'I think I can help you,' said Dullhead. 'Come with me, and you shall drink to your heart's content.' So he took him to the King's cellar, and the man sat down before the huge casks and drank and drank till he drank up the whole contents of the cellar before the day closed.

Then Dullhead asked once more for his bride, but the King felt vexed at the idea of a stupid fellow whom people called 'Dullhead' carrying off his daughter, and he began to make fresh conditions. He required Dullhead to find a man who could eat a mountain of bread. Dullhead did not wait to consider long but went straight off to the forest, and there on the same spot sat a man who was drawing in a strap as tight as he could round his body, and making a most woeful face the while. Said he: 'I've eaten up a whole oven full of loaves, but what's the good of that to anyone who is as hungry as I am? I declare my stomach feels quite empty, and I must draw my belt tight if I'm not to die of starvation.'

Dullhead was delighted, and said: 'Get up and come with me, and you shall have plenty to eat,' and he brought him to the King's Court.

Now the King had given orders to have all the flour in his kingdom brought together, and to have a huge mountain baked of it. But the man from the wood just took up his stand before the mountain and began to eat, and in one day it had all vanished.

For the third time Dullhead asked for his bride, but again the King tried to make some evasion, and demanded a ship 'which could sail on land or water! When you come sailing in such a ship,' said he, 'you shall have my daughter without further delay.'

Again Dullhead started off to the forest, and there he found the little old grey man with whom he had shared his cake, and who said: 'I have eaten and I have drunk for you, and now I will give you the ship. I have done all this for you because you were kind and merciful to me.'

Then he gave Dullhead a ship which could sail on land or water, and when the King saw it he felt he could no longer refuse him his daughter.

So they celebrated the wedding with great rejoicings; and after the King's death Dullhead succeeded to the kingdom, and lived happily with his wife for many years after.[30]

30. Grimm.

THE SEVEN FOALS

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There was once upon a time a couple of poor folks who lived in a wretched hut, far away from everyone else, in a wood. They only just managed to live from hand to mouth, and had great difficulty in doing even so much as that, but they had three sons, and the youngest of them was called Cinderlad, for he did nothing else but lie and poke about among the ashes.

One day the eldest lad said that he would go out to earn his living; he soon got leave to do that, and set out on his way into the world. He walked on and on for the whole day, and when night was beginning to fall he came to a royal palace. The King was standing outside on the steps, and asked where he was going.

‘Oh, I am going about seeking a place, my father,’ said the youth.

‘Wilt thou serve me, and watch my seven foals?’ asked the King. ‘If thou canst watch them for a whole day and tell me at night what they eat and drink, thou shalt have the Princess and half my kingdom, but if thou canst not, I will cut three red stripes on thy back.’

The youth thought that it was very easy work to watch the foals, and that he could do it well enough.

Next morning, when day was beginning to dawn, the King’s Master of the Horse let out the seven foals; and they ran away, and the youth after them just as it chanced, over hill and dale, through woods end bogs. When the youth had run thus for a long time he began to be tired, and when he had held on a little longer he was heartily weary of watching at all, and at the same moment he came to a cleft in a rock where an old woman was sitting spinning with her distaff in her hand.

As soon as she caught sight of the youth, who was running after the foals till the perspiration streamed down his face, she cried:

‘Come hither, come hither, my handsome son, and let me comb your hair for you.’

The lad was willing enough, so he sat down in the cleft of the rock beside the old hag, and laid his head on her knees, and she combed his hair

all day while he lay there and gave himself up to idleness.

When evening was drawing near, the youth wanted to go.

‘I may just as well go straight home again,’ said he, ‘for it is no use to go to the King’s palace.’

‘Wait till it is dusk,’ said the old hag, ‘and then the King’s foals will pass by this place again, and you can run home with them; no one will ever know that you have been lying here all day instead of watching the foals.’

So when they came she gave the lad a bottle of water and a bit of moss, and told him to show these to the King and say that this was what his seven foals ate and drank.

‘Hast thou watched faithfully and well the whole day long?’ said the King, when the lad came into his presence in the evening.

‘Yes, that I have!’ said the youth.

‘Then you are able to tell me what it is that my seven foals eat and drink,’ said the King.

So the youth produced the bottle of water and the bit of moss which he had got from the old woman, saying:

‘Here you see their meat, and here you see their drink.’

Then the King knew how his watching had been done, and fell into such a rage that he ordered his people to chase the youth back to his own home at once; but first they were to cut three red stripes in his back, and rub salt into them.

When the youth reached home again, anyone can imagine what a state of mind he was in. He had gone out once to seek a place, he said, but never would he do such a thing again.

Next day the second son said that he would now go out into the world to seek his fortune. His father and mother said ‘No,’ and bade him look at his brother’s back, but the youth would not give up his design, and stuck to it, and after a long, long time he got leave to go, and set forth on his way. When he had walked all day he too came to the King’s palace, and the King was standing outside on the steps, and asked where he was going; and when the youth replied that he was going about in search of a place, the King said that he might enter into his service and watch his seven foals. Then the King promised him the same punishment and the same reward that he had promised his brother.

The youth at once consented to this and entered into the King's service, for he thought he could easily watch the foals and inform the King what they ate and drank.

In the grey light of dawn the Master of the Horse let out the seven foals, and off they went again over hill and dale, and off went the lad after them. But all went with him as it had gone with his brother. When he had run after the foals for a long, long time and was hot and tired, he passed by a cleft in the rock where an old woman was sitting spinning with a distaff, and she called to him:

'Come hither, come hither, my handsome son, and let me comb your hair.'

The youth liked the thought of this, let the foals run where they chose, and seated himself in the cleft of the rock by the side of the old hag. So there he sat with his head on her lap, taking his ease the livelong day.

The foals came back in the evening, and then he too got a bit of moss and a bottle of water from the old hag, which things he was to show to the King. But when the King asked the youth: 'Canst thou tell me what my seven foals eat and drink?' and the youth showed him the bit of moss and the bottle of water, and said: 'Yes here may you behold their meat, and here their drink,' the King once more became wroth, and commanded that three red stripes should be cut on the lad's back, that salt should be strewn upon them, and that he should then be instantly chased back to his own home. So when the youth got home again he too related all that had happened to him, and he too said that he had gone out in search of a place once, but that never would he do it again.

On the third day Cinderlad wanted to set out. He had a fancy to try to watch the seven foals himself, he said.

The two others laughed at him, and mocked him. 'What I when all went so ill with us, do you suppose that you are going to succeed? You look like succeeding—you who have never done anything else but lie and poke about among the ashes!' said they.

'Yes, I will go too,' said Cinderlad, 'for I have taken it into my head.'

The two brothers laughed at him, and his father and mother begged him not to go, but all to no purpose, and Cinderlad set out on his way. So when he had walked the whole day, he too came to the King's palace as darkness began to fall.

There stood the King outside on the steps, and he asked whither he was bound.

‘I am walking about in search of a place,’ said Cinderlad.

‘From whence do you come, then?’ inquired the King, for by this time he wanted to know a little more about the men before he took any of them into his service.

So Cinderlad told him whence he came, and that he was brother to the two who had watched the seven foals for the King, and then he inquired if he might be allowed to try to watch them on the following day.

‘Oh, shame on them!’ said the King, for it enraged him even to think of them. ‘If thou art brother to those two, thou too art not good for much. I have had enough of such fellows.’

‘Well, but as I have come here, you might just give me leave to make the attempt,’ said Cinderlad.

‘Oh, very well, if thou art absolutely determined to have thy back flayed, thou may’st have thine own way if thou wilt,’ said the King.

‘I would much rather have the Princess,’ said Cinderlad.

Next morning, in the grey light of dawn, the Master of the Horse let out the seven foals again, and off they set over hill and dale, through woods and bogs, and off went Cinderlad after them. When he had run thus for a long time, he too came to the cleft in the rock. There the old hag was once more sitting spinning from her distaff, and she cried to Cinderlad;

‘Come hither, come hither, my handsome son, and let me comb your hair for you.’

‘Come to me, then; come to me!’ said Cinderlad, as he passed by jumping and running, and keeping tight hold of one of the foals’ tails.

When he had got safely past the cleft in the rock, the youngest foal said:

‘Get on my back, for we have still a long way to go.’ So the lad did this.

And thus they journeyed onwards a long, long way.

‘Dost thou see anything now?’ said the Foal.

‘No,’ said Cinderlad.

So they journeyed onwards a good bit farther.

‘Dost thou see anything now?’ asked the Foal.

‘Oh, no,’ said the lad.

When they had gone thus for a long, long way, the Foal again asked:

‘Dost thou see anything now?’

‘Yes, now I see something that is white,’ said Cinderlad. ‘It looks like the trunk of a great thick birch tree.’

‘Yes, that is where we are to go in,’ said the Foal.

When they got to the trunk, the eldest foal broke it down on one side, and then they saw a door where the trunk had been standing, and inside this there was a small room, and in the room there was scarcely anything but a small fire-place and a couple of benches, but behind the door hung a great rusty sword and a small pitcher.

‘Canst thou wield that sword?’ asked the Foal.

Cinderlad tried, but could not do it; so he had to take a draught from the pitcher, and then one more, and after that still another, and then he was able to wield the sword with perfect ease.

‘Good,’ said the Foal; ‘and now thou must take the sword away with thee, and with it shalt thou cut off the heads of all seven of us on thy wedding-day, and then we shall become princes again as we were before. For we are brothers of the Princess whom thou art to have when thou canst tell the King what we eat and drink, but there is a mighty Troll who has cast a spell over us. When thou hast cut off our heads, thou must take the greatest care to lay each head at the tail of the body to which it belonged before, and then the spell which the Troll has cast upon us will lose all its power.’

Cinderlad promised to do this, and then they went on farther.

When they had travelled a long, long way, the Foal said:

‘Dost thou see anything?’

‘No,’ said Cinderlad.

So they went on a great distance farther.

‘And now?’ inquired the Foal, ‘seest thou nothing now?’

‘Alas! no,’ said Cinderlad.

So they travelled onwards again, for many and many a mile, over hill and dale.

‘Now, then,’ said the Foal, ‘dost thou not see anything now?’

‘Yes,’ said Cinderlad; ‘now I see something like a bluish streak, far, far away.’

‘That is a river,’ said the Foal, ‘and we have to cross it.’

There was a long, handsome bridge over the river, and when they had got to the other side of it they again travelled on a long, long way, and then once more the Foal inquired if Cinderlad saw anything. Yes, this time he saw something that looked black, far, far away, and was rather like a church tower.

‘Yes,’ said the Foal, ‘we shall go into that.’

When the Foals got into the churchyard they turned into men and looked like the sons of a king, and their clothes were so magnificent that they shone with splendour, and they went into the church and received bread and wine from the priest, who was standing before the altar, and Cinderlad went in too. But when the priest had laid his hands on the princes and read the blessing, they went out of the church again, and Cinderlad went out too, but he took with him a flask of wine and some consecrated bread. No sooner had the seven princes come out into the churchyard than they became foals again, and Cinderlad got upon the back of the youngest, and they returned by the way they had come, only they went much, much faster.

First they went over the bridge, and then past the trunk of the birch tree, and then past the old hag who sat in the cleft of the rock spinning, and they went by so fast that Cinderlad could not hear what the old hag screeched after him, but just heard enough to understand that she was terribly enraged.

It was all but dark when they got back to the King at nightfall, and he himself was standing in the courtyard waiting for them.

‘Hast thou watched well and faithfully the whole day?’ said the King to Cinderlad.

‘I have done my best,’ replied Cinderlad.

‘Then thou canst tell me what my seven foals eat and drink?’ asked the King.

So Cinderlad pulled out the consecrated bread and the flask of wine, and showed them to the King. ‘Here may you behold their meat, and here their drink,’ said he.

‘Yes, diligently and faithfully hast thou watched,’ said the King, ‘and thou shalt have the Princess and half the kingdom.’

So all was made ready for the wedding, and the King said that it was to be so stately and magnificent that everyone should hear of it, and everyone

inquire about it.

But when they sat down to the marriage-feast, the bridegroom arose and went down to the stable, for he said that he had forgotten something which he must go and look to. When he got there, he did what the foals had bidden him, and cut off the heads of all the seven. First the eldest, and then the second, and so on according to their age, and he was extremely careful to lay each head at the tail of the foal to which it had belonged, and when that was done, all the foals became princes again. When he returned to the marriage-feast with the seven princes, the King was so joyful that he both kissed Cinderlad and clapped him on the back, and his bride was still more delighted with him than she had been before.

‘Half my kingdom is thine already,’ said the King, ‘and the other half shall be thine after my death, for my sons can get countries and kingdoms for themselves now that they have become princes again.’

Therefore, as all may well believe, there was joy and merriment at that wedding.[31]

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31. From J. Moe.

THE MARVELLOUS MUSICIAN

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There was once upon a time a marvellous musician. One day he was wandering through a wood all by himself, thinking now of one thing, now of another, till there was nothing else left to think about. Then he said to himself:

‘Time hangs very heavily on my hands when I’m all alone in the wood. I must try and find a pleasant companion.’

So he took his fiddle out, and fiddled till he woke the echoes round. After a time a wolf came through the thicket and trotted up to the musician.

‘Oh! it’s a Wolf, is it?’ said he. ‘I’ve not the smallest wish for his society.’

But the Wolf approached him and said:

‘Oh, my dear musician, how beautifully you play! I wish you’d teach me how it’s done.’

‘That’s easily learned,’ answered the fiddler; ‘you must only do exactly as I tell you.’

‘Of course I will,’ replied the Wolf. ‘I can promise that you will find me a most apt pupil.’

So they joined company and went on their way together, and after a time they came to an old oak tree, which was hollow and had a crack in the middle of the trunk.

‘Now,’ said the Musician, ‘if you want to learn to fiddle, here’s your chance. Lay your front paws in this crack.’

The Wolf did as he was told, and the Musician quickly seized a stone, and wedged both his fore paws so firmly into the crack that he was held there, a fast prisoner.

‘Wait there till I return,’ said the Fiddler, and he went on his way.

After a time he said to himself again:

‘Time hangs very heavily on my hands when I’m all alone in the wood; I must try and find a companion.’

So he drew out his fiddle, and fiddled away lustily. Presently a fox slunk through the trees.

‘Aha I what have we here?’ said the Musician. ‘A fox; well, I haven’t the smallest desire for his company.’

The Fox came straight up to him and said:

‘My dear friend, how beautifully you play the fiddle; I would like to learn how you do it.’

‘Nothing easier,’ said the Musician, ‘if you’ll promise to do exactly as I tell you.’

‘Certainly,’ answered the Fox, ‘you have only to say the word.’

‘Well, then, follow me,’ replied the Fiddler.

When they had gone a bit of the way, they came to a path with high trees on each side. Here the Musician halted, bent a stout hazel bough down to the ground from one side of the path, and put his foot on the end of it to keep it down. Then he bent a branch down from the other side and said:

‘Give me your left front paw, my little Fox, if you really wish to learn how it’s done.’

The Fox did as he was told, and the Musician tied his front paw to the end of one of the branches.

‘Now, my friend,’ he said, ‘give me your right paw.’

This he bound to the other branch, and having carefully seen that his knots were all secure, he stepped off the ends of the branches, and they sprang back, leaving the poor Fox suspended in mid-air.

‘Just you wait where you are till I return,’ said the Musician, and he went on his way again.

Once more he said to himself:

‘Time hangs heavily on my hands when I’m all alone in the wood; I must try and find another companion.’

So he took out his fiddle and played as merrily as before. This time a little hare came running up at the sound.

‘Oh! here comes a hare,’ said the Musician; ‘I’ve not the smallest desire for his company.’

‘How beautifully you play, dear Mr. Fiddler,’ said the little Hare. ‘I wish I could learn how you do it.’

‘It’s easily learnt,’ answered the Musician; ‘just do exactly as I tell you.’

‘That I will,’ said the Hare, ‘you will find me a most attentive pupil.’

They went on a bit together, till they came to a thin part of the wood, where they found an aspen tree growing. The Musician bound a long cord round the little Hare’s neck, the other end of which he fastened to the tree.

‘Now, my merry little friend,’ said the Musician, ‘run twenty times round the tree.’

The little Hare obeyed, and when it had run twenty times round the tree, the cord had twisted itself twenty times round the trunk, so that the poor little beast was held a fast prisoner, and it might bite and tear as much as it liked, it couldn’t free itself, and the cord only cut its tender neck.

‘Wait there till I return,’ said the Musician, and went on his way.

In the meantime the Wolf had pulled and bitten and scratched at the stone, till at last he succeeded in getting his paws out. Full of anger, he hurried after the Musician, determined when he met him to tear him to pieces. When the Fox saw him running by, he called out as loud as he could:

‘Brother Wolf, come to my rescue, the Musician has deceived me too.’

The Wolf pulled the branches down, bit the cord in two, and set the Fox free. So they went on their way together, both vowing vengeance on the Musician. They found the poor imprisoned little Hare, and having set him free also, they all set out to look for their enemy.

During this time the Musician had once more played his fiddle, and had been more fortunate in the result. The sounds pierced to the ears of a poor woodman, who instantly left his work, and with his hatchet under his arm came to listen to the music.

‘At last I’ve got a proper sort of companion,’ said the Musician, ‘for it was a human being I wanted all along, and not a wild animal.’

And he began playing so enchantingly that the poor man stood there as if bewitched, and his heart leapt for joy as he listened.

And as he stood thus, the Wolf and Fox and little Hare came up, and the woodman saw at once that they meant mischief. He lifted his glittering axe and placed himself in front of the Musician, as much as to say: ‘If you touch a hair of his head, beware, for you will have to answer for it to me.’

Then the beasts were frightened, and they all three ran back into the wood, and the Musician played the woodman one of his best tunes, by way of thanks, and then continued his way.[32]

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32. Grimm.

THE STORY OF SIGURD

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(This is a very old story: the Danes who used to fight with the English in King Alfred's time knew this story. They have carved on the rocks pictures of some of the things that happen in the tale, and those carvings may still be seen. Because it is so old and so beautiful the story is told here again, but it has a sad ending—indeed it is all sad, and all about fighting and killing, as might be expected from the Danes.)

Once upon a time there was a King in the North who had won many wars, but now he was old. Yet he took a new wife, and then another Prince, who wanted to have married her, came up against him with a great army. The old King went out and fought bravely, but at last his sword broke, and he was wounded and his men fled. But in the night, when the battle was over, his young wife came out and searched for him among the slain, and at last she found him, and asked whether he might be healed. But he said 'No,' his luck was gone, his sword was broken, and he must die. And he told her that she would have a son, and that son would be a great warrior, and would avenge him on the other King, his enemy. And he bade her keep the broken pieces of the sword, to make a new sword for his son, and that blade should be called Gram.

Then he died. And his wife called her maid to her and said, 'Let us change clothes, and you shall be called by my name, and I by yours, lest the enemy finds us.'

So this was done, and they hid in a wood, but there some strangers met them and carried them off in a ship to Denmark. And when they were brought before the King, he thought the maid looked like a Queen, and the Queen like a maid. So he asked the Queen, 'How do you know in the dark of night whether the hours are wearing to the morning?'

And she said:

‘I know because, when I was younger, I used to have to rise and light the fires, and still I waken at the same time.’

‘A strange Queen to light the fires,’ thought the King.

Then he asked the Queen, who was dressed like a maid, ‘How do you know in the dark of night whether the hours are wearing near the dawn?’

‘My father gave me a gold ring,’ said she, ‘and always, ere the dawning, it grows cold on my finger.’

‘A rich house where the maids wore gold,’ said the King. ‘Truly you are no maid, but a King’s daughter.’

So he treated her royally, and as time went on she had a son called Sigurd, a beautiful boy and very strong. He had a tutor to be with him, and once the tutor bade him go to the King and ask for a horse.

‘Choose a horse for yourself,’ said the King; and Sigurd went to the wood, and there he met an old man with a white beard, and said, ‘Come! help me in horse-choosing.’

Then the old man said, ‘Drive all the horses into the river, and choose the one that swims across.’

So Sigurd drove them, and only one swam across. Sigurd chose him: his name was Grani, and he came of Sleipnir’s breed, and was the best horse in the world. For Sleipnir was the horse of Odin, the God of the North, and was as swift as the wind.

But a day or two later his tutor said to Sigurd, ‘There is a great treasure of gold hidden not far from here, and it would become you to win it.’

But Sigurd answered, ‘I have heard stories of that treasure, and I know that the dragon Fafnir guards it, and he is so huge and wicked that no man dares to go near him.’

‘He is no bigger than other dragons,’ said the tutor, ‘and if you were as brave as your father you would not fear him.’

‘I am no coward,’ says Sigurd; ‘why do you want me to fight with this dragon?’

Then his tutor, whose name was Regin, told him that all this great hoard of red gold had once belonged to his own father. And his father had three sons—the first was Fafnir, the Dragon; the next was Otter, who could put on the shape of an otter when he liked; and the next was himself, Regin, and he was a great smith and maker of swords.

Now there was at that time a dwarf called Andvari, who lived in a pool beneath a waterfall, and there he had hidden a great hoard of gold. And one day Otter had been fishing there, and had killed a salmon and eaten it, and was sleeping, like an otter, on a stone. Then someone came by, and threw a stone at the otter and killed it, and flayed off the skin, and took it to the house of Otter's father. Then he knew his son was dead, and to punish the person who had killed him he said he must have the Otter's skin filled with gold, and covered all over with red gold, or it should go worse with him. Then the person who had killed Otter went down and caught the Dwarf who owned all the treasure and took it from him.

Only one ring was left, which the Dwarf wore, and even that was taken from him.

Then the poor Dwarf was very angry, and he prayed that the gold might never bring any but bad luck to all the men who might own it, for ever.

Then the otter skin was filled with gold and covered with gold, all but one hair, and that was covered with the poor Dwarf's last ring.

But it brought good luck to nobody. First Fafnir, the Dragon, killed his own father, and then he went and wallowed on the gold, and would let his brother have none, and no man dared go near it.

When Sigurd heard the story he said to Regin:

'Make me a good sword that I may kill this Dragon.'

So Regin made a sword, and Sigurd tried it with a blow on a lump of iron, and the sword broke.

Another sword he made, and Sigurd broke that too.

Then Sigurd went to his mother, and asked for the broken pieces of his father's blade, and gave them to Regin. And he hammered and wrought them into a new sword, so sharp that fire seemed to burn along its edges.

Sigurd tried this blade on the lump of iron, and it did not break, but split the iron in two. Then he threw a lock of wool into the river, and when it floated down against the sword it was cut into two pieces. So Sigurd said that sword would do. But before he went against the Dragon he led an army to fight the men who had killed his father, and he slew their King, and took all his wealth, and went home.

When he had been at home a few days, he rode out with Regin one morning to the heath where the Dragon used to lie. Then he saw the track

which the Dragon made when he went to a cliff to drink, and the track was as if a great river had rolled along and left a deep valley.

Then Sigurd went down into that deep place, and dug many pits in it, and in one of the pits he lay hidden with his sword drawn. There he waited, and presently the earth began to shake with the weight of the Dragon as he crawled to the water. And a cloud of venom flew before him as he snorted and roared, so that it would have been death to stand before him.

But Sigurd waited till half of him had crawled over the pit, and then he thrust the sword Gram right into his very heart.

Then the Dragon lashed with his tail till stones broke and trees crashed about him.

Then he spoke, as he died, and said:

‘Whoever thou art that hast slain me this gold shall be thy ruin, and the ruin of all who own it.’

Sigurd said:

‘I would touch none of it if by losing it I should never die. But all men die, and no brave man lets death frighten him from his desire. Die thou, Fafnir,’ and then Fafnir died.

And after that Sigurd was called Fafnir’s Bane, and Dragonslayer.

Then Sigurd rode back, and met Regin, and Regin asked him to roast Fafnir’s heart and let him taste of it.

So Sigurd put the heart of Fafnir on a stake, and roasted it. But it chanced that he touched it with his finger, and it burned him. Then he put his finger in his mouth, and so tasted the heart of Fafnir.

Then immediately he understood the language of birds, and he heard the Woodpeckers say:

‘There is Sigurd roasting Fafnir’s heart for another, when he should taste of it himself and learn all wisdom.’

The next bird said:

‘There lies Regin, ready to betray Sigurd, who trusts him.’

The third bird said:

‘Let him cut off Regin’s head, and keep all the gold to himself.’

The fourth bird said:

‘That let him do, and then ride over Hindfell, to the place where Brynhild sleeps.’

When Sigurd heard all this, and how Regin was plotting to betray him, he cut off Regin's head with one blow of the sword Gram.

Then all 'he birds broke out singing:

'We know a fair maid,
A fair maiden sleeping;
Sigurd, be not afraid,
Sigurd, win thou the maid
Fortune is keeping.

'High over Hindfell
Red fire is flaming,
There doth the maiden dwell
She that should love thee well,
Meet for thy taming.

'There must she sleep till thou
Comest for her waking
Rise up and ride, for now
Sure she will swear the vow
Fearless of breaking.'

Then Sigurd remembered how the story went that somewhere, far away, there was a beautiful lady enchanted. She was under a spell, so that she must always sleep in a castle surrounded by flaming fire; there she must sleep for ever till there came a knight who would ride through the fire and waken her. There he determined to go, but first he rode right down the horrible trail of Fafnir. And Fafnir had lived in a cave with iron doors, a cave dug deep down in the earth, and full of gold bracelets, and crowns, and rings; and there, too, Sigurd found the Helm of Dread, a golden helmet, and whoever wears it is invisible. All these he piled on the back of the good horse Grani, and then he rode south to Hindfell.

Now it was night, and on the crest of the hill Sigurd saw a red fire blazing up into the sky, and within the flame a castle, and a banner on the topmost tower. Then he set the horse Grani at the fire, and he leaped through it lightly, as if it had been through the heather. So Sigurd went

within the castle door, and there he saw someone sleeping, clad all in armour. Then he took the helmet off the head of the sleeper, and behold, she was a most beautiful lady. And she wakened and said, ‘Ah! is it Sigurd, Sigmund’s son, who has broken the curse, and comes here to waken me at last?’

This curse came upon her when the thorn of the tree of sleep ran into her hand long ago as a punishment because she had displeased Odin the God. Long ago, too, she had vowed never to marry a man who knew fear, and dared not ride through the fence of flaming fire. For she was a warrior maid herself, and went armed into the battle like a man. But now she and Sigurd loved each other, and promised to be true to each other, and he gave her a ring, and it was the last ring taken from the dwarf Andvari. Then Sigurd rode away, and he came to the house of a King who had a fair daughter. Her name was Gudrun, and her mother was a witch. Now Gudrun fell in love with Sigurd, but he was always talking of Brynhild, how beautiful she was and how dear. So one day Gudrun’s witch mother put poppy and forgetful drugs in a magical cup, and bade Sigurd drink to her health, and he drank, and instantly he forgot poor Brynhild and he loved Gudrun, and they were married with great rejoicings.

Now the witch, the mother of Gudrun, wanted her son Gunnar to marry Brynhild, and she bade him ride out with Sigurd and go and woo her. So forth they rode to her father’s house, for Brynhild had quite gone out of Sigurd’s mind by reason of the witch’s wine, but she remembered him and loved him still. Then Brynhild’s father told Gunnar that she would marry none but him who could ride the flame in front of her enchanted tower, and thither they rode, and Gunnar set his horse at the flame, but he would not face it. Then Gunnar tried Sigurd’s horse Grani, but he would not move with Gunnar on his back. Then Gunnar remembered witchcraft that his mother had taught him, and by his magic he made Sigurd look exactly like himself, and he looked exactly like Gunnar. Then Sigurd, in the shape of Gunnar and in his mail, mounted on Grani, and Grani leaped the fence of fire, and Sigurd went in and found Brynhild, but he did not remember her yet, because of the forgetful medicine in the cup of the witch’s wine.

Now Brynhild had no help but to promise she would be his wife, the wife of Gunnar as she supposed, for Sigurd wore Gunnar’s shape, and she had sworn to wed whoever should ride the flames. And he gave her a ring,

and she gave him back the ring he had given her before in his own shape as Sigurd, and it was the last ring of that poor dwarf Andvari. Then he rode out again, and he and Gunnar changed shapes, and each was himself again, and they went home to the witch Queen's, and Sigurd gave the dwarf's ring to his wife, Gudrun. And Brynhild went to her father, and said that a King had come called Gunnar, and had ridden the fire, and she must marry him. 'Yet I thought,' she said, 'that no man could have done this deed but Sigurd, Fafnir's bane, who was my true love. But he has forgotten me, and my promise I must keep.'

So Gunnar and Brynhild were married, though it was not Gunnar but Sigurd in Gunnar's shape, that had ridden the fire.

And when the wedding was over and all the feast, then the magic of the witch's wine went out of Sigurd's brain, and he remembered all. He remembered how he had freed Brynhild from the spell, and how she was his own true love, and how he had forgotten and had married another woman, and won Brynhild to be the wife of another man.

But he was brave, and he spoke not a word of it to the others to make them unhappy. Still he could not keep away the curse which was to come on every one who owned the treasure of the dwarf Andvari, and his fatal golden ring.

And the curse soon came upon all of them. For one day, when Brynhild and Gudrun were bathing, Brynhild waded farthest out into the river, and said she did that to show she was Gudrun's superior. For her husband, she said, had ridden through the flame when no other man dared face it.

Then Gudrun was very angry, and said that it was Sigurd, not Gunnar, who had ridden the flame, and had received from Brynhild that fatal ring, the ring of the dwarf Andvari.

Then Brynhild saw the ring which Sigard had given to Gudrun, and she knew it and knew all, and she turned as pale as a dead woman, and went home. All that evening she never spoke. Next day she told Gunnar, her husband, that he was a coward and a liar, for he had never ridden the flame, but had sent Sigurd to do it for him, and pretended that he had done it himself. And she said he would never see her glad in his hall, never drinking wine, never playing chess, never embroidering with the golden thread, never speaking words of kindness. Then she rent all her needlework asunder and wept aloud, so that everyone in the house heard

her. For her heart was broken, and her pride was broken in the same hour. She had lost her true love, Sigurd, the slayer of Fafnir, and she was married to a man who was a liar.

Then Sigurd came and tried to comfort her, but she would not listen, and said she wished the sword stood fast in his heart.

‘Not long to wait,’ he said, ‘till the bitter sword stands fast in my heart, and thou will not live long when I am dead. But, dear Brynhild, live and be comforted, and love Gunnar thy husband, and I will give thee all the gold, the treasure of the dragon Fafnir.’

Brynhild said:

‘It is too late.’

Then Sigurd was so grieved and his heart so swelled in his breast that it burst the steel rings of his shirt of mail.

Sigurd went out and Brynhild determined to slay him. She mixed serpent’s venom and wolf’s flesh, and gave them in one dish to her husband’s younger brother, and when he had tasted them he was mad, and he went into Sigurd’s chamber while he slept and pinned him to the bed with a sword. But Sigurd woke, and caught the sword Gram into his hand, and threw it at the man as he fled, and the sword cut him in twain. Thus died Sigurd, Fafnir’s bane, whom no ten men could have slain in fair fight. Then Gudrun wakened and saw him dead, and she moaned aloud, and Brynhild heard her and laughed; but the kind horse Grani lay down and died of very grief. And then Brynhild fell a-weeping till her heart broke. So they attired Sigurd in all his golden armour, and built a great pile of wood on board his ship, and at night laid on it the dead Sigurd and the dead Brynhild, and the good horse, Grani, and set fire to it, and launched the ship. And the wind bore it blazing out to sea, flaming into the dark. So there were Sigurd and Brynhild burned together, and the curse of the dwarf Andvari was fulfilled.[33]

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33. The Volsunga Saga.

THE GREEN FAIRY BOOK

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To The Friendly Reader

This is the third, and probably the last, of the Fairy Books of many colours. First there was the Blue Fairy Book; then, children, you asked for more, and we made up the Red Fairy Book; and, when you wanted more still, the Green Fairy Book was put together. The stories in all the books are borrowed from many countries; some are French, some German, some Russian, some Italian, some Scottish, some English, one Chinese. However much these nations differ about trifles, they all agree in liking fairy tales. The reason, no doubt, is that men were much like children in their minds long ago, long, long ago, and so before they took to writing newspapers, and sermons, and novels, and long poems, they told each other stories, such as you read in the fairy books. They believed that witches could turn people into beasts, that beasts could speak, that magic rings could make their owners invisible, and all the other wonders in the stories. Then, as the world became grown-up, the fairy tales which were not written down would have been quite forgotten but that the old grannies remembered them, and told them to the little grandchildren: and when they, in their turn, became grannies, they remembered them, and told them also. In this way these tales are older than reading and writing, far older than printing. The oldest fairy tales ever written down were written down in Egypt, about Joseph’s time, nearly three thousand five hundred years ago. Other fairy stories Homer knew, in Greece, nearly three thousand years ago, and he made them all up into a poem, the Odyssey, which I hope you will read some day. Here you will find the witch who turns men into swine, and the man who bores out the big foolish giant’s eye, and the cap of darkness, and the shoes of swiftness, that were worn later by Jack the Giant-Killer. These fairy tales are the oldest stories in the world, and as they were first made by men who were childlike for their own amusement, so they amuse children still, and also grown-up people who have not forgotten how they once were children.

Some of the stories were made, no doubt, not only to amuse, but to teach goodness. You see, in the tales, how the boy who is kind to beasts, and polite, and generous, and brave, always comes best through his trials,

and no doubt these tales were meant to make their hearers kind, unselfish, courteous, and courageous. This is the moral of them. But, after all, we think more as we read them of the diversion than of the lesson. There are grown-up people now who say that the stories are not good for children, because they are not true, because there are no witches, nor talking beasts, and because people are killed in them, especially wicked giants. But probably you who read the tales know very well how much is true and how much is only make-believe, and I never yet heard of a child who killed a very tall man merely because Jack killed the giants, or who was unkind to his stepmother, if he had one, because, in fairy tales, the stepmother is often disagreeable. If there are frightful monsters in fairy tales, they do not frighten you now, because that kind of monster is no longer going about the world, whatever he may have done long, long ago. He has been turned into stone, and you may see his remains in museums. Therefore, I am not afraid that you will be afraid of the magicians and dragons; besides, you see that a really brave boy or girl was always their master, even in the height of their power.

Some of the tales here, like The Half-Chick, are for very little children; others for older ones. The longest tales, like Heart of Ice, were not invented when the others were, but were written in French, by clever men and women, such as Madame d'Aulnoy, and the Count de Caylus, about two hundred years ago. There are not many people now, perhaps there are none, who can write really good fairy tales, because they do not believe enough in their own stories, and because they want to be wittier than it has pleased Heaven to make them.

So here we give you the last of the old stories, for the present, and hope you will like them, and feel grateful to the Brothers Grimm, who took them down from the telling of old women, and to M. Sebillot and M. Charles Marelles, who have lent us some tales from their own French people, and to Mr. Ford, who drew the pictures, and to the ladies, Miss Blackley, Miss Alma Alleyne, Miss Eleanor Sellar, Miss May Sellar, Miss Wright, and Mrs. Lang, who translated many of the tales out of French, German, and other languages.

If we have a book for you next year, it shall not be a fairy book. What it is to be is a secret, but we hope that it will not be dull. So good-bye, and when you have read a fairy book, lend it to other children who have none,

or tell them the stories in your own way, which is a very pleasant mode of passing the time.

THE BLUE BIRD

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Once upon a time there lived a King who was immensely rich. He had broad lands, and sacks overflowing with gold and silver; but he did not care a bit for all his riches, because the Queen, his wife, was dead. He shut himself up in a little room and knocked his head against the walls for grief, until his courtiers were really afraid that he would hurt himself. So they hung feather-beds between the tapestry and the walls, and then he could go on knocking his head as long as it was any consolation to him without coming to much harm. All his subjects came to see him, and said whatever they thought would comfort him: some were grave, even gloomy with him; and some agreeable, even gay; but not one could make the least impression upon him. Indeed, he hardly seemed to hear what they said. At last came a lady who was wrapped in a black mantle, and seemed to be in the deepest grief. She wept and sobbed until even the King's attention was attracted; and when she said that, far from coming to try and diminish his grief, she, who had just lost a good husband, was come to add her tears to his, since she knew what he must be feeling, the King redoubled his lamentations. Then he told the sorrowful lady long stories about the good qualities of his departed Queen, and she in her turn recounted all the virtues of her departed husband; and this passed the time so agreeably that the King quite forgot to thump his head against the feather-beds, and the lady did not need to wipe the tears from her great blue eyes as often as before. By degrees they came to talking about other things in which the King took an interest, and in a wonderfully short time the whole kingdom was astonished by the news that the King was married again to the sorrowful lady.

Now the King had one daughter, who was just fifteen years old. Her name was Fiordelisa, and she was the prettiest and most charming Princess imaginable, always gay and merry. The new Queen, who also had a daughter, very soon sent for her to come to the Palace. Turritella, for that was her name, had been brought up by her godmother, the Fairy Mazilla,

but in spite of all the care bestowed upon her, she was neither beautiful nor gracious. Indeed, when the Queen saw how ill-tempered and ugly she appeared beside Fiordelisa she was in despair, and did everything in her power to turn the King against his own daughter, in the hope that he might take a fancy to Turritella. One day the King said that it was time Fiordelisa and Turritella were married, so he would give one of them to the first suitable Prince who visited his Court. The Queen answered:

‘My daughter certainly ought to be the first to be married; she is older than yours, and a thousand times more charming!’

The King, who hated disputes, said, ‘Very well, it’s no affair of mine, settle it your own way.’

Very soon after came the news that King Charming, who was the most handsome and magnificent Prince in all the country round, was on his way to visit the King. As soon as the Queen heard this, she set all her jewellers, tailors, weavers, and embroiderers to work upon splendid dresses and ornaments for Turritella, but she told the King that Fiordelisa had no need of anything new, and the night before the King was to arrive, she bribed her waiting woman to steal away all the Princess’s own dresses and jewels, so that when the day came, and Fiordelisa wished to adorn herself as became her high rank, not even a ribbon could she find.

However, as she easily guessed who had played her such a trick, she made no complaint, but sent to the merchants for some rich stuffs. But they said that the Queen had expressly forbidden them to supply her with any, and they dared not disobey. So the Princess had nothing left to put on but the little white frock she had been wearing the day before; and dressed in that, she went down when the time of the King’s arrival came, and sat in a corner hoping to escape notice. The Queen received her guest with great ceremony, and presented him to her daughter, who was gorgeously attired, but so much splendour only made her ugliness more noticeable, and the King, after one glance at her, looked the other way. The Queen, however, only thought that he was bashful, and took pains to keep Turritella in full view. King Charming then asked it there was not another Princess, called Fiordelisa.

‘Yes,’ said Turritella, pointing with her finger, ‘there she is, trying to keep out of sight because she is not smart.’

At this Fiordelisa blushed, and looked so shy and so lovely, that the King was fairly astonished. He rose, and bowing low before her, said—

‘Madam, your incomparable beauty needs no adornment.’

‘Sire,’ answered the Princess, ‘I assure you that I am not in the habit of wearing dresses as crumpled and untidy as this one, so I should have been better pleased if you had not seen me at all.’

‘Impossible!’ cried King Charming. ‘Wherever such a marvellously beautiful Princess appears I can look at nothing else.’

Here the Queen broke in, saying sharply—

‘I assure you, Sire, that Fiordelisa is vain enough already. Pray make her no more flattering speeches.’

The King quite understood that she was not pleased, but that did not matter to him, so he admired Fiordelisa to his heart’s content, and talked to her for three hours without stopping.

The Queen was in despair, and so was Turritella, when they saw how much the King preferred Fiordelisa. They complained bitterly to the King, and begged and teased him, until he at last consented to have the Princess shut up somewhere out of sight while King Charming’s visit lasted. So that night, as she went to her room, she was seized by four masked figures, and carried up into the topmost room of a high tower, where they left her in the deepest dejection. She easily guessed that she was to be kept out of sight for fear the King should fall in love with her; but then, how disappointing that was, for she already liked him very much, and would have been quite willing to be chosen for his bride! As King Charming did not know what had happened to the Princess, he looked forward impatiently to meeting her again, and he tried to talk about her with the courtiers who were placed in attendance on him. But by the Queen’s orders they would say nothing good of her, but declared that she was vain, capricious, and bad-tempered; that she tormented her waiting-maids, and that, in spite of all the money that the King gave her, she was so mean that she preferred to go about dressed like a poor shepherdess, rather than spend any of it. All these things vexed the King very much, and he was silent.

‘It is true,’ thought he, ‘that she was very poorly dressed, but then she was so ashamed that it proves that she was not accustomed to be so. I cannot believe that with that lovely face she can be as ill-tempered and

contemptible as they say. No, no, the Queen must be jealous of her for the sake of that ugly daughter of hers, and so these evil reports are spread.'

The courtiers could not help seeing that what they had told the King did not please him, and one of them cunningly began to praise Fiordelisa, when he could talk to the King without being heard by the others.

King Charming thereupon became so cheerful, and interested in all he said, that it was easy to guess how much he admired the Princess. So when the Queen sent for the courtiers and questioned them about all they had found out, their report confirmed her worst fears. As to the poor Princess Fiordelisa, she cried all night without stopping.

'It would have been quite bad enough to be shut up in this gloomy tower before I had ever seen King Charming,' she said; 'but now when he is here, and they are all enjoying themselves with him, it is too unkind.'

The next day the Queen sent King Charming splendid presents of jewels and rich stuffs, and among other things an ornament made expressly in honour of the approaching wedding. It was a heart cut out of one huge ruby, and was surrounded by several diamond arrows, and pierced by one. A golden true-lover's knot above the heart bore the motto, 'But one can wound me,' and the whole jewel was hung upon a chain of immense pearls. Never, since the world has been a world, had such a thing been made, and the King was quite amazed when it was presented to him. The page who brought it begged him to accept it from the Princess, who chose him to be her knight.

'What!' cried he, 'does the lovely Princess Fiordelisa deign to think of me in this amiable and encouraging way?'

'You confuse the names, Sire,' said the page hastily. 'I come on behalf of the Princess Turritella.'

'Oh, it is Turritella who wishes me to be her knight,' said the King coldly. 'I am sorry that I cannot accept the honour.' And he sent the splendid gifts back to the Queen and Turritella, who were furiously angry at the contempt with which they were treated. As soon as he possibly could, King Charming went to see the King and Queen, and as he entered the hall he looked for Fiordelisa, and every time anyone came in he started round to see who it was, and was altogether so uneasy and dissatisfied that the Queen saw it plainly. But she would not take any notice, and talked of nothing but the entertainments she was planning. The Prince answered at

random, and presently asked if he was not to have the pleasure of seeing the Princess Fiordelisa.

‘Sire,’ answered the Queen haughtily, ‘her father has ordered that she shall not leave her own apartments until my daughter is married.’

‘What can be the reason for keeping that lovely Princess a prisoner?’ cried the King in great indignation.

‘That I do not know,’ answered the Queen; ‘and even if I did, I might not feel bound to tell you.’

The King was terribly angry at being thwarted like this. He felt certain that Turritella was to blame for it, so casting a furious glance at her he abruptly took leave of the Queen, and returned to his own apartments. There he said to a young squire whom he had brought with him: ‘I would give all I have in the world to gain the good will of one of the Princess’s waiting-women, and obtain a moment’s speech with Fiordelisa.’

‘Nothing could be easier,’ said the young squire; and he very soon made friends with one of the ladies, who told him that in the evening Fiordelisa would be at a little window which looked into the garden, where he could come and talk to her. Only, she said, he must take very great care not to be seen, as it would be as much as her place was worth to be caught helping King Charming to see the Princess. The squire was delighted, and promised all she asked; but the moment he had run off to announce his success to the King, the false waiting-woman went and told the Queen all that had passed. She at once determined that her own daughter should be at the little window; and she taught her so well all she was to say and do, that even the stupid Turritella could make no mistake.

The night was so dark that the King had not a chance of finding out the trick that was being played upon him, so he approached the window with the greatest delight, and said everything that he had been longing to say to Fiordelisa to persuade her of his love for her. Turritella answered as she had been taught, that she was very unhappy, and that there was no chance of her being better treated by the Queen until her daughter was married. And then the King entreated her to marry him; and thereupon he drew his ring from his finger and put it upon Turritella’s, and she answered him as well as she could. The King could not help thinking that she did not say exactly what he would have expected from his darling Fiordelisa, but he persuaded himself that the fear of being surprised by the Queen was

making her awkward and unnatural. He would not leave her until she had promised to see him again the next night, which Turritella did willingly enough. The Queen was overjoyed at the success of her stratagem, end promised herself that all would now be as she wished; and sure enough, as soon as it was dark the following night the King came, bringing with him a chariot which had been given him by an Enchanter who was his friend. This chariot was drawn by flying frogs, and the King easily persuaded Turritella to come out and let him put her into it, then mounting beside her he cried triumphantly—

‘Now, my Princess, you are free; where will it please you that we shall hold our wedding?’

And Turritella, with her head muffled in her mantle, answered that the Fairy Mazilla was her godmother, and that she would like it to be at her castle. So the King told the Frogs, who had the map of the whole world in their heads, and very soon he and Turritella were set down at the castle of the Fairy Mazilla. The King would certainly have found out his mistake the moment they stepped into the brilliantly lighted castle, but Turritella held her mantle more closely round her, and asked to see the Fairy by herself, and quickly told her all that had happened, and how she had succeeded in deceiving King Charming.

‘Oho! my daughter,’ said the Fairy, ‘I see we have no easy task before us. He loves Fiordelisa so much that he will not be easily pacified. I feel sure he will defy us!’ Meanwhile the King was waiting in a splendid room with diamond walls, so clear that he could see the Fairy and Turritella as they stood whispering together, and he was very much puzzled.

‘Who can have betrayed us?’ he said to himself. ‘How comes our enemy here? She must be plotting to prevent our marriage. Why doesn’t my lovely Fiordelisa make haste and come hack to me?’

But it was worse than anything he had imagined when the Fairy Mazilla entered, leading Turritella by the hand, and said to him—

‘King Charming, here is the Princess Turritella to whom you have plighted your faith. Let us have the wedding at once.’

‘I!’ cried the King. ‘I marry that little creature! What do you take me for? I have promised her nothing!’

‘Say no more. Have you no respect for a Fairy?’ cried she angrily.

‘Yes, madam,’ answered the King, ‘I am prepared to respect you as much as a Fairy can be respected, if you will give me back my Princess.’

‘Am I not here?’ interrupted Turritella. ‘Here is the ring you gave me. With whom did you talk at the little window, if it was not with me?’

‘What!’ cried the King angrily, ‘have I been altogether deceived and deluded? Where is my chariot? Not another moment will I stay here.’

‘Oho,’ said the Fairy, ‘not so fast.’ And she touched his feet, which instantly became as firmly fixed to the floor as if they had been nailed there.

‘Oh! do whatever you like with me,’ said the King; ‘you may turn me to stone, but I will marry no one but Fiordelisa.’

And not another word would he say, though the Fairy scolded and threatened, and Turritella wept and raged for twenty days and twenty nights. At last the Fairy Mazilla said furiously (for she was quite tired out by his obstinacy), ‘Choose whether you will marry my goddaughter, or do penance seven years for breaking your word to her.’

And then the King cried gaily: ‘Pray do whatever you like with me, as long as you deliver me from this ugly scold!’

‘Scold!’ cried Turritella angrily. ‘Who are you, I should like to know, that you dare to call me a scold? A miserable King who breaks his word, and goes about in a chariot drawn by croaking frogs out of a marsh!’

‘Let us have no more of these insults,’ cried the Fairy. ‘Fly from that window, ungrateful King, and for seven years be a Blue Bird.’ As she spoke the King’s face altered, his arms turned to wings, his feet to little crooked black claws. In a moment he had a slender body like a bird, covered with shining blue feathers, his beak was like ivory, his eyes were bright as stars, and a crown of white feathers adorned his head.

As soon as the transformation was complete the King uttered a dolorous cry and fled through the open window, pursued by the mocking laughter of Turritella and the Fairy Mazilla. He flew on until he reached the thickest part of the wood, and there, perched upon a cypress tree, he bewailed his miserable fate. ‘Alas! in seven years who knows what may happen to my darling Fiordelisa!’ he said. ‘Her cruel stepmother may have married her to someone else before I am myself again, and then what good will life be to me?’

In the meantime the Fairy Mazilla had sent Turritella back to the Queen, who was all anxiety to know how the wedding, had gone off. But when her daughter arrived and told her all that had happened she was terribly angry, and of course all her wrath fell upon Fiordelisa. ‘She shall have cause to repent that the King admires her,’ said the Queen, nodding her head meaningly, and then she and Turritella went up to the little room in the tower where the Princess was imprisoned. Fiordelisa was immensely surprised to see that Turritella was wearing a royal mantle and a diamond crown, and her heart sank when the Queen said: ‘My daughter is come to show you some of her wedding presents, for she is King Charming’s bride, and they are the happiest pair in the world, he loves her to distraction.’ All this time Turritella was spreading out lace, and jewels, and rich brocades, and ribbons before Fiordelisa’s unwilling eyes, and taking good care to display King Charming’s ring, which she wore upon her thumb. The Princess recognised it as soon as her eyes fell upon it, and after that she could no longer doubt that he had indeed married Turritella. In despair she cried, ‘Take away these miserable gauds! what pleasure has a wretched captive in the sight of them?’ and then she fell insensible upon the floor, and the cruel Queen laughed maliciously, and went away with Turritella, leaving her there without comfort or aid. That night the Queen said to the King, that his daughter was so infatuated with King Charming, in spite of his never having shown any preference for her, that it was just as well she should stay in the tower until she came to her senses. To which he answered that it was her affair, and she could give what orders she pleased about the Princess.

When the unhappy Fiordelisa recovered, and remembered all she had just heard, she began to cry bitterly, believing that King Charming was lost to her for ever, and all night long she sat at her open window sighing and lamenting; but when it was dawn she crept away into the darkest corner of her little room and sat there, too unhappy to care about anything. As soon as night came again she once more leaned out into the darkness and bewailed her miserable lot.

Now it happened that King Charming, or rather the Blue Bird, had been flying round the palace in the hope of seeing his beloved Princess, but had not dared to go too near the windows for fear of being seen and recognised by Turritella. When night fell he had not succeeded in discovering where

Fiordelisa was imprisoned, and, weary and sad, he perched upon a branch of a tall fir tree which grew close to the tower, and began to sing himself to sleep. But soon the sound of a soft voice lamenting attracted his attention, and listening intently he heard it say—

‘Ah! cruel Queen! what have I ever done to be imprisoned like this? And was I not unhappy enough before, that you must needs come and taunt me with the happiness your daughter is enjoying now she is King Charming’s bride?’

The Blue Bird, greatly surprised, waited impatiently for the dawn, and the moment it was light flew off to see who it could have been who spoke thus. But he found the window shut, and could see no one. The next night, however, he was on the watch, and by the clear moonlight he saw that the sorrowful lady at the window was Fiordelisa herself.

‘My Princess! have I found you at last?’ said he, alighting close to her.

‘Who is speaking to me?’ cried the Princess in great surprise.

‘Only a moment since you mentioned my name, and now you do not know me, Fiordelisa,’ said he sadly. ‘But no wonder, since I am nothing but a Blue Bird, and must remain one for seven years.’

‘What! Little Blue Bird, are you really the powerful King Charming?’ said the Princess, caressing him.

‘It is too true,’ he answered. ‘For being faithful to you I am thus punished. But believe me, if it were for twice as long I would bear it joyfully rather than give you up.’

‘Oh! what are you telling me?’ cried the Princess. ‘Has not your bride, Turritella, just visited me, wearing the royal mantle and the diamond crown you gave her? I cannot be mistaken, for I saw your ring upon her thumb.’

Then the Blue Bird was furiously angry, and told the Princess all that had happened, how he had been deceived into carrying off Turritella, and how, for refusing to marry her, the Fairy Mazilla had condemned him to be a Blue Bird for seven years.

The Princess was very happy when she heard how faithful her lover was, and would never have tired of hearing his loving speeches and explanations, but too soon the sun rose, and they had to part lest the Blue Bird should be discovered. After promising to come again to the Princess’s window as soon as it was dark, he flew away, and hid himself in a little

hole in the fir-tree, while Fiordelisa remained devoured by anxiety lest he should be caught in a trap, or eaten up by an eagle.

But the Blue Bird did not long stay in his hiding-place. He flew away, and away, until he came to his own palace, and got into it through a broken window, and there he found the cabinet where his jewels were kept, and chose out a splendid diamond ring as a present for the Princess. By the time he got back, Fiordelisa was sitting waiting for him by the open window, and when he gave her the ring, she scolded him gently for having run such a risk to get it for her.

‘Promise me that you will wear it always!’ said the Blue Bird. And the Princess promised on condition that he should come and see her in the day as well as by night. They talked all night long, and the next morning the Blue Bird flew off to his kingdom, and crept into his palace through the broken window, and chose from his treasures two bracelets, each cut out of a single emerald. When he presented them to the Princess, she shook her head at him reproachfully, saying—

‘Do you think I love you so little that I need all these gifts to remind me of you?’

And he answered—

‘No, my Princess; but I love you so much that I feel I cannot express it, try as I may. I only bring you these worthless trifles to show that I have not ceased to think of you, though I have been obliged to leave you for a time.’ The following night he gave Fiordelisa a watch set in a single pearl. The Princess laughed a little when she saw it, and said—

‘You may well give me a watch, for since I have known you I have lost the power of measuring time. The hours you spend with me pass like minutes, and the hours that I drag through without you seem years to me.’

‘Ah, Princess, they cannot seem so long to you as they do to me!’ he answered. Day by day he brought more beautiful things for the Princess—diamonds, and rubies, and opals; and at night she decked herself with them to please him, but by day she hid them in her straw mattress. When the sun shone the Blue Bird, hidden in the tall fir-tree, sang to her so sweetly that all the passersby wondered, and said that the wood was inhabited by a spirit. And so two years slipped away, and still the Princess was a prisoner, and Turritella was not married. The Queen had offered her hand to all the neighbouring Princes, but they always answered that they would marry

Fiordelisa with pleasure, but not Turritella on any account. This displeased the Queen terribly. ‘Fiordelisa must be in league with them, to annoy me!’ she said. ‘Let us go and accuse her of it.’

So she and Turritella went up into the tower. Now it happened that it was nearly midnight, and Fiordelisa, all decked with jewels, was sitting at the window with the Blue Bird, and as the Queen paused outside the door to listen she heard the Princess and her lover singing together a little song he had just taught her. These were the words:—

‘Oh! what a luckless pair are we,
One in a prison, and one in a tree.
All our trouble and anguish came
From our faithfulness spoiling our enemies’ game.
But vainly they practice their cruel arts,
For nought can sever our two fond hearts.’

They sound melancholy perhaps, but the two voices sang them gaily enough, and the Queen burst open the door, crying, ‘Ah! my Turritella, there is some treachery going on here!’

As soon as she saw her, Fiordelisa, with great presence of mind, hastily shut her little window, that the Blue Bird might have time to escape, and then turned to meet the Queen, who overwhelmed her with a torrent of reproaches.

‘Your intrigues are discovered, Madam,’ she said furiously; ‘and you need not hope that your high rank will save you from the punishment you deserve.’

‘And with whom do you accuse me of intriguing, Madam?’ said the Princess. ‘Have I not been your prisoner these two years, and who have I seen except the gaolers sent by you?’

While she spoke the Queen and Turritella were looking at her in the greatest surprise, perfectly dazzled by her beauty and the splendour of her jewels, and the Queen said:

‘If one may ask, Madam, where did you get all these diamonds? Perhaps you mean to tell me that you have discovered a mine of them in the tower!’

‘I certainly did find them here,’ answered the Princess.

‘And pray,’ said the Queen, her wrath increasing every moment, ‘for whose admiration are you decked out like this, since I have often seen you not half as fine on the most important occasions at Court?’

‘For my own,’ answered Fiordelisa. ‘You must admit that I have had plenty of time on my hands, so you cannot be surprised at my spending some of it in making myself smart.’

‘That’s all very fine,’ said the Queen suspiciously. ‘I think I will look about, and see for myself.’

So she and Turritella began to search every corner of the little room, and when they came to the straw mattress out fell such a quantity of pearls, diamonds, rubies, opals, emeralds, and sapphires, that they were amazed, and could not tell what to think. But the Queen resolved to hide somewhere a packet of false letters to prove that the Princess had been conspiring with the King’s enemies, and she chose the chimney as a good place. Fortunately for Fiordelisa this was exactly where the Blue Bird had perched himself, to keep an eye upon her proceedings, and try to avert danger from his beloved Princess, and now he cried:

‘Beware, Fiordelisa! Your false enemy is plotting against you.’

This strange voice so frightened the Queen that she took the letter and went away hastily with Turritella, and they held a council to try and devise some means of finding out what Fairy or Enchanter was favouring the Princess. At last they sent one of the Queen’s maids to wait upon Fiordelisa, and told her to pretend to be quite stupid, and to see and hear nothing, while she was really to watch the Princess day and night, and keep the Queen informed of all her doings.

Poor Fiordelisa, who guessed she was sent as a spy, was in despair, and cried bitterly that she dared not see her dear Blue Bird for fear that some evil might happen to him if he were discovered.

The days were so long, and the nights so dull, but for a whole month she never went near her little window lest he should fly to her as he used to do.

However, at last the spy, who had never taken her eyes off the Princess day or night, was so overcome with weariness that she fell into a deep sleep, and as son as the Princess saw that, she flew to open her window and cried softly:

‘Blue Bird, blue as the sky,
Fly to me now, there’s nobody by.’

And the Blue Bird, who had never ceased to flutter round within sight and hearing of her prison, came in an instant. They had so much to say, and were so overjoyed to meet once more, that it scarcely seemed to them five minutes before the sun rose, and the Blue Bird had to fly away.

But the next night the spy slept as soundly as before, so that the Blue Bird came, and he and the Princess began to think they were perfectly safe, and to make all sorts of plans for being happy as they were before the Queen’s visit. But, alas! the third night the spy was not quite so sleepy, and when the Princess opened her window and cried as usual:

‘Blue Bird, blue as the sky,
Fly to me now, there’s nobody nigh,’

she was wide awake in a moment, though she was sly enough to keep her eyes shut at first. But presently she heard voices, and peeping cautiously, she saw by the moonlight the most lovely blue bird in the world, who was talking to the Princess, while she stroked and caressed it fondly.

The spy did not lose a single word of the conversation, and as soon as the day dawned, and the Blue Bird had reluctantly said good-bye to the Princess, she rushed off to the Queen, and told her all she had seen and heard.

Then the Queen sent for Turritella, and they talked it over, and very soon came to the conclusion than this Blue Bird was no other than King Charming himself.

‘Ah! that insolent Princess!’ cried the Queen. ‘To think that when we supposed her to be so miserable, she was all the while as happy as possible with that false King. But I know how we can avenge ourselves!’

So the spy was ordered to go back and pretend to sleep as soundly as ever, and indeed she went to bed earlier than usual, and snored as naturally as possible, and the poor Princess ran to the window and cried:

‘Blue Bird, blue as the sky,
Fly to me now, there’s nobody by!’

But no bird came. All night long she called, and waited, and listened, but still there was no answer, for the cruel Queen had caused the fir tree to be hung all over with knives, swords, razors, shears, bill-hooks, and sickles, so that when the Blue Bird heard the Princess call, and flew towards her, his wings were cut, and his little black feet clipped off, and all pierced and stabbed in twenty places, he fell back bleeding into his hiding place in the tree, and lay there groaning and despairing, for he thought the Princess must have been persuaded to betray him, to regain her liberty.

‘Ah! Fiordelisa, can you indeed be so lovely and so faithless?’ he sighed, ‘then I may as well die at once!’ And he turned over on his side and began to die. But it happened that his friend the Enchanter had been very much alarmed at seeing the Frog chariot come back to him without King Charming, and had been round the world eight times seeking him, but without success. At the very moment when the King gave himself up to despair, he was passing through the wood for the eighth time, and called, as he had done all over the world:

‘Charming! King Charming! Are you here?’

The King at once recognised his friend’s voice, and answered very faintly:

‘I am here.’

The Enchanter looked all round him, but could see nothing, and then the King said again:

‘I am a Blue Bird.’

Then the Enchanter found him in an instant, and seeing his pitiable condition, ran hither and thither without a word, until he had collected a handful of magic herbs, with which, and a few incantations, he speedily made the King whole and sound again.

‘Now,’ said he, ‘let me hear all about it. There must be a Princess at the bottom of this.’

‘There are two!’ answered King Charming, with a wry smile.

And then he told the whole story, accusing Fiordelisa of having betrayed the secret of his visits to make her peace with the Queen, and

indeed saying a great many hard things about her fickleness and her deceitful beauty, and so on. The Enchanter quite agreed with him, and even went further, declaring that all Princesses were alike, except perhaps in the matter of beauty, and advised him to have done with Fiordelisa, and forget all about her. But, somehow or other, this advice did not quite please the King.

‘What is to be done next?’ said the Enchanter, ‘since you still have five years to remain a Blue Bird.’

‘Take me to your palace,’ answered the King; ‘there you can at least keep me in a cage safe from cats and swords.’

‘Well, that will be the best thing to do for the present,’ said his friend. ‘But I am not an Enchanter for nothing. I’m sure to have a brilliant idea for you before long.’

In the meantime Fiordelisa, quite in despair, sat at her window day and night calling her dear Blue Bird in vain, and imagining over and over again all the terrible things that could have happened to him, until she grew quite pale and thin. As for the Queen and Turritella, they were triumphant; but their triumph was short, for the King, Fiordelisa’s father, fell ill and died, and all the people rebelled against the Queen and Turritella, and came in a body to the palace demanding Fiordelisa.

The Queen came out upon the balcony with threats and haughty words, so that at last they lost their patience, and broke open the doors of the palace, one of which fell back upon the Queen and killed her. Turritella fled to the Fairy Mazilla, and all the nobles of the kingdom fetched the Princess Fiordelisa from her prison in the tower, and made her Queen. Very soon, with all the care and attention they bestowed upon her, she recovered from the effects of her long captivity and looked more beautiful than ever, and was able to take counsel with her courtiers, and arrange for the governing of her kingdom during her absence. And then, taking a bagful of jewels, she set out all alone to look for the Blue Bird, without telling anyone where she was going.

Meanwhile, the Enchanter was taking care of King Charming, but as his power was not great enough to counteract the Fairy Mazilla’s, he at last resolved to go and see if he could make any kind of terms with her for his friend; for you see, Fairies and Enchanters are cousins in a sort of way, after all; and after knowing one another for five or six hundred years and

falling out, and making it up again pretty often, they understand one another well enough. So the Fairy Mazilla received him graciously. ‘And what may you be wanting, Gossip?’ said she.

‘You can do a good turn for me if you will;’ he answered. ‘A King, who is a friend of mine, was unlucky enough to offend you—’

‘Aha! I know who you mean,’ interrupted the Fairy. ‘I am sorry not to oblige you, Gossip, but he need expect no mercy from me unless he will marry my goddaughter, whom you see yonder looking so pretty and charming. Let him think over what I say.’

The Enchanter hadn’t a word to say, for he thought Turritella really frightful, but he could not go away without making one more effort for his friend the King, who was really in great danger as long as he lived in a cage. Indeed, already he had met with several alarming accidents. Once the nail on which his cage was hung had given way, and his feathered Majesty had suffered much from the fall, while Madam Puss, who happened to be in the room at the time, had given him a scratch in the eye which came very near blinding him. Another time they had forgotten to give him any water to drink, so that he was nearly dead with thirst; and the worst thing of all was that he was in danger of losing his kingdom, for he had been absent so long that all his subjects believed him to be dead. So considering all these things the Enchanter agreed with the Fairy Mazilla that she should restore the King to his natural form, and should take Turritella to stay in his palace for several months, and if, after the time was over he still could not make up his mind to marry her, he should once more be changed into a Blue Bird.

Then the Fairy dressed Turritella in a magnificent gold and silver robe, and they mounted together upon a flying Dragon, and very soon reached King Charming’s palace, where he, too, had just been brought by his faithful friend the Enchanter.

Three strokes of the Fairy’s wand restored his natural form, and he was as handsome and delightful as ever, but he considered that he paid dearly for his restoration when he caught sight of Turritella, and the mere idea of marrying her made him shudder.

Meanwhile, Queen Fiordelisa, disguised as a poor peasant girl, wearing a great straw hat that concealed her face, and carrying an old sack over her shoulder, had set out upon her weary journey, and had travelled far,

sometimes by sea and sometimes by land; sometimes on foot, and sometimes on horseback, but not knowing which way to go. She feared all the time that every step she took was leading her farther from her lover. One day as she sat, quite tired and sad, on the bank of a little brook, cooling her white feet in the clear running water, and combing her long hair that glittered like gold in the sunshine, a little bent old woman passed by, leaning on a stick. She stopped, and said to Fiordelisa:

‘What, my pretty child, are you all alone?’

‘Indeed, good mother, I am too sad to care for company,’ she answered; and the tears ran down her cheeks.

‘Don’t cry,’ said the old woman, ‘but tell me truly what is the matter. Perhaps I can help you.’

The Queen told her willingly all that had happened, and how she was seeking the Blue Bird. Thereupon the little old woman suddenly stood up straight, and grew tall, and young, and beautiful, and said with a smile to the astonished Fiordelisa:

‘Lovely Queen, the King whom you seek is no longer a bird. My sister Mazilla has given his own form back to him, and he is in his own kingdom. Do not be afraid, you will reach him, and will prosper. Take these four eggs; if you break one when you are in any great difficulty, you will find aid.’

So saying, she disappeared, and Fiordelisa, feeling much encouraged, put the eggs into her bag and turned her steps towards Charming’s kingdom. After walking on and on for eight days and eight nights, she came at last to a tremendously high hill of polished ivory, so steep that it was impossible to get a foothold upon it. Fiordelisa tried a thousand times, and scrambled and slipped, but always in the end found herself exactly where she started from. At last she sat down at the foot of it in despair, and then suddenly bethought herself of the eggs. Breaking one quickly, she found in it some little gold hooks, and with these fastened to her feet and hands, she mounted the ivory hill without further trouble, for the little hooks saved her from slipping. As soon as she reached the top a new difficulty presented itself, for all the other side, and indeed the whole valley, was one polished mirror, in which thousands and thousands of people were admiring their reflections. For this was a magic mirror, in which people saw themselves just as they wished to appear, and pilgrims

came to it from the four corners of the world. But nobody had ever been able to reach the top of the hill, and when they saw Fiordelisa standing there, they raised a terrible outcry, declaring that if she set foot upon their glass she would break it to pieces. The Queen, not knowing what to do, for she saw it would be dangerous to try to go down, broke the second egg, and out came a chariot, drawn by two white doves, and Fiordelisa got into it, and was floated softly away. After a night and a day the doves alighted outside the gate of King Charming's kingdom. Here the Queen got out of the chariot, and kissed the doves and thanked them, and then with a beating heart she walked into the town, asking the people she met where she could see the King. But they only laughed at her, crying:

'See the King? And pray, why do you want to see the King, my little kitchen-maid? You had better go and wash your face first, your eyes are not clear enough to see him!' For the Queen had disguised herself, and pulled her hair down about her eyes, that no one might know her. As they would not tell her, she went on farther, and presently asked again, and this time the people answered that to-morrow she might see the King driving through the streets with the Princess Turritella, as it was said that at last he had consented to marry her. This was indeed terrible news to Fiordelisa. Had she come all this weary way only to find Turritella had succeeded in making King Charming forget her?

She was too tired and miserable to walk another step, so she sat down in a doorway and cried bitterly all night long. As soon as it was light she hastened to the palace, and after being sent away fifty times by the guards, she got in at last, and saw the thrones set in the great hall for the King and Turritella, who was already looked upon as Queen.

Fiordelisa hid herself behind a marble pillar, and very soon saw Turritella make her appearance, richly dressed, but as ugly as ever, and with her came the King, more handsome and splendid even than Fiordelisa had remembered him. When Turritella had seated herself upon the throne, the Queen approached her.

'Who are you, and how dare you come near my high-mightiness, upon my golden throne?' said Turritella, frowning fiercely at her.

'They call me the little kitchen-maid,' she replied, 'and I come to offer some precious things for sale,' and with that she searched in her old sack, and drew out the emerald bracelets King Charming had given her.

‘Ho, ho!’ said Turritella, those are pretty bits of glass. I suppose you would like five silver pieces for them.’

‘Show them to someone who understands such things, Madam,’ answered the Queen; ‘after that we can decide upon the price.’

Turritella, who really loved King Charming as much as she could love anybody, and was always delighted to get a chance of talking to him, now showed him the bracelets, asking how much he considered them worth. As soon as he saw them he remembered those he had given to Fiordelisa, and turned very pale and sighed deeply, and fell into such sad thought that he quite forgot to answer her. Presently she asked him again, and then he said, with a great effort:

‘I believe these bracelets are worth as much as my kingdom. I thought there was only one such pair in the world; but here, it seems, is another.’

Then Turritella went back to the Queen, and asked her what was the lowest price she would take for them.

‘More than you would find it easy to pay, Madam,’ answered she; ‘but if you will manage for me to sleep one night in the Chamber of Echoes, I will give you the emeralds.’

‘By all means, my little kitchen-maid,’ said Turritella, highly delighted.

The King did not try to find out where the bracelets had come from, not because he did not want to know, but because the only way would have been to ask Turritella, and he disliked her so much that he never spoke to her if he could possibly avoid it. It was he who had told Fiordelisa about the Chamber of Echoes, when he was a Blue Bird. It was a little room below the King’s own bed-chamber, and was so ingeniously built that the softest whisper in it was plainly heard in the King’s room. Fiordelisa wanted to reproach him for his faithlessness, and could not imagine a better way than this. So when, by Turritella’s orders, she was left there she began to weep and lament, and never ceased until daybreak.

The King’s pages told Turritella, when she asked them, what a sobbing and sighing they had heard, and she asked Fiordelisa what it was all about. The Queen answered that she often dreamed and talked aloud.

But by an unlucky chance the King heard nothing of all this, for he took a sleeping draught every night before he lay down, and did not wake up until the sun was high.

The Queen passed the day in great disquietude.

‘If he did hear me,’ she said, ‘could he remain so cruelly indifferent? But if he did not hear me, what can I do to get another chance? I have plenty of jewels, it is true, but nothing remarkable enough to catch Turritella’s fancy.’

Just then she thought of the eggs, and broke one, out of which came a little carriage of polished steel ornamented with gold, drawn by six green mice. The coachman was a rose-coloured rat, the postilion a grey one, and the carriage was occupied by the tiniest and most charming figures, who could dance and do wonderful tricks. Fiordelisa clapped her hands and danced for joy when she saw this triumph of magic art, and as soon as it was evening, went to a shady garden-path down which she knew Turritella would pass, and then she made the mice galop, and the tiny people show off their tricks, and sure enough Turritella came, and the moment she saw it all cried:

‘Little kitchen-maid, little kitchen-maid, what will you take for your mouse-carriage?’

And the Queen answered:

‘Let me sleep once more in the Chamber of Echoes.’

‘I won’t refuse your request, poor creature,’ said Turritella condescendingly.

And then she turned to her ladies and whispered

‘The silly creature does not know how to profit by her chances; so much the better for me.’

When night came Fiordelisa said all the loving words she could think of, but alas! with no better success than before, for the King slept heavily after his draught. One of the pages said:

‘This peasant girl must be crazy;’ but another answered:

‘Yet what she says sounds very sad and touching.’

As for Fiordelisa, she thought the King must have a very hard heart if he could hear how she grieved and yet pay her no attention. She had but one more chance, and on breaking the last egg she found to her great delight that it contained a more marvellous thing than ever. It was a pie made of six birds, cooked to perfection, and yet they were all alive, and singing and talking, and they answered questions and told fortunes in the most amusing way. Taking this treasure Fiordelisa once more set herself to

wait in the great hall through which Turritella was sure to pass, and as she sat there one of the King's pages came by, and said to her:

'Well, little kitchen-maid, it is a good thing that the King always takes a sleeping draught, for if not he would be kept awake all night by your sighing and lamenting.'

Then Fiordelisa knew why the King had not heeded her, and taking a handful of pearls and diamonds out of her sack, she said, 'If you can promise me that to-night the King shall not have his sleeping draught, I will give you all these jewels.'

'Oh! I promise that willingly,' said the page.

At this moment Turritella appeared, and at the first sight of the savoury pie, with the pretty little birds all singing and chattering, she cried:—

'That is an admirable pie, little kitchen-maid. Pray what will you take for it?'

'The usual price,' she answered. 'To sleep once more in the Chamber of Echoes.'

'By all means, only give me the pie,' said the greedy Turritella. And when night was come, Queen Fiordelisa waited until she thought everybody in the palace would be asleep, and then began to lament as before.

'Ah, Charming!' she said, 'what have I ever done that you should forsake me and marry Turritella? If you could only know all I have suffered, and what a weary way I have come to seek you.'

Now the page had faithfully kept his word, and given King Charming a glass of water instead of his usual sleeping draught, so there he lay wide awake, and heard every word Fiordelisa said, and even recognised her voice, though he could not tell where it came from.

'Ah, Princess!' he said, 'how could you betray me to our cruel enemies when I loved you so dearly?'

Fiordelisa heard him, and answered quickly:

'Find out the little kitchen-maid, and she will explain everything.'

Then the King in a great hurry sent for his pages and said:

'If you can find the little kitchen-maid, bring her to me at once.'

'Nothing could be easier, Sire,' they answered, 'for she is in the Chamber of Echoes.'

The King was very much puzzled when he heard this. How could the lovely Princess Fiordelisa be a little kitchen-maid? or how could a little kitchen-maid have Fiordelisa's own voice? So he dressed hastily, and ran down a little secret staircase which led to the Chamber of Echoes. There, upon a heap of soft cushions, sat his lovely Princess. She had laid aside all her ugly disguises and wore a white silken robe, and her golden hair shone in the soft lamp-light. The King was overjoyed at the sight, and rushed to throw himself at her feet, and asked her a thousand questions without giving her time to answer one. Fiordelisa was equally happy to be with him once more, and nothing troubled them but the remembrance of the Fairy Mazilla. But at this moment in came the Enchanter, and with him a famous Fairy, the same in fact who had given Fiordelisa the eggs. After greeting the King and Queen, they said that as they were united in wishing to help King Charming, the Fairy Mazilla had no longer any power against him, and he might marry Fiordelisa as soon as he pleased. The King's joy may be imagined, and as soon as it was day the news was spread through the palace, and everybody who saw Fiordelisa loved her directly. When Turritella heard what had happened she came running to the King, and when she saw Fiordelisa with him she was terribly angry, but before she could say a word the Enchanter and the Fairy changed her into a big brown owl, and she floated away out of one of the palace windows, hooting dismally. Then the wedding was held with great splendour, and King Charming and Queen Fiordelisa lived happily ever after.

L'Oiseau Bleu. Par Mme. d'Aulnoy.

THE HALF-CHICK

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Once upon a time there was a handsome black Spanish hen, who had a large brood of chickens. They were all fine, plump little birds, except the youngest, who was quite unlike his brothers and sisters. Indeed, he was such a strange, queer-looking creature, that when he first chipped his shell his mother could scarcely believe her eyes, he was so different from the twelve other fluffy, downy, soft little chicks who nestled under her wings. This one looked just as if he had been cut in two. He had only one leg, and one wing, and one eye, and he had half a head and half a beak. His mother shook her head sadly as she looked at him and said:

‘My youngest born is only a half-chick. He can never grow up a tall handsome cock like his brothers. They will go out into the world and rule over poultry yards of their own; but this poor little fellow will always have to stay at home with his mother.’ And she called him Medio Pollito, which is Spanish for half-chick.

Now though Medio Pollito was such an odd, helpless-looking little thing, his mother soon found that he was not at all willing to remain under her wing and protection. Indeed, in character he was as unlike his brothers and sisters as he was in appearance. They were good, obedient chickens, and when the old hen chicked after them, they chirped and ran back to her side. But Medio Pollito had a roving spirit in spite of his one leg, and when his mother called to him to return to the coop, he pretended that he could not hear, because he had only one ear.

When she took the whole family out for a walk in the fields, Medio Pollito would hop away by himself, and hide among the Indian corn. Many an anxious minute his brothers and sisters had looking for him, while his mother ran to and fro cackling in fear and dismay.

As he grew older he became more self-willed and disobedient, and his manner to his mother was often very rude, and his temper to the other chickens very disagreeable.

One day he had been out for a longer expedition than usual in the fields. On his return he strutted up to his mother with the peculiar little hop and kick which was his way of walking, and cocking his one eye at her in a very bold way he said:

‘Mother, I am tired of this life in a dull farmyard, with nothing but a dreary maize field to look at. I’m off to Madrid to see the King.’

‘To Madrid, Medio Pollito!’ exclaimed his mother; ‘why, you silly chick, it would be a long journey for a grown-up cock, and a poor little thing like you would be tired out before you had gone half the distance. No, no, stay at home with your mother, and some day, when you are bigger, we will go a little journey together.’

But Medio Pollito had made up his mind, and he would not listen to his mother’s advice, nor to the prayers and entreaties of his brothers and sisters.

‘What is the use of our all crowding each other up in this poky little place?’ he said. ‘When I have a fine courtyard of my own at the King’s palace, I shall perhaps ask some of you to come and pay me a short visit,’ and scarcely waiting to say good-bye to his family, away he stumped down the high road that led to Madrid.

‘Be sure that you are kind and civil to everyone you meet,’ called his mother, running after him; but he was in such a hurry to be off, that he did not wait to answer her, or even to look back.

A little later in the day, as he was taking a short cut through a field, he passed a stream. Now the stream was all choked up, and overgrown with weeds and water-plants, so that its waters could not flow freely.

‘Oh! Medio Pollito,’ it cried, as the half-chick hopped along its banks, ‘do come and help me by clearing away these weeds.’

‘Help you, indeed!’ exclaimed Medio Pollito, tossing his head, and shaking the few feathers in his tail. ‘Do you think I have nothing to do but to waste my time on such trifles? Help yourself, and don’t trouble busy travellers. I am off to Madrid to see the King,’ and hoppity-kick, hoppity-kick, away stumped Medio Pollito.

A little later he came to a fire that had been left by some gipsies in a wood. It was burning very low, and would soon be out.

‘Oh! Medio Pollito,’ cried the fire, in a weak, wavering voice as the half-chick approached, ‘in a few minutes I shall go quite out, unless you

put some sticks and dry leaves upon me. Do help me, or I shall die!'

'Help you, indeed!' answered Medio Pollito. 'I have other things to do. Gather sticks for yourself, and don't trouble me. I am off to Madrid to see the King,' and hoppity-kick, hoppity-kick, away stumped Medio Pollito.

The next morning, as he was getting near Madrid, he passed a large chestnut tree, in whose branches the wind was caught and entangled. 'Oh! Medio Pollito,' called the wind, 'do hop up here, and help me to get free of these branches. I cannot come away, and it is so uncomfortable.'

'It is your own fault for going there,' answered Medio Pollito. 'I can't waste all my morning stopping here to help you. Just shake yourself off, and don't hinder me, for I am off to Madrid to see the King,' and hoppity-kick, hoppity-kick, away stumped Medio Pollito in great glee, for the towers and roofs of Madrid were now in sight. When he entered the town he saw before him a great splendid house, with soldiers standing before the gates. This he knew must be the King's palace, and he determined to hop up to the front gate and wait there until the King came out. But as he was hopping past one of the back windows the King's cook saw him:

'Here is the very thing I want,' he exclaimed, 'for the King has just sent a message to say that he must have chicken broth for his dinner,' and opening the window he stretched out his arm, caught Medio Pollito, and popped him into the broth-pot that was standing near the fire. Oh! how wet and clammy the water felt as it went over Medio Pollito's head, making his feathers cling to his side.

'Water, water!' he cried in his despair, 'do have pity upon me and do not wet me like this.'

'Ah! Medio Pollito,' replied the water, 'you would not help me when I was a little stream away on the fields, now you must be punished.'

Then the fire began to burn and scald Medio Pollito, and he danced and hopped from one side of the pot to the other, trying to get away from the heat, and crying out in pain:

Fire, fire! do not scorch me like this; you can't think how it hurts.'

'Ah! Medio Pollito,' answered the fire, 'you would not help me when I was dying away in the wood. You are being punished.'

At last, just when the pain was so great that Medio Pollito thought he must die, the cook lifted up the lid of the pot to see if the broth was ready for the King's dinner.

‘Look here!’ he cried in horror, ‘this chicken is quite useless. It is burnt to a cinder. I can’t send it up to the royal table;’ and opening the window he threw Medio Pollito out into the street. But the wind caught him up, and whirled him through the air so quickly that Medio Pollito could scarcely breathe, and his heart beat against his side till he thought it would break.

‘Oh, wind!’ at last he gasped out, ‘if you hurry me along like this you will kill me. Do let me rest a moment, or—’ but he was so breathless that he could not finish his sentence.

‘Ah! Medio Pollito,’ replied the wind, ‘when I was caught in the branches of the chestnut tree you would not help me; now you are punished.’ And he swirled Medio Pollito over the roofs of the houses till they reached the highest church in the town, and there he left him fastened to the top of the steeple.

And there stands Medio Pollito to this day. And if you go to Madrid, and walk through the streets till you come to the highest church, you will see Medio Pollito perched on his one leg on the steeple, with his one wing drooping at his side, and gazing sadly out of his one eye over the town.

Spanish Tradition.

THE STORY OF CALIPH STORK

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I.

Caliph Chasid, of Bagdad, was resting comfortably on his divan one fine afternoon. He was smoking a long pipe, and from time to time he sipped a little coffee which a slave handed to him, and after each sip he stroked his long beard with an air of enjoyment. In short, anyone could see that the Caliph was in an excellent humour. This was, in fact, the best time of day in which to approach him, for just now he was pretty sure to be both affable and in good spirits, and for this reason the Grand Vizier Mansor always chose this hour in which to pay his daily visit.

He arrived as usual this afternoon, but, contrary to his usual custom, with an anxious face. The Caliph withdrew his pipe for a moment from his lips and asked, ‘Why do you look so anxious, Grand Vizier?’

The Grand Vizier crossed his arms on his breast and bent low before his master as he answered:

‘Oh, my Lord! whether my countenance be anxious or not I know not, but down below, in the court of the palace, is a pedlar with such beautiful things that I cannot help feeling annoyed at having so little money to spare.’

The Caliph, who had wished for some time past to give his Grand Vizier a present, ordered his black slave to bring the pedlar before him at once. The slave soon returned, followed by the pedlar, a short stout man with a swarthy face, and dressed in very ragged clothes. He carried a box containing all manner of wares—strings of pearls, rings, richly mounted pistols, goblets, and combs. The Caliph and his Vizier inspected everything, and the Caliph chose some handsome pistols for himself and Mansor, and a jewelled comb for the Vizier’s wife. Just as the pedlar was about to close his box, the Caliph noticed a small drawer, and asked if there was anything else in it for sale. The pedlar opened the drawer and

showed them a box containing a black powder, and a scroll written in strange characters, which neither the Caliph nor the Mansor could read.

‘I got these two articles from a merchant who had picked them up in the street at Mecca,’ said the pedlar. ‘I do not know what they may contain, but as they are of no use to me, you are welcome to have them for a trifle.’

The Caliph, who liked to have old manuscripts in his library, even though he could not read them, purchased the scroll and the box, and dismissed the pedlar. Then, being anxious to know what might be the contents of the scroll, he asked the Vizier if he did not know of anyone who might be able to decipher it.

‘Most gracious Lord and master,’ replied the Vizier, ‘near the great Mosque lives a man called Selim the learned, who knows every language under the sun. Send for him; it may be that he will be able to interpret these mysterious characters.’

The learned Selim was summoned immediately.

‘Selim,’ said the Caliph, ‘I hear you are a scholar. Look well at this scroll and see whether you can read it. If you can, I will give you a robe of honour; but if you fail, I will order you to receive twelve strokes on your cheeks, and five-and-twenty on the soles of your feet, because you have been falsely called Selim the learned.’

Selim prostrated himself and said, ‘Be it according to your will, oh master!’ Then he gazed long at the scroll. Suddenly he exclaimed: ‘May I die, oh, my Lord, if this isn’t Latin!’

‘Well,’ said the Caliph, ‘if it is Latin, let us hear what it means.’

So Selim began to translate: ‘Thou who mayest find this, praise Allah for his mercy. Whoever shall snuff the powder in this box, and at the same time shall pronounce the word “Mutabor!” can transform himself into any creature he likes, and will understand the language of all animals. When he wishes to resume the human form, he has only to bow three times towards the east, and to repeat the same word. Be careful, however, when wearing the shape of some beast or bird, not to laugh, or thou wilt certainly forget the magic word and remain an animal for ever.’

When Selim the learned had read this, the Caliph was delighted. He made the wise man swear not to tell the matter to anyone, gave him a splendid robe, and dismissed him. Then he said to his Vizier, ‘That’s what

I call a good bargain, Mansor. I am longing for the moment when I can become some animal. To-morrow morning I shall expect you early; we will go into the country, take some snuff from my box, and then hear what is being said in air, earth, and water.'

II.

Next morning Caliph Chasid had barely finished dressing, and breakfasting, when the Grand Vizier arrived, according to orders, to accompany him in his expedition. The Caliph stuck the snuff-box in his girdle, and, having desired his servants to remain at home, started off with the Grand Vizier only in attendance. First they walked through the palace gardens, but they looked in vain for some creature which could tempt them to try their magic power. At length the Vizier suggested going further on to a pond which lay beyond the town, and where he had often seen a variety of creatures, especially storks, whose grave, dignified appearance and constant chatter had often attracted his attention.

The Caliph consented, and they went straight to the pond. As soon as they arrived they remarked a stork strutting up and down with a stately air, hunting for frogs, and now and then muttering something to itself. At the same time they saw another stork far above in the sky flying towards the same spot.

'I would wager my beard, most gracious master,' said the Grand Vizier, 'that these two long legs will have a good chat together. How would it be if we turned ourselves into storks?'

'Well said,' replied the Caliph; 'but first let us remember carefully how we are to become men once more. True! Bow three times towards the east and say "Mutabor!" and I shall be Caliph and you my Grand Vizier again. But for Heaven's sake don't laugh or we are lost!'

As the Caliph spoke he saw the second stork circling round his head and gradually flying towards the earth. Quickly he drew the box from his girdle, took a good pinch of the snuff, and offered one to Mansor, who also took one, and both cried together 'Mutabor!'

Instantly their legs shrivelled up and grew thin and red; their smart yellow slippers turned to clumsy stork's feet, their arms to wings; their

necks began to sprout from between their shoulders and grew a yard long; their beards disappeared, and their bodies were covered with feathers.

‘You’ve got a fine long bill, Sir Vizier,’ cried the Caliph, after standing for some time lost in astonishment. ‘By the beard of the Prophet I never saw such a thing in all my life!’

‘My very humble thanks,’ replied the Grand Vizier, as he bent his long neck; ‘but, if I may venture to say so, your Highness is even handsomer as a stork than as a Caliph. But come, if it so pleases you, let us go near our comrades there and find out whether we really do understand the language of storks.’

Meantime the second stork had reached the ground. It first scraped its bill with its claw, stroked down its feathers, and then advanced towards the first stork. The two newly made storks lost no time in drawing near, and to their amazement overheard the following conversation:

‘Good morning, Dame Longlegs. You are out early this morning!’

‘Yes, indeed, dear Chatterbill! I am getting myself a morsel of breakfast. May I offer you a joint of lizard or a frog’s thigh?’

‘A thousand thanks, but I have really no appetite this morning. I am here for a very different purpose. I am to dance to-day before my father’s guests, and I have come to the meadow for a little quiet practice.’

Thereupon the young stork began to move about with the most wonderful steps. The Caliph and Mansor looked on in surprise for some time; but when at last she balanced herself in a picturesque attitude on one leg, and flapped her wings gracefully up and down, they could hold out no longer; a prolonged peal burst from each of their bills, and it was some time before they could recover their composure. The Caliph was the first to collect himself. ‘That was the best joke,’ said he, ‘I’ve ever seen. It’s a pity the stupid creatures were scared away by our laughter, or no doubt they would have sung next!’

Suddenly, however, the Vizier remembered how strictly they had been warned not to laugh during their transformation. He at once communicated his fears to the Caliph, who exclaimed, ‘By Mecca and Medina! it would indeed prove but a poor joke if I had to remain a stork for the remainder of my days! Do just try and remember the stupid word, it has slipped my memory.’

‘We must bow three times eastwards and say “Mu...mu...mu...”’

They turned to the east and fell to bowing till their bills touched the ground, but, oh horror—the magic word was quite forgotten, and however often the Caliph bowed and however touchingly his Vizier cried ‘Mu...mu...’ they could not recall it, and the unhappy Chasid and Mansor remained storks as they were.

III.

The two enchanted birds wandered sadly on through the meadows. In their misery they could not think what to do next. They could not rid themselves of their new forms; there was no use in returning to the town and saying who they were; for who would believe a stork who announced that he was a Caliph; and even if they did believe him, would the people of Bagdad consent to let a stork rule over them?

So they lounged about for several days, supporting themselves on fruits, which, however, they found some difficulty in eating with their long bills. They did not much care to eat frogs or lizards. Their one comfort in their sad plight was the power of flying, and accordingly they often flew over the roofs of Bagdad to see what was going on there.

During the first few days they noticed signs of much disturbance and distress in the streets, but about the fourth day, as they sat on the roof of the palace, they perceived a splendid procession passing below them along the street. Drums and trumpets sounded, a man in a scarlet mantle, embroidered in gold, sat on a splendidly caparisoned horse surrounded by richly dressed slaves; half Bagdad crowded after him, and they all shouted, ‘Hail, Mirza, the Lord of Bagdad!’

The two storks on the palace roof looked at each other, and Caliph Chasid said, ‘Can you guess now, Grand Vizier, why I have been enchanted? This Mirza is the son of my deadly enemy, the mighty magician Kaschnur, who in an evil moment vowed vengeance on me. Still I will not despair! Come with me, my faithful friend; we will go to the grave of the Prophet, and perhaps at that sacred spot the spell may be loosed.’

They rose from the palace roof, and spread their wings toward Medina.

But flying was not quite an easy matter, for the two storks had had but little practice as yet.

‘Oh, my Lord!’ gasped the Vizier, after a couple of hours, ‘I can get on no longer; you really fly too quick for me. Besides, it is nearly evening, and we should do well to find some place in which to spend the night.’

Chasid listened with favour to his servant’s suggestion, and perceiving in the valley beneath them a ruin which seemed to promise shelter they flew towards it. The building in which they proposed to pass the night had apparently been formerly a castle. Some handsome pillars still stood amongst the heaps of ruins, and several rooms, which yet remained in fair preservation, gave evidence of former splendour. Chasid and his companion wandered along the passages seeking a dry spot, when suddenly Mansor stood still.

‘My Lord and master,’ he whispered, ‘if it were not absurd for a Grand Vizier, and still more for a stork, to be afraid of ghosts, I should feel quite nervous, for someone, or something close by me, has sighed and moaned quite audibly.’

The Caliph stood still and distinctly heard a low weeping sound which seemed to proceed from a human being rather than from any animal. Full of curiosity he was about to rush towards the spot from whence the sounds of woe came, when the Vizier caught him by the wing with his bill, and implored him not to expose himself to fresh and unknown dangers. The Caliph, however, under whose stork’s breast a brave heart beat, tore himself away with the loss of a few feathers, and hurried down a dark passage. He saw a door which stood ajar, and through which he distinctly heard sighs, mingled with sobs. He pushed open the door with his bill, but remained on the threshold, astonished at the sight which met his eyes. On the floor of the ruined chamber—which was but scantily lighted by a small barred window—sat a large screech owl. Big tears rolled from its large round eyes, and in a hoarse voice it uttered its complaints through its crooked beak. As soon as it saw the Caliph and his Vizier—who had crept up meanwhile—it gave vent to a joyful cry. It gently wiped the tears from its eyes with its spotted brown wings, and to the great amazement of the two visitors, addressed them in good human Arabic.

‘Welcome, ye storks! You are a good sign of my deliverance, for it was foretold me that a piece of good fortune should befall me through a stork.’

When the Caliph had recovered from his surprise, he drew up his feet into a graceful position, bent his long neck, and said: ‘Oh, screech owl! from your words I am led to believe that we see in you a companion in misfortune. But, alas! your hope that you may attain your deliverance through us is but a vain one. You will know our helplessness when you have heard our story.’

The screech owl begged him to relate it, and the Caliph accordingly told him what we already know.

IV.

When the Caliph had ended, the owl thanked him and said: ‘You hear my story, and own that I am no less unfortunate than yourselves. My father is the King of the Indies. I, his only daughter, am named Lusa. That magician Kaschnur, who enchanted you, has been the cause of my misfortunes too. He came one day to my father and demanded my hand for his son Mirza. My father—who is rather hasty—ordered him to be thrown downstairs. The wretch not long after managed to approach me under another form, and one day, when I was in the garden, and asked for some refreshment, he brought me—in the disguise of a slave—a draught which changed me at once to this horrid shape. Whilst I was fainting with terror he transported me here, and cried to me with his awful voice: “There shall you remain, lonely and hideous, despised even by the brutes, till the end of your days, or till some one of his own free will asks you to be his wife. Thus do I avenge myself on you and your proud father.”

‘Since then many months have passed away. Sad and lonely do I live like any hermit within these walls, avoided by the world and a terror even to animals; the beauties of nature are hidden from me, for I am blind by day, and it is only when the moon sheds her pale light on this spot that the veil falls from my eyes and I can see.’ The owl paused, and once more wiped her eyes with her wing, for the recital of her woes had drawn fresh tears from her.

The Caliph fell into deep thought on hearing this story of the Princess. ‘If I am not much mistaken,’ said he, ‘there is some mysterious

connection between our misfortunes, but how to find the key to the riddle is the question.'

The owl answered: 'Oh, my Lord! I too feel sure of this, for in my earliest youth a wise woman foretold that a stork would bring me some great happiness, and I think I could tell you how we might save ourselves.' The Caliph was much surprised, and asked her what she meant.

'The Magician who has made us both miserable,' said she, 'comes once a month to these ruins. Not far from this room is a large hall where he is in the habit of feasting with his companions. I have often watched them. They tell each other all about their evil deeds, and possibly the magic word which you have forgotten may be mentioned.'

'Oh, dearest Princess!' exclaimed the Caliph, 'say, when does he come, and where is the hall?'

The owl paused a moment and then said: 'Do not think me unkind, but I can only grant your request on one condition.'

'Speak, speak!' cried Chasid; 'command, I will gladly do whatever you wish!'

'Well,' replied the owl, 'you see I should like to be free too; but this can only be if one of you will offer me his hand in marriage.'

The storks seemed rather taken aback by this suggestion, and the Caliph beckoned to his Vizier to retire and consult with him.

When they were outside the door the Caliph said: 'Grand Vizier, this is a tiresome business. However, you can take her.'

'Indeed!' said the Vizier; 'so that when I go home my wife may scratch my eyes out! Besides, I am an old man, and your Highness is still young and unmarried, and a far more suitable match for a young and lovely Princess.'

'That's just where it is,' sighed the Caliph, whose wings drooped in a dejected manner; 'how do you know she is young and lovely? I call it buying a pig in a poke.'

They argued on for some time, but at length, when the Caliph saw plainly that his Vizier would rather remain a stork to the end of his days than marry the owl, he determined to fulfil the condition himself. The owl was delighted. She owned that they could not have arrived at a better time, as most probably the magicians would meet that very night.

She then proceeded to lead the two storks to the chamber. They passed through a long dark passage till at length a bright ray of light shone before them through the chinks of a half-ruined wall. When they reached it the owl advised them to keep very quiet. Through the gap near which they stood they could with ease survey the whole of the large hall. It was adorned with splendid carved pillars; a number of coloured lamps replaced the light of day. In the middle of the hall stood a round table covered with a variety of dishes, and about the table was a divan on which eight men were seated. In one of these bad men the two recognised the pedlar who had sold the magic powder. The man next him begged him to relate all his latest doings, and amongst them he told the story of the Caliph and his Vizier.

‘And what kind of word did you give them?’ asked another old sorcerer.

‘A very difficult Latin word; it is “Mutabor.”’

V.

As soon as the storks heard this they were nearly beside themselves with joy. They ran at such a pace to the door of the ruined castle that the owl could scarcely keep up with them. When they reached it the Caliph turned to the owl, and said with much feeling: ‘Deliverer of my friend and myself, as a proof of my eternal gratitude, accept me as your husband.’ Then he turned towards the east. Three times the storks bowed their long necks to the sun, which was just rising over the mountains. ‘Mutabor!’ they both cried, and in an instant they were once more transformed. In the rapture of their newly-given lives master and servant fell laughing and weeping into each other’s arms. Who shall describe their surprise when they at last turned round and beheld standing before them a beautiful lady exquisitely dressed!

With a smile she held out her hand to the Caliph, and asked: ‘Do you not recognise your screech owl?’

It was she! The Caliph was so enchanted by her grace and beauty, that he declared being turned into a stork had been the best piece of luck which had ever befallen him. The three set out at once for Bagdad. Fortunately,

the Caliph found not only the box with the magic powder, but also his purse in his girdle; he was, therefore, able to buy in the nearest village all they required for their journey, and so at last they reached the gates of Bagdad.

Here the Caliph's arrival created the greatest sensation. He had been quite given up for dead, and the people were greatly rejoiced to see their beloved ruler again.

Their rage with the usurper Mirza, however, was great in proportion. They marched in force to the palace and took the old magician and his son prisoners. The Caliph sent the magician to the room where the Princess had lived as an owl, and there had him hanged. As the son, however, knew nothing of his father's acts, the Caliph gave him his choice between death and a pinch of the magic snuff. When he chose the latter, the Grand Vizier handed him the box. One good pinch, and the magic word transformed him to a stork. The Caliph ordered him to be confined in an iron cage, and placed in the palace gardens.

Caliph Chasid lived long and happily with his wife the Princess. His merriest time was when the Grand Vizier visited him in the afternoon; and when the Caliph was in particularly high spirits he would condescend to mimic the Vizier's appearance when he was a stork. He would strut gravely, and with well-stiffened legs, up and down the room, chattering, and showing how he had vainly bowed to the east and cried 'Mu...Mu...' The Caliphess and her children were always much entertained by this performance; but when the Caliph went on nodding and bowing, and calling 'Mu...mu...' too long, the Vizier would threaten laughingly to tell the Chaliphess the subject of the discussion carried on one night outside the door of Princess Screech Owl.

THE ENCHANTED WATCH

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Once upon a time there lived a rich man who had three sons. When they grew up, he sent the eldest to travel and see the world, and three years passed before his family saw him again. Then he returned, magnificently dressed, and his father was so delighted with his behaviour, that he gave a great feast in his honour, to which all the relations and friends were invited.

When the rejoicings were ended, the second son begged leave of his father to go in his turn to travel and mix with the world. The father was enchanted at the request, and gave him plenty of money for his expenses, saying, ‘If you behave as well as your brother, I will do honour to you as I did to him.’ The young man promised to do his best, and his conduct during three years was all that it should be. Then he went home, and his father was so pleased with him that his feast of welcome was even more splendid than the one before.

The third brother, whose name was Jenik, or Johnnie, was considered the most foolish of the three. He never did anything at home except sit over the stove and dirty himself with the ashes; but he also begged his father’s leave to travel for three years. ‘Go if you like, you idiot; but what good will it do you?’

The youth paid no heed to his father’s observations as long as he obtained permission to go. The father saw him depart with joy, glad to get rid of him, and gave him a handsome sum of money for his needs.

Once, as he was making one of his journeys, Jenik chanced to cross a meadow where some shepherds were just about to kill a dog. He entreated them to spare it, and to give it to him instead which they willingly did, and he went on his way, followed by the dog. A little further on he came upon a cat, which someone was going to put to death. He implored its life, and the cat followed him. Finally, in another place, he saved a serpent, which was also handed over to him and now they made a party of four—the dog behind Jenik, the cat behind the dog, and the serpent behind the cat.

Then the serpent said to Jenik, ‘Go wherever you see me go,’ for in the autumn, when all the serpents hide themselves in their holes, this serpent was going in search of his king, who was king of all the snakes.

Then he added: ‘My king will scold me for my long absence, everyone else is housed for the winter, and I am very late. I shall have to tell him what danger I have been in, and how, without your help, I should certainly have lost my life. The king will ask what you would like in return, and be sure you beg for the watch which hangs on the wall. It has all sorts of wonderful properties, you only need to rub it to get whatever you like.’

No sooner said than done. Jenik became the master of the watch, and the moment he got out he wished to put its virtues to the proof. He was hungry, and thought it would be delightful to eat in the meadow a loaf of new bread and a steak of good beef washed down by a flask of wine, so he scratched the watch, and in an instant it was all before him. Imagine his joy!

Evening soon came, and Jenik rubbed his watch, and thought it would be very pleasant to have a room with a comfortable bed and a good supper. In an instant they were all before him. After supper he went to bed and slept till morning, as every honest man ought to do. Then he set forth for his father’s house, his mind dwelling on the feast that would be awaiting him. But as he returned in the same old clothes in which he went away, his father flew into a great rage, and refused to do anything for him. Jenik went to his old place near the stove, and dirtied himself in the ashes without anybody minding.

The third day, feeling rather dull, he thought it would be nice to see a three-story house filled with beautiful furniture, and with vessels of silver and gold. So he rubbed the watch, and there it all was. Jenik went to look for his father, and said to him: ‘You offered me no feast of welcome, but permit me to give one to you, and come and let me show you my plate.’

The father was much astonished, and longed to know where his son had got all this wealth. Jenik did not reply, but begged him to invite all their relations and friends to a grand banquet.

So the father invited all the world, and everyone was amazed to see such splendid things, so much plate, and so many fine dishes on the table. After the first course Jenik prayed his father to invite the King, and his daughter the Princess. He rubbed his watch and wished for a carriage

ornamented with gold and silver, and drawn by six horses, with harness glittering with precious stones. The father did not dare to sit in this gorgeous coach, but went to the palace on foot. The King and his daughter were immensely surprised with the beauty of the carriage, and mounted the steps at once to go to Jenik's banquet. Then Jenik rubbed his watch afresh, and wished that for six miles the way to the house should be paved with marble. Who ever felt so astonished as the King? Never had he travelled over such a gorgeous road.

When Jenik heard the wheels of the carriage, he rubbed his watch and wished for a still more beautiful house, four stories high, and hung with gold, silver, and damask; filled with wonderful tables, covered with dishes such as no king had ever eaten before. The King, the Queen, and the Princess were speechless with surprise. Never had they seen such a splendid palace, nor such a high feast! At dessert the King asked Jenik's father to give him the young man for a son-in-law. No sooner said than done! The marriage took place at once, and the King returned to his own palace, and left Jenik with his wife in the enchanted house.

Now Jenik was not a very clever man, and at the end of a very short time he began to bore his wife. She inquired how he managed to build palaces and to get so many precious things. He told her all about the watch, and she never rested till she had stolen the precious talisman. One night she took the watch, rubbed it, and wished for a carriage drawn by four horses; and in this carriage she at once set out for her father's palace. There she called to her own attendants, bade them follow her into the carriage, and drove straight to the sea-side. Then she rubbed her watch, and wished that the sea might be crossed by a bridge, and that a magnificent palace might arise in the middle of the sea. No sooner said than done. The Princess entered the house, rubbed her watch, and in an instant the bridge was gone.

Left alone, Jenik felt very miserable. His father, mother, and brothers, and, indeed, everybody else, all laughed at him. Nothing remained to him but the cat and dog whose lives he had once saved. He took them with him and went far away, for he could no longer live with his family. He reached at last a great desert, and saw some crows flying towards a mountain. One of them was a long way behind, and when he arrived his brothers inquired what had made him so late. 'Winter is here,' they said, 'and it is time to

fly to other countries.’ He told them that he had seen in the middle of the sea the most wonderful house that ever was built.

On hearing this, Jenik at once concluded that this must be the hiding-place of his wife. So he proceeded directly to the shore with his dog and his cat. When he arrived on the beach, he said to the dog: ‘You are an excellent swimmer, and you, little one, are very light; jump on the dog’s back and he will take you to the palace. Once there, he will hide himself near the door, and you must steal secretly in and try to get hold of my watch.’

No sooner said than done. The two animals crossed the sea; the dog hid near the house, and the cat stole into the chamber. The Princess recognised him, and guessed why he had come; and she took the watch down to the cellar and locked it in a box. But the cat wriggled its way into the cellar, and the moment the Princess turned her back, he scratched and scratched till he had made a hole in the box. Then he took the watch between his teeth, and waited quietly till the Princess came back. Scarcely had she opened the door when the cat was outside, and the watch into the bargain.

The cat was no sooner beyond the gates than she said to the dog:

‘We are going to cross the sea; be very careful not to speak to me.’

The dog laid this to heart and said nothing; but when they approached the shore he could not help asking, ‘Have you got the watch?’

The cat did not answer—he was afraid that he might let the talisman fall. When they touched the shore the dog repeated his question.

‘Yes,’ said the cat.

And the watch fell into the sea. Then our two friends began each to accuse the other, and both looked sorrowfully at the place where their treasure had fallen in. Suddenly a fish appeared near the edge of the sea. The cat seized it, and thought it would make them a good supper.

‘I have nine little children,’ cried the fish. ‘Spare the father of a family!’

‘Granted,’ replied the cat; ‘but on condition that you find our watch.’

The fish executed his commission, and they brought the treasure back to their master. Jenik rubbed the watch and wished that the palace, with the Princess and all its inhabitants, should be swallowed up in the sea. No sooner said than done. Jenik returned to his parents, and he and his watch, his cat and his dog, lived together happily to the end of their days.

Deulin.

ROSANELLA

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Everybody knows that though the fairies live hundreds of years they do sometimes die, and especially as they are obliged to pass one day in every week under the form of some animal, when of course they are liable to accident. It was in this way that death once overtook the Queen of the Fairies, and it became necessary to call a general assembly to elect a new sovereign. After much discussion, it appeared that the choice lay between two fairies, one called Surcantine and the other Paridamie; and their claims were so equal that it was impossible without injustice to prefer one to the other. Under these circumstances it was unanimously decided that whichever of the two could show to the world the greatest wonder should be Queen; but it was to be a special kind of wonder, no moving of mountains or any such common fairy tricks would do. Surcantine, therefore, resolved that she would bring up a Prince whom nothing could make constant. While Paridamie decided to display to admiring mortals a Princess so charming that no one could see her without falling in love with her. They were allowed to take their own time, and meanwhile the four oldest fairies were to attend to the affairs of the kingdom.

Now Paridamie had for a long time been very friendly with King Bardondon, who was a most accomplished Prince, and whose court was the model of what a court should be. His Queen, Balanice, was also charming; indeed it is rare to find a husband and wife so perfectly of one mind about everything. They had one little daughter, whom they had named ‘Rosanella,’ because she had a little pink rose printed upon her white throat. From her earliest infancy she had shown the most astonishing intelligence, and the courtiers knew her smart sayings by heart, and repeated them on all occasions. In the middle of the night following the assembly of fairies, Queen Balanice woke up with a shriek, and when her maids of honour ran to see what was the matter, they found she had had a frightful dream.

‘I thought,’ said she, ‘that my little daughter had changed into a bouquet of roses, and that as I held it in my hand a bird swooped down suddenly and snatched it from me and carried it away.’

‘Let some one run and see that all is well with the Princess,’ she added.

So they ran; but what was their dismay when they found that the cradle was empty; and though they sought high and low, not a trace of Rosanella could they discover. The Queen was inconsolable, and so, indeed, was the King, only being a man he did not say quite so much about his feelings. He presently proposed to Balanice that they should spend a few days at one of their palaces in the country; and to this she willingly agreed, since her grief made the gaiety of the capital distasteful to her. One lovely summer evening, as they sat together on a shady lawn shaped like a star, from which radiated twelve splendid avenues of trees, the Queen looked round and saw a charming peasant-girl approaching by each path, and what was still more singular was that everyone carried something in a basket which appeared to occupy her whole attention. As each drew near she laid her basket at Balanice’s feet, saying:

‘Charming Queen, may this be some slight consolation to you in your unhappiness!’

The Queen hastily opened the baskets, and found in each a lovely baby-girl, about the same age as the little Princess for whom she sorrowed so deeply. At first the sight of them renewed her grief; but presently their charms so gained upon her that she forgot her melancholy in providing them with nursery-maids, cradle-rockers, and ladies-in-waiting, and in sending hither and thither for swings and dolls and tops, and bushels of the finest sweetmeats.

Oddly enough, every baby had upon its throat a tiny pink rose. The Queen found it so difficult to decide on suitable names for all of them, that until she could settle the matter she chose a special colour for everyone, by which it was known, so that when they were all together they looked like nothing so much as a nosegay of gay flowers. As they grew older it became evident that though they were all remarkably intelligent, and profited equally by the education they received, yet they differed one from another in disposition, so much so that they gradually ceased to be known as ‘Pearl,’ or ‘Primrose,’ or whatever might have been their colour, and the Queen instead would say:

‘Where is my Sweet?’ or ‘my Beautiful,’ or ‘my Gay.’

Of course, with all these charms they had lovers by the dozen. Not only in their own court, but princes from afar, who were constantly arriving, attracted by the reports which were spread abroad; but these lovely girls, the first Maids of Honour, were as discreet as they were beautiful, and favoured no one.

But let us return to Surcantine. She had fixed upon the son of a king who was cousin to Bardondon, to bring up as her fickle Prince. She had before, at his christening, given him all the graces of mind and body that a prince could possibly require; but now she redoubled her efforts, and spared no pains in adding every imaginable charm and fascination. So that whether he happened to be cross or amiable, splendidly or simply attired, serious or frivolous, he was always perfectly irresistible! In truth, he was a charming young fellow, since the Fairy had given him the best heart in the world as well as the best head, and had left nothing to be desired but—constancy. For it cannot be denied that Prince Mirliflor was a desperate flirt, and as fickle as the wind; so much so, that by the time he arrived at his eighteenth birthday there was not a heart left for him to conquer in his father’s kingdom—they were all his own, and he was tired of everyone! Things were in this state when he was invited to visit the court of his father’s cousin, King Bardondon.

Imagine his feelings when he arrived and was presented at once to twelve of the loveliest creatures in the world, and his embarrassment was heightened by the fact that they all liked him as much as he liked each one of them, so that things came to such a pass that he was never happy a single instant without them. For could he not whisper soft speeches to Sweet, and laugh with Joy, while he looked at Beauty? And in his more serious moments what could be pleasanter than to talk to Grave upon some shady lawn, while he held the hand of Loving in his own, and all the others lingered near in sympathetic silence? For the first time in his life he really loved, though the object of his devotion was not one person, but twelve, to whom he was equally attached, and even Surcantine was deceived into thinking that this was indeed the height of inconstancy. But Paridamie said not a word.

In vain did Prince Mirliflor’s father write commanding him to return, and proposing for him one good match after another. Nothing in the world

could tear him from his twelve enchantresses.

One day the Queen gave a large garden-party, and just as the guests were all assembled, and Prince Mirliflor was as usual dividing his attentions between the twelve beauties, a humming of bees was heard. The Rose-maidens, fearing their stings, uttered little shrieks, and fled all together to a distance from the rest of the company. Immediately, to the horror of all who were looking on, the bees pursued them, and, growing suddenly to an enormous size, pounced each upon a maiden and carried her off into the air, and in an instant they were all lost to view. This amazing occurrence plunged the whole court into the deepest affliction, and Prince Mirliflor, after giving way to the most violent grief at first, fell gradually into a state of such deep dejection that it was feared if nothing could rouse him he would certainly die. Surcantine came in all haste to see what she could do for her darling, but he rejected with scorn all the portraits of lovely princesses which she offered him for his collection. In short, it was evident that he was in a bad way, and the Fairy was at her wits' end. One day, as he wandered about absorbed in melancholy reflections, he heard sudden shouts and exclamations of amazement, and if he had taken the trouble to look up he could not have helped being as astonished as everyone else, for through the air a chariot of crystal was slowly approaching which glittered in the sunshine. Six lovely maidens with shining wings drew it by rose-coloured ribbons, while a whole flight of others, equally beautiful, were holding long garlands of roses crossed above it, so as to form a complete canopy. In it sat the Fairy Paridamie, and by her side a Princess whose beauty positively dazzled all who saw her. At the foot of the great staircase they descended, and proceeded to the Queen's apartments, though everyone had run together to see this marvel, till it was quite difficult to make a way through the crowd; and exclamations of wonder rose on all sides at the loveliness of the strange Princess. 'Great Queen,' said Paridamie, 'permit me to restore to you your daughter Rosanella, whom I stole out of her cradle.'

After the first transports of joy were over the Queen said to Paridamie:

'But my twelve lovely ones, are they lost to me for ever? Shall I never see them again?'

But Paridamie only said:

‘Very soon you will cease to miss them!’ in a tone that evidently meant ‘Don’t ask me any more questions.’ And then mounting again into her chariot she swiftly disappeared.

The news of his beautiful cousin’s arrival was soon carried to the Prince, but he had hardly the heart to go and see her. However, it became absolutely necessary that he should pay his respects, and he had scarcely been five minutes in her presence before it seemed to him that she combined in her own charming person all the gifts and graces which had so attracted him in the twelve Rose-maidens whose loss he had so truly mourned; and after all it is really more satisfactory to make love to one person at a time. So it came to pass that before he knew where he was he was entreating his lovely cousin to marry him, and the moment the words had left his lips, Paridamie appeared, smiling and triumphant, in the chariot of the Queen of the Fairies, for by that time they had all heard of her success, and declared her to have earned the kingdom. She had to give a full account of how she had stolen Rosanella from her cradle, and divided her character into twelve parts, that each might charm Prince Mirliflor, and when once more united might cure him of his inconstancy once and for ever.

And as one more proof of the fascination of the whole Rosanella, I may tell you that even the defeated Surcantine sent her a wedding gift, and was present at the ceremony which took place as soon as the guests could arrive. Prince Mirliflor was constant for the rest of his life. And indeed who would not have been in his place? As for Rosanella, she loved him as much as all the twelve beauties put together, so they reigned in peace and happiness to the end of their long lives.

By the Comte de Caylus.

SYLVAIN AND JOCOSA

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Once upon a time there lived in the same village two children, one called Sylvain and the other Jocosa, who were both remarkable for beauty and intelligence. It happened that their parents were not on terms of friendship with one another, on account of some old quarrel, which had, however, taken place so long ago, that they had quite forgotten what it was all about, and only kept up the feud from force of habit. Sylvain and Jocosa for their parts were far from sharing this enmity, and indeed were never happy when apart. Day after day they fed their flocks of sheep together, and spent the long sunshiny hours in playing, or resting upon some shady bank. It happened one day that the Fairy of the Meadows passed by and saw them, and was so much attracted by their pretty faces and gentle manners that she took them under her protection, and the older they grew the dearer they became to her. At first she showed her interest by leaving in their favourite haunts many little gifts such as they delighted to offer one to the other, for they loved each other so much that their first thought was always, ‘What will Jocosa like?’ or, ‘What will please Sylvain?’ And the Fairy took a great delight in their innocent enjoyment of the cakes and sweetmeats she gave them nearly every day. When they were grown up she resolved to make herself known to them, and chose a time when they were sheltering from the noonday sun in the deep shade of a flowery hedgerow. They were startled at first by the sudden apparition of a tall and slender lady, dressed all in green, and crowned with a garland of flowers. But when she spoke to them sweetly, and told them how she had always loved them, and that it was she who had given them all the pretty things which it had so surprised them to find, they thanked her gratefully, and took pleasure in answering the questions she put to them. When she presently bade them farewell, she told them never to tell anyone else that they had seen her. ‘You will often see me again,’ added she, ‘and I shall be with you frequently, even when you do not see me.’ So saying she vanished, leaving them in a state of great wonder and excitement. After this she came often,

and taught them numbers of things, and showed them many of the marvels of her beautiful kingdom, and at last one day she said to them, ‘You know that I have always been kind to you; now I think it is time you did something for me in your turn. You both remember the fountain I call my favourite? Promise me that every morning before the sun rises you will go to it and clear away every stone that impedes its course, and every dead leaf or broken twig that sullies its clear waters. I shall take it as a proof of your gratitude to me if you neither forget nor delay this duty, and I promise that so long as the sun’s earliest rays find my favourite spring the clearest and sweetest in all my meadows, you two shall not be parted from one another.’

Sylvain and Jocosa willingly undertook this service, and indeed felt that it was but a very small thing in return for all that the fairy had given and promised to them. So for a long time the fountain was tended with the most scrupulous care, and was the clearest and prettiest in all the country round. But one morning in the spring, long before the sun rose, they were hastening towards it from opposite directions, when, tempted by the beauty of the myriads of gay flowers which grew thickly on all sides, they paused each to gather some for the other.

‘I will make Sylvain a garland,’ said Jocosa, and ‘How pretty Jocosa will look in this crown!’ thought Sylvain.

Hither and thither they strayed, led ever farther and farther, for the brightest flowers seemed always just beyond them, until at last they were startled by the first bright rays of the rising sun. With one accord they turned and ran towards the fountain, reaching it at the same moment, though from opposite sides. But what was their horror to see its usually tranquil waters seething and bubbling, and even as they looked down rushed a mighty stream, which entirely engulfed it, and Sylvain and Jocosa found themselves parted by a wide and swiftly-rushing river. All this had happened with such rapidity that they had only time to utter a cry, and each to hold up to the other the flowers they had gathered; but this was explanation enough. Twenty times did Sylvain throw himself into the turbulent waters, hoping to be able to swim to the other side, but each time an irresistible force drove him back upon the bank he had just quitted, while, as for Jocosa, she even essayed to cross the flood upon a tree which came floating down torn up by the roots, but her efforts were equally

useless. Then with heavy hearts they set out to follow the course of the stream, which had now grown so wide that it was only with difficulty they could distinguish each other. Night and day, over mountains and through valleys, in cold or in heat, they struggled on, enduring fatigue and hunger and every hardship, and consoled only by the hope of meeting once more —until three years had passed, and at last they stood upon the cliffs where the river flowed into the mighty sea.

And now they seemed farther apart than ever, and in despair they tried once more to throw themselves into the foaming waves. But the Fairy of the Meadows, who had really never ceased to watch over them, did not intend that they should be drowned at last, so she hastily waved her wand, and immediately they found themselves standing side by side upon the golden sand. You may imagine their joy and delight when they realised that their weary struggle was ended, and their utter contentment as they clasped each other by the hand. They had so much to say that they hardly knew where to begin, but they agreed in blaming themselves bitterly for the negligence which had caused all their trouble; and when she heard this the Fairy immediately appeared to them. They threw themselves at her feet and implored her forgiveness, which she granted freely, and promised at the same time that now their punishment was ended she would always befriend them. Then she sent for her chariot of green rushes, ornamented with May dewdrops, which she particularly valued and always collected with great care; and ordered her six short-tailed moles to carry them all back to the well-known pastures, which they did in a remarkably short time; and Sylvain and Jocosa were overjoyed to see their dearly-loved home once more after all their toilful wanderings. The Fairy, who had set her mind upon securing their happiness, had in their absence quite made up the quarrel between their parents, and gained their consent to the marriage of the faithful lovers; and now she conducted them to the most charming little cottage that can be imagined, close to the fountain, which had once more resumed its peaceful aspect, and flowed gently down into the little brook which enclosed the garden and orchard and pasture which belonged to the cottage. Indeed, nothing more could have been thought of, either for Sylvain and Jocosa or for their flocks; and their delight satisfied even the Fairy who had planned it all to please them. When they had explored and admired until they were tired they sat down to rest under the

rose-covered porch, and the Fairy said that to pass the time until the wedding guests whom she had invited could arrive she would tell them a story. This is it:

The Yellow Bird

Once upon a time a Fairy, who had somehow or other got into mischief, was condemned by the High Court of Fairyland to live for several years under the form of some creature, and at the moment of resuming her natural appearance once again to make the fortune of two men. It was left to her to choose what form she would take, and because she loved yellow she transformed herself into a lovely bird with shining golden feathers such as no one had ever seen before. When the time of her punishment was at an end the beautiful yellow bird flew to Bagdad, and let herself be caught by a Fowler at the precise moment when Badi-al-Zaman was walking up and down outside his magnificent summer palace. This Badi-al-Zaman—whose name means ‘Wonder-of-the-World’—was looked upon in Bagdad as the most fortunate creature under the sun, because of his vast wealth. But really, what with anxiety about his riches and being weary of everything, and always desiring something he had not, he never knew a moment’s real happiness. Even now he had come out of his palace, which was large and splendid enough for fifty kings, weary and cross because he could find nothing new to amuse him. The Fowler thought that this would be a favourable opportunity for offering him the marvellous bird, which he felt certain he would buy the instant he saw it. And he was not mistaken, for when Badi-al-Zaman took the lovely prisoner into his own hands, he saw written under its right wing the words, ‘He who eats my head will become a king,’ and under its left wing, ‘He who eats my heart will find a hundred gold pieces under his pillow every morning.’ In spite of all his wealth he at once began to desire the promised gold, and the bargain was soon completed. Then the difficulty arose as to how the bird was to be cooked; for among all his army of servants not one could Badi-al-Zaman trust. At last he asked the Fowler if he were married, and on hearing that he was he bade him take the bird home with him and tell his wife to cook it.

‘Perhaps,’ said he, ‘this will give me an appetite, which I have not had for many a long day, and if so your wife shall have a hundred pieces of silver.’

The Fowler with great joy ran home to his wife, who speedily made a savoury stew of the Yellow Bird. But when Badi-al-Zaman reached the cottage and began eagerly to search in the dish for its head and its heart he could not find either of them, and turned to the Fowler's wife in a furious rage. She was so terrified that she fell upon her knees before him and confessed that her two children had come in just before he arrived, and had so teased her for some of the dish she was preparing that she had presently given the head to one and the heart to the other, since these morsels are not generally much esteemed; and Badi-al-Zaman rushed from the cottage vowing vengeance against the whole family. The wrath of a rich man is generally to be feared, so the Fowler and his wife resolved to send their children out of harm's way; but the wife, to console her husband, confided to him that she had purposely given them the head and heart of the bird because she had been able to read what was written under its wings. So, believing that their children's fortunes were made, they embraced them and sent them forth, bidding them get as far away as possible, to take different roads, and to send news of their welfare. For themselves, they remained hidden and disguised in the town, which was really rather clever of them; but very soon afterwards Badi-al-Zaman died of vexation and annoyance at the loss of the promised treasure, and then they went back to their cottage to wait for news of their children. The younger, who had eaten the heart of the Yellow Bird, very soon found out what it had done for him, for each morning when he awoke he found a purse containing a hundred gold pieces under his pillow. But, as all poor people may remember for their consolation, nothing in the world causes so much trouble or requires so much care as a great treasure. Consequently, the Fowler's son, who spent with reckless profusion and was supposed to be possessed of a great hoard of gold, was before very long attacked by robbers, and in trying to defend himself was so badly wounded that he died.

The elder brother, who had eaten the Yellow Bird's head, travelled a long way without meeting with any particular adventure, until at last he reached a large city in Asia, which was all in an uproar over the choosing of a new Emir. All the principal citizens had formed themselves into two parties, and it was not until after a prolonged squabble that they agreed that the person to whom the most singular thing happened should be Emir.

Our young traveller entered the town at this juncture, with his agreeable face and jaunty air, and all at once felt something alight upon his head, which proved to be a snow-white pigeon. Thereupon all the people began to stare, and to run after him, so that he presently reached the palace with the pigeon upon his head and all the inhabitants of the city at his heels, and before he knew where he was they made him Emir, to his great astonishment.

As there is nothing more agreeable than to command, and nothing to which people get accustomed more quickly, the young Emir soon felt quite at his ease in his new position; but this did not prevent him from making every kind of mistake, and so misgoverning the kingdom that at last the whole city rose in revolt and deprived him at once of his authority and his life—a punishment which he richly deserved, for in the days of his prosperity he disowned the Fowler and his wife, and allowed them to die in poverty.

‘I have told you this story, my dear Sylvain and Jocosa,’ added the Fairy, ‘to prove to you that this little cottage and all that belongs to it is a gift more likely to bring you happiness and contentment than many things that would at first seem grander and more desirable. If you will faithfully promise me to till your fields and feed your flocks, and will keep your word better than you did before, I will see that you never lack anything that is really for your good.’

Sylvain and Jocosa gave their faithful promise, and as they kept it they always enjoyed peace and prosperity. The Fairy had asked all their friends and neighbours to their wedding, which took place at once with great festivities and rejoicings, and they lived to a good old age, always loving one another with all their hearts.

By the Comte de Caylus.

FAIRY GIFTS

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It generally happens that people's surroundings reflect more or less accurately their minds and dispositions, so perhaps that is why the Flower Fairy lived in a lovely palace, with the most delightful garden you can imagine, full of flowers, and trees, and fountains, and fish-ponds, and everything nice. For the Fairy herself was so kind and charming that everybody loved her, and all the young princes and princesses who formed her court, were as happy as the day was long, simply because they were near her. They came to her when they were quite tiny, and never left her until they were grown up and had to go away into the great world; and when that time came she gave to each whatever gift he asked of her. But it is chiefly of the Princess Sylvia that you are going to hear now. The Fairy loved her with all her heart, for she was at once original and gentle, and she had nearly reached the age at which the gifts were generally bestowed. However, the Fairy had a great wish to know how the other princesses who had grown up and left her, were prospering, and before the time came for Sylvia to go herself, she resolved to send her to some of them. So one day her chariot, drawn by butterflies, was made ready, and the Fairy said: 'Sylvia, I am going to send you to the court of Iris; she will receive you with pleasure for my sake as well as for your own. In two months you may come back to me again, and I shall expect you to tell me what you think of her.'

Sylvia was very unwilling to go away, but as the Fairy wished it she said nothing—only when the two months were over she stepped joyfully into the butterfly chariot, and could not get back quickly enough to the Flower-Fairy, who, for her part, was equally delighted to see her again.

'Now, child,' said she, 'tell me what impression you have received.'

'You sent me, madam,' answered Sylvia, 'to the Court of Iris, on whom you had bestowed the gift of beauty. She never tells anyone, however, that it was your gift, though she often speaks of your kindness in general. It seemed to me that her loveliness, which fairly dazzled me at

first, had absolutely deprived her of the use of any of her other gifts or graces. In allowing herself to be seen, she appeared to think that she was doing all that could possibly be required of her. But, unfortunately, while I was still with her she became seriously ill, and though she presently recovered, her beauty is entirely gone, so that she hates the very sight of herself, and is in despair. She entreated me to tell you what had happened, and to beg you, in pity, to give her beauty back to her. And, indeed, she does need it terribly, for all the things in her that were tolerable, and even agreeable, when she was so pretty, seem quite different now she is ugly, and it is so long since she thought of using her mind or her natural cleverness, that I really don't think she has any left now. She is quite aware of all this herself, so you may imagine how unhappy she is, and how earnestly she begs for your aid.'

'You have told me what I wanted to know,' cried the Fairy, 'but alas! I cannot help her; my gifts can be given but once.'

Some time passed in all the usual delights of the Flower-Fairy's palace, and then she sent for Sylvia again, and told her she was to stay for a little while with the Princess Daphne, and accordingly the butterflies whisked her off, and set her down in quite a strange kingdom. But she had only been there a very little time before a wandering butterfly brought a message from her to the Fairy, begging that she might be sent for as soon as possible, and before very long she was allowed to return.

'Ah! madam,' cried she, 'what a place you sent me to that time!'

'Why, what was the matter?' asked the Fairy. 'Daphne was one of the princesses who asked for the gift of eloquence, if I remember rightly.'

'And very ill the gift of eloquence becomes a woman,' replied Sylvia, with an air of conviction. 'It is true that she speaks well, and her expressions are well chosen; but then she never leaves off talking, and though at first one may be amused, one ends by being wearied to death. Above all things she loves any assembly for settling the affairs of her kingdom, for on those occasions she can talk and talk without fear of interruption; but, even then, the moment it is over she is ready to begin again about anything or nothing, as the case may be. Oh! how glad I was to come away I cannot tell you.'

The Fairy smiled at Sylvia's unfeigned disgust at her late experience; but after allowing her a little time to recover she sent her to the Court of

the Princess Cynthia, where she left her for three months. At the end of that time Sylvia came back to her with all the joy and contentment that one feels at being once more beside a dear friend. The Fairy, as usual, was anxious to hear what she thought of Cynthia, who had always been amiable, and to whom she had given the gift of pleasing.

‘I thought at first,’ said Sylvia, ‘that she must be the happiest Princess in the world; she had a thousand lovers who vied with one another in their efforts to please and gratify her. Indeed, I had nearly decided that I would ask a similar gift.’

‘Have you altered your mind, then?’ interrupted the Fairy.

‘Yes, indeed, madam,’ replied Sylvia; ‘and I will tell you why. The longer I stayed the more I saw that Cynthia was not really happy. In her desire to please everyone she ceased to be sincere, and degenerated into a mere coquette; and even her lovers felt that the charms and fascinations which were exercised upon all who approached her without distinction were valueless, so that in the end they ceased to care for them, and went away disdainfully.’

‘I am pleased with you, child,’ said the Fairy; ‘enjoy yourself here for awhile and presently you shall go to Phyllida.’

Sylvia was glad to have leisure to think, for she could not make up her mind at all what she should ask for herself, and the time was drawing very near. However, before very long the Fairy sent her to Phyllida, and waited for her report with unabated interest.

‘I reached her court safely,’ said Sylvia, ‘and she received me with much kindness, and immediately began to exercise upon me that brilliant wit which you had bestowed upon her. I confess that I was fascinated by it, and for a week thought that nothing could be more desirable; the time passed like magic, so great was the charm of her society. But I ended by ceasing to covet that gift more than any of the others I have seen, for, like the gift of pleasing, it cannot really give satisfaction. By degrees I wearied of what had so delighted me at first, especially as I perceived more and more plainly that it is impossible to be constantly smart and amusing without being frequently ill-natured, and too apt to turn all things, even the most serious, into mere occasions for a brilliant jest.’

The Fairy in her heart agreed with Sylvia’s conclusions, and felt pleased with herself for having brought her up so well.

But now the time was come for Sylvia to receive her gift, and all her companions were assembled; the Fairy stood in the midst and in the usual manner asked what she would take with her into the great world.

Sylvia paused for a moment, and then answered: ‘A quiet spirit.’ And the Fairy granted her request.

This lovely gift makes life a constant happiness to its possessor, and to all who are brought into contact with her. She has all the beauty of gentleness and contentment in her sweet face; and if at times it seems less lovely through some chance grief or disquietude, the hardest thing that one ever hears said is:

‘Sylvia’s dear face is pale to-day. It grieves one to see her so.’

And when, on the contrary, she is gay and joyful, the sunshine of her presence rejoices all who have the happiness of being near her.

By the Comte de Caylus.

PRINCE NARCISSUS AND THE PRINCESS POTENTILLA

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Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen who, though it is a very long while since they died, were much the same in their tastes and pursuits as people nowadays. The King, who was called Cloverleaf, liked hunting better than anything else; but he nevertheless bestowed as much care upon his kingdom as he felt equal to—that is to say, he never made an end of folding and unfolding the State documents. As to the Queen, she had once been very pretty, and she liked to believe that she was so still, which is, of course, always made quite easy for queens. Her name was Frivola, and her one occupation in life was the pursuit of amusement. Balls, masquerades, and picnics followed one another in rapid succession, as fast as she could arrange them, and you may imagine that under these circumstances the kingdom was somewhat neglected. As a matter of fact, if anyone had a fancy for a town, or a province, he helped himself to it; but as long as the King had his horses and dogs, and the Queen her musicians and her actors, they did not trouble themselves about the matter. King Cloverleaf and Queen Frivola had but one child, and this Princess had from her very babyhood been so beautiful, that by the time she was four years old the Queen was desperately jealous of her, and so fearful that when she was grown up she would be more admired than herself, that she resolved to keep her hidden away out of sight. To this end she caused a little house to be built not far beyond the Palace gardens, on the bank of a river. This was surrounded by a high wall, and in it the charming Potentilla was imprisoned. Her nurse, who was dumb, took care of her, and the necessaries of life were conveyed to her through a little window in the wall, while guards were always pacing to and fro outside, with orders to cut off the head of anyone who tried to approach, which they would certainly have done without thinking twice about it. The Queen told everyone, with much pretended sorrow, that the Princess was so ugly, and so troublesome, and altogether so impossible to love, that to keep her out

of sight was the only thing that could be done for her. And this tale she repeated so often, that at last the whole court believed it. Things were in this state, and the Princess was about fifteen years old, when Prince Narcissus, attracted by the report of Queen Frivola's gay doings, presented himself at the court. He was not much older than the Princess, and was as handsome a Prince as you would see in a day's journey, and really, for his age, not so very scatter-brained. His parents were a King and Queen, whose story you will perhaps read some day. They died almost at the same time, leaving their kingdom to the eldest of their children, and commending their youngest son, Prince Narcissus, to the care of the Fairy Melinette. In this they did very well for him, for the Fairy was as kind as she was powerful, and she spared no pains in teaching the little Prince everything it was good for him to know, and even imparted to him some of her own Fairy lore. But as soon as he was grown up she sent him out to see the world for himself, though all the time she was secretly keeping watch over him, ready to help in any time of need. Before he started she gave him a ring which would render him invisible when he put it on his finger. These rings seem to be quite common; you must often have heard of them, even if you have never seen one. It was in the course of the Prince's wanderings, in search of experience of men and things, that he came to the court of Queen Frivola, where he was extremely well received. The Queen was delighted with him, so were all her ladies; and the King was very polite to him, though he did not quite see why the whole court was making such a fuss over him.

Prince Narcissus enjoyed all that went on, and found the time pass very pleasantly. Before long, of course, he heard the story about the Princess Potentilla, and, as it had by that time been repeated many times, and had been added to here and there, she was represented as such a monster of ugliness that he was really quite curious to see her, and resolved to avail himself of the magic power of his ring to accomplish his design. So he made himself invisible, and passed the guard without their so much as suspecting that anyone was near. Climbing the wall was rather a difficulty, but when he at length found himself inside it he was charmed with the peaceful beauty of the little domain it enclosed, and still more delighted when he perceived a slender, lovely maiden wandering among the flowers. It was not until he had sought vainly for the imaginary monster that he

realised that this was the Princess herself, and by that time he was deeply in love with her, for indeed it would have been hard to find anyone prettier than Potentilla, as she sat by the brook, weaving a garland of blue forget-me-nots to crown her waving golden locks, or to imagine anything more gentle than the way she tended all the birds and beasts who inhabited her small kingdom, and who all loved and followed her. Prince Narcissus watched her every movement, and hovered near her in a dream of delight, not daring as yet to appear to her, so humble had he suddenly become in her presence. And when evening came, and the nurse fetched the Princess into her little house, he felt obliged to go back to Frivola's palace, for fear his absence should be noticed and someone should discover his new treasure. But he forgot that to go back absent, and dreamy, and indifferent, when he had before been gay and ardent about everything, was the surest way of awakening suspicion; and when, in response to the jesting questions which were put to him upon the subject, he only blushed and returned evasive answers, all the ladies were certain that he had lost his heart, and did their utmost to discover who was the happy possessor of it. As to the Prince, he was becoming day by day more attached to Potentilla, and his one thought was to attend her, always invisible, and help her in everything she did, and provide her with everything that could possibly amuse or please her. And the Princess, who had learnt to find diversion in very small things in her quiet life, was in a continual state of delight over the treasures which the Prince constantly laid where she must find them. Then Narcissus implored his faithful friend Melinette to send the Princess such dreams of him as should make her recognise him as a friend when he actually appeared before her eyes; and this device was so successful that the Princess quite dreaded the cessation of these amusing dreams, in which a certain Prince Narcissus was such a delightful lover and companion. After that he went a step further and began to have long talks with the Princess—still, however, keeping himself invisible, until she begged him so earnestly to appear to her that he could no longer resist, and after making her promise that, no matter what he was like, she would still love him, he drew the ring from his finger, and the Princess saw with delight that he was as handsome as he was agreeable. Now, indeed, they were perfectly happy, and they passed the whole long summer day in Potentilla's favourite place by the brook, and when at last Prince Narcissus

had to leave her it seemed to them both that the hours had gone by with the most amazing swiftness. The Princess stayed where she was, dreaming of her delightful Prince, and nothing could have been further from her thoughts than any trouble or misfortune, when suddenly, in a cloud of dust and shavings, by came the enchanter Grumedan, and unluckily he chanced to catch sight of Potentilla. Down he came straightway and alighted at her feet, and one look at her charming blue eyes and smiling lips quite decided him that he must appear to her at once, though he was rather annoyed to remember that he had on only his second-best cloak. The Princess sprang to her feet with a cry of terror at this sudden apparition, for really the Enchanter was no beauty. To begin with, he was very big and clumsy, then he had but one eye, and his teeth were long, and he stammered badly; nevertheless, he had an excellent opinion of himself, and mistook the Princess's cry of terror for an exclamation of delighted surprise. After pausing a moment to give her time to admire him, the Enchanter made her the most complimentary speech he could invent, which, however, did not please her at all, though he was extremely delighted with it himself. Poor Potentilla only shuddered and cried:

'Oh! where is my Narcissus?'

To which he replied with a self-satisfied chuckle: 'You want a narcissus, madam? Well, they are not rare; you shall have as many as you like.'

Whereupon he waved his wand, and the Princess found herself surrounded and half buried in the fragrant flowers. She would certainly have betrayed that this was not the kind of narcissus she wanted, but for the Fairy Melinette, who had been anxiously watching the interview, and now thought it quite time to interfere. Assuming the Prince's voice, she whispered in Potentilla's ear:

'We are menaced by a great danger, but my only fear is for you, my Princess. Therefore I beg you to hide what you really feel, and we will hope that some way out of the difficulty may present itself.'

The Princess was much agitated by this speech, and feared lest the Enchanter should have overheard it; but he had been loudly calling her attention to the flowers, and chuckling over his own smartness in getting them for her; and it was rather a blow to him when she said very coldly that they were not the sort she preferred, and she would be glad if he

would send them all away. This he did, but afterwards wished to kiss the Princess's hand as a reward for having been so obliging; but the Fairy Melinette was not going to allow anything of that kind. She appeared suddenly, in all her splendour, and cried:

'Stay, Grumedan; this Princess is under my protection, and the smallest impertinence will cost you a thousand years of captivity. If you can win Potentilla's heart by the ordinary methods I cannot oppose you, but I warn you that I will not put up with any of your usual tricks.'

This declaration was not at all to the Enchanter's taste; but he knew that there was no help for it, and that he would have to behave well, and pay the Princess all the delicate attentions he could think of; though they were not at all the sort of thing he was used to. However, he decided that to win such a beauty it was quite worth while; and Melinette, feeling that she could now leave the Princess in safety, hurried off to tell Prince Narcissus what was going forward. Of course, at the very mention of the Enchanter as a rival he was furious, and I don't know what foolish things he would not have done if Melinette had not been there to calm him down. She represented to him what a powerful enchanter Grumedan was, and how, if he were provoked, he might avenge himself upon the Princess, since he was the most unjust and churlish of all the enchanters, and had often before had to be punished by the Fairy Queen for some of his ill-deeds. Once he had been imprisoned in a tree, and was only released when it was blown down by a furious wind; another time he was condemned to stay under a big stone at the bottom of a river, until by some chance the stone should be turned over; but nothing could ever really improve him. The Fairy finally made Narcissus promise that he would remain invisible when he was with the Princess, since she felt sure that this would make things easier for all of them. Then began a struggle between Grumedan and the Prince, the latter under the name of Melinette, as to which could best delight and divert the Princess and win her approbation. Prince Narcissus first made friends with all the birds in Potentilla's little domain, and taught them to sing her name and her praises, with all their sweetest trills and most touching melodies, and all day long to tell her how dearly he loved her. Grumedan, thereupon, declared that there was nothing new about that, since the birds had sung since the world began, and all lovers had imagined that they sang for them alone. Therefore he said he would

himself write an opera that should be absolutely a novelty and something worth hearing. When the time came for the performance (which lasted five weary hours) the Princess found to her dismay that the ‘opera’ consisted of this more than indifferent verse, chanted with all their might by ten thousand frogs:

‘Admirable Potentilla, Do you think it kind or wise In this sudden way to kill a Poor Enchanter with your eyes?’

Really, if Narcissus had not been there to whisper in her ear and divert her attention, I don’t know what would have become of poor Potentilla, for though the first repetition of this absurdity amused her faintly, she nearly died of weariness before the time was over. Luckily Grumedan did not perceive this, as he was too much occupied in whipping up the frogs, many of whom perished miserably from fatigue, since he did not allow them to rest for a moment. The Prince’s next idea for Potentilla’s amusement was to cause a fleet of boats exactly like those of Cleopatra, of which you have doubtless read in history, to come up the little river, and upon the most gorgeously decorated of these reclined the great Queen herself, who, as soon as she reached the place where Potentilla sat in rapt attention, stepped majestically on shore and presented the Princess with that celebrated pearl of which you have heard so much, saying:

‘You are more beautiful than I ever was. Let my example warn you to make a better use of your beauty!’

And then the little fleet sailed on, until it was lost to view in the windings of the river. Grumedan was also looking on at the spectacle, and said very contemptuously:

‘I cannot say I think these marionettes amusing. What a to-do to make over a single pearl! But if you like pearls, madam, why, I will soon gratify you.’

So saying, he drew a whistle from his pocket, and no sooner had he blown it than the Princess saw the water of the river bubble and grow muddy, and in another instant up came hundreds of thousands of great oysters, who climbed slowly and laboriously towards her and laid at her feet all the pearls they contained.

‘Those are what I call pearls,’ cried Grumedan in high glee. And truly there were enough of them to pave every path in Potentilla’s garden and leave some to spare! The next day Prince Narcissus had prepared for the

Princess's pleasure a charming arbour of leafy branches, with couches of moss and grassy floor and garlands everywhere, with her name written in different coloured blossoms. Here he caused a dainty little banquet to be set forth, while hidden musicians played softly, and the silvery fountains plashed down into their marble basins, and when presently the music stopped a single nightingale broke the stillness with his delicious chant.

'Ah!' cried the Princess, recognizing the voice of one of her favourites, 'Philomel, my sweet one, who taught you that new song?'

And he answered: 'Love, my Princess.'

Meanwhile the Enchanter was very ill-pleased with the entertainment, which he declared was dulness itself.

'You don't seem to have any idea in these parts beyond little squeaking birds!' said he. 'And fancy giving a banquet without so much as an ounce of plate!'

So the next day, when the Princess went out into her garden, there stood a summer-house built of solid gold, decorated within and without with her initials and the Enchanter's combined. And in it was spread an enormous repast, while the table so glittered with golden cups and plates, flagons and dishes, candlesticks and a hundred other things beside, that it was hardly possible to look steadily at it. The Enchanter ate like six ogres, but the Princess could not touch a morsel. Presently Grumedan remarked with a grin:

'I have provided neither musicians nor singers; but as you seem fond of music I will sing to you myself.'

Whereupon he began, with a voice like a screech-owl's, to chant the words of his 'opera,' only this time happily not at such a length, and without the frog accompaniment. After this the Prince again asked the aid of his friends the birds, and when they had assembled from all the country round he tied about the neck of each one a tiny lamp of some brilliant colour, and when darkness fell he made them go through a hundred pretty tricks before the delighted Potentilla, who clapped her little hands with delight when she saw her own name traced in points of light against the dark trees, or when the whole flock of sparks grouped themselves into bouquets of different colours, like living flowers. Grumedan leaning back in his arm-chair, with one knee crossed over the other and his nose in the air, looked on disdainfully.

‘Oh! if you like fireworks, Princess,’ said he; and the next night all the will-o’-the-wisps in the country came and danced on the plain, which could be seen from the Princess’s windows, and as she was looking out, and rather enjoying the sight, up sprang a frightful volcano, pouring out smoke and flames which terrified her greatly, to the intense amusement of the Enchanter, who laughed like a pack of wolves quarrelling. After this, as many of the will-o’-the-wisps as could get in crowded into Potentilla’s garden, and by their light the tall yew-trees danced minuets until the Princess was weary and begged to be excused from looking at anything more that night. But, in spite of Potentilla’s efforts to behave politely to the tiresome old Enchanter, whom she detested, he could not help seeing that he failed to please her, and then he began to suspect very strongly that she must love someone else, and that somebody besides Melinette was responsible for all the festivities he had witnessed. So after much consideration he devised a plan for finding out the truth. He went to the Princess suddenly, and announced that he was most unwillingly forced to leave her, and had come to bid her farewell. Potentilla could scarcely hide her delight when she heard this, and his back was hardly turned before she was entreating Prince Narcissus to make himself visible once more. The poor Prince had been getting quite thin with anxiety and annoyance, and was only too delighted to comply with her request. They greeted one another rapturously, and were just sitting down to talk over everything cosily, and enjoy the Enchanter’s discomfiture together, when out he burst in a fury from behind a bush. With his huge club he aimed a terrific blow at Narcissus, which must certainly have killed him but for the adroitness of the Fairy Melinette, who arrived upon the scene just in time to snatch him up and carry him off at lightning speed to her castle in the air. Poor Potentilla, however, had not the comfort of knowing this, for at the sight of the Enchanter threatening her beloved Prince she had given one shriek and fallen back insensible. When she recovered her senses she was more than ever convinced that he was dead, since even Melinette was no longer near her, and no one was left to defend her from the odious old Enchanter.

To make matters worse, he seemed to be in a very bad temper, and came blustering and raging at the poor Princess.

‘I tell you what it is, madam,’ said he: ‘whether you love this whipper-snapper Prince or not doesn’t matter in the least. You are going to marry

me, so you may as well make up your mind to it; and I am going away this very minute to make all the arrangements. But in case you should get into mischief in my absence, I think I had better put you to sleep.'

So saying, he waved his wand over her, and in spite of her utmost efforts to keep awake she sank into a profound and dreamless slumber.

As he wished to make what he considered a suitable entry into the King's palace, he stepped outside the Princess's little domain, and mounted upon an immense chariot with great solid wheels, and shafts like the trunk of an oak-tree, but all of solid gold. This was drawn with great difficulty by forty-eight strong oxen; and the Enchanter reclined at his ease, leaning upon his huge club, and holding carelessly upon his knee a tawny African lion, as if it had been a little lapdog. It was about seven o'clock in the morning when this extraordinary chariot reached the palace gates; the King was already astir, and about to set off on a hunting expedition; as for the Queen, she had only just gone off into her first sleep, and it would have been a bold person indeed who ventured to wake her.

The King was greatly annoyed at having to stay and see a visitor at such a time, and pulled off his hunting boots again with many grimaces. Meantime the Enchanter was stumping about in the hall, crying:

'Where is this King? Let him be told that I must see him and his wife also.'

The King, who was listening at the top of the staircase, thought this was not very polite; however, he took counsel with his favourite huntsman, and, following his advice, presently went down to see what was wanted of him. He was struck with astonishment at the sight of the chariot, and was gazing at it, when the Enchanter strode up to him, exclaiming:

'Shake hands, Cloverleaf, old fellow! Don't you know me?'

'No, I can't say I do,' replied the King, somewhat embarrassed.

'Why, I am Grumedan, the Enchanter,' said he, 'and I am come to make your fortune. Let us come in and talk things over a bit.'

Thereupon he ordered the oxen to go about their business, and they bounded off like stags, and were out of sight in a moment. Then, with one blow of his club, he changed the massive chariot into a perfect mountain of gold pieces.

'Those are for your lackeys,' said he to the King, 'that they may drink my health.'

Naturally a great scramble ensued, and at last the laughter and shouting awoke the Queen, who rang for her maids to ask the reason of such an unwonted hurry-burly. When they said that a visitor was asking for her, and then proceeded each one to tell breathlessly a different tale of wonder, in which she could only distinguish the words, ‘oxen,’ ‘gold,’ ‘club,’ ‘giant,’ ‘lion,’ she thought they were all out of their minds. Meanwhile the King was asking the Enchanter to what he was indebted for the honour of this visit, and on his replying that he would not say until the Queen was also present, messenger after messenger was dispatched to her to beg her immediate attendance. But Frivola was in a very bad humour at having been so unceremoniously awakened, and declared that she had a pain in her little finger, and that nothing should induce her to come.

When the Enchanter heard this he insisted that she must come.

‘Take my club to her Majesty,’ said he, ‘and tell her that if she smells the end of it she will find it wonderfully reviving.’

So four of the King’s strongest men-at-arms staggered off with it; and after some persuasion the Queen consented to try this novel remedy. She had hardly smelt it for an instant when she declared herself to be perfectly restored; but whether that was due to the scent of the wood or to the fact that as soon as she touched it out fell a perfect shower of magnificent jewels, I leave you to decide. At any rate, she was now all eagerness to see the mysterious stranger, and hastily throwing on her royal mantle, popped her second-best diamond crown over her night-cap, put a liberal dab of rouge upon each cheek, and holding up her largest fan before her nose—for she was not used to appearing in broad daylight—she went mincing into the great hall. The Enchanter waited until the King and Queen had seated themselves upon their throne, and then, taking his place between them, he began solemnly:

‘My name is Grumedan. I am an extremely well-connected Enchanter; my power is immense. In spite of all this, the charms of your daughter Potentilla have so fascinated me that I cannot live without her. She fancies that she loves a certain contemptible puppy called Narcissus; but I have made very short work with him. I really do not care whether you consent to my marriage with your daughter or not, but I am bound to ask your consent, on account of a certain meddling Fairy called Melinette, with whom I have reason for wishing to keep on good terms.’

The King and Queen were somewhat embarrassed to know what answer to make to this terrible suitor, but at last they asked for time to talk over the matter: since, they said, their subjects might think that the heir to the throne should not be married with as little consideration as a dairymaid.

‘Oh! take a day or two if you like,’ said the Enchanter; ‘but in the meantime, I am going to send for your daughter. Perhaps you will be able to induce her to be reasonable.’

So saying, he drew out his favourite whistle, and blew one ear-piercing note—whereupon the great lion, who had been dozing in the sunny courtyard, come bounding in on his soft, heavy feet. ‘Orion,’ said the Enchanter, ‘go and fetch me the Princess, and bring her here at once. Be gentle now!’

At these words Orion went off at a great pace, and was soon at the other end of the King’s gardens. Scattering the guards right and left, he cleared the wall at a bound, and seizing the sleeping Princess, he threw her on to his back, where he kept her by holding her robe in his teeth. Then he trotted gently back, and in less than five minutes stood in the great hall before the astonished King and Queen.

The Enchanter held his club close to the Princess’s charming little nose, whereupon she woke up and shrieked with terror at finding herself in a strange place with the detested Grumedan. Frivola, who had stood by, stiff with displeasure at the sight of the lovely Princess, now stepped forward, and with much pretended concern proposed to carry off Potentilla to her own apartments that she might enjoy the quiet she seemed to need. Really her one idea was to let the Princess be seen by as few people as possible; so, throwing a veil over her head, she led her away and locked her up securely. All this time Prince Narcissus, gloomy and despairing, was kept a prisoner by Melinette in her castle in the air, and in spite of all the splendour by which he was surrounded, and all the pleasures which he might have enjoyed, his one thought was to get back to Potentilla. The Fairy, however, left him there, promising to do her very best for him, and commanding all her swallows and butterflies to wait upon him and do his bidding. One day, as he paced sadly to and fro, he thought he heard a voice he knew calling to him, and sure enough there was the faithful Philomel, Potentilla’s favourite, who told him all that had passed, and how the

sleeping Princess had been carried off by the Lion to the great grief of all her four-footed and feathered subjects, and how, not knowing what to do, he had wandered about until he heard the swallows telling one another of the Prince who was in their airy castle and had come to see if it could be Narcissus. The Prince was more distracted than ever, and tried vainly to escape from the castle, by leaping from the roof into the clouds; but every time they caught him, and rolling softly up, brought him back to the place from which he started, so at last he gave up the attempt and waited with desperate patience for the return of Melinette. Meanwhile matters were advancing rapidly in the court of King Cloverleaf, for the Queen quite made up her mind that such a beauty as Potentilla must be got out of the way as quickly as possible. So she sent for the Enchanter secretly, and after making him promise that he would never turn herself and King Cloverleaf out of their kingdom, and that he would take Potentilla far away, so that never again might she set eyes upon her, she arranged the wedding for the next day but one.

You may imagine how Potentilla lamented her sad fate, and entreated to be spared. All the comfort she could get out of Frivola was, that if she preferred a cup of poison to a rich husband she would certainly provide her with one.

When, then, the fatal day came the unhappy Potentilla was led into the great hall between the King and Queen, the latter wild with envy at the murmurs of admiration which rose on all sides at the loveliness of the Princess. An instant later in came Grumedan by the opposite door. His hair stood on end, and he wore a huge bag-purse and a cravat tied in a bow, his mantle was made of a shower of silver coins with a lining of rose colour, and his delight in his own appearance knew no bounds. That any Princess could prefer a cup of poison to himself never for an instant occurred to him. Nevertheless, that was what did happen, for when Queen Frivola in jest held out the fatal cup to the Princess, she took it eagerly, crying:

‘Ah! beloved Narcissus, I come to thee!’ and was just raising it to her lips when the window of the great hall burst open, and the Fairy Melinette floated in upon a glowing sunset cloud, followed by the Prince himself:

All the court looked on in dazzled surprise, while Potentilla, catching sight of her lover, dropped the cup and ran joyfully to meet him.

The Enchanter’s first thought was to defend himself when he saw Melinette appear, but she slipped round his blind side, and catching him by the eyelashes dragged him off to the ceiling of the hall, where she held him kicking for a while just to give him a lesson, and then touching him with her wand she imprisoned him for a thousand years in a crystal ball which hung from the roof. ‘Let this teach you to mind what I tell you another time,’ she remarked severely. Then turning to the King and Queen, she begged them to proceed with the wedding, since she had provided a much more suitable bridegroom. She also deprived them of their kingdom, for they had really shown themselves unfit to manage it, and bestowed it upon the Prince and Princess, who, though they were unwilling to take it, had no choice but to obey the Fairy. However, they took care that the King and Queen were always supplied with everything they could wish for.

Prince Narcissus and Princess Potentilla lived long and happily, beloved by all their subjects. As for the Enchanter, I don’t believe he has been let out yet.

La Princesse Pimprenella et Le Prince Romarin.

PRINCE FEATHERHEAD AND THE PRINCESS CELANDINE

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Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen, who were the best creatures in the world, and so kind-hearted that they could not bear to see their subjects want for anything. The consequence was that they gradually gave away all their treasures, till they positively had nothing left to live upon; and this coming to the ears of their neighbour, King Bruin, he promptly raised a large army and marched into their country. The poor King, having no means of defending his kingdom, was forced to disguise himself with a false beard, and carrying his only son, the little Prince Featherhead, in his arms, and accompanied only by the Queen, to make the best of his way into the wild country. They were lucky enough to escape the soldiers of King Bruin, and at last, after unheard-of fatigues and adventures, they found themselves in a charming green valley, through which flowed a stream clear as crystal and overshadowed by beautiful trees. As they looked round them with delight, a voice said suddenly: ‘Fish, and see what you will catch.’ Now the King had always loved fishing, and never went anywhere without a fish-hook or two in his pocket, so he drew one out hastily, and the Queen lent him her girdle to fasten it to, and it had hardly touched the water before it caught a big fish, which made them an excellent meal—and not before they needed it, for they had found nothing until then but a few wild berries and roots. They thought that for the present they could not do better than stay in this delightful place, and the King set to work, and soon built a bower of branches to shelter them; and when it was finished the Queen was so charmed with it that she declared nothing was lacking to complete her happiness but a flock of sheep, which she and the little Prince might tend while the King fished. They soon found that the fish were not only abundant and easily caught, but also very beautiful, with glittering scales of every imaginable hue; and before long the King discovered that he could teach them to talk and whistle better than any parrot. Then he determined to carry some to

the nearest town and try to sell them; and as no one had ever before seen any like them the people flocked about him eagerly and bought all he had caught, so that presently not a house in the city was considered complete without a crystal bowl full of fish, and the King's customers were very particular about having them to match the rest of the furniture, and gave him a vast amount of trouble in choosing them. However, the money he obtained in this way enabled him to buy the Queen her flock of sheep, as well as many of the other things which go to make life pleasant, so that they never once regretted their lost kingdom. Now it happened that the Fairy of the Beech-Woods lived in the lovely valley to which chance had led the poor fugitives, and it was she who had, in pity for their forlorn condition, sent the King such good luck to his fishing, and generally taken them under her protection. This she was all the more inclined to do as she loved children, and little Prince Featherhead, who never cried and grew prettier day by day, quite won her heart. She made the acquaintance of the King and the Queen without at first letting them know that she was a fairy, and they soon took a great fancy to her, and even trusted her with the precious Prince, whom she carried off to her palace, where she regaled him with cakes and tarts and every other good thing. This was the way she chose of making him fond of her; but afterwards, as he grew older, she spared no pains in educating and training him as a prince should be trained. But unfortunately, in spite of all her care, he grew so vain and frivolous that he quitted his peaceful country life in disgust, and rushed eagerly after all the foolish gaieties of the neighbouring town, where his handsome face and charming manners speedily made him popular. The King and Queen deeply regretted this alteration in their son, but did not know how to mend matters, since the good old Fairy had made him so self-willed.

Just at this time the Fairy of the Beech-Woods received a visit from an old friend of hers called Saradine, who rushed into her house so breathless with rage that she could hardly speak.

'Dear, dear! what is the matter?' said the Fairy of the Beech-Woods soothingly.

'The matter!' cried Saradine. 'You shall soon hear all about it. You know that, not content with endowing Celandine, Princess of the Summer Islands, with everything she could desire to make her charming, I actually

took the trouble to bring her up myself; and now what does she do but come to me with more coaxings and caresses than usual to beg a favour. And what do you suppose this favour turns out to be—when I have been cajoled into promising to grant it? Nothing more nor less than a request that I will take back all my gifts—"since," says my young madam, "if I have the good fortune to please you, how am I to know that it is really I, myself? And that's how it will be all my life long, whenever I meet anybody. You see what a weariness my life will be to me under these circumstances, and yet I assure you I am not ungrateful to you for all your kindness!" I did all I could,' continued Saradine, 'to make her think better of it, but in vain; so after going through the usual ceremony for taking back my gifts, I'm come to you for a little peace and quietness. But, after all, I have not taken anything of consequence from this provoking Celandine. Nature had already made her so pretty, and given her such a ready wit of her own, that she will do perfectly well without me. However, I thought she deserved a little lesson, so to begin with I have whisked her off into the desert, and there left her!'

'What! all alone, and without any means of existence?' cried the kind-hearted old Fairy. 'You had better hand her over to me. I don't think so very badly of her after all. I'll just cure her vanity by making her love someone better than herself. Really, when I come to consider of it, I declare the little minx has shown more spirit and originality in the matter than one expects of a princess.'

Saradine willingly consented to this arrangement, and the old Fairy's first care was to smooth away all the difficulties which surrounded the Princess, and lead her by the mossy path overhung with trees to the bower of the King and Queen, who still pursued their peaceful life in the valley.

They were immensely surprised at her appearance, but her charming face, and the deplorably ragged condition to which the thorns and briers had reduced her once elegant attire, speedily won their compassion; they recognised her as a companion in misfortune, and the Queen welcomed her heartily, and begged her to share their simple repast. Celandine gracefully accepted their hospitality, and soon told them what had happened to her. The King was charmed with her spirit, while the Queen thought she had indeed been daring thus to go against the Fairy's wishes.

‘Since it has ended in my meeting you,’ said the Princess, ‘I cannot regret the step I have taken, and if you will let me stay with you, I shall be perfectly happy.’

The King and Queen were only too delighted to have this charming Princess to supply the place of Prince Featherhead, whom they saw but seldom, since the Fairy had provided him with a palace in the neighbouring town, where he lived in the greatest luxury, and did nothing but amuse himself from morning to night. So Celandine stayed, and helped the Queen to keep house, and very soon they loved her dearly. When the Fairy of the Beech-Woods came to them, they presented the Princess to her, and told her story, little thinking that the Fairy knew more about Celandine than they did. The old Fairy was equally delighted with her, and often invited her to visit her Leafy Palace, which was the most enchanting place that could be imagined, and full of treasures. Often she would say to the Princess, when showing her some wonderful thing:

‘This will do for a wedding gift some day.’ And Celandine could not help thinking that it was to her that the Fairy meant to give the two blue wax-torches which burned without ever getting smaller, or the diamond from which more diamonds were continually growing, or the boat that sailed under water, or whatever beautiful or wonderful thing they might happen to be looking at. It is true that she never said so positively, but she certainly allowed the Princess to believe it, because she thought a little disappointment would be good for her. But the person she really relied upon for curing Celandine of her vanity was Prince Featherhead. The old Fairy was not at all pleased with the way he had been going on for some time, but her heart was so soft towards him that she was unwilling to take him away from the pleasures he loved, except by offering him something better, which is not the most effectual mode of correction, though it is without doubt the most agreeable.

However, she did not even hint to the Princess that Featherhead was anything but absolutely perfect, and talked of him so much that when at last she announced that he was coming to visit her, Celandine made up her mind that this delightful Prince would be certain to fall in love with her at once, and was quite pleased at the idea. The old Fairy thought so too, but as this was not at all what she wished, she took care to throw such an enchantment over the Princess that she appeared to Featherhead quite ugly

and awkward, though to every one else she looked just as usual. So when he arrived at the Leafy Palace, more handsome and fascinating even than ever she had been led to expect, he hardly so much as glanced at the Princess, but bestowed all his attention upon the old Fairy, to whom he seemed to have a hundred things to say. The Princess was immensely astonished at his indifference, and put on a cold and offended air, which, however, he did not seem to observe. Then as a last resource she exerted all her wit and gaiety to amuse him, but with no better success, for he was of an age to be more attracted by beauty than by anything else, and though he responded politely enough, it was evident that his thoughts were elsewhere. Celandine was deeply mortified, since for her part the Prince pleased her very well, and for the first time she bitterly regretted the fairy gifts she had been anxious to get rid of. Prince Featherhead was almost equally puzzled, for he had heard nothing from the King and Queen but the praises of this charming Princess, and the fact that they had spoken of her as so very beautiful only confirmed his opinion that people who live in the country have no taste. He talked to them of his charming acquaintances in the town, the beauties he had admired, did admire, or thought he was going to admire, until Celandine, who heard it all, was ready to cry with vexation. The Fairy too was quite shocked at his conceit, and hit upon a plan for curing him of it. She sent to him by an unknown messenger a portrait of Princess Celandine as she really was, with this inscription: ‘All this beauty and sweetness, with a loving heart and a great kingdom, might have been yours but for your well-known fickleness.’

This message made a great impression upon the Prince, but not so much as the portrait. He positively could not tear his eyes away from it, and exclaimed aloud that never, never had he seen anything so lovely and so graceful. Then he began to think that it was too absurd that he, the fascinating Featherhead, should fall in love with a portrait; and, to drive away the recollections of its haunting eyes, he rushed back to the town; but somehow everything seemed changed. The beauties no longer pleased him, their witty speeches had ceased to amuse; and indeed, for their parts, they found the Prince far less amiable than of yore, and were not sorry when he declared that, after all, a country life suited him best, and went back to the Leafy Palace. Meanwhile, the Princess Celandine had been finding the time pass but slowly with the King and Queen, and was only too pleased

when Featherhead reappeared. She at once noticed the change in him, and was deeply curious to find the reason of it. Far from avoiding her, he now sought her company and seemed to take pleasure in talking to her, and yet the Princess did not for a moment flatter herself with the idea that he was in love with her, though it did not take her long to decide that he certainly loved someone. But one day the Princess, wandering sadly by the river, spied Prince Featherhead fast asleep in the shade of a tree, and stole nearer to enjoy the delight of gazing at his dear face unobserved. Judge of her astonishment when she saw that he was holding in his hand a portrait of herself! In vain did she puzzle over the apparent contradictoriness of his behaviour. Why did he cherish her portrait while he was so fatally indifferent to herself? At last she found an opportunity of asking him the name of the Princess whose picture he carried about with him always.

‘Alas! how can I tell you?’ replied he.

‘Why should you not?’ said the Princess timidly. ‘Surely there is nothing to prevent you.’

‘Nothing to prevent me!’ repeated he, ‘when my utmost efforts have failed to discover the lovely original. Should I be so sad if I could but find her? But I do not even know her name.’

More surprised than ever, the Princess asked to be allowed to see the portrait, and after examining it for a few minutes returned it, remarking shyly that at least the original had every cause to be satisfied with it.

‘That means that you consider it flattered,’ said the Prince severely. ‘Really, Celandine, I thought better of you, and should have expected you to be above such contemptible jealousy. But all women are alike!’

‘Indeed, I meant only that it was a good likeness,’ said the Princess meekly.

‘Then you know the original,’ cried the Prince, throwing himself on his knees beside her. ‘Pray tell me at once who it is, and don’t keep me in suspense!’

‘Oh! don’t you see that it is meant for me?’ cried Celandine.

The Prince sprang to his feet, hardly able to refrain from telling her that she must be blinded by vanity to suppose she resembled the lovely portrait even in the slightest degree; and after gazing at her for an instant with icy surprise, turned and left her without another word, and in a few hours quitted the Leafy Palace altogether.

Now the Princess was indeed unhappy, and could no longer bear to stay in a place where she had been so cruelly disdained. So, without even bidding farewell to the King and Queen, she left the valley behind her, and wandered sadly away, not caring whither. After walking until she was weary, she saw before her a tiny house, and turned her slow steps towards it. The nearer she approached the more miserable it appeared, and at length she saw a little old woman sitting upon the door-step, who said grimly:

‘Here comes one of these fine beggars who are too idle to do anything but run about the country!’

‘Alas! madam,’ said Celandine, with tears in her pretty eyes, ‘a sad fate forces me to ask you for shelter.’

‘Didn’t I tell you what it would be?’ growled the old hag. ‘From shelter we shall proceed to demand supper, and from supper money to take us on our way. Upon my word, if I could be sure of finding some one every day whose head was as soft as his heart, I wouldn’t wish for a more agreeable life myself! But I have worked hard to build my house and secure a morsel to eat, and I suppose you think that I am to give away everything to the first passer-by who chooses to ask for it. Not at all! I wager that a fine lady like you has more money than I have. I must search her, and see if it is not so,’ she added, hobbling towards Celandine with the aid of her stick.

‘Alas! madam,’ replied the Princess, ‘I only wish I had. I would give it to you with all the pleasure in life.’

‘But you are very smartly dressed for the kind of life you lead,’ continued the old woman.

‘What!’ cried the Princess, ‘do you think I am come to beg of you?’

‘I don’t know about that,’ answered she; ‘but at any rate you don’t seem to have come to bring me anything. But what is it that you do want? Shelter? Well, that does not cost much; but after that comes supper, and that I can’t hear of. Oh dear no! Why, at your age one is always ready to eat; and now you have been walking, and I suppose you are ravenous?’

‘Indeed no, madam,’ answered the poor Princess, ‘I am too sad to be hungry.’

‘Oh, well! if you will promise to go on being sad, you may stay for the night,’ said the old woman mockingly.

Thereupon she made the Princess sit down beside her, and began fingering her silken robe, while she muttered ‘Lace on top, lace underneath! This must have cost you a pretty penny! It would have been better to save enough to feed yourself, and not come begging to those who want all they have for themselves. Pray, what may you have paid for these fine clothes?’

‘Alas! madam,’ answered the Princess, ‘I did not buy them, and I know nothing about money.’

‘What do you know, if I may ask?’ said the old dame.

‘Not much; but indeed I am very unhappy,’ cried Celandine, bursting into tears, ‘and if my services are any good to you—’

‘Services!’ interrupted the hag crossly. ‘One has to pay for services, and I am not above doing my own work.’

‘Madam, I will serve you for nothing,’ said the poor Princess, whose spirits were sinking lower and lower. ‘I will do anything you please; all I wish is to live quietly in this lonely spot.’

‘Oh! I know you are only trying to take me in,’ answered she; ‘and if I do let you serve me, is it fitting that you should be so much better dressed I am? If I keep you, will you give me your clothes and wear some that I will provide you with? It is true that I am getting old and may want someone to take care of me some day.’

‘Oh! for pity’s sake, do what you please with my clothes,’ cried poor Celandine miserably.

And the old woman hobbled off with great alacrity, and fetched a little bundle containing a wretched dress, such as the Princess had never even seen before, and nimbly skipped round, helping her to put it on instead of her own rich robe, with many exclamations of:

‘Saints!—what a magnificent lining! And the width of it! It will make me four dresses at least. Why, child, I wonder you could walk under such a weight, and certainly in my house you would not have had room to turn round.’

So saying, she folded up the robe, and put it by with great care, while she remarked to Celandine:

‘That dress of mine certainly suits you to a marvel; be sure you take great care of it.’

When supper-time came she went into the house, declining all the Princess's offers of assistance, and shortly afterwards brought out a very small dish, saying:

'Now let us sup.'

Whereupon she handed Celandine a small piece of black bread and uncovered the dish, which contained two dried plums.

'We will have one between us,' continued the old dame; 'and as you are the visitor, you shall have the half which contains the stone; but be very careful that you don't swallow it, for I keep them against the winter, and you have no idea what a good fire they make. Now, you take my advice—which won't cost you anything—and remember that it is always more economical to buy fruit with stones on this account.'

Celandine, absorbed in her own sad thoughts, did not even hear this prudent counsel, and quite forgot to eat her share of the plum, which delighted the old woman, who put it by carefully for her breakfast, saying:

'I am very much pleased with you, and if you go on as you have begun, we shall do very well, and I can teach you many useful things which people don't generally know. For instance, look at my house! It is built entirely of the seeds of all the pears I have eaten in my life. Now, most people throw them away, and that only shows what a number of things are wasted for want of a little patience and ingenuity.'

But Celandine did not find it possible to be interested in this and similar pieces of advice. And the old woman soon sent her to bed, for fear the night air might give her an appetite. She passed a sleepless night; but in the morning the old dame remarked:

'I heard how well you slept. After such a night you cannot want any breakfast; so while I do my household tasks you had better stay in bed, since the more one sleeps the less one need eat; and as it is market-day I will go to town and buy a pennyworth of bread for the week's eating.'

And so she chattered on, but poor Celandine did not hear or heed her; she wandered out into the desolate country to think over her sad fate. However, the good Fairy of the Beech-Woods did not want her to be starved, so she sent her an unlooked for relief in the shape of a beautiful white cow, which followed her back to the tiny house. When the old woman saw it her joy knew no bounds.

‘Now we can have milk and cheese and butter!’ cried she. ‘Ah! how good milk is! What a pity it is so ruinously expensive!’ So they made a little shelter of branches for the beautiful creature which was quite gentle, and followed Celandine about like a dog when she took it out every day to graze. One morning as she sat by a little brook, thinking sadly, she suddenly saw a young stranger approaching, and got up quickly, intending to avoid him. But Prince Featherhead, for it was he, perceiving her at the same moment, rushed towards her with every demonstration of joy: for he had recognised her, not as the Celandine whom he had slighted, but as the lovely Princess whom he had sought vainly for so long. The fact was that the Fairy of the Beech-Woods, thinking she had been punished enough, had withdrawn the enchantment from her, and transferred it to Featherhead, thereby in an instant depriving him of the good looks which had done so much towards making him the fickle creature he was. Throwing himself down at the Princess’s feet, he implored her to stay, and at least speak to him, and she at last consented, but only because he seemed to wish it so very much. After that he came every day in the hope of meeting her again, and often expressed his delight at being with her. But one day, when he had been begging Celandine to love him, she confided to him that it was quite impossible, since her heart was already entirely occupied by another.

‘I have,’ said she, ‘the unhappiness of loving a Prince who is fickle, frivolous, proud, incapable of caring for anyone but himself, who has been spoilt by flattery, and, to crown all, who does not love me.’

‘But,’ cried Prince Featherhead, ‘surely you cannot care for so contemptible and worthless a creature as that.’

‘Alas! but I do care,’ answered the Princess, weeping.

‘But where can his eyes be,’ said the Prince, ‘that your beauty makes no impression upon him? As for me, since I have possessed your portrait I have wandered over the whole world to find you, and, now we have met, I see that you are ten times lovelier than I could have imagined, and I would give all I own to win your love.’

‘My portrait?’ cried Celandine with sudden interest. ‘Is it possible that Prince Featherhead can have parted with it?’

‘He would part with his life sooner, lovely Princess,’ answered he; ‘I can assure you of that, for I am Prince Featherhead.’

At the same moment the Fairy of the Beech-Woods took away the enchantment, and the happy Princess recognised her lover, now truly hers, for the trials they had both undergone had so changed and improved them that they were capable of a real love for each other. You may imagine how perfectly happy they were, and how much they had to hear and to tell. But at length it was time to go back to the little house, and as they went along Celandine remembered for the first time what a ragged old dress she was wearing, and what an odd appearance she must present. But the Prince declared that it became her vastly, and that he thought it most picturesque. When they reached the house the old woman received them very crossly.

‘I declare,’ said she, ‘that it’s perfectly true: wherever there is a girl you may be sure that a young man will appear before long! But don’t imagine that I’m going to have you here—not a bit of it, be off with you, my fine fellow!’

Prince Featherhead was inclined to be angry at this uncivil reception, but he was really too happy to care much, so he only demanded, on Celandine’s behalf, that the old dame should give her back her own attire, that she might go away suitably dressed.

This request roused her to fury, since she had counted upon the Princess’s fine robes to clothe her for the rest of her life, so that it was some time before the Prince could make himself heard to explain that he was willing to pay for them. The sight of a handful of gold pieces somewhat mollified her, however, and after making them both promise faithfully that on no consideration would they ask for the gold back again, she took the Princess into the house and grudgingly doled out to her just enough of her gay attire to make her presentable, while the rest she pretended to have lost. After this they found that they were very hungry, for one cannot live on love, any more than on air, and then the old woman’s lamentations were louder than before. ‘What!’ she cried, ‘feed people who were as happy as all that! Why, it was simply ruinous!’

But as the Prince began to look angry, she, with many sighs and mutterings, brought out a morsel of bread, a bowl of milk, and six plums, with which the lovers were well content: for as long as they could look at one another they really did not know what they were eating. It seemed as if they would go on for ever with their reminiscences, the Prince telling how he had wandered all over the world from beauty to beauty, always to be

disappointed when he found that no one resembled the portrait; the Princess wondering how it was he could have been so long with her and yet never have recognised her, and over and over again pardoning him for his cold and haughty behaviour to her.

‘For,’ she said, ‘you see, Featherhead, I love you, and love makes everything right! But we cannot stay here,’ she added; ‘what are we to do?’

The Prince thought they had better find their way to the Fairy of the Beech-Woods and put themselves once more under her protection, and they had hardly agreed upon this course when two little chariots wreathed with jasmine and honeysuckle suddenly appeared, and, stepping into them, they were whirled away to the Leafy Palace. Just before they lost sight of the little house they heard loud cries and lamentations from the miserly old dame, and, looking round, perceived that the beautiful cow was vanishing in spite of her frantic efforts to hold it fast. And they afterwards heard that she spent the rest of her life in trying to put the handful of gold the Prince had thrown to her into her money-bag. For the Fairy, as a punishment for her avarice, caused it to slip out again as fast as she dropped it in.

The Fairy of the Beech-Woods ran to welcome the Prince and Princess with open arms, only too delighted to find them so much improved that she could, with a clear conscience, begin to spoil them again. Very soon the Fairy Saradine also arrived, bringing the King and Queen with her. Princess Celandine implored her pardon, which she graciously gave; indeed the Princess was so charming she could refuse her nothing. She also restored to her the Summer Islands, and promised her protection in all things. The Fairy of the Beech-Woods then informed the King and Queen that their subjects had chased King Bruin from the throne, and were waiting to welcome them back again; but they at once abdicated in favour of Prince Featherhead, declaring that nothing could induce them to forsake their peaceful life, and the Fairies undertook to see the Prince and Princess established in their beautiful kingdoms. Their marriage took place the next day, and they lived happily ever afterwards, for Celandine was never vain and Featherhead was never fickle any more.

Le Prince Muguet et la Princesse Zaza.

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

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There was once upon a time a pig who lived with her three children on a large, comfortable, old-fashioned farmyard. The eldest of the little pigs was called Browny, the second Whitey, and the youngest and best looking Blacky. Now Browny was a very dirty little pig, and I am sorry to say spent most of his time rolling and wallowing about in the mud. He was never so happy as on a wet day, when the mud in the farmyard got soft, and thick, and slab. Then he would steal away from his mother's side, and finding the muddiest place in the yard, would roll about in it and thoroughly enjoy himself. His mother often found fault with him for this, and would shake her head sadly and say: 'Ah, Browny! some day you will be sorry that you did not obey your old mother.' But no words of advice or warning could cure Browny of his bad habits.

Whitey was quite a clever little pig, but she was greedy. She was always thinking of her food, and looking forward to her dinner; and when the farm girl was seen carrying the pails across the yard, she would rise up on her hind legs and dance and caper with excitement. As soon as the food was poured into the trough she jostled Blacky and Browny out of the way in her eagerness to get the best and biggest bits for herself. Her mother often scolded her for her selfishness, and told her that some day she would suffer for being so greedy and grabbing.

Blacky was a good, nice little pig, neither dirty nor greedy. He had nice dainty ways (for a pig), and his skin was always as smooth and shining as black satin. He was much cleverer than Browny and Whitey, and his mother's heart used to swell with pride when she heard the farmer's friends say to each other that some day the little black fellow would be a prize pig.

Now the time came when the mother pig felt old and feeble and near her end. One day she called the three little pigs round her and said:

'My children, I feel that I am growing odd and weak, and that I shall not live long. Before I die I should like to build a house for each of you, as

this dear old sty in which we have lived so happily will be given to a new family of pigs, and you will have to turn out. Now, Browny, what sort of a house would you like to have?'

'A house of mud,' replied Browny, looking longingly at a wet puddle in the corner of the yard.

'And you, Whitey?' said the mother pig in rather a sad voice, for she was disappointed that Browny had made so foolish a choice.

'A house of cabbage,' answered Whitey, with a mouth full, and scarcely raising her snout out of the trough in which she was grubbing for some potato-parings.

'Foolish, foolish child!' said the mother pig, looking quite distressed. 'And you, Blacky?' turning to her youngest son, 'what sort of a house shall I order for you?'

'A house of brick, please mother, as it will be warm in winter, and cool in summer, and safe all the year round.'

'That is a sensible little pig,' replied his mother, looking fondly at him. 'I will see that the three houses are got ready at once. And now one last piece of advice. You have heard me talk of our old enemy the fox. When he hears that I am dead, he is sure to try and get hold of you, to carry you off to his den. He is very sly and will no doubt disguise himself, and pretend to be a friend, but you must promise me not to let him enter your houses on any pretext whatever.'

And the little pigs readily promised, for they had always had a great fear of the fox, of whom they had heard many terrible tales. A short time afterwards the old pig died, and the little pigs went to live in their own houses.

Browny was quite delighted with his soft mud walls and with the clay floor, which soon looked like nothing but a big mud pie. But that was what Browny enjoyed, and he was as happy as possible, rolling about all day and making himself in such a mess. One day, as he was lying half asleep in the mud, he heard a soft knock at his door, and a gentle voice said:

'May I come in, Master Browny? I want to see your beautiful new house.'

'Who are you?' said Browny, starting up in great fright, for though the voice sounded gentle, he felt sure it was a feigned voice, and he feared it was the fox.

‘I am a friend come to call on you,’ answered the voice.

‘No, no,’ replied Browny, ‘I don’t believe you are a friend. You are the wicked fox, against whom our mother warned us. I won’t let you in.’

‘Oho! is that the way you answer me?’ said the fox, speaking very roughly in his natural voice. ‘We shall soon see who is master here,’ and with his paws he set to work and scraped a large hole in the soft mud walls. A moment later he had jumped through it, and catching Browny by the neck, flung him on his shoulders and trotted off with him to his den.

The next day, as Whitey was munching a few leaves of cabbage out of the corner of her house, the fox stole up to her door, determined to carry her off to join her brother in his den. He began speaking to her in the same feigned gentle voice in which he had spoken to Browny; but it frightened her very much when he said:

‘I am a friend come to visit you, and to have some of your good cabbage for my dinner.’

‘Please don’t touch it,’ cried Whitey in great distress. ‘The cabbages are the walls of my house, and if you eat them you will make a hole, and the wind and rain will come in and give me a cold. Do go away; I am sure you are not a friend, but our wicked enemy the fox.’ And poor Whitey began to whine and to whimper, and to wish that she had not been such a greedy little pig, and had chosen a more solid material than cabbages for her house. But it was too late now, and in another minute the fox had eaten his way through the cabbage walls, and had caught the trembling, shivering Whitey, and carried her off to his den.

The next day the fox started off for Blacky’s house, because he had made up his mind that he would get the three little pigs together in his den, and then kill them, and invite all his friends to a feast. But when he reached the brick house, he found that the door was bolted and barred, so in his sly manner he began, ‘Do let me in, dear Blacky. I have brought you a present of some eggs that I picked up in a farmyard on my way here.’

‘No, no, Mister Fox,’ replied Blacky, ‘I am not going to open my door to you. I know your cunning ways. You have carried off poor Browny and Whitey, but you are not going to get me.’

At this the fox was so angry that he dashed with all his force against the wall, and tried to knock it down. But it was too strong and well-built; and though the fox scraped and tore at the bricks with his paws he only

hurt himself, and at last he had to give it up, and limp away with his fore-paws all bleeding and sore.

‘Never mind!’ he cried angrily as he went off, ‘I’ll catch you another day, see if I don’t, and won’t I grind your bones to powder when I have got you in my den!’ and he snarled fiercely and showed his teeth.

Next day Blacky had to go into the neighbouring town to do some marketing and to buy a big kettle. As he was walking home with it slung over his shoulder, he heard a sound of steps stealthily creeping after him. For a moment his heart stood still with fear, and then a happy thought came to him. He had just reached the top of a hill, and could see his own little house nestling at the foot of it among the trees. In a moment he had snatched the lid off the kettle and had jumped in himself. Coiling himself round he lay quite snug in the bottom of the kettle, while with his fore-leg he managed to put the lid on, so that he was entirely hidden. With a little kick from the inside he started the kettle off, and down the hill it rolled full tilt; and when the fox came up, all that he saw was a large black kettle spinning over the ground at a great pace. Very much disappointed, he was just going to turn away, when he saw the kettle stop close to the little brick house, and in a moment later Blacky jumped out of it and escaped with the kettle into the house, when he barred and bolted the door, and put the shutter up over the window.

‘Oho!’ exclaimed the fox to himself, ‘you think you will escape me that way, do you? We shall soon see about that, my friend,’ and very quietly and stealthily he prowled round the house looking for some way to climb on to the roof.

In the meantime Blacky had filled the kettle with water, and having put it on the fire, sat down quietly waiting for it to boil. Just as the kettle was beginning to sing, and steam to come out of the spout, he heard a sound like a soft, muffled step, patter, patter, patter overhead, and the next moment the fox’s head and fore-paws were seen coming down the chimney. But Blacky very wisely had not put the lid on the kettle, and, with a yelp of pain, the fox fell into the boiling water, and before he could escape, Blacky had popped the lid on, and the fox was scalded to death.

As soon as he was sure that their wicked enemy was really dead, and could do them no further harm, Blacky started off to rescue Browny and Whitey. As he approached the den he heard piteous grunts and squeals

from his poor little brother and sister who lived in constant terror of the fox killing and eating them. But when they saw Blacky appear at the entrance to the den their joy knew no bounds. He quickly found a sharp stone and cut the cords by which they were tied to a stake in the ground, and then all three started off together for Blacky’s house, where they lived happily ever after; and Browny quite gave up rolling in the mud, and Whitey ceased to be greedy, for they never forgot how nearly these faults had brought them to an untimely end.

HEART OF ICE

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Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen who were foolish beyond all telling, but nevertheless they were vastly fond of one another. It is true that certain spiteful people were heard to say that this was only one proof the more of their exceeding foolishness, but of course you will understand that these were not their own courtiers, since, after all, they were a King and Queen, and up to this time all things had prospered with them. For in those days the one thing to be thought of in governing a kingdom was to keep well with all the Fairies and Enchanters, and on no account to stint them of the cakes, the ells of ribbon, and similar trifles which were their due, and, above all things, when there was a christening, to remember to invite every single one, good, bad, or indifferent, to the ceremony. Now, the foolish Queen had one little son who was just going to be christened, and for several months she had been hard at work preparing an enormous list of the names of those who were to be invited, but she quite forgot that it would take nearly as long to read it over as it had taken to write it out. So, when the moment of the christening arrived the King—to whom the task had been entrusted—had barely reached the end of the second page and his tongue was tripping with fatigue and haste as he repeated the usual formula: ‘I conjure and pray you, Fairy so-and-so’—or ‘Enchanter such-a-one’—‘to honour me with a visit, and graciously bestow your gifts upon my son.’

To make matters worse, word was brought to him that the Fairies asked on the first page had already arrived and were waiting impatiently in the Great Hall, and grumbling that nobody was there to receive them. Thereupon he gave up the list in despair and hurried to greet those whom he had succeeded in asking, imploring their goodwill so humbly that most of them were touched, and promised that they would do his son no harm. But there happened to be among them a Fairy from a far country about whom they knew nothing, though her name had been written on the first page of the list. This Fairy was annoyed that after having taken the trouble

to come so quickly, there had been no one to receive her, or help her to alight from the great ostrich on which she had travelled from her distant home, and now she began to mutter to herself in the most alarming way.

‘Oh! prate away,’ said she, ‘your son will never be anything to boast of. Say what you will, he will be nothing but a Mannikin—’

No doubt she would have gone on longer in this strain, and given the unhappy little Prince half-a-dozen undesirable gifts, if it had not been for the good Fairy Genesta, who held the kingdom under her special protection, and who luckily hurried in just in time to prevent further mischief. When she had by compliments and entreaties pacified the unknown Fairy, and persuaded her to say no more, she gave the King a hint that now was the time to distribute the presents, after which ceremony they all took their departure, excepting the Fairy Genesta, who then went to see the Queen, and said to her:

‘A nice mass you seem to have made of this business, madam. Why did you not condescend to consult me? But foolish people like you always think they can do without help or advice, and I observe that, in spite of all my goodness to you, you had not even the civility to invite me!’

‘Ah! dear madam,’ cried the King, throwing himself at her feet; ‘did I ever have time to get as far as your name? See where I put in this mark when I abandoned the hopeless undertaking which I had but just begun!’

‘There! there!’ said the Fairy, ‘I am not offended. I don’t allow myself to be put out by trifles like that with people I really am fond of. But now about your son: I have saved him from a great many disagreeable things, but you must let me take him away and take care of him, and you will not see him again until he is all covered with fur!’

At these mysterious words the King and Queen burst into tears, for they lived in such a hot climate themselves that how or why the Prince should come to be covered with fur they could not imagine, and thought it must portend some great misfortune to him.

However, Genesta told them not to disquiet themselves.

‘If I left him to you to bring up,’ said she, ‘you would be certain to make him as foolish as yourselves. I do not even intend to let him know that he is your son. As for you, you had better give your minds to governing your kingdom properly.’ So saying, she opened the window, and catching up the little Prince, cradle and all, she glided away in the air as if

she were skating upon ice, leaving the King and Queen in the greatest affliction. They consulted everyone who came near them as to what the Fairy could possibly have meant by saying that when they saw their son again he would be covered with fur. But nobody could offer any solution of the mystery, only they all seemed to agree that it must be something frightful, and the King and Queen made themselves more miserable than ever, and wandered about their palace in a way to make anyone pity them. Meantime the Fairy had carried off the little Prince to her own castle, and placed him under the care of a young peasant woman, whom she bewitched so as to make her think that this new baby was one of her own children. So the Prince grew up healthy and strong, leading the simple life of a young peasant, for the Fairy thought that he could have no better training; only as he grew older she kept him more and more with herself, that his mind might be cultivated and exercised as well as his body. But her care did not cease there: she resolved that he should be tried by hardships and disappointments and the knowledge of his fellowmen; for indeed she knew the Prince would need every advantage that she could give him, since, though he increased in years, he did not increase in height, but remained the tiniest of Princes. However, in spite of this he was exceedingly active and well formed, and altogether so handsome and agreeable that the smallness of his stature was of no real consequence. The Prince was perfectly aware that he was called by the ridiculous name of ‘Mannikin,’ but he consoled himself by vowing that, happen what might, he would make it illustrious.

In order to carry out her plans for his welfare the Fairy now began to send Prince Mannikin the most wonderful dreams of adventure by sea and land, and of these adventures he himself was always the hero. Sometimes he rescued a lovely Princess from some terrible danger, again he earned a kingdom by some brave deed, until at last he longed to go away and seek his fortune in a far country where his humble birth would not prevent his gaining honour and riches by his courage, and it was with a heart full of ambitious projects that he rode one day into a great city not far from the Fairy’s castle. As he had set out intending to hunt in the surrounding forest he was quite simply dressed, and carried only a bow and arrows and a light spear; but even thus arrayed he looked graceful and distinguished. As he entered the city he saw that the inhabitants were all racing with one accord

towards the market-place, and he also turned his horse in the same direction, curious to know what was going forward. When he reached the spot he found that certain foreigners of strange and outlandish appearance were about to make a proclamation to the assembled citizens, and he hastily pushed his way into the crowd until he was near enough to hear the words of the venerable old man who was their spokesman:

‘Let the whole world know that he who can reach the summit of the Ice Mountain shall receive as his reward, not only the incomparable Sabella, fairest of the fair, but also all the realms of which she is Queen!’ ‘Here,’ continued the old man after he had made this proclamation—‘here is the list of all those Princes who, struck by the beauty of the Princess, have perished in the attempt to win her; and here is the list of these who have just entered upon the high emprise.’

Prince Mannikin was seized with a violent desire to inscribe his name among the others, but the remembrance of his dependent position and his lack of wealth held him back. But while he hesitated the old man, with many respectful ceremonies, unveiled a portrait of the lovely Sabella, which was carried by some of the attendants, and after one glance at it the Prince delayed no longer, but, rushing forward, demanded permission to add his name to the list. When they saw his tiny stature anti simple attire the strangers looked at each other doubtfully, not knowing whether to accept or refuse him. But the Prince said haughtily:

‘Give me the paper that I may sign it,’ and they obeyed. What between admiration for the Princess and annoyance at the hesitation shown by her ambassadors the Prince was too much agitated to choose any other name than the one by which he was always known. But when, after all the grand titles of the other Princes, he simply wrote ‘Mannikin,’ the ambassadors broke into shouts of laughter.

‘Miserable wretches!’ cried the Prince; ‘but for the presence of that lovely portrait I would cut off your heads.’

But he suddenly remembered that, after all, it was a funny name, and that he had not yet had time to make it famous; so he was calm, and enquired the way to the Princess Sabella’s country.

Though his heart did not fail him in the least, still he felt there were many difficulties before him, and he resolved to set out at once, without even taking leave of the Fairy, for fear she might try to stop him.

Everybody in the town who knew him made great fun of the idea of Mannikin's undertaking such an expedition, and it even came to the ears of the foolish King and Queen, who laughed over it more than any of the others, without having an idea that the presumptuous Mannikin was their only son!

Meantime the Prince was travelling on, though the direction he had received for his journey were none of the clearest.

'Four hundred leagues north of Mount Caucasus you will receive your orders and instructions for the conquest of the Ice Mountain.'

Fine marching orders, those, for a man starting from a country near where Japan is nowadays!

However, he fared eastward, avoiding all towns, lest the people should laugh at his name, for, you see, he was not a very experienced traveller, and had not yet learned to enjoy a joke even if it were against himself. At night he slept in the woods, and at first he lived upon wild fruits; but the Fairy, who was keeping a benevolent eye upon him, thought that it would never do to let him be half-starved in that way, so she took to feeding him with all sorts of good things while he was asleep, and the Prince wondered very much that when he was awake he never felt hungry! True to her plan the Fairy sent him various adventures to prove his courage, and he came successfully through them all, only in his last fight with a furious monster rather like a tiger he had the ill luck to lose his horse. However, nothing daunted, he struggled on on foot, and at last reached a seaport. Here he found a boat sailing for the coast which he desired to reach, and, having just enough money to pay his passage, he went on board and they started. But after some days a fearful storm came on, which completely wrecked the little ship, and the Prince only saved his life by swimming a long, long way to the only land that was in sight, and which proved to be a desert island. Here he lived by fishing and hunting, always hoping that the good Fairy would presently rescue him. One day, as he was looking sadly out to sea, he became aware of a curious looking boat which was drifting slowly towards the shore, and which presently ran into a little creek and there stuck fast in the sand. Prince Mannikin rushed down eagerly to examine it, and saw with amazement that the masts and spars were all branched, and covered thickly with leaves until it looked like a little wood. Thinking from the stillness that there could be no one on board, the Prince pushed

aside the branches and sprang over the side, and found himself surrounded by the crew, who lay motionless as dead men and in a most deplorable condition. They, too, had become almost like trees, and were growing to the deck, or to the masts, or to the sides of the vessel, or to whatever they had happened to be touching when the enchantment fell upon them. Mannikin was struck with pity for their miserable plight, and set to work with might and main to release them. With the sharp point of one of his arrows he gently detached their hands and feet from the wood which held them fast, and carried them on shore, one after another, where he rubbed their rigid limbs, and bathed them with infusions of various herbs with such success, that, after a few days, they recovered perfectly and were as fit to manage a boat as ever. You may be sure that the good Fairy Genesta had something to do with this marvellous cure, and she also put it into the Prince's head to rub the boat itself with the same magic herbs, which cleared it entirely, and not before it was time, for, at the rate at which it was growing before, it would very soon have become a forest! The gratitude of the sailors was extreme, and they willingly promised to land the Prince upon any coast he pleased; but, when he questioned them about the extraordinary thing that had happened to them and to their ship, they could in no way explain it, except that they said that, as they were passing along a thickly wooded coast, a sudden gust of wind had reached them from the land and enveloped them in a dense cloud of dust, after which everything in the boat that was not metal had sprouted and blossomed, as the Prince had seen, and that they themselves had grown gradually numb and heavy, and had finally lost all consciousness. Prince Mannikin was deeply interested in this curious story, and collected a quantity of the dust from the bottom of the boat, which he carefully preserved, thinking that its strange property might one day stand him in good stead.

Then they joyfully left the desert island, and after a long and prosperous voyage over calm seas they at length came in sight of land, and resolved to go on shore, not only to take in a fresh stock of water and provisions, but also to find out, if possible, where they were and in what direction to proceed.

As they neared the coast they wondered if this could be another uninhabited land, for no human beings could be distinguished, and yet that something was stirring became evident, for in the dust-clouds that moved

near the ground small dark forms were dimly visible. These appeared to be assembling at the exact spot where they were preparing to run ashore, and what was their surprise to find they were nothing more nor less than large and beautiful spaniels, some mounted as sentries, others grouped in companies and regiments, all eagerly watching their disembarkation. When they found that Prince Mannikin, instead of saying, ‘Shoot them,’ as they had feared, said ‘Hi, good dog!’ in a thoroughly friendly and ingratiating way, they crowded round him with a great wagging of tails and giving of paws, and very soon made him understand that they wanted him to leave his men with the boat and follow them. The Prince was so curious to know more about them that he agreed willingly; so, after arranging with the sailors to wait for him fifteen days, and then, if he had not come back, to go on their way without him, he set out with his new friends. Their way lay inland, and Mannikin noticed with great surprise that the fields were well cultivated and that the carts and ploughs were drawn by horses or oxen, just as they might have been in any other country, and when they passed any village the cottages were trim and pretty, and an air of prosperity was everywhere. At one of the villages a dainty little repast was set before the Prince, and while he was eating, a chariot was brought, drawn by two splendid horses, which were driven with great skill by a large spaniel. In this carriage he continued his journey very comfortably, passing many similar equipages upon the road, and being always most courteously saluted by the spaniels who occupied them. At last they drove rapidly into a large town, which Prince Mannikin had no doubt was the capital of the kingdom. News of his approach had evidently been received, for all the inhabitants were at their doors and windows, and all the little spaniels had climbed upon the wall and gates to see him arrive. The Prince was delighted with the hearty welcome they gave him, and looked round him with the deepest interest. After passing through a few wide streets, well paved, and adorned with avenues of fine trees, they drove into the courtyard of a grand palace, which was full of spaniels who were evidently soldiers. ‘The King’s body-guard,’ thought the Prince to himself as he returned their salutations, and then the carriage stopped, and he was shown into the presence of the King, who lay upon a rich Persian carpet surrounded by several little spaniels, who were occupied in chasing away the flies lest they should disturb his Majesty. He was the most beautiful of

all spaniels, with a look of sadness in his large eyes, which, however, quite disappeared as he sprang up to welcome Prince Mannikin with every demonstration of delight; after which he made a sign to his courtiers, who came one by one to pay their respects to the visitor. The Prince thought that he would find himself puzzled as to how he should carry on a conversation, but as soon as he and the King were once more left alone, a Secretary of State was sent for, who wrote from his Majesty's dictation a most polite speech, in which he regretted much that they were unable to converse, except in writing, the language of dogs being difficult to understand. As for the writing, it had remained the same as the Prince's own.

Mannikin thereupon wrote a suitable reply, and then begged the King to satisfy his curiosity about all the strange things he had seen and heard since his landing. This appeared to awaken sad recollections in the King's mind, but he informed the Prince that he was called King Bayard, and that a Fairy, whose kingdom was next his own, had fallen violently in love with him, and had done all she could to persuade him to marry her; but that he could not do so as he himself was the devoted lover of the Queen of the Spice Islands. Finally, the Fairy, furious at the indifference with which her love was treated, had reduced him to the state in which the Prince found him, leaving him unchanged in mind, but deprived of the power of speech; and, not content with wreaking her vengeance upon the King alone, she had condemned all his subjects to a similar fate, saying:

'Bark, and run upon four feet, until the time comes when virtue shall be rewarded by love and fortune.'

Which, as the poor King remarked, was very much the same thing as if she had said, 'Remain a spaniel for ever and ever.'

Prince Mannikin was quite of the same opinion; nevertheless he said what we should all have said in the same circumstances:

'Your Majesty must have patience.'

He was indeed deeply sorry for poor King Bayard, and said all the consoling things he could think of, promising to aid him with all his might if there was anything to be done. In short they became firm friends, and the King proudly displayed to Mannikin the portrait of the Queen of the Spice Islands, and he quite agreed that it was worth while to go through anything for the sake of a creature so lovely. Prince Mannikin in his turn

told his own history, and the great undertaking upon which he had set out, and King Bayard was able to give him some valuable instructions as to which would be the best way for him to proceed, and then they went together to the place where the boat had been left. The sailors were delighted to see the Prince again, though they had known that he was safe, and when they had taken on board all the supplies which the King had sent for them, they started once more. The King and Prince parted with much regret, and the former insisted that Mannikin should take with him one of his own pages, named Mousta, who was charged to attend to him everywhere, and serve him faithfully, which he promised to do.

The wind being favourable they were soon out of hearing of the general howl of regret from the whole army, which had been given by order of the King, as a great compliment, and it was not long before the land was entirely lost to view. They met with no further adventures worth speaking of, and presently found themselves within two leagues of the harbour for which they were making. The Prince, however, thought it would suit him better to land where he was, so as to avoid the town, since he had no money left and was very doubtful as to what he should do next. So the sailors set him and Mousta on shore, and then went back sorrowfully to their ship, while the Prince and his attendant walked off in what looked to them the most promising direction. They soon reached a lovely green meadow on the border of a wood, which seemed to them so pleasant after their long voyage that they sat down to rest in the shade and amused themselves by watching the gambols and antics of a pretty tiny monkey in the trees close by. The Prince presently became so fascinated by it that he sprang up and tried to catch it, but it eluded his grasp and kept just out of arm’s reach, until it had made him promise to follow wherever it led him, and then it sprang upon his shoulder and whispered in his ear:

‘We have no money, my poor Mannikin, and we are altogether badly off, and at a loss to know what to do next.’

‘Yes, indeed,’ answered the Prince ruefully, ‘and I have nothing to give you, no sugar or biscuits, or anything that you like, my pretty one.’

‘Since you are so thoughtful for me, and so patient about your own affairs,’ said the little monkey, ‘I will show you the way to the Golden Rock, only you must leave Mousta to wait for you here.’

Prince Mannikin agreed willingly, and then the little monkey sprang from his shoulder to the nearest tree, and began to run through the wood from branch to branch, crying, ‘Follow me.’

This the Prince did not find quite so easy, but the little monkey waited for him and showed him the easiest places, until presently the wood grew thinner and they came out into a little clear grassy space at the foot of a mountain, in the midst of which stood a single rock, about ten feet high. When they were quite close to it the little monkey said:

‘This stone looks pretty hard, but give it a blow with your spear and let us see what will happen.’

So the Prince took his spear and gave the rock a vigorous dig, which split off several pieces, and showed that, though the surface was thinly coated with stone, inside it was one solid mass of pure gold.

Thereupon the little monkey said, laughing at his astonishment:

‘I make you a present of what you have broken off; take as much of it as you think proper.’

The Prince thanked her gratefully, and picked up one of the smallest of the lumps of gold; as he did so the little monkey was suddenly transformed into a tall and gracious lady, who said to him:

‘If you are always as kind and persevering and easily contented as you are now you may hope to accomplish the most difficult tasks; go on your way and have no fear that you will be troubled any more for lack of gold, for that little piece which you modestly chose shall never grow less, use it as much as you will. But that you may see the danger you have escaped by your moderation, come with me.’ So saying she led him back into the wood by a different path, and he saw that it was full of men and women; their faces were pale and haggard, and they ran hither and thither seeking madly upon the ground, or in the air, starting at every sound, pushing and trampling upon one another in their frantic eagerness to find the way to the Golden Rock.

‘You see how they toil,’ said the Fairy; ‘but it is all of no avail: they will end by dying of despair, as hundreds have done before them.’

As soon as they had got back to the place where they had left Mousta the Fairy disappeared, and the Prince and his faithful Squire, who had greeted him with every demonstration of joy, took the nearest way to the city. Here they stayed several days, while the Prince provided himself with

horses and attendants, and made many enquiries about the Princess Sabella, and the way to her kingdom, which was still so far away that he could hear but little, and that of the vaguest description, but when he presently reached Mount Caucasus it was quite a different matter. Here they seemed to talk of nothing but the Princess Sabella, and strangers from all parts of the world were travelling towards her father's Court.

The Prince heard plenty of assurances as to her beauty and her riches, but he also heard of the immense number of his rivals and their power. One brought an army at his back, another had vast treasures, a third was as handsome and accomplished as it was possible to be; while, as to poor Mannikin, he had nothing but his determination to succeed, his faithful spaniel, and his ridiculous name—which last was hardly likely to help him, but as he could not alter it he wisely determined not to think of it any more. After journeying for two whole months they came at last to Trelintin, the capital of the Princess Sabella's kingdom, and here he heard dismal stories about the Ice Mountain, and how none of those who had attempted to climb it had ever come back. He heard also the story of King Farda-Kinbras, Sabella's father. It appeared that he, being a rich and powerful monarch, had married a lovely Princess named Birbantine, and they were as happy as the day was long—so happy that as they were out sledging one day they were foolish enough to defy fate to spoil their happiness.

'We shall see about that,' grumbled an old hag who sat by the wayside blowing her fingers to keep them warm. The King thereupon was very angry, and wanted to punish the woman; but the Queen prevented him, saying:

'Alas! sire, do not let us make bad worse; no doubt this is a Fairy!'

'You are right there,' said the old woman, and immediately she stood up, and as they gazed at her in horror she grew gigantic and terrible, her staff turned to a fiery dragon with outstretched wings, her ragged cloak to a golden mantle, and her wooden shoes to two bundles of rockets. 'You are right there, and you will see what will come of your fine goings on, and remember the Fairy Gorgonzola!' So saying she mounted the dragon and flew off, the rockets shooting in all directions and leaving long trails of sparks.

In vain did Farda-Kinbras and Birbantine beg her to return, and endeavour by their humble apologies to pacify her; she never so much as looked at them, and was very soon out of sight, leaving them a prey to all kinds of dismal forebodings. Very soon after this the Queen had a little daughter, who was the most beautiful creature ever seen; all the Fairies of the North were invited to her christening, and warned against the malicious Gorgonzola. She also was invited, but she neither came to the banquet nor received her present; but as soon as all the others were seated at table, after bestowing their gifts upon the little Princess, she stole into the Palace, disguised as a black cat, and hid herself under the cradle until the nurses and the cradle-rockers had all turned their backs, and then she sprang out, and in an instant had stolen the little Princess's heart and made her escape, only being chased by a few dogs and scullions on her way across the courtyard. Once outside she mounted her chariot and flew straight away to the North Pole, where she shut up her stolen treasure on the summit of the Ice Mountain, and surrounded it with so many difficulties that she felt quite easy about its remaining there as long as the Princess lived, and then she went home, chuckling at her success. As to the other Fairies, they went home after the banquet without discovering that anything was amiss, and so the King and Queen were quite happy. Sabella grew prettier day by day. She learnt everything a Princess ought to know without the slightest trouble, and yet something always seemed lacking to make her perfectly charming. She had an exquisite voice, but whether her songs were grave or gay it did not matter, she did not seem to know what they meant; and everyone who heard her said:

'She certainly sings perfectly; but there is no tenderness, no heart in her voice.' Poor Sabella! how could there be when her heart was far away on the Ice Mountains? And it was just the same with all the other things that she did. As time went on, in spite of the admiration of the whole Court and the blind fondness of the King and Queen, it became more and more evident that something was fatally wrong: for those who love no one cannot long be loved; and at last the King called a general assembly, and invited the Fairies to attend, that they might, if possible, find out what was the matter. After explaining their grief as well as he could, he ended by begging them to see the Princess for themselves. 'It is certain,' said he,

‘that something is wrong—what it is I don’t know how to tell you, but in some way your work is imperfect.’

They all assured him that, so far as they knew, everything had been done for the Princess, and they had forgotten nothing that they could bestow on so good a neighbour as the King had been to them. After this they went to see Sabella; but they had no sooner entered her presence than they cried out with one accord:

‘Oh! horror!—she has no heart!’

On hearing this frightful announcement, the King and Queen gave a cry of despair, and entreated the Fairies to find some remedy for such an unheard-of misfortune. Thereupon the eldest Fairy consulted her Book of Magic, which she always carried about with her, hung to her girdle by a thick silver chain, and there she found out at once that it was Gorgonzola who had stolen the Princess’s heart, and also discovered what the wicked old Fairy had done with it.

‘What shall we do? What shall we do?’ cried the King and Queen in one breath.

‘You must certainly suffer much annoyance from seeing and loving Sabella, who is nothing but a beautiful image,’ replied the Fairy, ‘and this must go on for a long time; but I think I see that, in the end, she will once more regain her heart. My advice is that you shall at once cause her portrait to be sent all over the world, and promise her hand and all her possessions to the Prince who is successful in reaching her heart. Her beauty alone is sufficient to engage all the Princes of the world in the quest.’

This was accordingly done, and Prince Mannikin heard that already five hundred Princes had perished in the snow and ice, not to mention their squires and pages, and that more continued to arrive daily, eager to try their fortune. After some consideration he determined to present himself at Court; but his arrival made no stir, as his retinue was as inconsiderable as his stature, and the splendour of his rivals was great enough to throw even Farda-Kinbras himself into the shade. However, he paid his respects to the King very gracefully, and asked permission to kiss the hand of the Princess in the usual manner; but when he said he was called ‘Mannikin,’ the King could hardly repress a smile, and the Princes who stood by openly shouted with laughter.

Turning to the King, Prince Mannikin said with great dignity:

‘Pray laugh if it pleases your Majesty, I am glad that it is in my power to afford you any amusement; but I am not a plaything for these gentlemen, and I must beg them to dismiss any ideas of that kind from their minds at once,’ and with that he turned upon the one who had laughed the loudest and proudly challenged him to a single combat. This Prince, who was called Fadasse, accepted the challenge very scornfully, mocking at Mannikin, whom he felt sure had no chance against himself; but the meeting was arranged for the next day. When Prince Mannikin quitted the King’s presence he was conducted to the audience hall of the Princess Sabella. The sight of so much beauty and magnificence almost took his breath away for an instant, but, recovering himself with an effort, he said:

‘Lovely Princess, irresistibly drawn by the beauty of your portrait, I come from the other end of the world to offer my services to you. My devotion knows no bounds, but my absurd name has already involved me in a quarrel with one of your courtiers. Tomorrow I am to fight this ugly, overgrown Prince, and I beg you to honour the combat with your presence, and prove to the world that there is nothing in a name, and that you deign to accept Mannikin as your knight.’

When it came to this the Princess could not help being amused, for, though she had no heart, she was not without humour. However, she answered graciously that she accepted with pleasure, which encouraged the Prince to entreat further that she would not show any favour to his adversary.

‘Alas!’ said she, ‘I favour none of these foolish people, who weary me with their sentiment and their folly. I do very well as I am, and yet from one year’s end to another they talk of nothing but delivering me from some imaginary affliction. Not a word do I understand of all their pratings about love, and who knows what dull things besides, which, I declare to you, I cannot even remember.’

Mannikin was quick enough to gather from this speech that to amuse and interest the Princess would be a far surer way of gaining her favour than to add himself to the list of those who continually teased her about that mysterious thing called ‘love’ which she was so incapable of comprehending. So he began to talk of his rivals, and found in each of

them something to make merry over, in which diversion the Princess joined him heartily, and so well did he succeed in his attempt to amuse her that before very long she declared that of all the people at Court he was the one to whom she preferred to talk.

The following day, at the time appointed for the combat, when the King, the Queen, and the Princess had taken their places, and the whole Court and the whole town were assembled to see the show, Prince Fadasse rode into the lists magnificently armed and accoutred, followed by twenty-four squires and a hundred men-at-arms, each one leading, a splendid horse, while Prince Mannikin entered from the other side armed only with his spear and followed by the faithful Mousta. The contrast between the two champions was so great that there was a shout of laughter from the whole assembly; but when at the sounding of a trumpet the combatants rushed upon each other, and Mannikin, eluding the blow aimed at him, succeeded in thrusting Prince Fadasse from his horse and pinning him to the sand with his spear, it changed to a murmur of admiration.

So soon as he had him at his mercy, however, Mannikin, turning to the Princess, assured her that he had no desire to kill anyone who called himself her courtier, and then he bade the furious and humiliated Fadasse rise and thank the Princess to whom he owed his life. Then, amid the sounding of the trumpets and the shoutings of the people, he and Mousta retired gravely from the lists.

The King soon sent for him to congratulate him upon his success, and to offer him a lodging in the Palace, which he joyfully accepted. While the Princess expressed a wish to have Mousta brought to her, and, when the Prince sent for him, she was so delighted with his courtly manners and his marvellous intelligence that she entreated Mannikin to give him to her for her own. The Prince consented with alacrity, not only out of politeness, but because he foresaw that to have a faithful friend always near the Princess might some day be of great service to him. All these events made Prince Mannikin a person of much more consequence at the Court. Very soon after, there arrived upon the frontier the Ambassador of a very powerful King, who sent to Farda-Kinbras the following letter, at the same time demanding permission to enter the capital in state to receive the answer:

‘I, Brandatimor, to Farda-Kinbras send greeting. If I had before this time seen the portrait of your beautiful daughter Sabella I should not have

permitted all these adventurers and petty Princes to be dancing attendance and getting themselves frozen with the absurd idea of meriting her hand. For myself I am not afraid of any rivals, and, now I have declared my intention of marrying your daughter, no doubt they will at once withdraw their pretensions. My Ambassador has orders, therefore, to make arrangements for the Princess to come and be married to me without delay —for I attach no importance at all to the farrago of nonsense which you have caused to be published all over the world about this Ice Mountain. If the Princess really has no heart, be assured that I shall not concern myself about it, since, if anybody can help her to discover one, it is myself. My worthy father-in-law, farewell!'

The reading of this letter embarrassed and displeased Farda-Kinbras and Birbantine immensely, while the Princess was furious at the insolence of the demand. They all three resolved that its contents must be kept a profound secret until they could decide what reply should be sent, but Mousta contrived to send word of all that had passed to Prince Mannikin. He was naturally alarmed and indignant, and, after thinking it over a little, he begged an audience of the Princess, and led the conversation so cunningly up to the subject that was uppermost in her thoughts, as well as his own, that she presently told him all about the matter and asked his advice as to what it would be best to do. This was exactly what he had not been able to decide for himself; however, he replied that he should advise her to gain a little time by promising her answer after the grand entry of the Ambassador, and this was accordingly done.

The Ambassador did not at all like being put off after that fashion, but he was obliged to be content, and only said very arrogantly that so soon as his equipages arrived, as he expected they would do very shortly, he would give all the people of the city, and the stranger Princes with whom it was inundated, an idea of the power and the magnificence of his master. Mannikin, in despair, resolved that he would for once beg the assistance of the kind Fairy Genesta. He often thought of her and always with gratitude, but from the moment of his setting out he had determined to seek her aid only on the greatest occasions. That very night, when he had fallen asleep quite worn out with thinking over all the difficulties of the situation, he dreamed that the Fairy stood beside him, and said:

‘Mannikin, you have done very well so far; continue to please me and you shall always find good friends when you need them most. As for this affair with the Ambassador, you can assure Sabella that she may look forward tranquilly to his triumphal entry, since it will all turn out well for her in the end.’

The Prince tried to throw himself at her feet to thank her, but woke to find it was all a dream; nevertheless he took fresh courage, and went next day to see the Princess, to whom he gave many mysterious assurances that all would yet be well. He even went so far as to ask her if she would not be very grateful to anyone who would rid her of the insolent Brandatimor. To which she replied that her gratitude would know no bounds. Then he wanted to know what would be her best wish for the person who was lucky enough to accomplish it. To which she said that she would wish them to be as insensible to the folly called ‘love’ as she was herself!

This was indeed a crushing speech to make to such a devoted lover as Prince Mannikin, but he concealed the pain it caused him with great courage.

And now the Ambassador sent to say that on the very next day he would come in state to receive his answer, and from the earliest dawn the inhabitants were astir, to secure the best places for the grand sight; but the good Fairy Genesta was providing them an amount of amusement they were far from expecting, for she so enchanted the eyes of all the spectators that when the Ambassador’s gorgeous procession appeared, the splendid uniforms seemed to them miserable rags that a beggar would have been ashamed to wear, the prancing horses appeared as wretched skeletons hardly able to drag one leg after the other, while their trappings, which really sparkled with gold and jewels, looked like old sheepskins that would not have been good enough for a plough horse. The pages resembled the ugliest sweeps. The trumpets gave no more sound than whistles made of onion-stalks, or combs wrapped in paper; while the train of fifty carriages looked no better than fifty donkey carts. In the last of these sat the Ambassador with the haughty and scornful air which he considered becoming in the representative of so powerful a monarch: for this was the crowning point of the absurdity of the whole procession, that all who took part in it wore the expression of vanity and self-satisfaction and pride in

their own appearance and all their surroundings which they believed their splendour amply justified.

The laughter and howls of derision from the whole crowd rose ever louder and louder as the extraordinary cortege advanced, and at last reached the ears of the King as he waited in the audience hall, and before the procession reached the palace he had been informed of its nature, and, supposing that it must be intended as an insult, he ordered the gates to be closed. You may imagine the fury of the Ambassador when, after all his pomp and pride, the King absolutely and unaccountably refused to receive him. He raved wildly both against King and people, and the cortege retired in great confusion, jeered at and pelted with stones and mud by the enraged crowd. It is needless to say that he left the country as fast as horses could carry him, but not before he had declared war, with the most terrible menaces, threatening to devastate the country with fire and sword.

Some days after this disastrous embassy King Bayard sent couriers to Prince Mannikin with a most friendly letter, offering his services in any difficulty, and enquiring with the deepest interest how he fared.

Mannikin at once replied, relating all that had happened since they parted, not forgetting to mention the event which had just involved Farda-Kinbras and Brandatimor in this deadly quarrel, and he ended by entreating his faithful friend to despatch a few thousands of his veteran spaniels to his assistance.

Neither the King, the Queen, nor the Princess could in the least understand the amazing conduct of Brandatimor’s Ambassador; nevertheless the preparations for the war went forward briskly and all the Princes who had not gone on towards the Ice Mountain offered their services, at the same time demanding all the best appointments in the King’s army. Mannikin was one of the first to volunteer, but he only asked to go as aide-de-camp to the Commander-in chief, who was a gallant soldier and celebrated for his victories. As soon as the army could be got together it was marched to the frontier, where it met the opposing force headed by Brandatimor himself, who was full of fury, determined to avenge the insult to his Ambassador and to possess himself of the Princess Sabella. All the army of Farda-Kinbras could do, being so heavily outnumbered, was to act upon the defensive, and before long Mannikin won the esteem of the officers for his ability, and of the soldiers for his

courage, and care for their welfare, and in all the skirmishes which he conducted he had the good fortune to vanquish the enemy.

At last Brandatimor engaged the whole army in a terrific conflict, and though the troops of Farda-Kinbras fought with desperate courage, their general was killed, and they were defeated and forced to retreat with immense loss. Mannikin did wonders, and half-a-dozen times turned the retreating forces and beat back the enemy; and he afterwards collected troops enough to keep them in check until, the severe winter setting in, put an end to hostilities for a while.

He then returned to the Court, where consternation reigned. The King was in despair at the death of his trusty general, and ended by imploring Mannikin to take the command of the army, and his counsel was followed in all the affairs of the Court. He followed up his former plan of amusing the Princess, and on no account reminding her of that tedious thing called ‘love,’ so that she was always glad to see him, and the winter slipped by gaily for both of them.

The Prince was all the while secretly making plans for the next campaign; he received private intelligence of the arrival of a strong reinforcement of Spaniels, to whom he sent orders to post themselves along the frontier without attracting attention, and as soon as he possibly could he held a consultation with their Commander, who was an old and experienced warrior. Following his advice, he decided to have a pitched battle as soon as the enemy advanced, and this Brandatimor lost not a moment in doing, as he was perfectly persuaded that he was now going to make an end of the war and utterly vanquish Farda-Kinbras. But no sooner had he given the order to charge than the Spaniels, who had mingled with his troops unperceived, leaped each upon the horse nearest to him, and not only threw the whole squadron into confusion by the terror they caused, but, springing at the throats of the riders, unhorsed many of them by the suddenness of their attack; then turning the horses to the rear, they spread consternation everywhere, and made it easy for Prince Mannikin to gain a complete victory. He met Brandatimor in single combat, and succeeded in taking him prisoner; but he did not live to reach the Court, to which Mannikin had sent him: his pride killed him at the thought of appearing before Sabella under these altered circumstances. In the meantime Prince Fadasse and all the others who had remained behind were setting out with

all speed for the conquest of the Ice Mountain, being afraid that Prince Mannikin might prove as successful in that as he seemed to be in everything else, and when Mannikin returned he heard of it with great annoyance. True he had been serving the Princess, but she only admired and praised him for his gallant deeds, and seemed no whit nearer bestowing on him the love he so ardently desired, and all the comfort Mousta could give him on the subject was that at least she loved no one else, and with that he had to content himself. But he determined that, come what might, he would delay no longer, but attempt the great undertaking for which he had come so far. When he went to take leave of the King and Queen they entreated him not to go, as they had just heard that Prince Fadasse, and all who accompanied him, had perished in the snow; but he persisted in his resolve. As for Sabella, she gave him her hand to kiss with precisely the same gracious indifference as she had given it to him the first time they met. It happened that this farewell took place before the whole Court, and so great a favourite had Prince Mannikin become that they were all indignant at the coldness with which the Princess treated him.

Finally the King said to him:

‘Prince, you have constantly refilled all the gifts which, in my gratitude for your invaluable services, I have offered to you, but I wish the Princess to present you with her cloak of marten’s fur, and that I hope you will not reject!’ Now this was a splendid fur mantle which the Princess was very fond of wearing, not so much because she felt cold, as that its richness set off to perfection the delicate tints of her complexion and the brilliant gold of her hair. However, she took it off, and with graceful politeness begged Prince Mannikin to accept it, which you may be sure he was charmed to do, and, taking only this and a little bundle of all kinds of wood, and accompanied only by two spaniels out of the fifty who had stayed with him when the war was ended, he set forth, receiving many tokens of love and favour from the people in every town he passed through. At the last little village he left his horse behind him, to begin his toilful march through the snow, which extended, blank and terrible, in every direction as far as the eye could see. Here he had appointed to meet the other forty-eight spaniels, who received him joyfully, and assured him that, happen what might, they would follow and serve him faithfully. And so they started, full of heart and hope. At first there was a slight track,

difficult, but not impossible to follow; but this was soon lost, and the Pole Star was their only guide. When the time came to call a halt, the Prince, who had after much consideration decided on his plan of action, caused a few twigs from the faggot he had brought with him to be planted in the snow, and then he sprinkled over them a pinch of the magic powder he had collected from the enchanted boat. To his great joy they instantly began to sprout and grow, and in a marvellously short time the camp was surrounded by a perfect grove of trees of all sorts, which blossomed and bore ripe fruit, so that all their wants were easily supplied, and they were able to make huge fires to warm themselves. The Prince then sent out several spaniels to reconnoitre, and they had the good luck to discover a horse laden with provisions stuck fast in the snow. They at once fetched their comrades, and brought the spoil triumphantly into the camp, and, as it consisted principally of biscuits, not a spaniel among them went supperless to sleep. In this way they journeyed by day and encamped safely at night, always remembering to take on a few branches to provide them with food and shelter. They passed by the way armies of those who had set out upon the perilous enterprise, who stood frozen stiffly, without sense or motion; but Prince Mannikin strictly forbade that any attempt should be made to thaw them. So they went on and on for more than three months, and day by day the Ice Mountain, which they had seen for a long time, grew clearer, until at last they stood close to it, and shuddered at its height and steepness. But by patience and perseverance they crept up foot by foot, aided by their fires of magic wood, without which they must have perished in the intense cold, until presently they stood at the gates of the magnificent Ice Palace which crowned the mountain, where, in deadly silence and icy sleep, lay the heart of Sabella. Now the difficulty became immense, for if they maintained enough heat to keep themselves alive they were in danger every moment of melting the blocks of solid ice of which the palace was entirely built, and bringing the whole structure down upon their heads; but cautiously and quickly they traversed courtyards and halls, until they found themselves at the foot of a vast throne, where, upon a cushion of snow, lay an enormous and brilliantly sparkling diamond, which contained the heart of the lovely Princess Sabella. Upon the lowest step of the throne was inscribed in icy letters, ‘Whosoever thou art who by

courage and virtue canst win the heart of Sabella enjoy peacefully the good fortune which thou hast richly deserved.'

Prince Mannikin bounded forward, and had just strength left to grasp the precious diamond which contained all he coveted in the world before he fell insensible upon the snowy cushion. But his good spaniels lost no time in rushing to the rescue, and between them they bore him hastily from the hall, and not a moment too soon, for all around them they heard the clang of the falling blocks of ice as the Fairy Palace slowly collapsed under the unwonted heat. Not until they reached the foot of the mountain did they pause to restore the Prince to consciousness, and then his joy to find himself the possessor of Sabella's heart knew no bounds.

With all speed they began to retrace their steps, but this time the happy Prince could not bear the sight of his defeated and disappointed rivals, whose frozen forms lined his triumphant way. He gave orders to his spaniels to spare no pains to restore them to life, and so successful were they that day by day his train increased, so that by the time he got back to the little village where he had left his horse he was escorted by five hundred sovereign Princes, and knights and squires without number, and he was so courteous and unassuming that they all followed him willingly, anxious to do him honour. But then he was so happy and blissful himself that he found it easy to be at peace with all the world. It was not long before he met the faithful Mousta, who was coming at the top of his speed hoping to meet the Prince, that he might tell him of the sudden and wonderful change that had come over the Princess, who had become gentle and thoughtful and had talked to him of nothing but Prince Mannikin, of the hardships she feared he might be suffering, and of her anxiety for him, and all this with a hundred fonder expressions which put the finishing stroke to the Prince's delight. Then came a courier bearing the congratulations of the King and Queen, who had just heard of his successful return, and there was even a graceful compliment from Sabella herself. The Prince sent Mousta back to her, and he was welcomed with joy, for was he not her lover's present?

At last the travellers reached the capital, and were received with regal magnificence. Farda-Kinbras and Birbantine embraced Prince Mannikin, declaring that they regarded him as their heir and the future husband of the Princess, to which he replied that they did him too much honour. And then

he was admitted into the presence of the Princess, who for the first time in her life blushed as he kissed her hand, and could not find a word to say. But the Prince, throwing himself on his knees beside her, held out the splendid diamond, saying:

‘Madam, this treasure is yours, since none of the dangers and difficulties I have gone through have been sufficient to make me deserve it.’

‘Ah! Prince,’ said she, ‘if I take it, it is only that I may give it back to you, since truly it belongs to you already.’

At this moment in came the King and Queen, and interrupted them by asking all the questions imaginable, and not infrequently the same over and over again. It seems that there is always one thing that is sure to be said about an event by everybody, and Prince Mannikin found that the question which he was asked by more than a thousand people on this particular occasion was:

‘And didn’t you find it very cold?’

The King had come to request Prince Mannikin and the Princess to follow him to the Council Chamber, which they did, not knowing that he meant to present the Prince to all the nobles assembled there as his son-in-law and successor. But when Mannikin perceived his intention, he begged permission to speak first, and told his whole story, even to the fact that he believed himself to be a peasant’s son. Scarcely had he finished speaking when the sky grew black, the thunder growled, and the lightning flashed, and in the blaze of light the good Fairy Genesta suddenly appeared. Turning to Prince Mannikin, she said:

‘I am satisfied with you, since you have shown not only courage but a good heart.’ Then she addressed King Farda-Kinbras, and informed him of the real history of the Prince, and how she had determined to give him the education she knew would be best for a man who was to command others. ‘You have already found the advantage of having a faithful friend,’ she added to the Prince ‘and now you will have the pleasure of seeing King Bayard and his subjects regain their natural forms as a reward for his kindness to you.’

Just then arrived a chariot drawn by eagles, which proved to contain the foolish King and Queen, who embraced their long-lost son with great joy, and were greatly struck with the fact that they did indeed find him

covered with fur! While they were caressing Sabella and wringing her hands (which is a favourite form of endearment with foolish people) chariots were seen approaching from all points of the compass, containing numbers of Fairies.

‘Sire,’ said Genesta to Farda-Kinbras, ‘I have taken the liberty of appointing your Court as a meeting-place for all the Fairies who could spare the time to come; and I hope you can arrange to hold the great ball, which we have once in a hundred years, on this occasion.’

The King having suitably acknowledged the honour done him, was next reconciled to Gorgonzola, and they two presently opened the ball together. The Fairy Marsontine restored their natural forms to King Bayard and all his subjects, and he appeared once more as handsome a king as you could wish to see. One of the Fairies immediately despatched her chariot for the Queen of the Spice Islands, and their wedding took place at the same time as that of Prince Mannikin and the lovely and gracious Sabella. They lived happily ever afterwards, and their vast kingdoms were presently divided between their children.

The Prince, out of grateful remembrance of the Princess Sabella’s first gift to him bestowed the right of bearing her name upon the most beautiful of the martens, and that is why they are called sables to this day.

Comte de Caylus.

THE ENCHANTED RING

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Once upon a time there lived a young man named Rosimond, who was as good and handsome as his elder brother Bramintho was ugly and wicked. Their mother detested her eldest son, and had only eyes for the youngest. This excited Bramintho's jealousy, and he invented a horrible story in order to ruin his brother. He told his father that Rosimond was in the habit of visiting a neighbour who was an enemy of the family, and betraying to him all that went on in the house, and was plotting with him to poison their father.

The father flew into a rage, and flogged his son till the blood came. Then he threw him into prison and kept him for three days without food, and after that he turned him out of the house, and threatened to kill him if he ever came back. The mother was miserable, and did nothing but weep, but she dared not say anything.

The youth left his home with tears in his eyes, not knowing where to go, and wandered about for many hours till he came to a thick wood. Night overtook him at the foot of a great rock, and he fell asleep on a bank of moss, lulled by the music of a little brook.

It was dawn when he woke, and he saw before him a beautiful woman seated on a grey horse, with trappings of gold, who looked as if she were preparing for the hunt.

'Have you seen a stag and some deerhounds go by?' she asked.

'No, madam,' he replied.

Then she added, 'You look unhappy; is there anything the matter? Take this ring, which will make you the happiest and most powerful of men, provided you never make a bad use of it. If you turn the diamond inside, you will become invisible. If you turn it outside, you will become visible again. If you place it on your little finger, you will take the shape of the King's son, followed by a splendid court. If you put it on your fourth finger, you will take your own shape.'

Then the young man understood that it was a Fairy who was speaking to him, and when she had finished she plunged into the woods. The youth was very impatient to try the ring, and returned home immediately. He found that the Fairy had spoken the truth, and that he could see and hear everything, while he himself was unseen. It lay with him to revenge himself, if he chose, on his brother, without the slightest danger to himself, and he told no one but his mother of all the strange things that had befallen him. He afterwards put the enchanted ring on his little finger, and appeared as the King's son, followed by a hundred fine horses, and a guard of officers all richly dressed.

His father was much surprised to see the King's son in his quiet little house, and he felt rather embarrassed, not knowing what was the proper way to behave on such a grand occasion. Then Rosimond asked him how many sons he had.

'Two,' replied he.

'I wish to see them,' said Rosimond. 'Send for them at once. I desire to take them both to Court, in order to make their fortunes.'

The father hesitated, then answered: 'Here is the eldest, whom I have the honour to present to your Highness.'

'But where is the youngest? I wish to see him too,' persisted Rosimond.

'He is not here,' said the father. 'I had to punish him for a fault, and he has run away.'

Then Rosimond replied, 'You should have shown him what was right, but not have punished him. However, let the elder come with me, and as for you, follow these two guards, who will escort you to a place that I will point out to them.'

Then the two guards led off the father, and the Fairy of whom you have heard found him in the forest, and beat him with a golden birch rod, and cast him into a cave that was very deep and dark, where he lay enchanted. 'Lie there,' she said, 'till your son comes to take you out again.'

Meanwhile the son went to the King's palace, and arrived just when the real prince was absent. He had sailed away to make war on a distant island, but the winds had been contrary, and he had been shipwrecked on unknown shores, and taken captive by a savage people. Rosimond made his appearance at Court in the character of the Prince, whom everyone wept

for as lost, and told them that he had been rescued when at the point of death by some merchants. His return was the signal for great public rejoicings, and the King was so overcome that he became quite speechless, and did nothing but embrace his son. The Queen was even more delighted, and fetes were ordered over the whole kingdom.

One day the false Prince said to his real brother, ‘Bramintho, you know that I brought you here from your native village in order to make your fortune; but I have found out that you are a liar, and that by your deceit you have been the cause of all the troubles of your brother Rosimond. He is in hiding here, and I desire that you shall speak to him, and listen to his reproaches.’

Bramintho trembled at these words, and, flinging himself at the Prince’s feet, confessed his crime.

‘That is not enough,’ said Rosimond. ‘It is to your brother that you must confess, and I desire that you shall ask his forgiveness. He will be very generous if he grants it, and it will be more than you deserve. He is in my ante-room, where you shall see him at once. I myself will retire into another apartment, so as to leave you alone with him.’

Bramintho entered, as he was told, into the anteroom. Then Rosimond changed the ring, and passed into the room by another door.

Bramintho was filled with shame as soon as he saw his brother’s face. He implored his pardon, and promised to atone for all his faults. Rosimond embraced him with tears, and at once forgave him, adding, ‘I am in great favour with the King. It rests with me to have your head cut off, or to condemn you to pass the remainder of your life in prison; but I desire to be as good to you as you have been wicked to me.’ Bramintho, confused and ashamed, listened to his words without daring to lift his eyes or to remind Rosimond that he was his brother. After this, Rosimond gave out that he was going to make a secret voyage, to marry a Princess who lived in a neighbouring kingdom; but in reality he only went to see his mother, whom he told all that had happened at the Court, giving her at the same time some money that she needed, for the King allowed him to take exactly what he liked, though he was always careful not to abuse this permission. Just then a furious war broke out between the King his master and the Sovereign of the adjoining country, who was a bad man and one that never kept his word. Rosimond went straight to the palace of the

wicked King, and by means of his ring was able to be present at all the councils, and learnt all their schemes, so that he was able to forestall them and bring them to naught. He took the command of the army which was brought against the wicked King, and defeated him in a glorious battle, so that peace was at once concluded on conditions that were just to everyone.

Henceforth the King's one idea was to marry the young man to a Princess who was the heiress to a neighbouring kingdom, and, besides that, was as lovely as the day. But one morning, while Rosimond was hunting in the forest where for the first time he had seen the Fairy, his benefactress suddenly appeared before him. 'Take heed,' she said to him in severe tones, 'that you do not marry anybody who believes you to be a Prince. You must never deceive anyone. The real Prince, whom the whole nation thinks you are, will have to succeed his father, for that is just and right. Go and seek him in some distant island, and I will send winds that will swell your sails and bring you to him. Hasten to render this service to your master, although it is against your own ambition, and prepare, like an honest man, to return to your natural state. If you do not do this, you will become wicked and unhappy, and I will abandon you to all your former troubles.'

Rosimond took these wise counsels to heart. He gave out that he had undertaken a secret mission to a neighbouring state, and embarked on board a vessel, the winds carrying him straight to the island where the Fairy had told him he would find the real Prince. This unfortunate youth had been taken captive by a savage people, who had kept him to guard their sheep. Rosimond, becoming invisible, went to seek him amongst the pastures, where he kept his flock, and, covering him with his mantle, he delivered him out of the hands of his cruel masters, and bore him back to the ship. Other winds sent by the Fairy swelled the sails, and together the two young men entered the King's presence.

Rosimond spoke first and said, 'You have believed me to be your son. I am not he, but I have brought him back to you.' The King, filled with astonishment, turned to his real son and asked, 'Was it not you, my son, who conquered my enemies and won such a glorious peace? Or is it true that you have been shipwrecked and taken captive, and that Rosimond has set you free?'

‘Yes, my father,’ replied the Prince. ‘It is he who sought me out in my captivity and set me free, and to him I owe the happiness of seeing you once more. It was he, not I, who gained the victory.’

The King could hardly believe his ears; but Rosimond, turning the ring, appeared before him in the likeness of the Prince, and the King gazed distractedly at the two youths who seemed both to be his son. Then he offered Rosimond immense rewards for his services, which were refused, and the only favour the young man would accept was that one of his posts at Court should be conferred on his brother Bramintho. For he feared for himself the changes of fortune, the envy of mankind and his own weakness. His desire was to go back to his mother and his native village, and to spend his time in cultivating the land.

One day, when he was wandering through the woods, he met the Fairy, who showed him the cavern where his father was imprisoned, and told him what words he must use in order to set him free. He repeated them joyfully, for he had always longed to bring the old man back and to make his last days happy. Rosimond thus became the benefactor of all his family, and had the pleasure of doing good to those who had wished to do him evil. As for the Court, to whom he had rendered such services, all he asked was the freedom to live far from its corruption; and, to crown all, fearing that if he kept the ring he might be tempted to use it in order to regain his lost place in the world, he made up his mind to restore it to the Fairy. For many days he sought her up and down the woods and at last he found her. ‘I want to give you back,’ he said, holding out the ring, ‘a gift as dangerous as it is powerful, and which I fear to use wrongfully. I shall never feel safe till I have made it impossible for me to leave my solitude and to satisfy my passions.’

While Rosimond was seeking to give back the ring to the Fairy, Bramintho, who had failed to learn any lessons from experience, gave way to all his desires, and tried to persuade the Prince, lately become King, to ill-treat Rosimond. But the Fairy, who knew all about everything, said to Rosimond, when he was imploring her to accept the ring:

‘Your wicked brother is doing his best to poison the mind of the King towards you, and to ruin you. He deserves to be punished, and he must die; and in order that he may destroy himself, I shall give the ring to him.’

Rosimond wept at these words, and then asked:

‘What do you mean by giving him the ring as a punishment? He will only use it to persecute everyone, and to become master.’

‘The same things,’ answered the Fairy, ‘are often a healing medicine to one person and a deadly poison to another. Prosperity is the source of all evil to a naturally wicked man. If you wish to punish a scoundrel, the first thing to do is to give him power. You will see that with this rope he will soon hang himself.’

Having said this, she disappeared, and went straight to the Palace, where she showed herself to Bramintho under the disguise of an old woman covered with rags. She at once addressed him in these words:

‘I have taken this ring from the hands of your brother, to whom I had lent it, and by its help he covered himself with glory. I now give it to you, and be careful what you do with it.’

Bramintho replied with a laugh:

‘I shall certainly not imitate my brother, who was foolish enough to bring back the Prince instead of reigning in his place,’ and he was as good as his word. The only use he made of the ring was to find out family secrets and betray them, to commit murders and every sort of wickedness, and to gain wealth for himself unlawfully. All these crimes, which could be traced to nobody, filled the people with astonishment. The King, seeing so many affairs, public and private, exposed, was at first as puzzled as anyone, till Bramintho’s wonderful prosperity and amazing insolence made him suspect that the enchanted ring had become his property. In order to find out the truth he bribed a stranger just arrived at Court, one of a nation with whom the King was always at war, and arranged that he was to steal in the night to Bramintho and to offer him untold honours and rewards if he would betray the State secrets.

Bramintho promised everything, and accepted at once the first payment of his crime, boasting that he had a ring which rendered him invisible, and that by means of it he could penetrate into the most private places. But his triumph was short. Next day he was seized by order of the King, and his ring was taken from him. He was searched, and on him were found papers which proved his crimes; and, though Rosimond himself came back to the Court to entreat his pardon, it was refused. So Bramintho was put to death, and the ring had been even more fatal to him than it had been useful in the hands of his brother.

To console Rosimond for the fate of Bramintho, the King gave him back the enchanted ring, as a pearl without price. The unhappy Rosimond did not look upon it in the same light, and the first thing he did on his return home was to seek the Fairy in the woods.

‘Here,’ he said, ‘is your ring. My brother’s experience has made me understand many things that I did not know before. Keep it, it has only led to his destruction. Ah! without it he would be alive now, and my father and mother would not in their old age be bowed to the earth with shame and grief! Perhaps he might have been wise and happy if he had never had the chance of gratifying his wishes! Oh! how dangerous it is to have more power than the rest of the world! Take back your ring, and as ill fortune seems to follow all on whom you bestow it, I will implore you, as a favour to myself, that you will never give it to anyone who is dear to me.’

Fenelon.

THE SNUFF-BOX

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As often happens in this world, there was once a young man who spent all his time in travelling. One day, as he was walking along, he picked up a snuff-box. He opened it, and the snuff-box said to him in the Spanish language, ‘What do you want?’ He was very much frightened, but, luckily, instead of throwing the box away, he only shut it tight, and put it in his pocket. Then he went on, away, away, away, and as he went he said to himself, ‘If it says to me again “What do you want?” I shall know better what to say this time.’ So he took out the snuff-box and opened it, and again it asked ‘What do you want?’ ‘My hat full of gold,’ answered the youth, and immediately it was full.

Our young man was enchanted. Henceforth he should never be in need of anything. So on he travelled, away, away, away, through thick forests, till at last he came to a beautiful castle. In the castle there lived a King. The young man walked round and round the castle, not caring who saw him, till the King noticed him, and asked what he was doing there. ‘I was just looking at your castle.’ ‘You would like to have one like it, wouldn’t you?’ The young man did not reply, but when it grew dark he took his snuff-box and opened the lid. ‘What do you want?’ ‘Build me a castle with laths of gold and tiles of diamond, and the furniture all of silver and gold.’ He had scarcely finished speaking when there stood in front of him, exactly opposite the King’s palace, a castle built precisely as he had ordered. When the King awoke he was struck dumb at the sight of the magnificent house shining in the rays of the sun. The servants could not do their work for stopping to stare at it. Then the King dressed himself, and went to see the young man. And he told him plainly that he was a very powerful Prince; and that he hoped that they might all live together in one house or the other, and that the King would give him his daughter to wife. So it all turned out just as the King wished. The young man married the Princess, and they lived happily in the palace of gold.

But the King's wife was jealous both of the young man and of her own daughter. The Princess had told her mother about the snuff-box, which gave them everything they wanted, and the Queen bribed a servant to steal the snuff-box. They noticed carefully where it was put away every night, and one evening, when the whole world was asleep, the woman stole it and brought it to her old mistress. Oh how happy the Queen was! She opened the lid, and the snuff-box said to her 'What do you want?' And she answered at once 'I want you to take me and my husband and my servants and this beautiful house and set us down on the other side of the Red Sea, but my daughter and her husband are to stay behind.'

When the young couple woke up, they found themselves back in the old castle, without their snuff-box. They hunted for it high and low, but quite vainly. The young man felt that no time was to be lost, and he mounted his horse and filled his pockets with as much gold as he could carry. On he went, away, away, away, but he sought the snuff-box in vain all up and down the neighbouring countries, and very soon he came to the end of all his money. But still he went on, as fast as the strength of his horse would let him, begging his way.

Someone told him that he ought to consult the moon, for the moon travelled far, and might be able to tell him something. So he went away, away, away, and ended, somehow or other, by reaching the land of the moon. There he found a little old woman who said to him 'What are you doing here? My son eats all living things he sees, and if you are wise, you will go away without coming any further.' But the young man told her all his sad tale, and how he possessed a wonderful snuff-box, and how it had been stolen from him, and how he had nothing left, now that he was parted from his wife and was in need of everything. And he said that perhaps her son, who travelled so far, might have seen a palace with laths of gold and tiles of diamond, and furnished all in silver and gold. As he spoke these last words, the moon came in and said he smelt mortal flesh and blood. But his mother told him that it was an unhappy man who had lost everything, and had come all this way to consult him, and bade the young man not to be afraid, but to come forward and show himself. So he went boldly up to the moon, and asked if by any accident he had seen a palace with the laths of gold and the tiles of diamond, and all the furniture of silver and gold. Once this house belonged to him, but now it was stolen.

And the moon said no, but that the sun travelled farther than he did, and that the young man had better go and ask him.

So the young man departed, and went away, away, away, as well as his horse would take him, begging his living as he rode along, and, somehow or other, at last he got to the land of the sun. There he found a little old woman, who asked him, ‘What are you doing here? Go away. Have you not heard that my son feeds upon Christians?’ But he said no, and that he would not go, for he was so miserable that it was all one to him whether he died or not; that he had lost everything, and especially a splendid palace like none other in the whole world, for it had laths of gold and tiles of diamond, and all the furniture was of silver and gold. And that he had sought it far and long, and in all the earth there was no man more unhappy. So the old woman’s heart melted, and she agreed to hide him.

When the Sun arrived, he declared that he smelt Christian flesh, and he meant to have it for his dinner. But his mother told him such a pitiful story of the miserable wretch who had lost everything, and had come from far to ask his help, that at last he promised to see him.

So the young man came out from his hiding-place and begged the sun to tell him if in the course of his travels he had not seen somewhere a palace that had not its like in the whole world, for its laths were of gold and its tiles of diamond, and all the furniture in silver and gold.

And the sun said no, but that perhaps the wind had seen it, for he entered everywhere, and saw things that no one else ever saw, and if anyone knew where it was, it was certainly the wind.

Then the poor young man again set forth as well as his horse could take him, begging his living as he went, and, somehow or other, he ended by reaching the home of the wind. He found there a little old woman busily occupied in filling great barrels with water. She asked him what had put it into his head to come there, for her son ate everything he saw, and that he would shortly arrive quite mad, and that the young man had better look out. But he answered that he was so unhappy that he had ceased to mind anything, even being eaten, and then he told her that he had been robbed of a palace that had not its equal in all the world, and of all that was in it, and that he had even left his wife, and was wandering over the world until he found it. And that it was the sun who had sent him to consult the wind. So she hid him under the staircase, and soon they heard

the south wind arrive, shaking the house to its foundations. Thirsty as he was, he did not wait to drink, but he told his mother that he smelt the blood of a Christian man, and that she had better bring him out at once and make him ready to be eaten. But she bade her son eat and drink what was before him, and said that the poor young man was much to be pitied, and that the sun had granted him his life in order that he might consult the wind. Then she brought out the young man, who explained how he was seeking for his palace, and that no man had been able to tell him where it was, so he had come to the wind. And he added that he had been shamefully robbed, and that the laths were of gold and the tiles of diamond, and all the furniture in silver and gold, and he inquired if the wind had not seen such a palace during his wanderings.

And the wind said yes, and that all that day he had been blowing backwards and forwards over it without being able to move one single tile. ‘Oh, do tell me where it is,’ cried the you man. ‘It is a long way off,’ replied the wind, ‘on the other side of the Red Sea.’ But our traveller was not discouraged, he had already journeyed too far.

So he set forth at once, and, somehow or other, he managed to reach that distant land. And he enquired if anyone wanted a gardener. He was told that the head gardener at the castle had just left, and perhaps he might have a chance of getting the place. The young man lost no time, but walked up to the castle and asked if they were in want of a gardener; and how happy he was when they agreed to take him! Now he passed most of his day in gossiping with the servants about the wealth of their masters and the wonderful things in the house. He made friends with one of the maids, who told him the history of the snuff-box, and he coaxed her to let him see it. One evening she managed to get hold of it, and the young man watched carefully where she hid it away, in a secret place in the bedchamber of her mistress.

The following night, when everyone was fast asleep, he crept in and took the snuff-box. Think of his joy as he opened the lid! When it asked him, as of yore, ‘What do you want?’ he replied: ‘What do I want? What do I want? Why, I want to go with my palace to the old place, and for the King and the Queen and all their servants to be drowned in the Red Sea.’ He hardly finished speaking when he found himself back again with his

wife, while all the other inhabitants of the palace were lying at the bottom of the Red Sea.

Sebillot.

THE GOLDEN BLACKBIRD

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Once upon a time there was a great lord who had three sons. He fell very ill, sent for doctors of every kind, even bonesetters, but they, none of them, could find out what was the matter with him, or even give him any relief. At last there came a foreign doctor, who declared that the Golden Blackbird alone could cure the sick man.

So the old lord despatched his eldest son to look for the wonderful bird, and promised him great riches if he managed to find it and bring it back.

The young man began his journey, and soon arrived at a place where four roads met. He did not know which to choose, and tossed his cap in the air, determining that the direction of its fall should decide him. After travelling for two or three days, he grew tired of walking without knowing where or for how long, and he stopped at an inn which was filled with merrymakers and ordered something to eat and drink.

‘My faith,’ said he, ‘it is sheer folly to waste more time hunting for this bird. My father is old, and if he dies I shall inherit his goods.’

The old man, after waiting patiently for some time, sent his second son to seek the Golden Blackbird. The youth took the same direction as his brother, and when he came to the cross roads, he too tossed up which road he should take. The cap fell in the same place as before, and he walked on till he came to the spot where his brother had halted. The latter, who was leaning out of the window of the inn, called to him to stay where he was and amuse himself.

‘You are right,’ replied the youth. ‘Who knows if I should ever find the Golden Blackbird, even if I sought the whole world through for it. At the worst, if the old man dies, we shall have his property.’

He entered the inn and the two brothers made merry and feasted, till very soon their money was all spent. They even owed something to their landlord, who kept them as hostages till they could pay their debts.

The youngest son set forth in his turn, and he arrived at the place where his brothers were still prisoners. They called to him to stop, and did all they could to prevent his going further.

‘No,’ he replied, ‘my father trusted me, and I will go all over the world till I find the Golden Blackbird.’

‘Bah,’ said his brothers, ‘you will never succeed any better than we did. Let him die if he wants to; we will divide the property.’

As he went his way he met a little hare, who stopped to look at him, and asked:

‘Where are you going, my friend?’

‘I really don’t quite know,’ answered he. ‘My father is ill, and he cannot be cured unless I bring him back the Golden Blackbird. It is a long time since I set out, but no one can tell me where to find it.’

‘Ah,’ said the hare, ‘you have a long way to go yet. You will have to walk at least seven hundred miles before you get to it.’

‘And how am I to travel such a distance?’

‘Mount on my back,’ said the little hare, ‘and I will conduct you.’

The young man obeyed: at each bound the little hare went seven miles, and it was not long before they reached a castle that was as large and beautiful as a castle could be.

‘The Golden Blackbird is in a little cabin near by,’ said the little hare, ‘and you will easily find it. It lives in a little cage, with another cage beside it made all of gold. But whatever you do, be sure not to put it in the beautiful cage, or everybody in the castle will know that you have stolen it.’

The youth found the Golden Blackbird standing on a wooden perch, but as stiff and rigid as if he was dead. And beside the beautiful cage was the cage of gold.

‘Perhaps he would revive if I were to put him in that lovely cage,’ thought the youth.

The moment that Golden Bird had touched the bars of the splendid cage he awoke, and began to whistle, so that all the servants of the castle ran to see what was the matter, saying that he was a thief and must be put in prison.

‘No,’ he answered, ‘I am not a thief. If I have taken the Golden Blackbird, it is only that it may cure my father, who is ill, and I have

travelled more than seven hundred miles in order to find it.’

‘Well,’ they replied, ‘we will let you go, and will even give you the Golden Bird, if you are able to bring us the Porcelain Maiden.’

The youth departed, weeping, and met the little hare, who was munching wild thyme.

‘What are you crying for, my friend?’ asked the hare.

‘It is because,’ he answered, ‘the castle people will not allow me to carry off the Golden Blackbird without giving them the Porcelain Maiden in exchange.’

‘You have not followed my advice,’ said the little hare. ‘And you have put the Golden Bird into the fine cage.’

‘Alas! yes!’

‘Don’t despair! the Porcelain Maiden is a young girl, beautiful as Venus, who dwells two hundred miles from here. Jump on my back and I will take you there.’

The little hare, who took seven miles in a stride, was there in no time at all, and he stopped on the borders of a lake.

‘The Porcelain Maiden,’ said the hare to the youth, ‘will come here to bathe with her friends, while I just eat a mouthful of thyme to refresh me. When she is in the lake, be sure you hide her clothes, which are of dazzling whiteness, and do not give them back to her unless she consents to follow you.’

The little hare left him, and almost immediately the Porcelain Maiden arrived with her friends. She undressed herself and got into the water. Then the young man glided up noiselessly and laid hold of her clothes, which he hid under a rock at some distance.

When the Porcelain Maiden was tired of playing in the water she came out to dress herself, but, though she hunted for her clothes high and low, she could find them nowhere. Her friends helped her in the search, but, seeing at last that it was of no use, they left her, alone on the bank, weeping bitterly.

‘Why do you cry?’ said the young man, approaching her.

‘Alas!’ answered she, ‘while I was bathing someone stole my clothes, and my friends have abandoned me.’

‘I will find your clothes if you will only come with me.’

And the Porcelain Maiden agreed to follow him, and after having given up her clothes, the young man bought a small horse for her, which went like the wind. The little hare brought them both back to seek for the Golden Blackbird, and when they drew near to the castle where it lived the little hero said to the young man:

‘Now, do be a little sharper than you were before, and you will manage to carry off both the Golden Blackbird and the Porcelain Maiden. Take the golden cage in one hand, and leave the bird in the old cage where he is, and bring that away too.’

The little hare then vanished; the youth did as he was bid, and the castle servants never noticed that he was carrying off the Golden Bird. When he reached the inn where his brothers were detained, he delivered them by paying their debt. They set out all together, but as the two elder brothers were jealous of the success of the youngest, they took the opportunity as they were passing by the shores of a lake to throw themselves upon him, seize the Golden Bird, and fling him in the water. Then they continued their journey, taking with them the Porcelain Maiden, in the firm belief that their brother was drowned. But, happily, he had snatched in falling at a tuft of rushes and called loudly for help. The little hare came running to him, and said ‘Take hold of my leg and pull yourself out of the water.’

When he was safe on shore the little hare said to him:

‘Now this is what you have to do: dress yourself like a Breton seeking a place as stable-boy, and go and offer your services to your father. Once there, you will easily be able to make him understand the truth.’

The young man did as the little hare bade him, and he went to his father’s castle and enquired if they were not in want of a stable-boy.

‘Yes,’ replied his father, ‘very much indeed. But it is not an easy place. There is a little horse in the stable which will not let anyone go near it, and it has already kicked to death several people who have tried to groom it.’

‘I will undertake to groom it,’ said the youth. ‘I never saw the horse I was afraid of yet.’ The little horse allowed itself to be rubbed down without a toss of its head and without a kick.

‘Good gracious!’ exclaimed the master; ‘how is it that he lets you touch him, when no one else can go near him?’

‘Perhaps he knows me,’ answered the stable-boy.

Two or three days later the master said to him: ‘The Porcelain Maiden is here: but, though she is as lovely as the dawn, she is so wicked that she scratches everyone that approaches her. Try if she will accept your services.’

When the youth entered the room where she was, the Golden Blackbird broke forth into a joyful song, and the Porcelain Maiden sang too, and jumped for joy.

‘Good gracious!’ cried the master. ‘The Porcelain Maiden and the Golden Blackbird know you too?’

‘Yes,’ replied the youth, ‘and the Porcelain Maiden can tell you the whole truth, if she only will.’

Then she told all that had happened, and how she had consented to follow the young man who had captured the Golden Blackbird.

‘Yes,’ added the youth, ‘I delivered my brothers, who were kept prisoners in an inn, and, as a reward, they threw me into a lake. So I disguised myself and came here, in order to prove the truth to you.’

So the old lord embraced his son, and promised that he should inherit all his possessions, and he put to death the two elder ones, who had deceived him and had tried to slay their own brother.

The young man married the Porcelain Maiden, and had a splendid wedding-feast.

Sebillot.

THE LITTLE SOLDIER

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I

Once upon a time there was a little soldier who had just come back from the war. He was a brave little fellow, but he had lost neither arms nor legs in battle. Still, the fighting was ended and the army disbanded, so he had to return to the village where he was born.

Now the soldier's name was really John, but for some reason or other his friends always called him the Kinglet; why, no one ever knew, but so it was.

As he had no father or mother to welcome him home, he did not hurry himself, but went quietly along, his knapsack on his back and his sword by his side, when suddenly one evening he was seized with a wish to light his pipe. He felt for his match-box to strike a light, but to his great disgust he found he had lost it.

He had only gone about a stone's throw after making this discovery when he noticed a light shining through the trees. He went towards it, and perceived before him an old castle, with the door standing open.

The little soldier entered the courtyard, and, peeping through a window, saw a large fire blazing at the end of a low hall. He put his pipe in his pocket and knocked gently, saying politely:

'Would you give me a light?'

But he got no answer.

After waiting for a moment John knocked again, this time more loudly. There was still no reply.

He raised the latch and entered; the hall was empty.

The little soldier made straight for the fireplace, seized the tongs, and was stooping down to look for a nice red hot coal with which to light his pipe, when clic! something went, like a spring giving way, and in the very midst of the flames an enormous serpent reared itself up close to his face.

And what was more strange still, this serpent had the head of a woman.

At such an unexpected sight many men would have turned and run for their lives; but the little soldier, though he was so small, had a true soldier's heart. He only made one step backwards, and grasped the hilt of his sword.

'Don't unsheath it,' said the serpent. 'I have been waiting for you, as it is you who must deliver me.'

'Who are you?'

'My name is Ludovine, and I am the daughter of the King of the Low Countries. Deliver me, and I will marry you and make you happy for ever after.'

Now, some people might not have liked the notion of being made happy by a serpent with the head of a woman, but the Kinglet had no such fears. And, besides, he felt the fascination of Ludovine's eyes, which looked at him as a snake looks at a little bird. They were beautiful green eyes, not round like those of a cat, but long and almond-shaped, and they shone with a strange light, and the golden hair which floated round them seemed all the brighter for their lustre. The face had the beauty of an angel, though the body was only that of a serpent.

'What must I do?' asked the Kinglet.

'Open that door. You will find yourself in a gallery with a room at the end just like this. Cross that, and you will see a closet, out of which you must take a tunic, and bring it back to me.'

The little soldier boldly prepared to do as he was told. He crossed the gallery in safety, but when he reached the room he saw by the light of the stars eight hands on a level with his face, which threatened to strike him. And, turn his eyes which way he would, he could discover no bodies belonging to them.

He lowered his head and rushed forward amidst a storm of blows, which he returned with his fists. When he got to the closet, he opened it, took down the tunic, and brought it to the first room.

'Here it is,' he panted, rather out of breath.

'Clic!' once more the flames parted. Ludovine was a woman down to her waist. She took the tunic and put it on.

It was a magnificent tunic of orange velvet, embroidered in pearls, but the pearls were not so white as her own neck.

‘That is not all,’ she said. ‘Go to the gallery, take the staircase which is on the left, and in the second room on the first story you will find another closet with my skirt. Bring this to me.’

The Kinglet did as he was told, but in entering the room he saw, instead of merely hands, eight arms, each holding an enormous stick. He instantly unsheathed his sword and cut his way through with such vigour that he hardly received a scratch.

He brought back the skirt, which was made of silk as blue as the skies of Spain.

‘Here it is,’ said John, as the serpent appeared. She was now a woman as far as her knees.

‘I only want my shoes and stockings now,’ she said. ‘Go and get them from the closet which is on the second story.’

The little soldier departed, and found himself in the presence of eight goblins armed with hammers, and flames darting from their eyes. This time he stopped short at the threshold. ‘My sword is no use,’ he thought to himself; ‘these wretches will break it like glass, and if I can’t think of anything else, I am a dead man.’ At this moment his eyes fell on the door, which was made of oak, thick and heavy. He wrenched it off its hinges and held it over his head, and then went straight at the goblins, whom he crushed beneath it. After that he took the shoes and stockings out of the closet and brought them to Ludovine, who, directly she had put them on, became a woman all over.

When she was quite dressed in her white silk stockings and little blue slippers dotted over with carbuncles, she said to her deliverer, ‘Now you must go away, and never come back here, whatever happens. Here is a purse with two hundred ducats. Sleep to-night at the inn which is at the edge of the wood, and awake early in the morning: for at nine o’clock I shall pass the door, and shall take you up in my carriage.’ ‘Why shouldn’t we go now?’ asked the little soldier. ‘Because the time has not yet come,’ said the Princess. ‘But first you may drink my health in this glass of wine,’ and as she spoke she filled a crystal goblet with a liquid that looked like melted gold.

John drank, then lit his pipe and went out.

II

When he arrived at the inn he ordered supper, but no sooner had he sat down to eat it than he felt that he was going sound asleep.

‘I must be more tired than I thought,’ he said to himself, and, after telling them to be sure to wake him next morning at eight o’clock, he went to bed.

All night long he slept like a dead man. At eight o’clock they came to wake him, and at half-past, and a quarter of an hour later, but it was no use; and at last they decided to leave him in peace.

The clocks were striking twelve when John awoke. He sprang out of bed, and, scarcely waiting to dress himself, hastened to ask if anyone had been to inquire for him.

‘There came a lovely princess,’ replied the landlady, ‘in a coach of gold. She left you this bouquet, and a message to say that she would pass this way to-morrow morning at eight o’clock.’

The little soldier cursed his sleep, but tried to console himself by looking at his bouquet, which was of immortelles.

‘It is the flower of remembrance,’ thought he, forgetting that it is also the flower of the dead.

When the night came, he slept with one eye open, and jumped up twenty times an hour. When the birds began to sing he could lie still no longer, and climbed out of his window into the branches of one of the great lime-trees that stood before the door. There he sat, dreamily gazing at his bouquet till he ended by going fast asleep.

Once asleep, nothing was able to wake him; neither the brightness of the sun, nor the songs of the birds, nor the noise of Ludovine’s golden coach, nor the cries of the landlady who sought him in every place she could think of.

As the clock struck twelve he woke, and his heart sank as he came down out of his tree and saw them laying the table for dinner.

‘Did the Princess come?’ he asked.

‘Yes, indeed, she did. She left this flower-coloured scarf for you; said she would pass by to-morrow at seven o’clock, but it would be the last time.’

‘I must have been bewitched,’ thought the little soldier. Then he took the scarf, which had a strange kind of scent, and tied it round his left arm, thinking all the while that the best way to keep awake was not to go to bed at all. So he paid his bill, and bought a horse with the money that remained, and when the evening came he mounted his horse and stood in front of the inn door, determined to stay there all night.

Every now and then he stooped to smell the sweet perfume of the scarf round his arm; and gradually he smelt it so often that at last his head sank on to the horse’s neck, and he and his horse snored in company.

When the Princess arrived, they shook him, and beat him, and screamed at him, but it was all no good. Neither man nor horse woke till the coach was seen vanishing away in the distance.

Then John put spurs to his horse, calling with all his might ‘Stop! stop!’ But the coach drove on as before, and though the little soldier rode after it for a day and a night, he never got one step nearer.

Thus they left many villages and towns behind them, till they came to the sea itself. Here John thought that at last the coach must stop, but, wonder of wonders! it went straight on, and rolled over the water as easily as it had done over the land. John’s horse, which had carried him so well, sank down from fatigue, and the little soldier sat sadly on the shore, watching the coach which was fast disappearing on the horizon.

III

However, he soon plucked up his spirits again, and walked along the beach to try and find a boat in which he could sail after the Princess. But no boat was there, and at last, tired and hungry, he sat down to rest on the steps of a fisherman’s hut.

In the hut was a young girl who was mending a net. She invited John to come in, and set before him some wine and fried fish, and John ate and drank and felt comforted, and he told his adventures to the little fisher-girl. But though she was very pretty, with a skin as white as a gull’s breast, for which her neighbours gave her the name of the Seagull, he did not think about her at all, for he was dreaming of the green eyes of the Princess.

When he had finished his tale, she was filled with pity and said:

‘Last week, when I was fishing, my net suddenly grew very heavy, and when I drew it in I found a great copper vase, fastened with lead. I brought it home and placed it on the fire. When the lead had melted a little, I opened the vase with my knife and drew out a mantle of red cloth and a purse containing fifty crowns. That is the mantle, covering my bed, and I have kept the money for my marriage-portion. But take it and go to the nearest seaport, where you will find a ship sailing for the Low Countries, and when you become King you will bring me back my fifty crowns.’

And the Kinglet answered: ‘When I am King of the Low Countries, I will make you lady-in-waiting to the Queen, for you are as good as you are beautiful. So farewell,’ said he, and as the Seagull went back to her fishing he rolled himself in the mantle and threw himself down on a heap of dried grass, thinking of the strange things that had befallen him, till he suddenly exclaimed:

‘Oh, how I wish I was in the capital of the Low Countries!’

IV

In one moment the little soldier found himself standing before a splendid palace. He rubbed his eyes and pinched himself, and when he was quite sure he was not dreaming he said to a man who was smoking his pipe before the door, ‘Where am I?’

‘Where are you? Can’t you see? Before the King’s palace, of course.’

‘What King?’

‘Why the King of the Low Countries!’ replied the man, laughing and supposing that he was mad.

Was there ever anything so strange? But as John was an honest fellow, he was troubled at the thought that the Seagull would think he had stolen her mantle and purse. And he began to wonder how he could restore them to her the soonest. Then he remembered that the mantle had some hidden charm that enabled the bearer to transport himself at will from place to place, and in order to make sure of this he wished himself in the best inn of the town. In an instant he was there.

Enchanted with this discovery, he ordered supper, and as it was too late to visit the King that night he went to bed.

The next day, when he got up, he saw that all the houses were wreathed with flowers and covered with flags, and all the church bells were ringing. The little soldier inquired the meaning of all this noise, and was told that the Princess Ludovine, the King's beautiful daughter, had been found, and was about to make her triumphal entry. 'That will just suit me,' thought the Kinglet; 'I will stand at the door and see if she knows me.'

He had scarcely time to dress himself when the golden coach of Ludovine went by. She had a crown of gold upon her head, and the King and Queen sat by her side. By accident her eyes fell upon the little soldier, and she grew pale and turned away her head.

'Didn't she know me?' the little soldier asked himself, 'or was she angry because I missed our meetings?' and he followed the crowd till he got to the palace. When the royal party entered he told the guards that it was he who had delivered the Princess, and wished to speak to the King. But the more he talked the more they believed him mad and refused to let him pass.

The little soldier was furious. He felt that he needed his pipe to calm him, and he entered a tavern and ordered a pint of beer. 'It is this miserable soldier's helmet,' said he to himself 'If I had only money enough I could look as splendid as the lords of the Court; but what is the good of thinking of that when I have only the remains of the Seagull's fifty crowns?'

He took out his purse to see what was left, and he found that there were still fifty crowns.

'The Seagull must have miscounted,' thought he, and he paid for his beer. Then he counted his money again, and there were still fifty crowns. He took away five and counted a third time, but there were still fifty. He emptied the purse altogether and then shut it; when he opened it the fifty crowns were still there!

Then a plan came into his head, and he determined to go at once to the Court tailor and coachbuilder.

He ordered the tailor to make him a mantle and vest of blue velvet embroidered with pearls, and the coachbuilder to make him a golden coach

like the coach of the Princess Ludovine. If the tailor and the coachbuilder were quick he promised to pay them double.

A few days later the little soldier was driven through the city in his coach drawn by six white horses, and with four lacqueys richly dressed standing behind. Inside sat John, clad in blue velvet, with a bouquet of immortelles in his hand and a scarf bound round his arm. He drove twice round the city, throwing money to the right and left, and the third time, as he passed under the palace windows, he saw Ludovine lift a corner of the curtain and peep out.

V

The next day no one talked of anything but the rich lord who had distributed money as he drove along. The talk even reached the Court, and the Queen, who was very curious, had a great desire to see the wonderful Prince.

‘Very well,’ said the King; ‘let him be asked to come and play cards with me.’

This time the Kinglet was not late for his appointment.

The King sent for the cards and they sat down to play. They had six games, and John always lost. The stake was fifty crowns, and each time he emptied his purse, which was full the next instant.

The sixth time the King exclaimed, ‘It is amazing!’

The Queen cried, ‘It is astonishing!’

The Princess said, ‘It is bewildering!’

‘Not so bewildering,’ replied the little soldier, ‘as your change into a serpent.’

‘Hush!’ interrupted the King, who did not like the subject.

‘I only spoke of it,’ said John, ‘because you see in me the man who delivered the Princess from the goblins and whom she promised to marry.’

‘Is that true?’ asked the King of the Princess.

‘Quite true,’ answered Ludovine. ‘But I told my deliverer to be ready to go with me when I passed by with my coach. I passed three times, but he slept so soundly that no one could wake him.’

‘What is your name?’ said the King, ‘and who are you?’

‘My name is John. I am a soldier, and my father is a boatman.’

‘You are not a fit husband for my daughter. Still, if you will give us your purse, you shall have her for your wife.’

‘My purse does not belong to me, and I cannot give it away.’

‘But you can lend it to me till our wedding-day,’ said the Princess with one of those glances the little soldier never could resist.

‘And when will that be?’

‘At Easter,’ said the monarch.

‘Or in a blue moon!’ murmured the Princess; but the Kinglet did not hear her and let her take his purse.

Next evening he presented himself at the palace to play picquet with the King and to make his court to the Princess. But he was told that the King had gone into the country to receive his rents. He returned the following day, and had the same answer. Then he asked to see the Queen, but she had a headache. When this had happened five or six times, he began to understand that they were making fun of him.

‘That is not the way for a King to behave,’ thought John. ‘Old scoundrel!’ and then suddenly he remembered his red cloak.

‘Ah, what an idiot I am!’ said he. ‘Of course I can get in whenever I like with the help of this.’

That evening he was in front of the palace, wrapped in his red cloak.

On the first story one window was lighted, and John saw on the curtains the shadow of the Princess.

‘I wish myself in the room of the Princess Ludovine,’ said he, and in a second he was there.

The King’s daughter was sitting before a table counting the money that she emptied from the inexhaustible purse.

‘Eight hundred and fifty, nine hundred, nine hundred and fifty—’

‘A thousand,’ finished John. ‘Good evening everybody!’

The Princess jumped and gave a little cry. ‘You here! What business have you to do it? Leave at once, or I shall call—’

‘I have come,’ said the Kinglet, ‘to remind you of your promise. The day after to-morrow is Easter Day, and it is high time to think of our marriage.’

Ludovine burst out into a fit of laughter. ‘Our marriage! Have you really been foolish enough to believe that the daughter of the King of the

Low Countries would ever marry the son of a boatman?'

'Then give me back the purse,' said John.

'Never,' said the Princess, and put it calmly in her pocket.

'As you like,' said the little soldier. 'He laughs best who laughs the last;' and he took the Princess in his arms. 'I wish,' he cried, 'that we were at the ends of the earth;' and in one second he was there, still clasping the Princess tightly in his arms.

'Ouf,' said John, laying her gently at the foot of a tree. 'I never took such a long journey before. What do you say, madam?' The Princess understood that it was no time for jesting, and did not answer. Besides she was still feeling giddy from her rapid flight, and had not yet collected her senses.

VI

The King of the Low Countries was not a very scrupulous person, and his daughter took after him. This was why she had been changed into a serpent. It had been prophesied that she should be delivered by a little soldier, and that she must marry him, unless he failed to appear at the meeting-place three times running. The cunning Princess then laid her plans accordingly.

The wine that she had given to John in the castle of the goblins, the bouquet of immortelles, and the scarf, all had the power of producing sleep like death. And we know how they had acted on John.

However, even in this critical moment, Ludovine did not lose her head.

'I thought you were simply a street vagabond,' said she, in her most coaxing voice; 'and I find you are more powerful than any king. Here is your purse. Have you got my scarf and my bouquet?'

'Here they are,' said the Kinglet, delighted with this change of tone, and he drew them from his bosom. Ludovine fastened one in his buttonhole and the other round his arm. 'Now,' she said, 'you are my lord and master, and I will marry you at your good pleasure.'

'You are kinder than I thought,' said John; 'and you shall never be unhappy, for I love you.'

‘Then, my little husband, tell me how you managed to carry me so quickly to the ends of the world.’

The little soldier scratched his head. ‘Does she really mean to marry me,’ he thought to himself, ‘or is she only trying to deceive me again?’

But Ludovine repeated, ‘Won’t you tell me?’ in such a tender voice he did not know how to resist her.

‘After all,’ he said to himself, ‘what does it matter telling her the secret, as long as I don’t give her the cloak.’

And he told her the virtue of the red mantle.

‘Oh dear, how tired I am!’ sighed Ludovine. ‘Don’t you think we had better take a nap? And then we can talk over our plans.’

She stretched herself on the grass, and the Kinglet did the same. He laid his head on his left arm, round which the scarf was tied, and was soon fast asleep.

Ludovine was watching him out of one eye, and no sooner did she hear him snore than she unfastened the mantle, drew it gently from under him and wrapped it round her, took the purse from his pocket, and put it in hers, and said: ‘I wish I was back in my own room.’ In another moment she was there.

VII

Who felt foolish but John, when he awoke, twenty-four hours after, and found himself without purse, without mantle, and without Princess? He tore his hair, he beat his breast, he trampled on the bouquet, and tore the scarf of the traitress to atoms.

Besides this he was very hungry, and he had nothing to eat.

He thought of all the wonderful things his grandmother had told him when he was a child, but none of them helped him now. He was in despair, when suddenly he looked up and saw that the tree under which he had been sleeping was a superb plum, covered with fruit as yellow as gold.

‘Here goes for the plums,’ he said to himself, ‘all is fair in war.’

He climbed the tree and began to eat steadily. But he had hardly swallowed two plums when, to his horror, he felt as if something was

growing on his forehead. He put up his hand and found that he had two horns!

He leapt down from the tree and rushed to a stream that flowed close by. Alas! there was no escape: two charming little horns, that would not have disgraced the head of a goat.

Then his courage failed him.

‘As if it was not enough,’ said he, ‘that a woman should trick me, but the devil must mix himself up in it and lend me his horns. What a pretty figure I should cut if I went back into the world!’

But as he was still hungry, and the mischief was done, he climbed boldly up another tree, and plucked two plums of a lovely green colour. No sooner had he swallowed two than the horns disappeared. The little soldier was enchanted, though greatly surprised, and came to the conclusion that it was no good to despair too quickly. When he had done eating an idea suddenly occurred to him.

‘Perhaps,’ thought he, ‘these pretty little plums may help me to recover my purse, my cloak, and my heart from the hands of this wicked Princess. She has the eyes of a deer already; let her have the horns of one. If I can manage to set her up with a pair, I will bet any money that I shall cease to want her for my wife. A horned maiden is by no means lovely to look at.’ So he plaited a basket out of the long willows, and placed in it carefully both sorts of plums. Then he walked bravely on for many days, having no food but the berries by the wayside, and was in great danger from wild beasts and savage men. But he feared nothing, except that his plums should decay, and this never happened.

At last he came to a civilised country, and with the sale of some jewels that he had about him on the evening of his flight he took passage on board a vessel for the Low Countries. So, at the end of a year and a day, he arrived at the capital of the kingdom.

VIII

The next day he put on a false beard and the dress of a date merchant, and, taking a little table, he placed himself before the door of the church.

He spread carefully out on a fine white cloth his Mirabelle plums, which looked for all the world as if they had been freshly gathered, and when he saw the Princess coming out of church he began to call out in a feigned voice: ‘Fine plums! lovely plums!’

‘How much are they?’ said the Princess.

‘Fifty crowns each.’

‘Fifty crowns! But what is there so very precious about them? Do they give one wit, or will they increase one’s beauty?’

‘They could not increase what is perfect already, fair Princess, but still they might add something.’

Rolling stones gather no moss, but they sometimes gain polish; and the months which John had spent in roaming about the world had not been wasted. Such a neatly turned compliment flattered Ludovine.

‘What will they add?’ she smilingly asked.

‘You will see, fair Princess, when you taste them. It will be a surprise for you.’

Ludovine’s curiosity was roused. She drew out the purse and shook out as many little heaps of fifty crowns as there were plums in the basket. The little soldier was seized with a wild desire to snatch the purse from her and proclaim her a thief, but he managed to control himself.

His plums all sold, he shut up shop, took off his disguise, changed his inn, and kept quiet, waiting to see what would happen.

No sooner had she reached her room than the Princess exclaimed, ‘Now let us see what these fine plums can add to my beauty,’ and throwing off her hood, she picked up a couple and ate them.

Imagine with what surprise and horror she felt all of a sudden that something was growing out of her forehead. She flew to her mirror and uttered a piercing cry.

‘Horns! so that was what he promised me! Let someone find the plum-seller at once and bring him to me! Let his nose and ears be cut off! Let him be flayed alive, or burnt at a slow fire and his ashes scattered to the winds! Oh, I shall die of shame and despair!’

Her women ran at the sound of her screams, and tried to wrench off the horns, but it was of no use, and they only gave her a violent headache.

The King then sent round a herald to proclaim that he would give the hand of the Princess to anyone who would rid her of her strange

ornaments. So all the doctors and sorcerers and surgeons in the Low Countries and the neighbouring kingdoms thronged to the palace, each with a remedy of his own. But it was all no good, and the Princess suffered so much from their remedies that the King was obliged to send out a second proclamation that anyone who undertook to cure the Princess, and who failed to do it, should be hanged up to the nearest tree.

But the prize was too great for any proclamation to put a stop to the efforts of the crowd of suitors, and that year the orchards of the Low Countries all bore a harvest of dead men.

IX

The King had given orders that they should seek high and low for the plum-seller, but in spite of all their pains, he was nowhere to be found.

When the little soldier discovered that their patience was worn out, he pressed the juice of the green Queen Claude plums into a small phial, bought a doctor's robe, put on a wig and spectacles, and presented himself before the King of the Low Countries. He gave himself out as a famous physician who had come from distant lands, and he promised that he would cure the Princess if only he might be left alone with her.

'Another madman determined to be hanged,' said the King. 'Very well, do as he asks; one should refuse nothing to a man with a rope round his neck.'

As soon as the little soldier was in the presence of the Princess he poured some drops of the liquid into a glass. The Princess had scarcely tasted it, when the tip of the horns disappeared.

'They would have disappeared completely,' said the pretended doctor, 'if there did not exist something to counteract the effect. It is only possible to cure people whose souls are as clean as the palm of my hand. Are you sure you have not committed some little sin? Examine yourself well.'

Ludovine had no need to think over it long, but she was torn in pieces between the shame of a humiliating confession, and the desire to be unhorned. At last she made answer with downcast eyes,

'I have stolen a leather purse from a little soldier.'

‘Give it to me. The remedy will not act till I hold the purse in my hands.’

It cost Ludovine a great pang to give up the purse, but she remembered that riches would not benefit her if she was still to keep the horns.

With a sigh, she handed the purse to the doctor, who poured more of the liquid into the glass, and when the Princess had drunk it, she found that the horns had diminished by one half.

‘You must really have another little sin on your conscience. Did you steal nothing from this soldier but his purse?’

‘I also stole from him his cloak.’

‘Give it me.’

‘Here it is.’

This time Ludovine thought to herself that when once the horns had departed, she would call her attendants and take the things from the doctor by force.

She was greatly pleased with this idea, when suddenly the pretended physician wrapped himself in the cloak, flung away the wig and spectacles, and showed to the traitress the face of the Little Soldier.

She stood before him dumb with fright.

‘I might,’ said John, ‘have left you horned to the end of your days, but I am a good fellow and I once loved you, and besides—you are too like the devil to have any need of his horns.’

X

John had wished himself in the house of the Seagull. Now the Seagull was seated at the window, mending her net, and from time to time her eyes wandered to the sea as if she was expecting someone. At the noise made by the little soldier, she looked up and blushed.

‘So it is you!’ she said. ‘How did you get here?’ And then she added in a low voice, ‘And have you married your Princess?’

Then John told her all his adventures, and when he had finished, he restored to her the purse and the mantle.

‘What can I do with them?’ said she. ‘You have proved to me that happiness does not lie in the possession of treasures.’

‘It lies in work and in the love of an honest woman,’ replied the little soldier, who noticed for the first time what pretty eyes she had. ‘Dear Seagull, will you have me for a husband?’ and he held out his hand.

‘Yes, I will,’ answered the fisher maiden, blushing very red, ‘but only on condition that we seal up the purse and the mantle in the copper vessel and throw them into the sea.’

And this they did.

Charles Deulin.

THE MAGIC SWAN

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There were once upon a time three brothers, of whom the eldest was called Jacob, the second Frederick, and the youngest Peter. This youngest brother was made a regular butt of by the other two, and they treated him shamefully. If anything went wrong with their affairs, Peter had to bear the blame and put things right for them, and he had to endure all this ill-treatment because he was weak and delicate and couldn't defend himself against his stronger brothers. The poor creature had a most trying life of it in every way, and day and night he pondered how he could make it better. One day, when he was in the wood gathering sticks and crying bitterly, a little old woman came up to him and asked him what was the matter; and he told her all his troubles.

'Come, my good youth,' said the old dame, when he had finished his tale of woe, 'isn't the world wide enough? Why don't you set out and try your fortune somewhere else?'

Peter took her words to heart, and left his father's house early one morning to try his fortune in the wide world, as the old woman had advised him. But he felt very bitterly parting from the home where he had been born, and where he had at least passed a short but happy childhood, and sitting down on a hill he gazed once more fondly on his native place.

Suddenly the little old woman stood before him, and, tapping him on the shoulder, said, 'So far good, my boy; but what do you mean to do now?'

Peter was at a loss what to answer, for so far he had always thought that fortune would drop into his mouth like a ripe cherry. The old woman, who guessed his thoughts, laughed kindly and said, 'I'll tell you what you must do, for I've taken a fancy to you, and I'm sure you won't forget me when you've made your fortune.'

Peter promised faithfully he wouldn't, and the old woman continued:

'This evening at sunset go to yonder pear-tree which you see growing at the cross roads. Underneath it you will find a man lying asleep, and a

beautiful large swan will be fastened to the tree close to him. You must be careful not to waken the man, but you must unfasten the swan and take it away with you. You will find that everyone will fall in love with its beautiful plumage, and you must allow anyone who likes to pull out a feather. But as soon as the swan feels as much as a finger on it, it will scream out, and then you must say, "Swan, hold fast." Then the hand of the person who has touched the bird will be held as in a vice, and nothing will set it free, unless you touch it with this little stick which I will make you a present of. When you have captured a whole lot of people in this way, lead your train straight on with you; you will come to a big town where a Princess lives who has never been known to laugh. If you can only make her laugh your fortune is made; then I beg you won't forget your old friend.'

Peter promised again that he wouldn't, and at sunset he went to the tree the old woman had mentioned. The man lay there fast asleep, and a large beautiful swan was fastened to the tree beside him by a red cord. Peter loosed the bird, and led it away with him without disturbing the bird's master.

He walked on with the swan for some time, and came at last to a building-yard where some men were busily at work. They were all lost in admiration of the bird's beautiful plumage, and one forward youth, who was covered with clay from head to foot, called out, 'Oh, if I'd only one of those feathers how happy I should be!'

'Pull one out then,' said Peter kindly, and the youth seized one from the bird's tail; instantly the swan screamed, and Peter called out, 'Swan, hold fast,' and do what he could the poor youth couldn't get his hand away. The more he howled the more the others laughed, till a girl who had been washing clothes in the neighbouring stream hurried up to see what was the matter. When she saw the poor boy fastened to the swan she felt so sorry for him that she stretched out her hand to free him. The bird screamed.

'Swan, hold fast,' called out Peter, and the girl was caught also.

When Peter had gone on for a bit with his captives, they met a chimney sweep, who laughed loudly over the extraordinary troop, and asked the girl what she was doing.

'Oh, dearest John,' replied the girl, 'give me your hand and set me free from this cursed young man.'

‘Most certainly I will, if that’s all you want,’ replied the sweep, and gave the girl his hand. The bird screamed.

‘Swan, hold fast,’ said Peter, and the black man was added to their number.

They soon came to a village where a fair was being held. A travelling circus was giving a performance, and the clown was just doing his tricks. He opened his eyes wide with amazement when he saw the remarkable trio fastened on to the swan’s tail.

‘Have you gone raving mad, Blackie?’ he asked as well as he could for laughing.

‘It’s no laughing matter,’ the sweep replied. ‘This wench has got so tight hold of me that I feel as if I were glued to her. Do set me free, like a good clown, and I’ll do you a good turn some day.’

Without a moment’s hesitation the clown grasped the black outstretched hand. The bird screamed.

‘Swan, hold fast,’ called out Peter, and the clown became the fourth of the party.

Now in the front row of the spectators sat the respected and popular Mayor of the village, who was much put out by what he considered nothing but a foolish trick. So much annoyed was he that he seized the clown by the hand and tried to tear him away, in order to hand him over to the police.

Then the bird screamed, and Peter called out, ‘Swan, hold fast,’ and the dignified Mayor shared the fate of his predecessors.

The Mayoress, a long thin stick of a woman, enraged at the insult done to her husband, seized his free arm and tore at it with all her might, with the only result that she too was forced to swell the procession. After this no one else had any wish to join them.

Soon Peter saw the towers of the capital in front of him. Just before entering it, a glittering carriage came out to meet him, in which was seated a young lady as beautiful as the day, but with a very solemn and serious expression. But no sooner had she perceived the motley crowd fastened to the swan’s tail than she burst into a loud fit of laughter, in which she was joined by all her servants and ladies in waiting.

‘The Princess has laughed at last,’ they all cried with joy.

She stepped out of her carriage to look more closely at the wonderful sight, and laughed again over the capers the poor captives cut. She ordered her carriage to be turned round and drove slowly back into the town, never taking her eyes off Peter and his procession.

When the King heard the news that his daughter had actually laughed, he was more than delighted, and had Peter and his marvellous train brought before him. He laughed himself when he saw them till the tears rolled down his cheeks.

‘My good friend,’ he said to Peter, ‘do you know what I promised the person who succeeded in making the Princess laugh?’

‘No, I don’t,’ said Peter.

‘Then I’ll tell you,’ answered the King; ‘a thousand gold crowns or a piece of land. Which will you choose?’

Peter decided in favour of the land. Then he touched the youth, the girl, the sweep, the clown, the Mayor, and the Mayoress with his little stick, and they were all free again, and ran away home as if a fire were burning behind them; and their flight, as you may imagine, gave rise to renewed merriment.

Then the Princess felt moved to stroke the swan, at the same time admiring its plumage. The bird screamed.

‘Swan, hold fast,’ called out Peter, and so he won the Princess for his bride. But the swan flew up into the air, and vanished in the blue horizon. Peter now received a duchy as a present, and became a very great man indeed; but he did not forget the little old woman who had been the cause of all his good fortune, and appointed her as head housekeeper to him and his royal bride in their magnificent castle.

Kletke.

THE DIRTY SHEPHERDESS

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Once upon a time there lived a King who had two daughters, and he loved them with all his heart. When they grew up, he was suddenly seized with a wish to know if they, on their part, truly loved him, and he made up his mind that he would give his kingdom to whichever best proved her devotion.

So he called the elder Princess and said to her, ‘How much do you love me?’

‘As the apple of my eye!’ answered she.

‘Ah!’ exclaimed the King, kissing her tenderly as he spoke, ‘you are indeed a good daughter.’

Then he sent for the younger, and asked her how much she loved him.

‘I look upon you, my father,’ she answered, ‘as I look upon salt in my food.’

But the King did not like her words, and ordered her to quit the court, and never again to appear before him. The poor Princess went sadly up to her room and began to cry, but when she was reminded of her father’s commands, she dried her eyes, and made a bundle of her jewels and her best dresses and hurriedly left the castle where she was born.

She walked straight along the road in front of her, without knowing very well where she was going or what was to become of her, for she had never been shown how to work, and all she had learnt consisted of a few household rules, and receipts of dishes which her mother had taught her long ago. And as she was afraid that no housewife would want to engage a girl with such a pretty face, she determined to make herself as ugly as she could.

She therefore took off the dress that she was wearing and put on some horrible old rags belonging to a beggar, all torn and covered with mud. After that she smeared mud all over her hands and face, and shook her hair into a great tangle. Having thus changed her appearance, she went about offering herself as a goose-girl or shepherdess. But the farmers’ wives

would have nothing to say to such a dirty maiden, and sent her away with a morsel of bread for charity's sake.

After walking for a great many days without being able to find any work, she came to a large farm where they were in want of a shepherdess, and engaged her gladly.

One day when she was keeping her sheep in a lonely tract of land, she suddenly felt a wish to dress herself in her robes of splendour. She washed herself carefully in the stream, and as she always carried her bundle with her, it was easy to shake off her rags, and transform herself in a few moments into a great lady.

The King's son, who had lost his way out hunting, perceived this lovely damsel a long way off, and wished to look at her closer. But as soon as the girl saw what he was at, she fled into the wood as swiftly as a bird. The Prince ran after her, but as he was running he caught his foot in the root of a tree and fell, and when he got up again, she was nowhere to be seen.

When she was quite safe, she put on her rags again, and smeared over her face and hands. However the young Prince, who was both hot and thirsty, found his way to the farm, to ask for a drink of cider, and he inquired the name of the beautiful lady that kept the sheep. At this everyone began to laugh, for they said that the shepherdess was one of the ugliest and dirtiest creatures under the sun.

The Prince thought some witchcraft must be at work, and he hastened away before the return of the shepherdess, who became that evening the butt of everybody's jests.

But the King's son thought often of the lovely maiden whom he had only seen for a moment, though she seemed to him much more fascinating than any lady of the Court. At last he dreamed of nothing else, and grew thinner day by day till his parents inquired what was the matter, promising to do all they could to make him as happy as he once was. He dared not tell them the truth, lest they should laugh at him, so he only said that he should like some bread baked by the kitchen girl in the distant farm.

Although the wish appeared rather odd, they hastened to fulfil it, and the farmer was told the request of the King's son. The maiden showed no surprise at receiving such an order, but merely asked for some flour, salt, and water, and also that she might be left alone in a little room adjoining

the oven, where the kneading-trough stood. Before beginning her work she washed herself carefully, and even put on her rings; but, while she was baking, one of her rings slid into the dough. When she had finished she dirtied herself again, and let the lumps of the dough stick to her fingers, so that she became as ugly as before.

The loaf, which was a very little one, was brought to the King's son, who ate it with pleasure. But in cutting it he found the ring of the Princess, and declared to his parents that he would marry the girl whom that ring fitted.

So the King made a proclamation through his whole kingdom and ladies came from afar to lay claim to the honour. But the ring was so tiny that even those who had the smallest hands could only get it on their little fingers. In a short time all the maidens of the kingdom, including the peasant girls, had tried on the ring, and the King was just about to announce that their efforts had been in vain, when the Prince observed that he had not yet seen the shepherdess.

They sent to fetch her, and she arrived covered with rags, but with her hands cleaner than usual, so that she could easily slip on the ring. The King's son declared that he would fulfil his promise, and when his parents mildly remarked that the girl was only a keeper of sheep, and a very ugly one too, the maiden boldly said that she was born a princess, and that, if they would only give her some water and leave her alone in a room for a few minutes, she would show that she could look as well as anyone in fine clothes.

They did what she asked, and when she entered in a magnificent dress, she looked so beautiful that all saw she must be a princess in disguise. The King's son recognized the charming damsel of whom he had once caught a glimpse, and, flinging himself at her feet, asked if she would marry him. The Princess then told her story, and said that it would be necessary to send an ambassador to her father to ask his consent and to invite him to the wedding.

The Princess's father, who had never ceased to repent his harshness towards his daughter, had sought her through the land, but as no one could tell him anything of her, he supposed her dead. Therefore it was with great joy he heard that she was living and that a king's son asked her in

marriage, and he quitted his kingdom with his elder daughter so as to be present at the ceremony.

By the orders of the bride, they only served her father at the wedding breakfast bread without salt, and meat without seasoning. Seeing him make faces, and eat very little, his daughter, who sat beside him, inquired if his dinner was not to his taste.

‘No,’ he replied, ‘the dishes are carefully cooked and sent up, but they are all so dreadfully tasteless.’

‘Did not I tell you, my father, that salt was the best thing in life? And yet, when I compared you to salt, to show how much I loved you, you thought slightingly of me and you chased me from your presence.’

The King embraced his daughter, and allowed that he had been wrong to misinterpret her words. Then, for the rest of the wedding feast they gave him bread made with salt, and dishes with seasoning, and he said they were the very best he had ever eaten.

Sebillot.

THE ENCHANTED SNAKE

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There was once upon a time a poor woman who would have given all she possessed for a child, but she hadn’t one.

Now it happened one day that her husband went to the wood to collect brushwood, and when he had brought it home, he discovered a pretty little snake among the twigs.

When Sabatella, for that was the name of the peasant’s wife, saw the little beast, she sighed deeply and said, ‘Even the snakes have their brood; I alone am unfortunate and have no children.’ No sooner had she said these words than, to her intense surprise, the little snake looked up into her face and spoke: ‘Since you have no children, be a mother to me instead, and I promise you will never repent it, for I will love you as if I were your own son.’

At first Sabatella was frightened to death at hearing a snake speak, but plucking up her courage, she replied, ‘If it weren’t for any other reason than your kindly thought, I would agree to what you say, and I will love you and look after you like a mother.’

So she gave the snake a little hole in the house for its bed, fed it with all the nicest food she could think of, and seemed as if she never could show it enough kindness. Day by day it grew bigger and fatter, and at last one morning it said to Cola-Mattheo, the peasant, whom it always regarded as its father, ‘Dear papa, I am now of a suitable age and wish to marry.’

‘I’m quite agreeable,’ answered Mattheo, ‘and I’ll do my best to find another snake like yourself and arrange a match between you.’

‘Why, if you do that,’ replied the snake, ‘we shall be no better than the vipers and reptiles, and that’s not what I want at all. No; I’d much prefer to marry the King’s daughter; therefore I pray you go without further delay, and demand an audience of the King, and tell him a snake wishes to marry his daughter.’

Cola-Mattheo, who was rather a simpleton, went as he was desired to the King, and having obtained an audience, he said, ‘Your Majesty, I have often heard that people lose nothing by asking, so I have come to inform you that a snake wants to marry your daughter, and I’d be glad to know if you are willing to mate a dove with a serpent?’

The King, who saw at once that the man was a fool, said, in order to get quit of him, ‘Go home and tell your friend the snake that if he can turn this palace into ivory, inlaid with gold and silver, before to-morrow at noon, I will let him marry my daughter.’ And with a hearty laugh he dismissed the peasant.

When Cola-Mattheo brought this answer back to the snake, the little creature didn’t seem the least put out, but said, ‘To-morrow morning, before sunrise, you must go to the wood and gather a bunch of green herbs, and then rub the threshold of the palace with them, and you’ll see what will happen.’

Cola-Mattheo, who was, as I have said before, a great simpleton, made no reply; but before sunrise next morning he went to the wood and gathered a bunch of St. John’s Wort, and rosemary, and suchlike herbs, and rubbed them, as he had been told, on the floor of the palace. Hardly had he done so than the walls immediately turned into ivory, so richly inlaid with gold and silver that they dazzled the eyes of all beholders. The King, when he rose and saw the miracle that had been performed, was beside himself with amazement, and didn’t know what in the world he was to do.

But when Cola-Mattheo came next day, and, in the name of the snake, demanded the hand of the Princess, the King replied, ‘Don’t be in such a hurry; if the snake really wants to marry my daughter, he must do some more things first, and one of these is to turn all the paths and walls of my garden into pure gold before noon to-morrow.’

When the snake was told of this new condition, he replied, ‘To-morrow morning, early, you must go and collect all the odds and ends of rubbish you can find in the streets, and then take them and throw them on the paths and walls of the garden, and you’ll see then if we won’t be more than a match for the old King.’

So Cola-Mattheo rose at cock-crow, took a large basket under his arm, and carefully collected all the broken fragments of pots and pans, and jugs and lamps, and other trash of that sort. No sooner had he scattered them

over the paths and walls of the King's garden than they became one blaze of glittering gold, so that everyone's eyes were dazzled with the brilliancy, and everyone's soul was filled with wonder. The King, too, was amazed at the sight, but still he couldn't make up his mind to part with his daughter, so when Cola-Mattheo came to remind him of his promise he replied, 'I have still a third demand to make. If the snake can turn all the trees and fruit of my garden into precious stones, then I promise him my daughter in marriage.'

When the peasant informed the snake what the King had said, he replied, 'To-morrow morning, early, you must go to the market and buy all the fruit you see there, and then sow all the stones and seeds in the palace garden, and, if I'm not mistaken, the King will be satisfied with the result.'

Cola-Mattheo rose at dawn, and taking a basket on his arm, he went to the market, and bought all the pomegranates, apricots, cherries, and other fruit he could find there, and sowed the seeds and stones in the palace garden. In one moment, the trees were all ablaze with rubies, emeralds, diamonds, and every other precious stone you can think of.

This time the King felt obliged to keep his promise, and calling his daughter to him, he said, 'My dear Grannonia,' for that was the Princess's name, 'more as a joke than anything else, I demanded what seemed to me impossibilities from your bridegroom, but now that he has done all I required, I am bound to stick to my part of the bargain. Be a good child, and as you love me, do not force me to break my word, but give yourself up with as good grace as you can to a most unhappy fate.'

'Do with me what you like, my lord and father, for your will is my law,' answered Grannonia.

When the King heard this, he told Cola-Mattheo to bring the snake to the palace, and said that he was prepared to receive the creature as his son-in-law.

The snake arrived at court in a carriage made of gold and drawn by six white elephants; but wherever it appeared on the way, the people fled in terror at the sight of the fearful reptile.

When the snake reached the palace, all the courtiers shook and trembled with fear down to the very scullion, and the King and Queen were in such a state of nervous collapse that they hid themselves in a far-

away turret. Grannonia alone kept her presence of mind, and although both her father and mother implored her to fly for her life, she wouldn't move a step, saying, 'I'm certainly not going to fly from the man you have chosen for my husband.'

As soon as the snake saw Grannonia, it wound its tail round her and kissed her. Then, leading her into a room, it shut the door, and throwing off its skin, it changed into a beautiful young man with golden locks, and flashing eyes, who embraced Grannonia tenderly, and said all sorts of pretty things to her.

When the King saw the snake shut itself into a room with his daughter, he said to his wife, 'Heaven be merciful to our child, for I fear it is all over with her now. This cursed snake has most likely swallowed her up.' Then they put their eyes to the keyhole to see what had happened.

Their amazement knew no bounds when they saw a beautiful youth standing before their daughter with the snake's skin lying on the floor beside him. In their excitement they burst open the door, and seizing the skin they threw it into the fire. But no sooner had they done this than the young man called out, 'Oh, wretched people! what have you done?' and before they had time to look round he had changed himself into a dove, and dashing against the window he broke a pane of glass, and flew away from their sight.

But Grannonia, who in one and the same moment saw herself merry and sad, cheerful and despairing, rich and beggared, complained bitterly over this robbery of her happiness, this poisoning of her cup of joy, this unlucky stroke of fortune, and laid all the blame on her parents, though they assured her that they had meant no harm. But the Princess refused to be comforted, and at night, when all the inhabitants of the palace were asleep, she stole out by a back door, disguised as a peasant woman, determined to seek for her lost happiness till she found it. When she got to the outskirts of the town, led by the light of the moon, she met a fox, who offered to accompany her, an offer which Grannonia gladly accepted, saying 'You are most heartily welcome, for I don't know my way at all about the neighbourhood.'

So they went on their way together, and came at last to a wood, where, being tired with walking, they paused to rest under the shade of a tree,

where a spring of water sported with the tender grass, refreshing it with its crystal spray.

They laid themselves down on the green carpet and soon fell fast asleep, and did not waken again till the sun was high in the heavens. They rose up and stood for some time listening to the birds singing, because Grannonia delighted in their songs.

When the fox perceived this, he said: ‘If you only understood, as I do, what these little birds are saying, your pleasure would be even greater.’

Provoked by his words—for we all know that curiosity is as deeply inborn in every woman as even the love of talking—Grannonia implored the fox to tell her what the birds had said.

At first the wily fox refused to tell her what he had gathered from the conversation of the birds, but at last he gave way to her entreaties, and told her that they had spoken of the misfortunes of a beautiful young Prince, whom a wicked enchantress had turned into a snake for the period of seven years. At the end of this time he had fallen in love with a charming Princess, but that when he had shut himself up into a room with her, and had thrown off his snake’s skin, her parents had forced their way into the room and had burnt the skin, whereupon the Prince, changed into the likeness of a dove, had broken a pane of glass in trying to fly out of the window, and had wounded himself so badly that the doctors despaired of his life.

Grannonia, when she learnt that they were talking of her lover, asked at once whose son he was, and if there was any hope of his recovery; to which the fox made answer that the birds had said he was the son of the King of Vallone Grosso, and that the only thing that could cure him was to rub the wounds on his head with the blood of the very birds who had told the tale.

Then Grannonia knelt down before the fox, and begged him in her sweetest way to catch the birds for her and procure their blood, promising at the same time to reward him richly.

‘All right,’ said the fox, ‘only don’t be in such a hurry; let’s wait till night, when the little birds have gone to roost, then I’ll climb up and catch them all for you.’

So they passed the day, talking now of the beauty of the Prince, now of the father of the Princess, and then of the misfortune that had happened. At

last the night arrived, and all the little birds were asleep high up on the branches of a big tree. The fox climbed up stealthily and caught the little creatures with his paws one after the other; and when he had killed them all he put their blood into a little bottle which he wore at his side and returned with it to Grannonia, who was beside herself with joy at the result of the fox's raid. But the fox said, 'My dear daughter, your joy is in vain, because, let me tell you, this blood is of no earthly use to you unless you add some of mine to it,' and with these words he took to his heels.

Grannonia, who saw her hopes dashed to the ground in this cruel way, had recourse to flattery and cunning, weapons which have often stood the sex in good stead, and called out after the fox, 'Father Fox, you would be quite right to save your skin, if, in the first place, I didn't feel I owed so much to you, and if, in the second, there weren't other foxes in the world; but as you know how grateful I feel to you, and as there are heaps of other foxes about, you can trust yourself to me. Don't behave like the cow that kicks the pail over after it has filled it with milk, but continue your journey with me, and when we get to the capital you can sell me to the King as a servant girl.'

It never entered the fox's head that even foxes can be outwitted, so after a bit he consented to go with her; but he hadn't gone far before the cunning girl seized a stick, and gave him such a blow with it on the head, that he dropped down dead on the spot. Then Grannonia took some of his blood and poured it into her little bottle; and went on her way as fast as she could to Vallone Grosso.

When she arrived there she went straight to the Royal palace, and let the King be told she had come to cure the young Prince.

The King commanded her to be brought before him at once, and was much astonished when he saw that it was a girl who undertook to do what all the cleverest doctors of his kingdom had failed in. As an attempt hurts no one, he willingly consented that she should do what she could.

'All I ask,' said Grannonia, 'is that, should I succeed in what you desire, you will give me your son in marriage.'

The King, who had given up all hopes of his son's recovery, replied: 'Only restore him to life and health and he shall be yours. It is only fair to give her a husband who gives me a son.'

And so they went into the Prince’s room. The moment Grannonia had rubbed the blood on his wounds the illness left him, and he was as sound and well as ever. When the King saw his son thus marvellously restored to life and health, he turned to him and said: ‘My dear son, I thought of you as dead, and now, to my great joy and amazement, you are alive again. I promised this young woman that if she should cure you, to bestow your hand and heart on her, and seeing that Heaven has been gracious, you must fulfil the promise I made her; for gratitude alone forces me to pay this debt.’

But the Prince answered: ‘My lord and father, I would that my will were as free as my love for you is great. But as I have plighted my word to another maiden, you will see yourself, and so will this young woman, that I cannot go back from my word, and be faithless to her whom I love.’

When Grannonia heard these words, and saw how deeply rooted the Prince’s love for her was, she felt very happy, and blushing rosy red, she said: ‘But should I get the other lady to give up her rights, would you then consent to marry me?’

‘Far be it from me,’ replied the Prince, ‘to banish the beautiful picture of my love from my heart. Whatever she may say, my heart and desire will remain the same, and though I were to lose my life for it, I couldn’t consent to this exchange.’

Grannonia could keep silence no longer, and throwing off her peasant’s disguise, she discovered herself to the Prince, who was nearly beside himself with joy when he recognised his fair lady-love. He then told his father at once who she was, and what she had done and suffered for his sake.

Then they invited the King and Queen of Starza-Longa to their Court, and had a great wedding feast, and proved once more that there is no better seasoning for the joys of true love than a few pangs of grief.

THE BITER BIT

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Once upon a time there lived a man called Simon, who was very rich, but at the same time as stingy and miserly as he could be. He had a housekeeper called Nina, a clever capable woman, and as she did her work carefully and conscientiously, her master had the greatest respect for her.

In his young days Simon had been one of the gayest and most active youths of the neighbourhood, but as he grew old and stiff he found it very difficult to walk, and his faithful servant urged him to get a horse so as to save his poor old bones. At last Simon gave way to the request and persuasive eloquence of his housekeeper, and betook himself one day to the market where he had seen a mule, which he thought would just suit him, and which he bought for seven gold pieces.

Now it happened that there were three merry rascals hanging about the market-place, who much preferred living on other people's goods to working for their own living. As soon as they saw that Simon had bought a mule, one of them said to his two boon companions, 'My friends, this mule must be ours before we are many hours older.'

'But how shall we manage it,' asked one of them.

'We must all three station ourselves at different intervals along the old man's homeward way, and must each in his turn declare that the mule he has bought is a donkey. If we only stick to it you'll see the mule will soon be ours.' This proposal quite satisfied the others, and they all separated as they had agreed.

Now when Simon came by, the first rogue said to him, 'God bless you, my fine gentleman.'

'Thanks for your courtesy,' replied Simon.

'Where have you been?' asked the thief.

'To the market,' was the reply.

'And what did you buy there?' continued the rogue.

'This mule.'

'Which mule?'

‘The one I’m sitting upon, to be sure,’ replied Simon.

‘Are you in earnest, or only joking?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Because it seems to me you’ve got hold of a donkey, and not of a mule.’

‘A donkey? Rubbish!’ screamed Simon, and without another word he rode on his way. After a few hundred yards he met the second confederate, who addressed him, ‘Good day, dear sir, where are you coming from?’

‘From the market,’ answered Simon.

‘Did things go pretty cheap?’ asked the other.

‘I should just think so,’ said Simon.

‘And did you make any good bargain yourself?’

‘I bought this mule on which you see me.’

‘Is it possible that you really bought that beast for a mule?’

‘Why certainly.’

‘But, good heavens, it’s nothing but a donkey!’

‘A donkey!’ repeated Simon, ‘you don’t mean to say so; if a single other person tells me that, I’ll make him a present of the wretched animal.’

With these words he continued his way, and very soon met the third knave, who said to him, ‘God bless you, sir; are you by any chance coming from the market?’

‘Yes, I am,’ replied Simon.

‘And what bargain did you drive there?’ asked the cunning fellow.

‘I bought this mule on which I am riding.’

‘A mule! Are you speaking seriously, or do you wish to make a fool of me?’

‘I’m speaking in sober earnest,’ said Simon; ‘it wouldn’t occur to me to make a joke of it.’

‘Oh, my poor friend,’ cried the rascal, ‘don’t you see that is a donkey and not a mule? you have been taken in by some wretched cheats.’

‘You are the third person in the last two hours who has told me the same thing,’ said Simon, ‘but I couldn’t believe it,’ and dismounting from the mule he spoke: ‘Keep the animal, I make you a present of it.’ The rascal took the beast, thanked him kindly, and rode on to join his comrades, while Simon continued his journey on foot.

As soon as the old man got home, he told his housekeeper that he had bought a beast under the belief that it was a mule, but that it had turned out to be a donkey—at least, so he had been assured by several people he had met on the road, and that in disgust he had at last given it away.

‘Oh, you simpleton!’ cried Nina; ‘didn’t you see that they were only playing you a trick? Really, I thought you’d have had more gumption than that; they wouldn’t have taken me in in that way.’

‘Never mind,’ replied Simon, ‘I’ll play them one worth two of that; for depend upon it they won’t be contented with having got the donkey out of me, but they’ll try by some new dodge to get something more, or I’m much mistaken.’

Now there lived in the village not far from Simon’s house, a peasant who had two goats, so alike in every respect that it was impossible to distinguish one from the other. Simon bought them both, paid as small a price as he could for them, and leading them home with him, he told Nina to prepare a good meal, as he was going to invite some friends to dinner. He ordered her to roast some veal, and to boil a pair of chickens, and gave her some herbs to make a good savoury, and told her to bake the best tart she could make. Then he took one of the goats and tied it to a post in the courtyard, and gave it some grass to eat; but he bound a cord round the neck of the other goat and led it to the market.

Hardly had he arrived there, than the three gentlemen who had got his mule perceived him, and coming up to him said: ‘Welcome, Mr. Simon, what brings you here; are you on the look out for a bargain?’

‘I’ve come to get some provisions,’ he answered, ‘because some friends are coming to dine with me today, and it would give me much pleasure if you were to honour me with your company also.’

The accomplices willingly accepted this invitation; and after Simon had made all his purchases, he tied them on to the goat’s back, and said to it, in the presence of the three cheats, ‘Go home now, and tell Nina to roast the veal, and boil the chickens, and tell her to prepare a savoury with herbs, and to bake the best tart she can make. Have you followed me? Then go, and Heaven’s blessing go with you.’

As soon as it felt itself free, the laden goat trotted off as quickly as it could, and to this day nobody knows what became of it. But Simon, after

wandering about the market for some time with his three friends and some others he had picked up, returned home to his house.

When he and his guests entered the courtyard, they noticed the goat tied to the post quietly chewing the cud. They were not a little astonished at this, for of course they thought it was the same goat that Simon had sent home laden with provisions. As soon as they reached the house Mr. Simon said to his housekeeper, ‘Well, Nina, have you done what I told the goat to tell you to do?’ The artful woman, who at once understood her master, answered, ‘Certainly I have. The veal is roasted, and the chickens boiled.’

‘That’s all right,’ said Simon.

When the three rogues saw the cooked meats, and the tart in the oven, and heard Nina’s words, they were nearly beside themselves with amazement, and began to consult at once how they were to get the goat into their own possession. At last, towards the end of the meal, having sought in vain for some cunning dodge to get the goat away from Mr. Simon, one of them said to him, ‘My worthy host, you must sell your goat to us.’

Simon replied that he was most unwilling to part with the creature, as no amount of money would make up to him for its loss; still, if they were quite set on it, he would let them have the goat for fifty gold pieces.

The knaves, who thought they were doing a capital piece of business, paid down the fifty gold pieces at once, and left the house quite happily, leading the goat with them. When they got home they said to their wives, ‘You needn’t begin to cook the dinner to-morrow till we send the provisions home.’

The following day they went to the market and bought chickens and other eatables, and after they had packed them on the back of the goat (which they had brought with them), they told it all the dishes they wished their wives to prepare. As soon as the goat felt itself free, it ran as quickly as it could, and was very soon lost to sight, and, as far as I know, was never heard of again.

When the dinner hour approached all three went home and asked their wives if the goat had returned with the necessary provisions, and had told them what they wished prepared for their meal.

‘Oh, you fools and blockheads!’ cried their wives, ‘how could you ever believe for a moment that a goat would do the work of a servant-maid?

You have been finely deceived for once in a way. Of course, if you are always taking in other people, your turn to be taken in comes too, and this time you've been made to look pretty foolish.'

When the three comrades saw that Mr. Simon had got the better of them, and done them out of fifty gold pieces, they flew into such a rage that they made up their minds to kill him, and, seizing their weapons for this purpose, went to his house.

But the sly old man, who was terrified for his life that the three rogues might do him some harm, was on his guard, and said to his housekeeper, 'Nina, take this bladder, which is filled with blood, and hide it under your cloak; then when these thieves come I'll lay all the blame on you, and will pretend to be so angry with you that I will run at you with my knife, and pierce the bladder with it; then you must fall on the ground as if you were dead, and leave the rest to me.'

Hardly had Simon said these words when the three rogues appeared and fell on him to kill him.

'My friends,' called out Simon to then, 'what do you accuse me of? I am in no way to blame; perhaps my housekeeper has done you some injury of which I know nothing.' And with these words, he turned on Nina with his knife, and stuck it right into her, so that he pierced the bladder filled with blood. Instantly the housekeeper fell down as if she were dead, and the blood streamed all over the ground.

Simon then pretended to be seized with remorse at the sight of this dreadful catastrophe, and cried out in a loud voice, 'Unhappy wretch that I am! What have I done? Like a madman I have killed the woman who is the prop and stay of my old age. How could I ever go on living without her?' Then he seized a pipe, and when he had blown into it for some time Nina sprang up alive and well.

The rogues were more amazed than ever; they forgot their anger, and buying the pipe for two hundred gold pieces, they went joyfully home.

Not long after this one of them quarrelled with his wife, and in his rage he thrust his knife into her breast so that she fell dead on the ground. Then he took Simon's pipe and blew into it with all his might, in the hopes of calling his wife back to life. But he blew in vain, for the poor soul was as dead as a door-nail.

When one of his comrades heard what had happened, he said, ‘You blockhead, you can’t have done it properly; just let me have a try,’ and with these words he seized his wife by the roots of her hair, cut her throat with a razor, and then took the pipe and blew into it with all his might but he couldn’t bring her back to life. The same thing happened to the third rogue, so that they were now all three without wives.

Full of wrath they ran to Simon’s house, and, refusing to listen to a word of explanation or excuse, they seized the old man and put him into a sack, meaning to drown him in the neighbouring river. On their way there, however, a sudden noise threw them into such a panic that they dropped the sack with Simon in it and ran for their lives.

Soon after this a shepherd happened to pass by with his flock, and while he was slowly following the sheep, who paused here and there by the wayside to browse on the tender grass, he heard a pitiful voice wailing, ‘They insist on my taking her, and I don’t want her, for I am too old, and I really can’t have her.’ The shepherd was much startled, for he couldn’t make out where these words, which were repeated more than once, came from, and looked about him to the right and left; at last he perceived the sack in which Simon was hidden, and going up to it he opened it and discovered Simon repeating his dismal complaint. The shepherd asked him why he had been left there tied up in a sack.

Simon replied that the king of the country had insisted on giving him one of his daughters as a wife, but that he had refused the honour because he was too old and too frail. The simple-minded shepherd, who believed his story implicitly, asked him, ‘Do you think the king of the country would give his daughter to me?’

‘Yes, certainly, I know he would,’ answered Simon, ‘if you were tied up in this sack instead of me.’ Then getting out of the sack, he tied the confiding shepherd up in it instead, and at his request fastened it securely and drove the sheep on himself.

An hour had scarcely passed when the three rogues returned to the place where they had left Simon in the sack, and without opening it, one of them seized it and threw it into the river. And so the poor shepherd was drowned instead of Mr. Simon!

The three rogues, having wreaked their vengeance, set out, for home. On their way they noticed a flock of sheep grazing not far from the road.

They longed to steal a few of the lambs, and approached the flock, and were more than startled to recognise Mr. Simon, whom they had drowned in the river, as the shepherd who was looking after the sheep. They asked him how he had managed to get out of the river, to which he replied:

‘Get along with you—you are no better than silly donkeys without any sense; if you had only drowned me in deeper water I would have returned with three times as many sheep.’

When the three rogues heard this, they said to him: ‘Oh, dear Mr. Simon, do us the favour to tie us up in sacks and throw us into the river that we may give up our thieving ways and become the owners of flocks.’

‘I am ready,’ answered Simon, ‘to do what you please; there’s nothing in the world I wouldn’t do for you.’

So he took three strong sacks and put a man in each of them, and fastened them up so tightly that they couldn’t get out, and then he threw them all into the river; and that was the end of the three rogues. But Mr. Simon returned home to his faithful Nina rich in flocks and gold, and lived for many a year in health and happiness.

Kletke.

KING KOJATA

(From the Russian)

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There was once upon a time a king called Kojata, whose beard was so long that it reached below his knees. Three years had passed since his marriage, and he lived very happily with his wife, but Heaven granted him no heir, which grieved the King greatly. One day he set forth from his capital, in order to make a journey through his kingdom. He travelled for nearly a year through the different parts of his territory, and then, having seen all there was to be seen, he set forth on his homeward way. As the day was very hot and sultry he commanded his servants to pitch tents in the open field, and there await the cool of the evening. Suddenly a frightful thirst seized the King, and as he saw no water near, he mounted his horse, and rode through the neighbourhood looking for a spring. Before long he came to a well filled to the brim with water clear as crystal, and on the bosom of which a golden jug was floating. King Kojata at once tried to seize the vessel, but though he endeavoured to grasp it with his right hand, and then with his left, the wretched thing always eluded his efforts and refused to let itself be caught. First with one hand, and then with two, did the King try to seize it, but like a fish the goblet always slipped through his fingers and bobbed to the ground only to reappear at some other place, and mock the King.

‘Plague on you!’ said King Kojata. ‘I can quench my thirst without you,’ and bending over the well he lapped up the water so greedily that he plunged his face, beard and all, right into the crystal mirror. But when he had satisfied his thirst, and wished to raise himself up, he couldn’t lift his head, because someone held his beard fast in the water. ‘Who’s there? let me go!’ cried King Kojata, but there was no answer; only an awful face looked up from the bottom of the well with two great green eyes, glowing like emeralds, and a wide mouth reaching from ear to ear showing two rows of gleaming white teeth, and the King’s beard was held, not by mortal hands, but by two claws. At last a hoarse voice sounded from the

depths. ‘Your trouble is all in vain, King Kojata; I will only let you go on condition that you give me something you know nothing about, and which you will find on your return home.’

The King didn’t pause to ponder long, ‘for what,’ thought he, ‘could be in my palace without my knowing about it—the thing is absurd;’ so he answered quickly:

‘Yes, I promise that you shall have it.’

The voice replied, ‘Very well; but it will go ill with you if you fail to keep your promise.’ Then the claws relaxed their hold, and the face disappeared in the depths. The King drew his chin out of the water, and shook himself like a dog; then he mounted his horse and rode thoughtfully home with his retinue. When they approached the capital, all the people came out to meet them with great joy and acclamation, and when the King reached his palace the Queen met him on the threshold; beside her stood the Prime Minister, holding a little cradle in his hands, in which lay a new-born child as beautiful as the day. Then the whole thing dawned on the King, and groaning deeply he muttered to himself ‘So this is what I did not know about,’ and the tears rolled down his cheeks. All the courtiers standing round were much amazed at the King’s grief, but no one dared to ask him the cause of it. He took the child in his arms and kissed it tenderly; then laying it in its cradle, he determined to control his emotion and began to reign again as before.

The secret of the King remained a secret, though his grave, careworn expression escaped no one’s notice. In the constant dread that his child would be taken from him, poor Kojata knew no rest night or day. However, time went on and nothing happened. Days and months and years passed, and the Prince grew up into a beautiful youth, and at last the King himself forgot all about the incident that had happened so long ago.

One day the Prince went out hunting, and going in pursuit of a wild boar he soon lost the other huntsmen, and found himself quite alone in the middle of a dark wood. The trees grew so thick and near together that it was almost impossible to see through them, only straight in front of him lay a little patch of meadowland. Overgrown with thistles and rank weeds, in the centre of which a leafy lime tree reared itself. Suddenly a rustling sound was heard in the hollow of the tree, and an extraordinary old man with green eyes and chin crept out of it.

‘A fine day, Prince Milan,’ he said; ‘you’ve kept me waiting a good number of years; it was high time for you to come and pay me a visit.’

‘Who are you, in the name of wonder?’ demanded the astonished Prince.

‘You’ll find out soon enough, but in the meantime do as I bid you. Greet your father King Kojata from me, and don’t forget to remind him of his debt; the time has long passed since it was due, but now he will have to pay it. Farewell for the present; we shall meet again.’

With these words the old man disappeared into the tree, and the Prince returned home rather startled, and told his father all that he had seen and heard.

The King grew as white as a sheet when he heard the Prince’s story, and said, ‘Woe is me, my son! The time has come when we must part,’ and with a heavy heart he told the Prince what had happened at the time of his birth.

‘Don’t worry or distress yourself, dear father,’ answered Prince Milan. ‘Things are never as bad as they look. Only give me a horse for my journey, and I wager you’ll soon see me back again.’

The King gave him a beautiful charger, with golden stirrups, and a sword. The Queen hung a little cross round his neck, and after much weeping and lamentation the Prince bade them all farewell and set forth on his journey.

He rode straight on for two days, and on the third he came to a lake as smooth as glass and as clear as crystal. Not a breath of wind moved, not a leaf stirred, all was silent as the grave, only on the still bosom of the lake thirty ducks, with brilliant plumage, swam about in the water. Not far from the shore Prince Milan noticed thirty little white garments lying on the grass, and dismounting from his horse, he crept down under the high bulrushes, took one of the garments and hid himself with it behind the bushes which grew round the lake. The ducks swam about all over the place, dived down into the depths and rose again and glided through the waves. At last, tired of disporting themselves, they swam to the shore, and twenty-nine of them put on their little white garments and instantly turned into so many beautiful maidens. Then they finished dressing and disappeared. Only the thirtieth little duck couldn’t come to the land; it swam about close to the shore, and, giving out a piercing cry, it stretched

its neck up timidly, gazed wildly around, and then dived under again. Prince Milan's heart was so moved with pity for the poor little creature that he came out from behind the bulrushes, to see if he could be of any help. As soon as the duck perceived him, it cried in a human voice, 'Oh, dear Prince Milan, for the love of Heaven give me back my garment, and I will be so grateful to you.' The Prince lay the little garment on the bank beside her, and stepped back into the bushes. In a few seconds a beautiful girl in a white robe stood before him, so fair and sweet and young that no pen could describe her. She gave the Prince her hand and spoke.

'Many thanks, Prince Milan, for your courtesy. I am the daughter of a wicked magician, and my name is Hyacinthia. My father has thirty young daughters, and is a mighty ruler in the underworld, with many castles and great riches. He has been expecting you for ages, but you need have no fear if you will only follow my advice. As soon as you come into the presence of my father, throw yourself at once on the ground and approach him on your knees. Don't mind if he stamps furiously with his feet and curses and swears. I'll attend to the rest, and in the meantime we had better be off.'

With these words the beautiful Hyacinthia stamped on the ground with her little foot, and the earth opened and they both sank down into the lower world.

The palace of the Magician was all hewn out of a single carbuncle, lighting up the whole surrounding region, and Prince Milan walked into it gaily.

The Magician sat on a throne, a sparkling crown on his head; his eyes blazed like a green fire, and instead of hands he had claws. As soon as Prince Milan entered he flung himself on his knees. The Magician stamped loudly with his feet, glared frightfully out of his green eyes, and cursed so loudly that the whole underworld shook. But the Prince, mindful of the counsel he had been given, wasn't the least afraid, and approached the throne still on his knees. At last the Magician laughed aloud and said, 'You rogue, you have been well advised to make me laugh; I won't be your enemy any more. Welcome to the underworld! All the same, for your delay in coming here, we must demand three services from you. For to-day you may go, but to-morrow I shall have something more to say to you.'

Then two servants led Prince Milan to a beautiful apartment, and he lay down fearlessly on the soft bed that had been prepared for him, and was soon fast asleep.

Early the next morning the Magician sent for him, and said, ‘Let’s see now what you’ve learnt. In the first place you must build me a palace to-night, the roof of purest gold, the walls of marble, and the windows of crystal; all round you must lay out a beautiful garden, with fish-ponds and artistic waterfalls. If you do all this, I will reward you richly; but if you don’t, you shall lose your head.’

‘Oh, you wicked monster!’ thought Prince Milan, ‘you might as well have put me to death at once.’ Sadly he returned to his room, and with bent head sat brooding over his cruel fate till evening. When it grew dark, a little bee flew by, and knocking at the window, it said, ‘Open, and let me in.’

Milan opened the window quickly, and as soon as the bee had entered, it changed into the beautiful Hyacinthia.

‘Good evening, Prince Milan. Why are you so sad?’

‘How can I help being sad? Your father threatens me with death, and I see myself already without a head.’

‘And what have you made up your mind to do?’

‘There’s nothing to be done, and after all I suppose one can only die once.’

‘Now, don’t be so foolish, my dear Prince; but keep up your spirits, for there is no need to despair. Go to bed, and when you wake up to-morrow morning the palace will be finished. Then you must go all round it, giving a tap here and there on the walls to look as if you had just finished it.’

And so it all turned out just as she had said. As soon as it was daylight Prince Milan stepped out of his room, and found a palace which was quite a work of art down to the very smallest detail. The Magician himself was not a little astonished at its beauty, and could hardly believe his eyes.

‘Well, you certainly are a splendid workman,’ he said to the Prince. ‘I see you are very clever with your hands, now I must see if you are equally accomplished with your head. I have thirty daughters in my house, all beautiful princesses. To-morrow I will place the whole thirty in a row. You must walk past them three times, and the third time you must show me

which is my youngest daughter Hyacinthia. If you don’t guess rightly, you shall lose your head.’

‘This time you’ve made a mistake,’ thought Prince Milan, and going to his room he sat down at the window. Just fancy my not recognising the beautiful Hyacinthia! Why, that is the easiest thing in the world.’

‘Not so easy as you think,’ cried the little bee, who was flying past. ‘If I weren’t to help you, you’d never guess. We are thirty sisters so exactly alike that our own father can hardly distinguish us apart.’

‘Then what am I to do?’ asked Prince Milan.

‘Listen,’ answered Hyacinthia. ‘You will recognise me by a tiny fly I shall have on my left cheek, but be careful for you might easily make a mistake.’

The next day the Magician again commanded Prince Milan to be led before him. His daughters were all arranged in a straight row in front of him, dressed exactly alike, and with their eyes bent on the ground.

‘Now, you genius,’ said the Magician, ‘look at these beauties three times, and then tell us which is the Princess Hyacinthia.’

Prince Milan went past them and looked at them closely. But they were all so precisely alike that they looked like one face reflected in thirty mirrors, and the fly was nowhere to be seen; the second time he passed them he still saw nothing; but the third time he perceived a little fly stealing down one cheek, causing it to blush a faint pink. Then the Prince seized the girl’s hand and cried out, ‘This is the Princess Hyacinthia!’

‘You’re right again,’ said the Magician in amazement; ‘but I’ve still another task for you to do. Before this candle, which I shall light, burns to the socket, you must have made me a pair of boots reaching to my knees. If they aren’t finished in that time, off comes your head.’

The Prince returned to his room in despair; then the Princess Hyacinthia came to him once more changed into the likeness of a bee, and asked him, ‘Why so sad, Prince Milan?’

‘How can I help being sad? Your father has set me this time an impossible task. Before a candle which he has lit burns to the socket, I am to make a pair of boots. But what does a prince know of shoemaking? If I can’t do it, I lose my head.’

‘And what do you mean to do?’ asked Hyacinthia.

‘Well, what is there to be done? What he demands I can’t and won’t do, so he must just make an end of me.’

‘Not so, dearest. I love you dearly, and you shall marry me, and I’ll either save your life or die with you. We must fly now as quickly as we can, for there is no other way of escape.’

With these words she breathed on the window, and her breath froze on the pane. Then she led Milan out of the room with her, shut the door, and threw the key away. Hand in hand, they hurried to the spot where they had descended into the lower world, and at last reached the banks of the lake. Prince Milan’s charger was still grazing on the grass which grew near the water. The horse no sooner recognized his master, than it neighed loudly with joy, and springing towards him, it stood as if rooted to the ground, while Prince Milan and Hyacinthia jumped on its back. Then it sped onwards like an arrow from a bow.

In the meantime the Magician was waiting impatiently for the Prince. Enraged by the delay, he sent his servants to fetch him, for the appointed time was past.

The servants came to the door, and finding it locked, they knocked; but the frozen breath on the window replied in Prince Milan’s voice, ‘I am coming directly.’ With this answer they returned to the Magician. But when the Prince still did not appear, after a time he sent his servants a second time to bring him. The frozen breath always gave the same answer, but the Prince never came. At last the Magician lost all patience, and commanded the door to be burst open. But when his servants did so, they found the room empty, and the frozen breath laughed aloud. Out of his mind with rage, the Magician ordered the Prince to be pursued.

Then a wild chase began. ‘I hear horses’ hoofs behind us,’ said Hyacinthia to the Prince. Milan sprang from the saddle, put his ear to the ground and listened. ‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘they are pursuing us, and are quite close.’ ‘Then no time must be lost,’ said Hyacinthia, and she immediately turned herself into a river, Prince Milan into an iron bridge, and the charger into a blackbird. Behind the bridge the road branched off into three ways.

The Magician’s servants hurried after the fresh tracks, but when they came to the bridge, they stood, not knowing which road to take, as the footprints stopped suddenly, and there were three paths for them to choose

from. In fear and trembling they returned to tell the Magician what had happened. He flew into a dreadful rage when he saw them, and screamed out, ‘Oh, you fools! the river and bridge were they! Go back and bring them to me at once, or it will be the worse for you.’

Then the pursuit began afresh. ‘I hear horses’ hoofs,’ sighed Hyacinthia. The Prince dismounted and put his ear to the ground. ‘They are hurrying after us, and are already quite near.’ In a moment the Princess Hyacinthia had changed herself, the Prince, and his charger into a thick wood where a thousand paths and roads crossed each other. Their pursuers entered the forest, but searched in vain for Prince Milan and his bride. At last they found themselves back at the same spot they had started from, and in despair they returned once more with empty hands to the Magician.

‘Then I’ll go after the wretches myself,’ he shouted. ‘Bring a horse at once; they shan’t escape me.’

Once more the beautiful Hyacinthia murmured, ‘I hear horses’ hoofs quite near.’ And the Prince answered, ‘They are pursuing us hotly and are quite close.’

‘We are lost now, for that is my father himself. But at the first church we come to his power ceases; he may chase us no further. Hand me your cross.’

Prince Milan loosened from his neck the little gold cross his mother had given him, and as soon as Hyacinthia grasped it, she had changed herself into a church, Milan into a monk, and the horse into a belfry. They had hardly done this when the magician and his servants rode up.

‘Did you see no one pass by on horseback, reverend father?’ he asked the monk.

‘Prince Milan and Princess Hyacinthia have just gone on this minute; they stopped for a few minutes in the church to say their prayers, and bade me light this wax candle for you, and give you their love.’

‘I’d like to wring their necks,’ said the magician, and made all haste home, where he had every one of his servants beaten to within an inch of their lives.

Prince Milan rode on slowly with his bride without fearing any further pursuit. The sun was just setting, and its last rays lit up a large city they were approaching. Prince Milan was suddenly seized with an ardent desire to enter the town.

‘Oh my beloved,’ implored Hyacinthia, ‘please don’t go; for I am frightened and fear some evil.’

‘What are you afraid of?’ asked the Prince. ‘We’ll only go and look at what’s to be seen in the town for about an hour, and then we’ll continue our journey to my father’s kingdom.’

‘The town is easy to get into, but more difficult to get out of,’ sighed Hyacinthia. ‘But let it be as you wish. Go, and I will await you here, but I will first change myself into a white milestone; only I pray you be very careful. The King and Queen of the town will come out to meet you, leading a little child with them. Whatever you do, don’t kiss the child, or you will forget me and all that has happened to us. I will wait for you here for three days.’

The Prince hurried to the town, but Hyacinthia remained behind disguised as a white milestone on the road. The first day passed, and then the second, and at last the third also, but Prince Milan did not return, for he had not taken Hyacinthia’s advice. The King and Queen came out to meet him as she had said, leading with them a lovely fair-haired little girl, whose eyes shone like two clear stars. The child at once caressed the Prince, who, carried away by its beauty, bent down and kissed it on the cheek. From that moment his memory became a blank, and he forgot all about the beautiful Hyacinthia.

When the Prince did not return, poor Hyacinthia wept bitterly and changing herself from a milestone into a little blue field flower, she said, ‘I will grow here on the wayside till some passer-by tramples me under foot.’ And one of her tears remained as a dewdrop and sparkled on the little blue flower.

Now it happened shortly after this that an old man passed by, and seeing the flower, he was delighted with its beauty. He pulled it up carefully by the roots and carried it home. Here he planted it in a pot, and watered and tended the little plant carefully. And now the most extraordinary thing happened, for from this moment everything in the old man’s house was changed. When he awoke in the morning he always found his room tidied and put into such beautiful order that not a speck of dust was to be found anywhere. When he came home at midday, he found a table laid out with the most dainty food, and he had only to sit down and enjoy himself to his heart’s content. At first he was so surprised he didn’t

know what to think, but after a time he grew a little uncomfortable, and went to an old witch to ask for advice.

The witch said, ‘Get up before the cock crows, and watch carefully till you see something move, and then throw this cloth quickly over it, and you’ll see what will happen.’

All night the old man never closed an eye. When the first ray of light entered the room, he noticed that the little blue flower began to tremble, and at last it rose out of the pot and flew about the room, put everything in order, swept away the dust, and lit the fire. In great haste the old man sprang from his bed, and covered the flower with the cloth the old witch had given him, and in a moment the beautiful Princess Hyacinthia stood before him.

‘What have you done?’ she cried. ‘Why have you called me back to life? For I have no desire to live since my bridegroom, the beautiful Prince Milan, has deserted me.’

‘Prince Milan is just going to be married,’ replied the old man. ‘Everything is being got ready for the feast, and all the invited guests are flocking to the palace from all sides.’

The beautiful Hyacinthia cried bitterly when she heard this; then she dried her tears, and went into the town dressed as a peasant woman. She went straight to the King’s kitchen, where the white-aproned cooks were running about in great confusion. The Princess went up to the head cook, and said, ‘Dear cook, please listen to my request, and let me make a wedding-cake for Prince Milan.’

The busy cook was just going to refuse her demand and order her out of the kitchen, but the words died on his lips when he turned and beheld the beautiful Hyacinthia, and he answered politely, ‘You have just come in the nick of time, fair maiden. Bake your cake, and I myself will lay it before Prince Milan.’

The cake was soon made. The invited guests were already thronging round the table, when the head cook entered the room, bearing a beautiful wedding cake on a silver dish, and laid it before Prince Milan. The guests were all lost in admiration, for the cake was quite a work of art. Prince Milan at once proceeded to cut it open, when to his surprise two white doves sprang out of it, and one of them said to the other: ‘My dear mate,

do not fly away and leave me, and forget me as Prince Milan forgot his beloved Hyacinthia.'

Milan sighed deeply when he heard what the little dove said. Then he jumped up suddenly from the table and ran to the door, where he found the beautiful Hyacinthia waiting for him. Outside stood his faithful charger, pawing the ground. Without pausing for a moment, Milan and Hyacinthia mounted him and galloped as fast as they could into the country of King Kojata. The King and Queen received them with such joy and gladness as had never been heard of before, and they all lived happily for the rest of their lives.

PRINCE FICKLE AND FAIR HELENA

(From the German)

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There was once upon a time a beautiful girl called Helena. Her own mother had died when she was quite a child, and her stepmother was as cruel and unkind to her as she could be. Helena did all she could to gain her love, and performed the heavy work given her to do cheerfully and well; but her stepmother's heart wasn't in the least touched, and the more the poor girl did the more she asked her to do.

One day she gave Helena twelve pounds of mixed feathers and bade her separate them all before evening, threatening her with heavy punishment if she failed to do so.

The poor child sat down to her task with her eyes so full of tears that she could hardly see to begin. And when she had made one little heap of feathers, she sighed so deeply that they all blew apart again. And so it went on, and the poor girl grew more and more miserable. She bowed her head in her hands and cried, 'Is there no one under heaven who will take pity on me?'

Suddenly a soft voice replied, 'Be comforted, my child: I have come to help you.'

Terrified to death, Helena looked up and saw a Fairy standing in front of her, who asked in the kindest way possible, 'Why are you crying, my dear?'

Helena, who for long had heard no friendly voice, confided her sad tale of woe to the Fairy, and told her what the new task she had been given to do was, and how she despaired of ever accomplishing it.

'Don't worry yourself about it any more,' said the kind Fairy; 'lie down and go to sleep, and I'll see that your work is done all right.' So Helena lay down, and when she awoke all the feathers were sorted into little bundles; but when she turned to thank the good Fairy she had vanished.

In the evening her stepmother returned and was much amazed to find Helena sitting quietly with her work all finished before her.

She praised her diligence, but at the same time racked her brain as to what harder task she could set her to do.

The next day she told Helena to empty a pond near the house with a spoon which was full of holes. Helena set to work at once, but she very soon found that what her stepmother had told her to do was an impossibility. Full of despair and misery, she was in the act of throwing the spoon away, when suddenly the kind Fairy stood before her again, and asked her why she was so unhappy?

When Helena told her of her stepmother's new demand she said, 'Trust to me and I will do your task for you. Lie down and have a sleep in the meantime.'

Helena was comforted and lay down, and before you would have believed it possible the Fairy roused her gently and told her the pond was empty. Full of joy and gratitude, Helena hurried to her stepmother, hoping that now at last her heart would be softened towards her. But the wicked woman was furious at the frustration of her own evil designs, and only thought of what harder thing she could set the girl to do.

Next morning she ordered her to build before evening a beautiful castle, and to furnish it all from garret to basement. Helena sat down on the rocks which had been pointed out to her as the site of the castle, feeling very depressed, but at the same time with the lurking hope that the kind Fairy would come once more to her aid.

And so it turned out. The Fairy appeared, promised to build the castle, and told Helena to lie down and go to sleep in the meantime. At the word of the Fairy the rocks and stones rose and built themselves into a beautiful castle, and before sunset it was all furnished inside, and left nothing to be desired. You may think how grateful Helena was when she awoke and found her task all finished.

But her stepmother was anything but pleased, and went through the whole castle from top to bottom, to see if she couldn't find some fault for which she could punish Helena. At last she went down into one of the cellars, but it was so dark that she fell down the steep stairs and was killed on the spot.

So Helena was now mistress of the beautiful castle, and lived there in peace and happiness. And soon the noise of her beauty spread abroad, and many wooers came to try and gain her hand.

Among them came one Prince Fickle by name, who very quickly won the love of fair Helena. One day, as they were sitting happily together under a lime-tree in front of the castle, Prince Fickle broke the sad news to Helena that he must return to his parents to get their consent to his marriage. He promised faithfully to come back to her as soon as he could and begged her to await his return under the lime-tree where they had spent so many happy hours.

Helena kissed him tenderly at parting on his left cheek, and begged him not to let anyone else kiss him there while they were parted, and she promised to sit and wait for him under the lime-tree, for she never doubted that the Prince would be faithful to her and would return as quickly as he could.

And so she sat for three days and three nights under the tree without moving. But when her lover never returned, she grew very unhappy, and determined to set out to look for him. She took as many of her jewels as she could carry, and three of her most beautiful dresses, one embroidered with stars, one with moons, and the third with suns, all of pure gold. Far and wide she wandered through the world, but nowhere did she find any trace of her bridegroom. At last she gave up the search in despair. She could not bear to return to her own castle where she had been so happy with her lover, but determined rather to endure her loneliness and desolation in a strange land. She took a place as herd-girl with a peasant, and buried her jewels and beautiful dresses in a safe and hidden spot.

Every day she drove the cattle to pasture, and all the time she thought of nothing but her faithless bridegroom. She was very devoted to a certain little calf in the herd, and made a great pet of it, feeding it out of her own hands. She taught it to kneel before her, and then she whispered in its ear:

‘Kneel, little calf, kneel; Be faithful and leal, Not like Prince Fickle, Who once on a time Left his fair Helena Under the lime.’

After some years passed in this way, she heard that the daughter of the king of the country she was living in was going to marry a Prince called ‘Fickle.’ Everybody rejoiced at the news except poor Helena, to whom it

was a fearful blow, for at the bottom of her heart she had always believed her lover to be true.

Now it chanced that the way to the capital led right past the village where Helena was, and often when she was leading her cattle forth to the meadows Prince Fickle rode past her, without ever noticing the poor herd-girl, so engrossed was he in thoughts of his new bride. Then it occurred to Helena to put his heart to the test and to see if it weren't possible to recall herself to him. So one day as Prince Fickle rode by she said to her little calf:

'Kneel, little calf, kneel; Be faithful and leal, Not like Prince Fickle, Who once on a time Left his poor Helena Under the lime.'

When Prince Fickle heard her voice it seemed to him to remind him of something, but of what he couldn't remember, for he hadn't heard the words distinctly, as Helena had only spoken them very low and with a shaky voice. Helena herself had been far too moved to let her see what impression her words had made on the Prince, and when she looked round he was already far away. But she noticed how slowly he was riding, and how deeply sunk he was in thought, so she didn't quite give herself up as lost.

In honour of the approaching wedding a feast lasting many nights was to be given in the capital. Helena placed all her hopes on this, and determined to go to the feast and there to seek out her bridegroom.

When evening drew near she stole out of the peasant's cottage secretly, and, going to her hiding-place, she put on her dress embroidered with the gold suns, and all her jewels, and loosed her beautiful golden hair, which up to now she had always worn under a kerchief, and, adorned thus, she set out for the town.

When she entered the ball-room all eyes were turned on her, and everyone marvelled at her beauty, but no one knew who she was. Prince Fickle, too, was quite dazzled by the charms of the beautiful maiden, and never guessed that she had once been his own ladylove. He never left her side all night, and it was with great difficulty that Helena escaped from him in the crowd when it was time to return home. Prince Fickle searched for her everywhere, and longed eagerly for the next night, when the beautiful lady had promised to come again.

The following evening the fair Helena started early for the feast.

This time she wore her dress embroidered with silver moons, and in her hair she placed a silver crescent. Prince Fickle was enchanted to see her again, and she seemed to him even more beautiful than she had been the night before. He never left her side, and refused to dance with anyone else. He begged her to tell him who she was, but this she refused to do. Then he implored her to return again next evening, and this she promised him she would.

On the third evening Prince Fickle was so impatient to see his fair enchantress again, that he arrived at the feast hours before it began, and never took his eyes from the door. At last Helena arrived in a dress all covered with gold and silver stars, and with a girdle of stars round her waist, and a band of stars in her hair. Prince Fickle was more in love with her than ever, and begged her once again to tell him her name.

Then Helena kissed him silently on the left cheek, and in one moment Prince Fickle recognized his old love. Full of remorse and sorrow, he begged for her forgiveness, and Helena, only too pleased to have got him back again, did not, you may be sure, keep him waiting very long for her pardon, and so they were married and returned to Helena’s castle, where they are no doubt still sitting happily together under the lime-tree.

PUDDOCKY

(From the German)

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There was once upon a time a poor woman who had one little daughter called ‘Parsley.’ She was so called because she liked eating parsley better than any other food, indeed she would hardly eat anything else. Her poor mother hadn’t enough money always to be buying parsley for her, but the child was so beautiful that she could refuse her nothing, and so she went every night to the garden of an old witch who lived near and stole great branches of the coveted vegetable, in order to satisfy her daughter.

This remarkable taste of the fair Parsley soon became known, and the theft was discovered. The witch called the girl’s mother to her, and proposed that she should let her daughter come and live with her, and then she could eat as much parsley as she liked. The mother was quite pleased with this suggestion, and so the beautiful Parsley took up her abode with the old witch.

One day three Princes, whom their father had sent abroad to travel, came to the town where Parsley lived and perceived the beautiful girl combing and plaiting her long black hair at the window. In one moment they all fell hopelessly in love with her, and longed ardently to have the girl for their wife; but hardly had they with one breath expressed their desire than, mad with jealousy, they drew their swords and all three set upon each other. The struggle was so violent and the noise so loud that the old witch heard it, and said at once ‘Of course Parsley is at the bottom of all this.’

And when she had convinced herself that this was so, she stepped forward, and, full of wrath over the quarrels and feuds Parsley’s beauty gave rise to, she cursed the girl and said, ‘I wish you were an ugly toad, sitting under a bridge at the other end of the world.’

Hardly were the words out of her mouth than Parsley was changed into a toad and vanished from their sight. The Princes, now that the cause of

their dispute was removed, put up their swords, kissed each other affectionately, and returned to their father.

The King was growing old and feeble, and wished to yield his sceptre and crown in favour of one of his sons, but he couldn't make up his mind which of the three he should appoint as his successor. He determined that fate should decide for him. So he called his three children to him and said, 'My dear sons, I am growing old, and am weary of reigning, but I can't make up my mind to which of you three I should yield my crown, for I love you all equally. At the same time I would like the best and cleverest of you to rule over my people. I have, therefore, determined to set you three tasks to do, and the one that performs them best shall be my heir. The first thing I shall ask you to do is to bring me a piece of linen a hundred yards long, so fine that it will go through a gold ring.' The sons bowed low, and, promising to do their best, they started on their journey without further delay.

The two elder brothers took many servants and carriages with them, but the youngest set out quite alone. In a short time they came to three cross roads; two of them were gay and crowded, but the third was dark and lonely.

The two elder brothers chose the more frequented ways, but the youngest, bidding them farewell, set out on the dreary road.

Wherever linen was to be bought, there the two elder brothers hastened. They loaded their carriages with bales of the finest linen they could find and then returned home.

The youngest brother, on the other hand, went on his weary way for many days, and nowhere did he come across any linen that would have done. So he journeyed on, and his spirits sank with every step. At last he came to a bridge which stretched over a deep river flowing through a flat and marshy land. Before crossing the bridge he sat down on the banks of the stream and sighed dismally over his sad fate. Suddenly a misshapen toad crawled out of the swamp, and, sitting down opposite him, asked: 'What's the matter with you, my dear Prince?'

The Prince answered impatiently, 'There's not much good my telling you, Puddocky, for you couldn't help me if I did.'

'Don't be too sure of that,' replied the toad; 'tell me your trouble and we'll see.'

Then the Prince became most confidential and told the little creature why he had been sent out of his father's kingdom.

'Prince, I will certainly help you,' said the toad, and, crawling back into her swamp, she returned dragging after her a piece of linen not bigger than a finger, which she lay before the Prince, saying, 'Take this home, and you'll see it will help you.'

The Prince had no wish to take such an insignificant bundle with him; but he didn't like to hurt Puddocky's feelings by refusing it, so he took up the little packet, put it in his pocket, and bade the little toad farewell. Puddocky watched the Prince till he was out of sight and then crept back into the water.

The further the Prince went the more he noticed that the pocket in which the little roll of linen lay became heavier, and in proportion his heart grew lighter. And so, greatly comforted, he returned to the Court of his father, and arrived home just at the same time as his brothers with their caravans. The King was delighted to see them all again, and at once drew the ring from his finger and the trial began. In all the waggon-loads there was not one piece of linen the tenth part of which would go through the ring, and the two elder brothers, who had at first sneered at their youngest brother for returning with no baggage, began to feel rather small. But what were their feelings when he drew a bale of linen out of his pocket which in fineness, softness, and purity of colour was unsurpassable! The threads were hardly visible, and it went through the ring without the smallest difficulty, at the same time measuring a hundred yards quite correctly.

The father embraced his fortunate son, and commanded the rest of the linen to be thrown into the water; then, turning to his children he said, 'Now, dear Princes, prepare yourselves for the second task. You must bring me back a little dog that will go comfortably into a walnut-shell.'

The sons were all in despair over this demand, but as they each wished to win the crown, they determined to do their best, and after a very few days set out on their travels again.

At the cross roads they separated once more. The youngest went by himself along his lonely way, but this time he felt much more cheerful. Hardly had he sat down under the bridge and heaved a sigh, than Puddocky came out; and, sitting down opposite him, asked, 'What's wrong with you now, dear Prince?'

The Prince, who this time never doubted the little toad's power to help him, told her his difficulty at once. 'Prince, I will help you,' said the toad again, and crawled back into her swamp as fast as her short little legs would carry her. She returned, dragging a hazel nut behind her, which she laid at the Prince's feet and said, 'Take this nut home with you and tell your father to crack it very carefully, and you'll see then what will happen.' The Prince thanked her heartily and went on his way in the best of spirits, while the little puddock crept slowly back into the water.

When the Prince got home he found his brothers had just arrived with great waggon-loads of little dogs of all sorts. The King had a walnut shell ready, and the trial began; but not one of the dogs the two eldest sons had brought with them would in the least fit into the shell. When they had tried all their little dogs, the youngest son handed his father the hazel-nut, with a modest bow, and begged him to crack it carefully. Hardly had the old King done so than a lovely tiny dog sprang out of the nutshell, and ran about on the King's hand, wagging its tail and barking lustily at all the other little dogs. The joy of the Court was great. The father again embraced his fortunate son, commanded the rest of the small dogs to be thrown into the water and drowned, and once more addressed his sons. 'The two most difficult tasks have been performed. Now listen to the third and last: whoever brings the fairest wife home with him shall be my heir.'

This demand seemed so easy and agreeable and the reward was so great, that the Princes lost no time in setting forth on their travels. At the cross roads the two elder brothers debated if they should go the same way as the youngest, but when they saw how dreary and deserted it looked they made up their minds that it would be impossible to find what they sought in these wilds, and so they stuck to their former paths.

The youngest was very depressed this time and said to himself, 'Anything else Puddocky could have helped me in, but this task is quite beyond her power. How could she ever find a beautiful wife for me? Her swamps are wide and empty, and no human beings dwell there; only frogs and toads and other creatures of that sort.' However, he sat down as usual under the bridge, and this time he sighed from the bottom of his heart.

In a few minutes the toad stood in front of him and asked, 'What's the matter with you now, my dear Prince?'

‘Oh, Puddocky, this time you can’t help me, for the task is beyond even your power,’ replied the Prince.

‘Still,’ answered the toad, ‘you may as well tell me your difficulty, for who knows but I mayn’t be able to help you this time also.’

The Prince then told her the task they had been set to do. ‘I’ll help you right enough, my dear Prince,’ said the little toad; ‘just you go home, and I’ll soon follow you.’ With these words, Puddocky, with a spring quite unlike her usual slow movements, jumped into the water and disappeared.

The Prince rose up and went sadly on his way, for he didn’t believe it possible that the little toad could really help him in his present difficulty. He had hardly gone a few steps when he heard a sound behind him, and, looking round, he saw a carriage made of cardboard, drawn by six big rats, coming towards him. Two hedgehogs rode in front as outriders, and on the box sat a fat mouse as coachman, and behind stood two little frogs as footmen. In the carriage itself sat Puddocky, who kissed her hand to the Prince out of the window as she passed by.

Sunk deep in thought over the fickleness of fortune that had granted him two of his wishes and now seemed about to deny him the last and best, the Prince hardly noticed the absurd equipage, and still less did he feel inclined to laugh at its comic appearance.

The carriage drove on in front of him for some time and then turned a corner. But what was his joy and surprise when suddenly, round the same corner, but coming towards him, there appeared a beautiful coach drawn by six splendid horses, with outriders, coachmen, footmen and other servants all in the most gorgeous liveries, and seated in the carriage was the most beautiful woman the Prince had ever seen, and in whom he at once recognised the beautiful Parsley, for whom his heart had formerly burned. The carriage stopped when it reached him, and the footmen sprang down and opened the door for him. He got in and sat down beside the beautiful Parsley, and thanked her heartily for her help, and told her how much he loved her.

And so he arrived at his father’s capital, at the same moment as his brothers who had returned with many carriage-loads of beautiful women. But when they were all led before the King, the whole Court with one consent awarded the prize of beauty to the fair Parsley.

The old King was delighted, and embraced his thrice fortunate son and his new daughter-in-law tenderly, and appointed them as his successors to the throne. But he commanded the other women to be thrown into the water and drowned, like the bales of linen and the little dogs. The Prince married Puddocky and reigned long and happily with her, and if they aren’t dead I suppose they are living still.

THE STORY OF HOK LEE AND THE DWARFS

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There once lived in a small town in China a man named Hok Lee. He was a steady industrious man, who not only worked hard at his trade, but did all his own house-work as well, for he had no wife to do it for him. ‘What an excellent industrious man is this Hok Lee!’ said his neighbours; ‘how hard he works: he never leaves his house to amuse himself or to take a holiday as others do!’

But Hok Lee was by no means the virtuous person his neighbours thought him. True, he worked hard enough by day, but at night, when all respectable folk were fast asleep, he used to steal out and join a dangerous band of robbers, who broke into rich people’s houses and carried off all they could lay hands on.

This state of things went on for some time, and, though a thief was caught now and then and punished, no suspicion ever fell on Hok Lee, he was such a very respectable, hard-working man.

Hok Lee had already amassed a good store of money as his share of the proceeds of these robberies when it happened one morning on going to market that a neighbour said to him:

‘Why, Hok Lee, what is the matter with your face? One side of it is all swelled up.’

True enough, Hok Lee’s right cheek was twice the size of his left, and it soon began to feel very uncomfortable.

‘I will bind up my face,’ said Hok Lee; ‘doubtless the warmth will cure the swelling.’ But no such thing. Next day it was worse, and day by day it grew bigger and bigger till it was nearly as large as his head and became very painful.

Hok Lee was at his wits’ ends what to do. Not only was his cheek unsightly and painful, but his neighbours began to jeer and make fun of him, which hurt his feelings very much indeed.

One day, as luck would have it, a travelling doctor came to the town. He sold not only all kinds of medicine, but also dealt in many strange charms against witches and evil spirits.

Hok Lee determined to consult him, and asked him into his house.

After the doctor had examined him carefully, he spoke thus: ‘This, O Hok Lee, is no ordinary swelled face. I strongly suspect you have been doing some wrong deed which has called down the anger of the spirits on you. None of my drugs will avail to cure you, but, if you are willing to pay me handsomely, I can tell you how you may be cured.’

Then Hok Lee and the doctor began to bargain together, and it was a long time before they could come to terms. However, the doctor got the better of it in the end, for he was determined not to part with his secret under a certain price, and Hok Lee had no mind to carry his huge cheek about with him to the end of his days. So he was obliged to part with the greater portion of his ill-gotten gains.

When the Doctor had pocketed the money, he told Hok Lee to go on the first night of the full moon to a certain wood and there to watch by a particular tree. After a time he would see the dwarfs and little sprites who live underground come out to dance. When they saw him they would be sure to make him dance too. ‘And mind you dance your very best,’ added the doctor. ‘If you dance well and please them they will grant you a petition and you can then beg to be cured; but if you dance badly they will most likely do you some mischief out of spite.’ With that he took leave and departed.

Happily the first night of the full moon was near, and at the proper time Hok Lee set out for the wood. With a little trouble he found the tree the doctor had described, and, feeling nervous, he climbed up into it.

He had hardly settled himself on a branch when he saw the little dwarfs assembling in the moonlight. They came from all sides, till at length there appeared to be hundreds of them. They seemed in high glee, and danced and skipped and capered about, whilst Hok Lee grew so eager watching them that he crept further and further along his branch till at length it gave a loud crack. All the dwarfs stood still, and Hok Lee felt as if his heart stood still also.

Then one of the dwarfs called out, ‘Someone is up in that tree. Come down at once, whoever you are, or we must come and fetch you.’

In great terror, Hok Lee proceeded to come down; but he was so nervous that he tripped near the ground and came rolling down in the most absurd manner. When he had picked himself up, he came forward with a low bow, and the dwarf who had first spoken and who appeared to be the leader, said, ‘Now, then, who art thou, and what brings thee here?’

So Hok Lee told him the sad story of his swelled cheek, and how he had been advised to come to the forest and beg the dwarfs to cure him.

‘It is well,’ replied the dwarf. ‘We will see about that. First, however, thou must dance before us. Should thy dancing please us, perhaps we may be able to do something; but shouldst thou dance badly, we shall assuredly punish thee, so now take warning and dance away.’

With that, he and all the other dwarfs sat down in a large ring, leaving Hok Lee to dance alone in the middle. He felt half frightened to death, and besides was a good deal shaken by his fall from the tree and did not feel at all inclined to dance. But the dwarfs were not to be trifled with.

‘Begin!’ cried their leader, and ‘Begin!’ shouted the rest in chorus.

So in despair Hok Lee began. First he hopped on one foot and then on the other, but he was so stiff and so nervous that he made but a poor attempt, and after a time sank down on the ground and vowed he could dance no more.

The dwarfs were very angry. They crowded round Hok Lee and abused him. ‘Thou to come here to be cured, indeed!’ they cried, ‘thou hast brought one big cheek with thee, but thou shalt take away two.’ And with that they ran off and disappeared, leaving Hok Lee to find his way home as best he might.

He hobbled away, weary and depressed, and not a little anxious on account of the dwarfs’ threat.

Nor were his fears unfounded, for when he rose next morning his left cheek was swelled up as big as his right, and he could hardly see out of his eyes. Hok Lee felt in despair, and his neighbours jeered at him more than ever. The doctor, too, had disappeared, so there was nothing for it but to try the dwarfs once more.

He waited a month till the first night of the full moon came round again, and then he trudged back to the forest, and sat down under the tree from which he had fallen. He had not long to wait. Ere long the dwarfs came trooping out till all were assembled.

‘I don’t feel quite easy,’ said one; ‘I feel as if some horrid human being were near us.’

When Hok Lee heard this he came forward and bent down to the ground before the dwarfs, who came crowding round, and laughed heartily at his comical appearance with his two big cheeks.

‘What dost thou want?’ they asked; and Hok Lee proceeded to tell them of his fresh misfortunes, and begged so hard to be allowed one more trial at dancing that the dwarfs consented, for there is nothing they love so much as being amused.

Now, Hok Lee knew how much depended on his dancing well, so he plucked up a good spirit and began, first quite slowly, and faster by degrees, and he danced so well and gracefully, and made such new and wonderful steps, that the dwarfs were quite delighted with him.

They clapped their tiny hands, and shouted, ‘Well done, Hok Lee, well done, go on, dance more, for we are pleased.’

And Hok Lee danced on and on, till he really could dance no more, and was obliged to stop.

Then the leader of the dwarfs said, ‘We are well pleased, Hok Lee, and as a recompense for thy dancing thy face shall be cured. Farewell.’

With these words he and the other dwarfs vanished, and Hok Lee, putting his hands to his face, found to his great joy that his cheeks were reduced to their natural size. The way home seemed short and easy to him, and he went to bed happy, and resolved never to go out robbing again.

Next day the whole town was full of the news of Hok’s sudden cure. His neighbours questioned him, but could get nothing from him, except the fact that he had discovered a wonderful cure for all kinds of diseases.

After a time a rich neighbour, who had been ill for some years, came, and offered to give Hok Lee a large sum of money if he would tell him how he might get cured. Hok Lee consented on condition that he swore to keep the secret. He did so, and Hok Lee told him of the dwarfs and their dances.

The neighbour went off, carefully obeyed Hok Lee’s directions, and was duly cured by the dwarfs. Then another and another came to Hok Lee to beg his secret, and from each he extracted a vow of secrecy and a large sum of money. This went on for some years, so that at length Hok Lee became a very wealthy man, and ended his days in peace and prosperity.

From the Chinese.

THE STORY OF THE THREE BEARS

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Once upon a time there were Three Bears, who lived together in a house of their own in a wood. One of them was a Little, Small, Wee Bear; and one was a Middle-sized Bear, and the other was a Great, Huge Bear. They had each a pot for their porridge, a little pot for the Little, Small, Wee Bear; and a middle-sized pot for the Middle Bear; and a great pot for the Great, Huge Bear. And they had each a chair to sit in; a little chair for the Little, Small, Wee Bear; and a middle-sized chair for the Middle Bear; and a great chair for the Great, Huge Bear. And they had each a bed to sleep in; a little bed for the Little, Small, Wee Bear; and a middle-sized bed for the Middle Bear; and a great bed for the Great, Huge Bear.

One day, after they had made the porridge for their breakfast, and poured it into their porridge-pots, they walked out into the wood while the porridge was cooling, that they might not burn their mouths by beginning too soon to eat it. And while they were walking, a little old woman came to the house. She could not have been a good, honest old woman; for, first, she looked in at the window, and then she peeped in at the keyhole; and, seeing nobody in the house, she lifted the latch. The door was not fastened, because the bears were good bears, who did nobody any harm, and never suspected that anybody would harm them. So the little old woman opened the door and went in; and well pleased she was when she saw the porridge on the table. If she had been a good little old woman she would have waited till the bears came home, and then, perhaps, they would have asked her to breakfast; for they were good bears—a little rough or so, as the manner of bears is, but for all that very good-natured and hospitable. But she was an impudent, bad old woman, and set about helping herself.

So first she tasted the porridge of the Great, Huge Bear, and that was too hot for her; and she said a bad word about that. And then she tasted the porridge of the Middle Bear; and that was too cold for her; and she said a bad word about that too. And then she went to the porridge of the Little, Small, Wee Bear, and tasted that; and that was neither too hot nor too cold,

but just right; and she liked it so well, that she ate it all up: but the naughty old woman said a bad word about the little porridge-pot, because it did not hold enough for her.

Then the little old woman sate down in the chair of the Great, Huge Bear, and that was too hard for her. And then she sate down in the chair of the Middle Bear, and that was too soft for her. And then she sate down in the chair of the Little, Small, Wee Bear, and that was neither too hard nor too soft, but just right. So she seated herself in it, and there she sate till the bottom of the chair came out, and down came she, plump upon the ground. And the naughty old woman said a wicked word about that too.

Then the little old woman went up stairs into the bed-chamber in which the three bears slept. And first she lay down upon the bed of the Great, Huge Bear; but that was too high at the head for her. And next she lay down upon the bed of the Middle Bear; and that was too high at the foot for her. And then she lay down upon the bed of the Little, Small, Wee Bear; and that was neither too high at the head, nor at the foot, but just right. So she covered herself up comfortably, and lay there till she fell fast asleep.

By this time the three bears thought their porridge would be cool enough; so they came home to breakfast. Now the little old woman had left the spoon of the Great, Huge Bear, standing in his porridge.

‘SOMEBODY HAS BEEN AT MY PORRIDGE!’

said the Great, Huge Bear, in his great gruff voice. And when the Middle Bear looked at his, he saw that the spoon was standing in it too. They were wooden spoons; if they had been silver ones, the naughty old woman would have put them in her pocket.

‘Somebody Has Been At My Porridge!’

said the Middle Bear, in his middle voice.

Then the Little, Small, Wee Bear looked at his, and there was the spoon in the porridge-pot, but the porridge was all gone.

‘*Somebody has been at my porridge, and has eaten it all up*!’

said the Little, Small Wee Bear, in his little, small wee voice.

Upon this the three bears, seeing that some one had entered their house, and eaten up the Little, Small, Wee Bear’s breakfast, began to look about them. Now the little old woman had not put the hard cushion straight when she rose from the chair of the Great, Huge Bear.

‘SOMEBODY HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR!’

said the Great, Huge Bear, in his great, rough, gruff voice.

And the little old woman had squatted down the soft cushion of the Middle Bear.

‘Somebody Has Been Sitting In My Chair!’

said the Middle Bear, in his middle voice.

And you know what the little old woman had done to the third chair.

‘*Somebody has been sitting in my chair, and has sate the bottom of it out*!’

said the Little, Small, Wee Bear, in his little, small, wee voice.

Then the three bears thought it necessary that they should make farther search; so they went up stairs into their bed-chamber. Now the little old woman had pulled the pillow of the Great, Huge Bear out of its place.

‘SOMEBODY HAS BEEN LYING IN MY BED!’

said the Great, Huge Bear, in his great, rough, gruff voice.

And the little old woman had pulled the bolster of the Middle Bear out of its place.

‘Somebody Has Been Lying In My Bed!’

said the Middle Bear in his middle voice.

And when the Little, Small, Wee Bear came to look at his bed, there was the bolster in its place, and the pillow in its place upon the bolster, and upon the pillow was the little old woman’s ugly, dirty head,—which was not in its place, for she had no business there.

‘*Somebody has been lying in my bed,—and here she is*!’

said the Little, Small, Wee Bear, in his little, small, wee voice.

The little old woman had heard in her sleep the great, rough, gruff voice of the Great, Huge Bear; but she was so fast asleep that it was no more to her than the roaring of wind or the rumbling of thunder. And she had heard the middle voice of the Middle Bear, but it was only as if she had heard someone speaking in a dream. But when she heard the little, small, wee voice of the Little, Small, Wee Bear, it was so sharp, and so shrill, that it awakened her at once. Up she started; and when she saw the Three Bears on one side of the bed, she tumbled herself out at the other, and ran to the window. Now the window was open, because the bears, like good, tidy bears as they were, always opened their bedchamber window when they got up in the morning. Out the little old woman jumped; and

whether she broke her neck in the fall, or ran into the wood and was lost there, or found her way out of the wood and was taken up by the constable and sent to the House of Correction for a vagrant as she was, I cannot tell. But the Three Bears never saw anything more of her.

Southey.

PRINCE VIVIEN AND THE PRINCESS PLACIDA

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Once upon a time there lived a King and Queen who loved one another dearly. Indeed the Queen, whose name was Santorina, was so pretty and so kind-hearted that it would have been a wonder if her husband had not been fond of her, while King Gridelin himself was a perfect bundle of good qualities, for the Fairy who presided at his christening had summoned the shades of all his ancestors, and taken something good from each of them to form his character. Unfortunately, though, she had given him rather too much kindness of heart, which is a thing that generally gets its possessor into trouble, but so far all things had prospered with King Gridelin. However, it was not to be expected such good fortune could last, and before very long the Queen had a lovely little daughter who was named Placida. Now the King, who thought that if she resembled her mother in face and mind she would need no other gift, never troubled to ask any of the Fairies to her christening, and this offended them mortally, so that they resolved to punish him severely for thus depriving them of their rights. So, to the despair of King Gridelin, the Queen first of all became very ill, and then disappeared altogether. If it had not been for the little Princess there is no saying what would have become of him, he was so miserable, but there she was to be brought up, and luckily the good Fairy Lolotte, in spite of all that had passed, was willing to come and take charge of her, and of her little cousin Prince Vivien, who was an orphan and had been placed under the care of his uncle, King Gridelin, when he was quite a baby. Although she neglected nothing that could possibly have been done for them, their characters, as they grew up, plainly proved that education only softens down natural defects, but cannot entirely do away with them; for Placida, who was perfectly lovely, and with a capacity and intelligence which enabled her to learn and understand anything that presented itself, was at the same time as lazy and indifferent as it is possible for anyone to be, while Vivien on the contrary was only too lively, and was for ever

taking up some new thing and as promptly tiring of it, and flying off to something else which held his fickle fancy an equally short time. As these two children would possibly inherit the kingdom, it was natural that their people should take a great interest in them, and it fell out that all the tranquil and peace-loving citizens desired that Placida should one day be their Queen, while the rash and quarrelsome hoped great things for Vivien. Such a division of ideas seemed to promise civil wars and all kinds of troubles to the State, and even in the Palace the two parties frequently came into collision. As for the children themselves, though they were too well brought up to quarrel, still the difference in all their tastes and feelings made it impossible for them to like one another, so there seemed no chance of their ever consenting to be married, which was a pity, since that was the only thing that would have satisfied both parties. Prince Vivien was fully aware of the feeling in his favour, but being too honourable to wish to injure his pretty cousin, and perhaps too impatient and volatile to care to think seriously about anything, he suddenly took it into his head that he would go off by himself in search of adventure. Luckily this idea occurred to him when he was on horseback, for he would certainly have set out on foot rather than lose an instant. As it was, he simply turned his horse's head, without another thought than that of getting out of the kingdom as soon as possible. This abrupt departure was a great blow to the State, especially as no one had any idea what had become of the Prince. Even King Gridelin, who had never cared for anything since the disappearance of Queen Santorina, was roused by this new loss, and though he could not so much as look at the Princess Placida without shedding floods of tears, he resolved to see for himself what talents and capabilities she showed. He very soon found out that in addition to her natural indolence, she was being as much indulged and spoilt day by day as if the Fairy had been her grandmother, and was obliged to remonstrate very seriously upon the subject. Lolotte took his reproaches meekly, and promised faithfully that she would not encourage the Princess in her idleness and indifference any more. From this moment poor Placida's troubles began! She was actually expected to choose her own dresses, to take care of her jewels, and to find her own amusements; but rather than take so much trouble she wore the same old frock from morning till night, and never appeared in public if she could possibly

avoid it. However, this was not all, King Gridelin insisted that the affairs of the kingdom should be explained to her, and that she should attend all the councils and give her opinion upon the matter in hand whenever it was asked of her, and this made her life such a burden to her that she implored Lolotte to take her away from a country where too much was required of an unhappy Princess.

The Fairy refused at first with a great show of firmness, but who could resist the tears and entreaties of anyone so pretty as Placida? It came to this in the end, that she transported the Princess just as she was, cosily tucked up upon her favourite couch, to her own Grotto, and this new disappearance left all the people in despair, and Gridelin went about looking more distracted than ever. But now let us return to Prince Vivien, and see what his restless spirit has brought him to. Though Placida's kingdom was a large one; his horse had carried him gallantly to the limit of it, but it could go no further, and the Prince was obliged to dismount and continue his journey on foot, though this slow mode of progress tired his patience severely.

After what seemed to him a very long time, he found himself all alone in a vast forest, so dark and gloomy that he secretly shuddered; however, he chose the most promising looking path he could find, and marched along it courageously at his best speed, but in spite of all his efforts, night fell before he reached the edge of the wood.

For some time he stumbled along, keeping to the path as well as he could in the darkness, and just as he was almost wearied out he saw before him a gleam of light.

This sight revived his drooping spirits, and he made sure that he was now close to the shelter and supper he needed so much, but the more he walked towards the light the further away it seemed; sometimes he even lost sight of it altogether, and you may imagine how provoked and impatient he was by the time he finally arrived at the miserable cottage from which the light proceeded. He gave a loud knock at the door, and an old woman's voice answered from within, but as she did not seem to be hurrying herself to open it he redoubled his blows, and demanded to be let in imperiously, quite forgetting that he was no longer in his own kingdom. But all this had no effect upon the old woman, who only noticed all the uproar he was making by saying gently:

‘You must have patience.’

He could hear that she really was coming to open the door to him, only she was so very long about it. First she chased away her cat, lest it should run away when the door was opened, then he heard her talking to herself and made out that her lamp wanted trimming, that she might see better who it was that knocked, and then that it lacked fresh oil, and she must refill it. So what with one thing and another she was an immense time trotting to and fro, and all the while she now and again bade the Prince have patience. When at last he stood within the little hut he saw with despair that it was a picture of poverty, and that not a crumb of anything eatable was to be seen, and when he explained to the old woman that he was dying of hunger and fatigue she only answered tranquilly that he must have patience. However, she presently showed him a bundle of straw on which he could sleep.

‘But what can I have to eat?’ cried Prince Vivien sharply.

‘Wait a little, wait a little,’ she replied. ‘If you will only have patience I am just going out into the garden to gather some peas: we will shell them at our leisure, then I will light a fire and cook them, and when they are thoroughly done, we can enjoy them peaceably; there is no hurry.’

‘I shall have died of starvation by the time all that is done,’ said the Prince ruefully.

‘Patience, patience,’ said the old woman looking at him with her slow gentle smile, ‘I can’t be hurried. “All things come at last to him who waits;” you must have heard that often.’

Prince Vivien was wild with aggravation, but there was nothing to be done.

‘Come then,’ said the old woman, ‘you shall hold the lamp to light me while I pick the peas.’

The Prince in his haste snatched it up so quickly that it went out, and it took him a long time to light it again with two little bits of glowing charcoal which he had to dig out from the pile of ashes upon the hearth. However, at last the peas were gathered and shelled, and the fire lighted, but then they had to be carefully counted, since the old woman declared that she would cook fifty-four, and no more. In vain did the Prince represent to her that he was famished—that fifty-four peas would go no way towards satisfying his hunger—that a few peas, more or less, surely

could not matter. It was quite useless, in the end he had to count out the fifty-four, and worse than that, because he dropped one or two in his hurry, he had to begin again from the very first, to be sure the number was complete. As soon as they were cooked the old dame took a pair of scales and a morsel of bread from the cupboard, and was just about to divide it when Prince Vivien, who really could wait no longer, seized the whole piece and ate it up, saying in his turn, ‘Patience.’

‘You mean that for a joke,’ said the old woman, as gently as ever, ‘but that is really my name, and some day you will know more about me.’

Then they each ate their twenty-seven peas, and the Prince was surprised to find that he wanted nothing more, and he slept as sweetly upon his bed of straw as he had ever done in his palace.

In the morning the old woman gave him milk and bread for his breakfast, which he ate contentedly, rejoicing that there was nothing to be gathered, or counted, or cooked, and when he had finished he begged her to tell him who she was.

‘That I will, with pleasure,’ she replied. ‘But it will be a long story.’

‘Oh! if it’s long, I can’t listen,’ cried the Prince.

‘But,’ said she, ‘at your age, you should attend to what old people say, and learn to have patience.’

‘But, but,’ said the Prince, in his most impatient tone, ‘old people should not be so long-winded! Tell me what country I have got into, and nothing else.’

‘With all my heart,’ said she. ‘You are in the Forest of the Black Bird; it is here that he utters his oracles.’

‘An Oracle,’ cried the Prince. ‘Oh! I must go and consult him.’ Thereupon he drew a handful of gold from his pocket, and offered it to the old woman, and when she would not take it, he threw it down upon the table and was off like a flash of lightning, without even staying to ask the way. He took the first path that presented itself and followed it at the top of his speed, often losing his way, or stumbling over some stone, or running up against a tree, and leaving behind him without regret the cottage which had been as little to his taste as the character of its possessor. After some time he saw in the distance a huge black castle which commanded a view of the whole forest. The Prince felt certain that this must be the abode of the Oracle, and just as the sun was setting he

reached its outermost gates. The whole castle was surrounded by a deep moat, and the drawbridge and the gates, and even the water in the moat, were all of the same sombre hue as the walls and towers. Upon the gate hung a huge bell, upon which was written in red letters:

‘Mortal, if thou art curious to know thy fate, strike this bell, and submit to what shall befall thee.’

The Prince, without the smallest hesitation, snatched up a great stone, and hammered vigorously upon the bell, which gave forth a deep and terrible sound, the gate flew open, and closed again with a thundering clang the moment the Prince had passed through it, while from every tower and battlement rose a wheeling, screaming crowd of bats which darkened the whole sky with their multitudes. Anyone but Prince Vivien would have been terrified by such an uncanny sight, but he strode stoutly forward till he reached the second gate, which was opened to him by sixty black slaves covered from head to foot in long mantles.

He wished to speak to them, but soon discovered that they spoke an utterly unknown language, and did not seem to understand a word he said. This was a great aggravation to the Prince, who was not accustomed to keep his ideas to himself, and he positively found himself wishing for his old friend Patience. However, he had to follow his guides in silence, and they led him into a magnificent hall; the floor was of ebony, the walls of jet, and all the hangings were of black velvet, but the Prince looked round it in vain for something to eat, and then made signs that he was hungry. In the same manner he was respectfully given to understand that he must wait, and after several hours the sixty hooded and shrouded figures re-appeared, and conducted him with great ceremony, and also very very slowly, to a banqueting hall, where they all placed themselves at a long table. The dishes were arranged down the centre of it, and with his usual impetuosity the Prince seized the one that stood in front of him to draw it nearer, but soon found that it was firmly fixed in its place. Then he looked at his solemn and lugubrious neighbours, and saw that each one was supplied with a long hollow reed through which he slowly sucked up his portion, and the Prince was obliged to do the same, though he found it a frightfully tedious process. After supper, they returned as they had come to the ebony room, where he was compelled to look on while his companions played interminable games of chess, and not until he was nearly dying of

weariness did they, slowly and ceremoniously as before, conduct him to his sleeping apartment. The hope of consulting the Oracle woke him very early the next morning, and his first demand was to be allowed to present himself before it, but, without replying, his attendants conducted him to a huge marble bath, very shallow at one end, and quite deep at the other, and gave him to understand that he was to go into it. The Prince, nothing loth, was for springing at once into deep water, but he was gently but forcibly held back and only allowed to stand where it was about an inch deep, and he was nearly wild with impatience when he found that this process was to be repeated every day in spite of all he could say or do, the water rising higher and higher by inches, so that for sixty days he had to live in perpetual silence, ceremoniously conducted to and fro, supping all his meals through the long reed, and looking on at innumerable games of chess, the game of all others which he detested most. But at last the water rose as high as his chin, and his bath was complete. And that day the slaves in their black robes, and each having a large bat perched upon his head, marched in slow procession with the Prince in their midst, chanting a melancholy song, to the iron gate that led into a kind of Temple. At the sound of their chanting, another band of slaves appeared, and took possession of the unhappy Vivien.

They looked to him exactly like the ones he had left, except that they moved more slowly still, and each one held a raven upon his wrist, and their harsh croakings re-echoed through the dismal place. Holding the Prince by the arms, not so much to do him honour as to restrain his impatience, they proceeded by slow degrees up the steps of the Temple, and when they at last reached the top he thought his long waiting must be at an end. But on the contrary, after slowly enshrouding him in a long black robe like their own, they led him into the Temple itself, where he was forced to witness numbers of lengthy rites and ceremonies. By this time Vivien’s active impatience had subsided into passive weariness, his yawns were continual and scandalous, but nobody heeded him, he stared hopelessly at the thick black curtain which hung down straight in front of him, and could hardly believe his eyes when it presently began to slide back, and he saw before him the Black Bird. It was of enormous size, and was perched upon a thick bar of iron which ran across from one side of the Temple to the other. At the sight of it all the slaves fell upon their knees

and hid their faces, and when it had three times flapped its mighty wings it uttered distinctly in Prince Vivien's own language the words:

'Prince, your only chance of happiness depends upon that which is most opposed to your own nature.'

Then the curtain fell before it once more, and the Prince, after many ceremonies, was presented with a raven which perched upon his wrist, and was conducted slowly back to the iron gate. Here the raven left him and he was handed over once more to the care of the first band of slaves, while a large bat flickered down and settled upon his head of its own accord, and so he was taken back to the marble bath, and had to go through the whole process again, only this time he began in deep water which receded daily inch by inch. When this was over the slaves escorted him to the outer gate, and took leave of him with every mark of esteem and politeness, to which it is to be feared he responded but indifferently, since the gate was no sooner opened than he took to his heels, and fled away with all his might, his one idea being to put as much space as possible between himself and the dreary place into which he had ventured so rashly, just to consult a tedious Oracle who after all had told him nothing. He actually reflected for about five seconds on his folly, and came to the conclusion that it might sometimes be advisable to think before one acted.

After wandering about for several days until he was weary and hungry, he at last succeeded in finding a way out of the forest, and soon came to a wide and rapid river, which he followed, hoping to find some means of crossing it, and it happened that as the sun rose the next morning he saw something of a dazzling whiteness moored out in the middle of the stream. Upon looking more attentively at it he found that it was one of the prettiest little ships he had ever seen, and the boat that belonged to it was made fast to the bank quite close to him. The Prince was immediately seized with the most ardent desire to go on board the ship, and shouted loudly to attract the notice of her crew, but no one answered. So he sprang into the little boat and rowed away without finding it at all hard work, for the boat was made all of white paper and was as light as a rose leaf. The ship was made of white paper too, as the Prince presently discovered when he reached it. He found not a soul on board, but there was a very cosy little bed in the cabin, and an ample supply of all sorts of good things to eat and drink, which he made up his mind to enjoy until something new happened.

Having been thoroughly well brought up at the court of King Gridelin, of course he understood the art of navigation, but when once he had started, the current carried the vessel down at such a pace that before he knew where he was the Prince found himself out at sea, and a wind springing up behind him just at this moment soon drove him out of sight of land. By this time he was somewhat alarmed, and did his best to put the ship about and get back to the river, but wind and tide were too strong for him, and he began to think of the number of times, from his childhood up, that he had been warned not to meddle with water. But it was too late now to do anything but wish vainly that he had stayed on shore, and to grow heartily weary of the boat and the sea and everything connected with it. These two things, however, he did most thoroughly. To put the finishing touch to his misfortunes he presently found himself becalmed in mid-ocean, a state of affairs which would be considered trying by the most patient of men, so you may imagine how it affected Prince Vivien! He even came to wishing himself back at the Castle of the Black Bird, for there at least he saw some living beings, whereas on board the white-paper ship he was absolutely alone, and could not imagine how he was ever to get away from his wearisome prison. However, after a very long time, he did see land, and his impatience to be on shore was so great that he at once flung himself over the ship's side that he might reach it sooner by swimming. But this was quite useless, for spring as far as he might from the vessel, it was always under his feet again before he reached the water, and he had to resign himself to his fate, and wait with what patience he could muster until the winds and waves carried the ship into a kind of natural harbour which ran far into the land. After his long imprisonment at sea the Prince was delighted with the sight of the great trees which grew down to the very edge of the water, and leaping lightly on shore he speedily lost himself in the thick forest. When he had wandered a long way he stopped to rest beside a clear spring of water, but scarcely had he thrown himself down upon the mossy bank when there was a great rustling in the bushes close by, and out sprang a pretty little gazelle panting and exhausted, which fell at his feet gasping out—

'Oh! Vivien, save me!'

The Prince in great astonishment leapt to his feet, and had just time to draw his sword before he found himself face to face with a large green lion

which had been hotly pursuing the poor little gazelle. Prince Vivien attacked it gallantly and a fierce combat ensued, which, however, ended before long in the Prince's dealing his adversary a terrific blow which felled him to the earth. As he fell the lion whistled loudly three times with such force that the forest rang again, and the sound must have been heard for more than two leagues round, after which having apparently nothing more to do in the world he rolled over on his side and died. The Prince without paying any further heed to him or to his whistling returned to the pretty gazelle, saying:

'Well! are you satisfied now? Since you can talk, pray tell me instantly what all this is about, and how you happen to know my name.'

'Oh, I must rest for a long time before I can talk,' she replied, 'and beside, I very much doubt if you will have leisure to listen, for the affair is by no means finished. In fact,' she continued in the same languid tone, 'you had better look behind you now.'

The Prince turned sharply round and to his horror saw a huge Giant approaching with mighty strides, crying fiercely—

'Who has made my lion whistle I should like to know?'

'I have,' replied Prince Vivien boldly, 'but I can answer for it that he will not do it again!'

At these words the Giant began to howl and lament.

'Alas, my poor Tiny, my sweet little pet,' he cried, 'but at least I can avenge thy death.'

Thereupon he rushed at the Prince, brandishing an immense serpent which was coiled about his wrist. Vivien, without losing his coolness, aimed a terrific blow at it with his sword, but no sooner did he touch the snake than it changed into a Giant and the Giant into a snake, with such rapidity that the Prince felt perfectly giddy, and this happened at least half-a-dozen times, until at last with a fortunate stroke he cut the serpent in halves, and picking up one morsel flung it with all his force at the nose of the Giant, who fell insensible on top of the lion, and in an instant a thick black cloud rolled up which hid them from view, and when it cleared away they had all disappeared.

Then the Prince, without even waiting to sheathe his sword, rushed back to the gazelle, crying:

‘Now you have had plenty of time to recover your wits, and you have nothing more to fear, so tell me who you are, and what this horrible Giant, with his lion and his serpent, have to do with you and for pity’s sake be quick about it.’

‘I will tell you with pleasure,’ she answered, ‘but where is the hurry? I want you to come back with me to the Green Castle, but I don’t want to walk there, it is so far, and walking is so fatiguing.’

‘Let us set out at once then,’ replied the Prince severely, ‘or else really I shall have to leave you where you are. Surely a young and active gazelle like you ought to be ashamed of not being able to walk a few steps. The further off this castle is the faster we ought to walk, but as you don’t appear to enjoy that, I will promise that we will go gently, and we can talk by the way.’

‘It would be better still if you would carry me,’ said she sweetly, ‘but as I don’t like to see people giving themselves trouble, you may carry me, and make that snail carry you.’ So saying, she pointed languidly with one tiny foot at what the Prince had taken for a block of stone, but now he saw that it was a huge snail.

‘What! I ride a snail!’ cried the Prince; ‘you are laughing at me, and beside we should not get there for a year.’

‘Oh! well then don’t do it,’ replied the gazelle, ‘I am quite willing to stay here. The grass is green, and the water clear. But if I were you I should take the advice that was given me and ride the snail.’

So, though it did not please him at all, the Prince took the gazelle in his arms, and mounted upon the back of the snail, which glided along very peaceably, entirely declining to be hurried by frequent blows from the Prince’s heels. In vain did the gazelle represent to him that she was enjoying herself very much, and that this was the easiest mode of conveyance she had ever discovered. Prince Vivien was wild with impatience, and thought that the Green Castle would never be reached. However, at last, they did get there, and everyone who was in it ran to see the Prince dismount from his singular steed.

But what was his surprise, when having at her request set the gazelle gently down upon the steps which led up to the castle, he saw her suddenly change into a charming Princess, and recognized in her his pretty cousin Placida, who greeted him with her usual tranquil sweetness. His delight

knew no bounds, and he followed her eagerly up into the castle, impatient to know what strange events had brought her there. But after all he had to wait for the Princess's story, for the inhabitants of the Green Lands, hearing that the Giant was dead, ran to offer the kingdom to his vanquisher, and Prince Vivien had to listen to various complimentary harangues, which took a great deal of time, though he cut them as short as politeness allowed—if not shorter. But at last he was free to rejoin Placida, who at once began the story of her adventures.

'After you had gone away,' said she, 'they tried to make me learn how to govern the kingdom, which wearied me to death, so that I begged and prayed Lolotte to take me away with her, and this she presently did, but very reluctantly. However, having been transported to her grotto upon my favourite couch, I spent several delicious days, soothed by the soft green light, which was like a beech wood in the spring, and by the murmuring of bees and the tinkle of falling water. But alas! Lolotte was forced to go away to a general assembly of the Fairies, and she came back in great dismay, telling me that her indulgence to me had cost her dear, for she had been severely reprimanded and ordered to hand me over to the Fairy Mirlifiche, who was already taking charge of you, and who had been much commended for her management of you.'

'Fine management, indeed,' interrupted the Prince, 'if it is to her I owe all the adventures I have met with! But go on with your story, my cousin. I can tell you all about my doings afterwards, and then you can judge for yourself.'

'At first I was grieved to see Lolotte cry,' resumed the Princess, 'but I soon found that grieving was very troublesome, so I thought it better to be calm, and very soon afterwards I saw the Fairy Mirlifiche arrive, mounted upon her great unicorn. She stopped before the grotto and bade Lolotte bring me out to her, at which she cried worse than ever, and kissed me a dozen times, but she dared not refuse. I was lifted up on to the unicorn, behind Mirlifiche, who said to me—

'"Hold on tight, little girl, if you don't want to break your neck."

'And, indeed, I had to hold on with all my might, for her horrible steed trotted so violently that it positively took my breath away. However, at last we stopped at a large farm, and the farmer and his wife ran out as soon as they saw the Fairy, and helped us to dismount.

‘I knew that they were really a King and Queen, whom the Fairies were punishing for their ignorance and idleness. You may imagine that I was by this time half dead with fatigue, but Mirlifiche insisted upon my feeding her unicorn before I did anything else. To accomplish this I had to climb up a long ladder into the hayloft, and bring down, one after another, twenty-four handfuls of hay. Never, never before, did I have such a wearisome task! It makes me shudder to think of it now, and that was not all. In the same way I had to carry the twenty-four handfuls of hay to the stable, and then it was supper time, and I had to wait upon all the others. After that I really thought I should be allowed to go peaceably to my little bed, but, oh dear no! First of all I had to make it, for it was all in confusion, and then I had to make one for the Fairy, and tuck her in, and draw the curtains round her, beside rendering her a dozen little services which I was not at all accustomed to. Finally, when I was perfectly exhausted by all this toil, I was free to go to bed myself, but as I had never before undressed myself, and really did not know how to begin, I lay down as I was. Unfortunately, the Fairy found this out, and just as I was falling into a sweet slumber, she made me get up once more, but even then I managed to escape her vigilance, and only took off my upper robe. Indeed, I may tell you in confidence, that I always find disobedience answer very well. One is often scolded, it is true, but then one has been saved some trouble.

‘At the earliest dawn of day Mirlifiche woke me, and made me take many journeys to the stable to bring her word how her unicorn had slept, and how much hay he had eaten, and then to find out what time it was, and if it was a fine day. I was so slow, and did my errands so badly, that before she left she called the King and Queen and said to them:

‘“I am much more pleased with you this year. Continue to make the best of your farm, if you wish to get back to your kingdom, and also take care of this little Princess for me, and teach her to be useful, that when I come I may find her cured of her faults. If she is not—”

‘Here she broke off with a significant look, and mounting my enemy the unicorn, speedily disappeared.

‘Then the King and Queen, turning to me, asked me what I could do.

‘“Nothing at all, I assure you,” I replied in a tone which really ought to have convinced them, but they went on to describe various employments,

and tried to discover which of them would be most to my taste. However, at last I persuaded them that to do nothing whatever would be the only thing that would suit me, and that if they really wanted to be kind to me, they would let me go to bed and to sleep, and not tease me about doing anything. To my great joy, they not only permitted this, but actually, when they had their own meals, the Queen brought my portion up to me. But early the next morning she appeared at my bedside, saying, with an apologetic air:

‘“My pretty child, I am afraid you must really make up your mind to get up to-day. I know quite well how delightful it is to be thoroughly idle, for when my husband and I were King and Queen we did nothing at all from morning to night, and I sincerely hope that it will not be long before those happy days will come again for us. But at present we have not reached them, nor have you, and you know from what the Fairy said that perhaps worse things may happen to us if she is not obeyed. Make haste, I beg of you, and come down to breakfast, for I have put by some delicious cream for you.”

‘It was really very tiresome, but as there was no help for it I went down!

‘But the instant breakfast was over they began again their cuckoo-cry of “What will you do?” In vain did I answer—

‘“Nothing at all, if it please you, madam.”

‘The Queen at last gave me a spindle and about four pounds of hemp upon a distaff, and sent me out to keep the sheep, assuring me that there could not be a pleasanter occupation, and that I could take my ease as much as I pleased. I was forced to set out, very unwillingly, as you may imagine, but I had not walked far before I came to a shady bank in what seemed to me a charming place. I stretched myself cosily upon the soft grass, and with the bundle of hemp for a pillow slept as tranquilly as if there were no such things as sheep in the world, while they for their part wandered hither and thither at their own sweet will, as if there were no such thing as a shepherdess, invading every field, and browsing upon every kind of forbidden dainty, until the peasants, alarmed by the havoc they were making, raised a clamour, which at last reached the ears of the King and Queen, who ran out, and seeing the cause of the commotion, hastily collected their flock. And, indeed, the sooner the better, since they

had to pay for all the damage they had done. As for me I lay still and watched them run, for I was very comfortable, and there I might be still if they had not come up, all panting and breathless, and compelled me to get up and follow them; they also reproached me bitterly, but I need hardly tell you that they did not again entrust me with the flock.

‘But whatever they found for me to do it was always the same thing, I spoilt and mismanaged it all, and was so successful in provoking even the most patient people, that one day I ran away from the farm, for I was really afraid the Queen would be obliged to beat me. When I came to the little river in which the King used to fish, I found the boat tied to a tree, and stepping in I unfastened it, and floated gently down with the current. The gliding of the boat was so soothing that I did not trouble myself in the least when the Queen caught sight of me and ran along the bank, crying—

‘“My boat, my boat! Husband, come and catch the little Princess who is running away with my boat!”

‘The current soon carried me out of hearing of her cries, and I dreamed to the song of the ripples and the whisper of the trees, until the boat suddenly stopped, and I found it was stuck fast beside a fresh green meadow, and that the sun was rising. In the distance I saw some little houses which seemed to be built in a most singular fashion, but as I was by this time very hungry I set out towards them, but before I had walked many steps, I saw that the air was full of shining objects which seemed to be fixed, and yet I could not see what they hung from.

‘I went nearer, and saw a silken cord hanging down to the ground, and pulled it just because it was so close to my hand. Instantly the whole meadow resounded to the melodious chiming of a peal of silver bells, and they sounded so pretty that I sat down to listen, and to watch them as they swung shining in the sunbeams. Before they ceased to sound, came a great flight of birds, and each one perching upon a bell added its charming song to the concert. As they ended, I looked up and saw a tall and stately dame advancing towards me, surrounded and followed by a vast flock of every kind of bird.

‘“Who are you, little girl,” said she, “who dares to come where I allow no mortal to live, lest my birds should be disturbed? Still, if you are clever at anything,” she added, “I might be able to put up with your presence.”

‘“Madam,” I answered, rising, “you may be very sure that I shall not do anything to alarm your birds. I only beg you, for pity’s sake, to give me something to eat.”

‘“I will do that,” she replied, “before I send you where you deserve to go.”

‘And thereupon she despatched six jays, who were her pages, to fetch me all sorts of biscuits, while some of the other birds brought ripe fruits. In fact, I had a delicious breakfast, though I do not like to be waited upon so quickly. It is so disagreeable to be hurried. I began to think I should like very well to stay in this pleasant country, and I said so to the stately lady, but she answered with the greatest disdain:

‘“Do you think I would keep you here? *You*! Why what do you suppose would be the good of you in this country, where everybody is wide-awake and busy? No, no, I have shown you all the hospitality you will get from me.”

‘With these words she turned and gave a vigorous pull to the silken rope which I mentioned before, but instead of a melodious chime, there arose a hideous clanging which quite terrified me, and in an instant a huge Black Bird appeared, which alighted at the Fairy’s feet, saying in a frightful voice—

‘“What do you want of me, my sister?”

‘“I wish you to take this little Princess to my cousin, the Giant of the Green Castle, at once,” she replied, “and beg him from me to make her work day and night upon his beautiful tapestry.”

‘At these words the great Bird snatched me up, regardless of my cries, and flew off at a terrific pace—’

‘Oh! you are joking, cousin,’ interrupted Prince Vivien; ‘you mean as slowly as possible. I know that horrible Black Bird, and the lengthiness of all his proceedings and surroundings.’

‘Have it your own way,’ replied Placida, tranquilly. ‘I cannot bear arguing. Perhaps, this was not even the same bird. At any rate, he carried me off at a prodigious speed, and set me gently down in this very castle of which you are now the master. We entered by one of the windows, and when the Bird had handed me over to the Giant from whom you have been good enough to deliver me, and given the Fairy’s message, it departed.

‘Then the Giant turned to me, saying,

‘“So you are an idler! Ah! well, we must teach you to work. You won’t be the first we have cured of laziness. See how busy all my guests are.”

‘I looked up as he spoke, and saw that an immense gallery ran all round the hall, in which were tapestry frames, spindles, skeins of wool, patterns, and all necessary things. Before each frame about a dozen people were sitting, hard at work, at which terrible sight I fainted away, and as soon as I recovered they began to ask me what I could do.

‘It was in vain that I replied as before, and with the strongest desire to be taken at my word, “Nothing at all.”

‘The Giant only said,

‘“Then you must learn to do something; in this world there is enough work for everybody.”

‘It appeared that they were working into the tapestry all the stories the Fairies liked best, and they began to try and teach me to help them, but from the first class, where they tried me to begin with, I sank lower and lower, and not even the most simple stitches could I learn.

‘In vain they punished me by all the usual methods. In vain the Giant showed me his menagerie, which was entirely composed of children who would not work! Nothing did me any good, and at last I was reduced to drawing water for the dyeing of the wools, and even over that I was so slow that this morning the Giant flew into a rage and changed me into a gazelle. He was just putting me into the menagerie when I happened to catch sight of a dog, and was seized with such terror that I fled away at my utmost speed, and escaped through the outer court of the castle. The Giant, fearing that I should be lost altogether, sent his green lion after me, with orders to bring me back, cost what it might, and I should certainly have let myself be caught, or eaten up, or anything, rather than run any further, if I had not luckily met you by the fountain. And oh!’ concluded the Princess, ‘how delightful it is once more to be able to sit still in peace. I was so tired of trying to learn things.’

Prince Vivien said that, for his part, he had been kept a great deal too still, and had not found it at all amusing, and then he recounted all his adventures with breathless rapidity. How he had taken shelter with Dame Patience, and consulted the Oracle, and voyaged in the paper ship. Then they went hand in hand to release all the prisoners in the castle, and all the Princes and Princesses who were in cages in the menagerie, for the instant

the Green Giant was dead they had resumed their natural forms. As you may imagine, they were all very grateful, and Princess Placida entreated them never, never to do another stitch of work so long as they lived, and they promptly made a great bonfire in the courtyard, and solemnly burnt all the embroidery frames and spinning wheels. Then the Princess gave them splendid presents, or rather sat by while Prince Vivien gave them, and there were great rejoicings in the Green Castle, and everyone did his best to please the Prince and Princess. But with all their good intentions, they often made mistakes, for Vivien and Placida were never of one mind about their plans, so it was very confusing, and they frequently found themselves obeying the Prince's orders, very, very slowly, and rushing off with lightning speed to do something that the Princess did not wish to have done at all, until, by-and-by, the two cousins took to consulting with, and consoling one another in all these little vexations, and at last came to be so fond of each other that for Placida's sake Vivien became quite patient, and for Vivien's sake Placida made the most unheard-of exertions. But now the Fairies who had been watching all these proceedings with interest, thought it was time to interfere, and ascertain by further trials if this improvement was likely to continue, and if they really loved one another. So they caused Placida to seem to have a violent fever, and Vivien to languish and grow dull, and made each of them very uneasy about the other, and then, finding a moment when they were apart, the Fairy Mirlifiche suddenly appeared to Placida, and said—

'I have just seen Prince Vivien, and he seemed to me to be very ill.'

'Alas! yes, madam,' she answered, 'and if you will but cure him, you may take me back to the farm, or bring the Green Giant to life again, and you shall see how obedient I will be.'

'If you really wish him to recover,' said the Fairy, 'you have only to catch the Trotting Mouse and the Chaffinch-on-the-Wing and bring them to me. Only remember that time presses!'

She had hardly finished speaking before the Princess was rushing headlong out of the castle gate, and the Fairy after watching her till she was lost to sight, gave a little chuckle and went in search of the Prince, who begged her earnestly to send him back to the Black Castle, or to the paper boat if she would but save Placida's life. The Fairy shook her head, and looked very grave. She quite agreed with him, the Princess was in a

bad way—‘But,’ said she, ‘if you can find the Rosy Mole, and give him to her she will recover.’ So now it was the Prince’s turn to set off in a vast hurry, only as soon as he left the Castle he happened to go in exactly the opposite direction to the one Placida had taken. Now you can imagine these two devoted lovers hunting night and day. The Princess in the woods, always running, always listening, pursuing hotly after two creatures which seemed to her very hard to catch, which she yet never ceased from pursuing. The Prince on the other hand wandering continually across the meadows, his eyes fixed upon the ground, attentive to every movement among the moles. He was forced to walk slowly—slowly upon tip-toe, hardly venturing to breathe. Often he stood for hours motionless as a statue, and if the desire to succeed could have helped him he would soon have possessed the Rosy Mole. But alas! all that he caught were black and ordinary, though strange to say he never grew impatient, but always seemed ready to begin the tedious hunt again. But this changing of character is one of the most ordinary miracles which love works. Neither the Prince nor the Princess gave a thought to anything but their quest. It never even occurred to them to wonder what country they had reached. So you may guess how astonished they were one day, when having at last been successful after their long and weary chase, they cried aloud at the same instant: ‘At last I have saved my beloved,’ and then recognising each other’s voice looked up, and rushed to meet one another with the wildest joy. Surprise kept them silent while for one delicious moment they gazed into each other’s eyes, and just then who should come up but King Gridelin, for it was into his kingdom they had accidentally strayed. He recognized them in his turn and greeted them joyfully, but when they turned afterwards to look for the Rosy Mole, the Chaffinch, and the Trotting-Mouse, they had vanished, and in their places stood a lovely lady whom they did not know, the Black Bird, and the Green Giant. King Gridelin had no sooner set eyes upon the lady than with a cry of joy he clasped her in his arms, for it was no other than his long-lost wife, Santorina, about whose imprisonment in Fairyland you may perhaps read some day.

Then the Black Bird and the Green Giant resumed their natural form, for they were enchanters, and up flew Lolotte and Mirlifiche in their chariots, and then there was a great kissing and congratulating, for

everybody had regained someone he loved, including the enchanters, who loved their natural forms dearly. After this they repaired to the Palace, and the wedding of Prince Vivien and Princess Placida was held at once with all the splendour imaginable.

King Gridelin and Queen Santorina, after all their experiences had no further desire to reign, so they retired happily to a peaceful place, leaving their kingdom to the Prince and Princess, who were beloved by all their subjects, and found their greatest happiness all their lives long in making other people happy.

Nonchalante et Papillon

LITTLE ONE-EYE, LITTLE TWO-EYES, AND LITTLE THREE-EYES

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There was once a woman who had three daughters, of whom the eldest was called Little One-eye, because she had only one eye in the middle of her forehead; and the second, Little Two-eyes, because she had two eyes like other people; and the youngest, Little Three-eyes, because she had three eyes, and *her* third eye was also in the middle of her forehead. But because Little Two-eyes did not look any different from other children, her sisters and mother could not bear her. They would say to her, ‘You with your two eyes are no better than common folk; you don’t belong to us.’ They pushed her here, and threw her wretched clothes there, and gave her to eat only what they left, and they were as unkind to her as ever they could be.

It happened one day that Little Two-eyes had to go out into the fields to take care of the goat, but she was still quite hungry because her sisters had given her so little to eat. So she sat down in the meadow and began to cry, and she cried so much that two little brooks ran out of her eyes. But when she looked up once in her grief there stood a woman beside her who asked, ‘Little Two-eyes, what are you crying for?’ Little Two-eyes answered, ‘Have I not reason to cry? Because I have two eyes like other people, my sisters and my mother cannot bear me; they push me out of one corner into another, and give me nothing to eat except what they leave. To-day they have given me so little that I am still quite hungry.’ Then the wise woman said, ‘Little Two-eyes, dry your eyes, and I will tell you something so that you need never be hungry again. Only say to your goat,

“Little goat, bleat, Little table, appear,”

and a beautifully spread table will stand before you, with the most delicious food on it, so that you can eat as much as you want. And when you have had enough and don’t want the little table any more, you have only to say,

“Little goat, bleat, Little table, away,”

and then it will vanish.’ Then the wise woman went away.

But Little Two-eyes thought, ‘I must try at once if what she has told me is true, for I am more hungry than ever’; and she said,

‘Little goat, bleat, Little table appear,’

and scarcely had she uttered the words, when there stood a little table before her covered with a white cloth, on which were arranged a plate, with a knife and fork and a silver spoon, and the most beautiful dishes, which were smoking hot, as if they had just come out of the kitchen. Then Little Two-eyes said the shortest grace she knew, and set to work and made a good dinner. And when she had had enough, she said, as the wise woman had told her,

‘Little goat, bleat, Little table, away,’

and immediately the table and all that was on it disappeared again. ‘That is a splendid way of housekeeping,’ thought Little Two-eyes, and she was quite happy and contented.

In the evening, when she went home with her goat, she found a little earthenware dish with the food that her sisters had thrown to her, but she did not touch it. The next day she went out again with her goat, and left the few scraps which were given her. The first and second times her sisters did not notice this, but when it happened continually, they remarked it and said, ‘Something is the matter with Little Two-eyes, for she always leaves her food now, and she used to gobble up all that was given her. She must have found other means of getting food.’ So in order to get at the truth, Little One-eye was told to go out with Little Two-eyes when she drove the goat to pasture, and to notice particularly what she got there, and whether anyone brought her food and drink.

Now when Little Two-eyes was setting out, Little One-eye came up to her and said, ‘I will go into the field with you and see if you take good care of the goat, and if you drive him properly to get grass.’ But Little Two-eyes saw what Little One-eye had in her mind, and she drove the goat into the long grass and said, ‘Come, Little One-eye, we will sit down here, and I will sing you something.’

Little One-eye sat down, and as she was very much tired by the long walk to which she was not used, and by the hot day, and as Little Two-eyes went on singing.

‘Little One-eye, are you awake? Little One-eye, are you asleep?’

she shut her one eye and fell asleep. When Little Two-eyes saw that Little One-eye was asleep and could find out nothing, she said,

‘Little goat, bleat, Little table, appear,’

and sat down at her table and ate and drank as much as she wanted. Then she said again,

‘Little goat, bleat, Little table, away.’

and in the twinkling of an eye all had vanished.

Little Two-eyes then woke Little One-eye and said, ‘Little One-eye, you meant to watch, and, instead, you went to sleep; in the meantime the goat might have run far and wide. Come, we will go home.’ So they went home, and Little Two-eyes again left her little dish untouched, and Little One-eye could not tell her mother why she would not eat, and said as an excuse, ‘I was so sleepy out-of-doors.’

The next day the mother said to Little Three-eyes, ‘This time you shall go with Little Two-eyes and watch whether she eats anything out in the fields, and whether anyone brings her food and drink, for eat and drink she must secretly.’ So Little Three-eyes went to Little Two-eyes and said, ‘I will go with you and see if you take good care of the goat, and if you drive him properly to get grass.’ But little Two-eyes knew what Little Three-eyes had in her mind, and she drove the goat out into the tall grass and said, ‘We will sit down here, Little Three-eyes, and I will sing you something.’ Little Three-eyes sat down; she was tired by the walk and the hot day, and Little Two-eyes sang the same little song again:

‘Little Three eyes, are you awake?’

but instead of singing as she ought to have done,

‘Little Three-eyes, are you asleep?’

she sang, without thinking,

‘Little *Two-eyes*, are you asleep?’

She went on singing,

‘Little Three-eyes, are you awake? Little *Two-eyes*, are you asleep?’

so that the two eyes of Little Three-eyes fell asleep, but the third, which was not spoken to in the little rhyme, did not fall asleep. Of course Little Three-eyes shut that eye also out of cunning, to look as if she were asleep, but it was blinking and could see everything quite well.

And when Little Two-eyes thought that Little Three-eyes was sound asleep, she said her rhyme,

‘Little goat, bleat, Little table, appear,’

and ate and drank to her heart’s content, and then made the table go away again, by saying,

‘Little goat, bleat, Little table, away.’

But Little Three-eyes had seen everything. Then Little Two-eyes came to her, and woke her and said, ‘Well, Little Three-eyes, have you been asleep? You watch well! Come, we will go home.’ When they reached home, Little Two-eyes did not eat again, and Little Three-eyes said to the mother, ‘I know now why that proud thing eats nothing. When she says to the goat in the field,

“Little goat, bleat, Little table, appear,”

a table stands before her, spread with the best food, much better than we have; and when she has had enough, she says,

“Little goat, bleat, Little table, away,”

and everything disappears again. I saw it all exactly. She made two of my eyes go to sleep with a little rhyme, but the one in my forehead remained awake, luckily!’

Then the envious mother cried out, ‘Will you fare better than we do? you shall not have the chance to do so again!’ and she fetched a knife, and killed the goat.

When Little Two-eyes saw this, she went out full of grief, and sat down in the meadow and wept bitter tears. Then again the wise woman stood before her, and said, ‘Little Two-eyes, what are you crying for?’ ‘Have I not reason to cry?’ she answered, ‘the goat, which when I said the little rhyme, spread the table so beautifully, my mother has killed, and now I must suffer hunger and want again.’ The wise woman said, ‘Little Two-eyes, I will give you a good piece of advice. Ask your sisters to give you the heart of the dead goat, and bury it in the earth before the house-door; that will bring you good luck.’ Then she disappeared, and Little Two-eyes went home, and said to her sisters, ‘Dear sisters, do give me something of my goat; I ask nothing better than its heart.’ Then they laughed and said, ‘You can have that if you want nothing more.’ And Little Two-eyes took the heart and buried it in the evening when all was quiet, as the wise woman had told her, before the house-door. The next morning when they all awoke and came to the house-door, there stood a most wonderful tree, which had leaves of silver and fruit of gold growing on it—you never saw

anything more lovely and gorgeous in your life! But they did not know how the tree had grown up in the night; only Little Two-eyes knew that it had sprung from the heart of the goat, for it was standing just where she had buried it in the ground. Then the mother said to Little One-eye, ‘Climb up, my child, and break us off the fruit from the tree.’ Little One-eye climbed up, but just when she was going to take hold of one of the golden apples the bough sprang out of her hands; and this happened every time, so that she could not break off a single apple, however hard she tried. Then the mother said, ‘Little Three-eyes, do you climb up; you with your three eyes can see round better than Little One-eye.’ So Little One-eye slid down, and Little Three-eyes climbed up; but she was not any more successful; look round as she might, the golden apples bent themselves back. At last the mother got impatient and climbed up herself, but she was even less successful than Little One-eye and Little Three-eyes in catching hold of the fruit, and only grasped at the empty air. Then Little Two-eyes said, ‘I will just try once, perhaps I shall succeed better.’ The sisters called out, ‘You with your two eyes will no doubt succeed!’ But Little Two-eyes climbed up, and the golden apples did not jump away from her, but behaved quite properly, so that she could pluck them off, one after the other, and brought a whole apron-full down with her. The mother took them from her, and, instead of behaving better to poor Little Two-eyes, as they ought to have done, they were jealous that she only could reach the fruit and behaved still more unkindly to her.

It happened one day that when they were all standing together by the tree that a young knight came riding along. ‘Be quick, Little Two-eyes,’ cried the two sisters, ‘creep under this, so that you shall not disgrace us,’ and they put over poor Little Two-eyes as quickly as possible an empty cask, which was standing close to the tree, and they pushed the golden apples which she had broken off under with her. When the knight, who was a very handsome young man, rode up, he wondered to see the marvellous tree of gold and silver, and said to the two sisters, ‘Whose is this beautiful tree? Whoever will give me a twig of it shall have whatever she wants.’ Then Little One-eye and Little Three-eyes answered that the tree belonged to them, and that they would certainly break him off a twig. They gave themselves a great deal of trouble, but in vain; the twigs and fruit bent back every time from their hands. Then the knight said, ‘It is very strange

that the tree should belong to you, and yet that you have not the power to break anything from it!' But they would have that the tree was theirs; and while they were saying this, Little Two-eyes rolled a couple of golden apples from under the cask, so that they lay at the knight's feet, for she was angry with Little One-eye and Little Three-eyes for not speaking the truth. When the knight saw the apples he was astonished, and asked where they came from. Little One-eye and Little Three-eyes answered that they had another sister, but she could not be seen because she had only two eyes, like ordinary people. But the knight demanded to see her, and called out, 'Little Two-eyes, come forth.' Then Little Two-eyes came out from under the cask quite happily, and the knight was astonished at her great beauty, and said, 'Little Two-eyes, I am sure you can break me off a twig from the tree.' 'Yes,' answered Little Two-eyes, 'I can, for the tree is mine.' So she climbed up and broke off a small branch with its silver leaves and golden fruit without any trouble, and gave it to the knight. Then he said, 'Little Two-eyes, what shall I give you for this?' 'Ah,' answered Little Two-eyes, 'I suffer hunger and thirst, want and sorrow, from early morning till late in the evening; if you would take me with you, and free me from this, I should be happy!' Then the knight lifted Little Two-eyes on his horse, and took her home to his father's castle. There he gave her beautiful clothes, and food and drink, and because he loved her so much he married her, and the wedding was celebrated with great joy.

When the handsome knight carried Little Two-eyes away with him, the two sisters envied her good luck at first. 'But the wonderful tree is still with us, after all,' they thought, 'and although we cannot break any fruit from it, everyone will stop and look at it, and will come to us and praise it; who knows whether *we* may not reap a harvest from it?' But the next morning the tree had flown, and their hopes with it; and when Little Two-eyes looked out of her window there it stood underneath, to her great delight. Little Two-eyes lived happily for a long time. Once two poor women came to the castle to beg alms. Then Little Two-eyes looked at then and recognised both her sisters, Little One-eye and Little Three-eyes, who had become so poor that they came to beg bread at her door. But Little Two-eyes bade them welcome, and was so good to them that they both repented from their hearts of having been so unkind to their sister.

Grimm.

JORINDE AND JORINGEL

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There was once upon a time a castle in the middle of a thick wood where lived an old woman quite alone, for she was an enchantress. In the day-time she changed herself into a cat or a night-owl, but in the evening she became like an ordinary woman again. She could entice animals and birds to come to her, and then she would kill and cook them. If any youth came within a hundred paces of the castle, he was obliged to stand still, and could not stir from the spot till she set him free; but if a pretty girl came within this boundary, the old enchantress changed her into a bird, and shut her up in a wicker cage, which she put in one of the rooms in the castle. She had quite seven thousand of such cages in the castle with very rare birds in them.

Now, there was once a maiden called Jorinde, who was more beautiful than other maidens. She and a youth named Joringel, who was just as good-looking as she was, were betrothed to one another. Their greatest delight was to be together, and so that they might get a good long talk, they went one evening for a walk in the wood. ‘Take care,’ said Joringel, ‘not to come too close to the castle.’ It was a beautiful evening; the sun shone brightly between the stems of the trees among the dark green leaves of the forest, and the turtle-dove sang clearly on the old maybushes.

Jorinde wept from time to time, and she sat herself down in the sunshine and lamented, and Joringel lamented too. They felt as sad as if they had been condemned to die; they looked round and got quite confused, and did not remember which was their way home. Half the sun was still above the mountain and half was behind it when Joringel looked through the trees and saw the old wall of the castle quite near them. He was terrified and half dead with fright. Jorinde sang:

‘My little bird with throat so red Sings sorrow, sorrow, sorrow; He sings to the little dove that’s dead, Sings sorrow, sor—jug, jug, jug.’

Joringel looked up at Jorinde. She had been changed into a nightingale, who was singing ‘jug, jug.’ A night-owl with glowing eyes flew three

times round her, and screeched three times ‘tu-whit, tu-whit, tu-whoo.’ Joringel could not stir; he stood there like a stone; he could not weep, or speak, or move hand or foot. Now the sun set; the owl flew into a bush, and immediately an old, bent woman came out of it; she was yellow-skinned and thin, and had large red eyes and a hooked nose, which met her chin. She muttered to herself, caught the nightingale, and carried her away in her hand. Joringel could say nothing; he could not move from the spot, and the nightingale was gone. At last the woman came back again, and said in a gruff voice, ‘Good evening, Zachiel; when the young moon shines in the basket, you are freed early, Zachiel.’ Then Joringel was free. He fell on his knees before the old woman and implored her to give him back his Jorinde, but she said he should never have her again, and then went away. He called after her, he wept and lamented, but all in vain. ‘What is to become of me!’ he thought. Then he went away, and came at last to a strange village, where he kept sheep for a long time. He often went round the castle while he was there, but never too close. At last he dreamt one night that he had found a blood-red flower, which had in its centre a beautiful large pearl. He plucked this flower and went with it to the castle; and there everything which he touched with the flower was freed from the enchantment, and he got his Jorinde back again through it. When he awoke in the morning he began to seek mountain and valley to find such a flower. He sought it for eight days, and on the ninth early in the morning he found the blood-red flower. In its centre was a large dew-drop, as big as the most lovely pearl. He travelled day and night with this flower till he arrived at the castle. When he came within a hundred paces of it he did not cease to be able to move, but he went on till he reached the gate. He was delighted at his success, touched the great gate with the flower, and it sprung open. He entered, passed through the courtyard, and then stopped to listen for the singing of the birds; at last he heard it. He went in and found the hall in which was the enchantress, and with her seven thousand birds in their wicker cages. When she saw Joringel she was furious, and breathed out poison and gall at him, but she could not move a step towards him. He took no notice of her, and went and looked over the cages of birds; but there were many hundred nightingales, and how was he to find his Jorinde from among them? Whilst he was considering, he observed the old witch take up a cage secretly and go with it towards the door. Instantly he sprang

after her, touched the cage with the flower, and the old woman as well. Now she could no longer work enchantments, and there stood Jorinde before him, with her arms round his neck, and more beautiful than ever. Then he turned all the other birds again into maidens, and he went home with his Jorinde, and they lived a long and happy life.

Grimm.

ALLERLEIRAUH; OR, THE MANY-FURRED CREATURE

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There was once upon a time a King who had a wife with golden hair, and she was so beautiful that you couldn't find anyone like her in the world. It happened that she fell ill, and when she felt that she must soon die, she sent for the King, and said, 'If you want to marry after my death, make no one queen unless she is just as beautiful as I am, and has just such golden hair as I have. Promise me this.' After the King had promised her this, she closed her eyes and died.

For a long time the King was not to be comforted, and he did not even think of taking a second wife. At last his councillors said, 'The King *must* marry again, so that we may have a queen.' So messengers were sent far and wide to seek for a bride equal to the late Queen in beauty. But there was no one in the wide world, and if there had been she could not have had such golden hair. Then the messengers came home again, not having been able to find a queen.

Now, the King had a daughter, who was just as beautiful as her dead mother, and had just such golden hair. One day when she had grown up, her father looked at her, and saw that she was exactly like her mother, so he said to his councillors, 'I will marry my daughter to one of you, and she shall be queen, for she is exactly like her dead mother, and when I die her husband shall be king.' But when the Princess heard of her father's decision, she was not at all pleased, and said to him, 'Before I do your bidding, I must have three dresses; one as golden as the sun, one as silver as the moon, and one as shining as the stars. Besides these, I want a cloak made of a thousand different kinds of skin; every animal in your kingdom must give a bit of his skin to it.' But she thought to herself, 'This will be quite impossible, and I shall not have to marry someone I do not care for.' The King, however, was not to be turned from his purpose, and he commanded the most skilled maidens in his kingdom to weave the three dresses, one as golden as the sun, and one as silver as the moon, and one as

shining as the stars; and he gave orders to all his huntsmen to catch one of every kind of beast in the kingdom, and to get a bit of its skin to make the cloak of a thousand pieces of fur. At last, when all was ready, the King commanded the cloak to be brought to him, and he spread it out before the Princess, and said, ‘Tomorrow shall be your wedding-day.’ When the Princess saw that there was no more hope of changing her father’s resolution, she determined to flee away. In the night, when everyone else was sleeping, she got up and took three things from her treasures, a gold ring, a little gold spinning-wheel, and a gold reel; she put the sun, moon, and star dresses in a nut-shell, drew on the cloak of many skins, and made her face and hands black with soot. Then she commended herself to God, and went out and travelled the whole night till she came to a large forest. And as she was very much tired she sat down inside a hollow tree and fell asleep.

The sun rose and she still slept on and on, although it was nearly noon. Now, it happened that the king to whom this wood belonged was hunting in it. When his dogs came to the tree, they sniffed, and ran round and round it, barking. The King said to the huntsmen, ‘See what sort of a wild beast is in there.’ The huntsmen went in, and then came back and said, ‘In the hollow tree there lies a wonderful animal that we don’t know, and we have never seen one like it; its skin is made of a thousand pieces of fur; but it is lying down asleep.’ The King said, ‘See if you can catch it alive, and then fasten it to the cart, and we will take it with us.’ When the huntsmen seized the maiden, she awoke and was frightened, and cried out to them, ‘I am a poor child, forsaken by father and mother; take pity on me, and let me go with you.’ Then they said to her, ‘Many-furred Creature, you can work in the kitchen; come with us and sweep the ashes together.’ So they put her in the cart and they went back to the palace. There they showed her a tiny room under the stairs, where no daylight came, and said to her, ‘Many-furred Creature, you can live and sleep here.’ Then she was sent into the kitchen, where she carried wood and water, poked the fire, washed vegetables, plucked fowls, swept up the ashes, and did all the dirty work.

So the Many-furred Creature lived for a long time in great poverty. Ah, beautiful King’s daughter, what is going to befall you now?

It happened once when a great feast was being held in the palace, that she said to the cook, ‘Can I go upstairs for a little bit and look on? I will

stand outside the doors.' The cook replied, 'Yes, you can go up, but in half-an-hour you must be back here to sweep up the ashes.' Then she took her little oil-lamp, and went into her little room, drew off her fur cloak, and washed off the soot from her face and hands, so that her beauty shone forth, and it was as if one sunbeam after another were coming out of a black cloud. Then she opened the nut, and took out the dress as golden as the sun. And when she had done this, she went up to the feast, and everyone stepped out of her way, for nobody knew her, and they thought she must be a King's daughter. But the King came towards her and gave her his hand, and danced with her, thinking to himself, 'My eyes have never beheld anyone so fair!' When the dance was ended, she curtseyed to him, and when the King looked round she had disappeared, no one knew whither. The guards who were standing before the palace were called and questioned, but no one had seen her.

She had run to her little room and had quickly taken off her dress, made her face and hands black, put on the fur cloak, and was once more the Many-furred Creature. When she came into the kitchen and was setting about her work of sweeping the ashes together, the cook said to her, 'Let that wait till to-morrow, and just cook the King's soup for me; I want to have a little peep at the company upstairs; but be sure that you do not let a hair fall into it, otherwise you will get nothing to eat in future!' So the cook went away, and the Many-furred Creature cooked the soup for the King. She made a bread-soup as well as she possibly could, and when it was done, she fetched her gold ring from her little room, and laid it in the tureen in which the soup was to be served up.

When the dance was ended, the King had his soup brought to him and ate it, and it was so good that he thought he had never tasted such soup in his life. But when he came to the bottom of the dish he saw a gold ring lying there, and he could not imagine how it got in. Then he commanded the cook to be brought before him. The cook was terrified when he heard the command, and said to the Many-furred Creature, 'You must have let a hair fall into the soup, and if you have you deserve a good beating!' When he came before the King, the King asked who had cooked the soup. The cook answered, 'I cooked it.' But the King said, 'That's not true, for it was quite different and much better soup than you have ever cooked.' Then the cook said, 'I must confess; *I* did not cook the soup; the Many-furred

Creature did.' 'Let her be brought before me,' said the King. When the Many-furred Creature came, the King asked her who she was. 'I am a poor child without father or mother.' Then he asked her, 'What do you do in my palace?' 'I am of no use except to have boots thrown at my head.' 'How did you get the ring which was in the soup?' he asked. 'I know nothing at all about the ring,' she answered. So the King could find out nothing, and was obliged to send her away.

After a time there was another feast, and the Many-furred Creature begged the cook as at the last one to let her go and look on. He answered, 'Yes, but come back again in half-an-hour and cook the King the bread-soup that he likes so much.' So she ran away to her little room, washed herself quickly, took out of the nut the dress as silver as the moon and put it on. Then she went upstairs looking just like a King's daughter, and the King came towards her, delighted to see her again, and as the dance had just begun, they danced together. But when the dance was ended, she disappeared again so quickly that the King could not see which way she went. She ran to her little room and changed herself once more into the Many-furred Creature, and went into the kitchen to cook the bread-soup. When the cook was upstairs, she fetched the golden spinning-wheel and put it in the dish so that the soup was poured over it. It was brought to the King, who ate it, and liked it as much as the last time. He had the cook sent to him, and again he had to confess that the Many-furred Creature had cooked the soup. Then the Many-furred Creature came before the King, but she said again that she was of no use except to have boots thrown at her head, and that she knew nothing at all of the golden spinning-wheel.

When the King had a feast for the third time, things did not turn out quite the same as at the other two. The cook said, 'You must be a witch, Many-furred Creature, for you always put something in the soup, so that it is much better and tastes nicer to the King than any that I cook.' But because she begged hard, he let her go up for the usual time. Now she put on the dress as shining as the stars, and stepped into the hall in it.

The King danced again with the beautiful maiden, and thought she had never looked so beautiful. And while he was dancing, he put a gold ring on her finger without her seeing it, and he commanded that the dance should last longer than usual. When it was finished he wanted to keep her hands in his, but she broke from him, and sprang so quickly away among the

people that she vanished from his sight. She ran as fast as she could to her little room under the stairs, but because she had stayed too long beyond the half-hour, she could not stop to take off the beautiful dress, but only threw the fur cloak over it, and in her haste she did not make herself quite black with the soot, one finger remaining white. The Many-furred Creature now ran into the kitchen, cooked the King's bread-soup, and when the cook had gone, she laid the gold reel in the dish. When the King found the reel at the bottom, he had the Many-furred Creature brought to him, and then he saw the white finger, and the ring which he had put on her hand in the dance. Then he took her hand and held her tightly, and as she was trying to get away, she undid the fur-cloak a little bit and the star-dress shone out. The King seized the cloak and tore it off her. Her golden hair came down, and she stood there in her full splendour, and could not hide herself away any more. And when the soot and ashes had been washed from her face, she looked more beautiful than anyone in the world. But the King said, 'You are my dear bride, and we will never be separated from one another.' So the wedding was celebrated and they lived happily ever after.

Grimm.

THE TWELVE HUNTSMEN

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Once upon a time there was a King’s son who was engaged to a Princess whom he dearly loved. One day as he sat by her side feeling very happy, he received news that his father was lying at the point of death, and desired to see him before his end. So he said to his love: ‘Alas! I must go off and leave you, but take this ring and wear it as a remembrance of me, and when I am King I will return and fetch you home.’

Then he rode off, and when he reached his father he found him mortally ill and very near death.

The King said: ‘Dearest son, I have desired to see you again before my end. Promise me, I beg of you, that you will marry according to my wishes’; and he then named the daughter of a neighbouring King who he was anxious should be his son’s wife. The Prince was so overwhelmed with grief that he could think of nothing but his father, and exclaimed: ‘Yes, yes, dear father, whatever you desire shall be done.’ Thereupon the King closed his eyes and died.

After the Prince had been proclaimed King, and the usual time of mourning had elapsed, he felt that he must keep the promise he had made to his father, so he sent to ask for the hand of the King’s daughter, which was granted to him at once.

Now, his first love heard of this, and the thought of her lover’s desertion grieved her so sadly that she pined away and nearly died. Her father said to her: ‘My dearest child, why are you so unhappy? If there is anything you wish for, say so, and you shall have it.’

His daughter reflected for a moment, and then said: ‘Dear father, I wish for eleven girls as nearly as possible of the same height, age, and appearance as myself.’

Said the King: ‘If the thing is possible your wish shall be fulfilled’; and he had his kingdom searched till he found eleven maidens of the same height, size, and appearance as his daughter.

Then the Princess desired twelve complete huntsmen's suits to be made, all exactly alike, and the eleven maidens had to dress themselves in eleven of the suits, while she herself put on the twelfth. After this she took leave of her father, and rode off with her girls to the court of her former lover.

Here she enquired whether the King did not want some huntsmen, and if he would not take them all into his service. The King saw her but did not recognize her, and as he thought them very good-looking young people, he said, 'Yes, he would gladly engage them all.' So they became the twelve royal huntsmen.

Now, the King had a most remarkable Lion, for it knew every hidden or secret thing.

One evening the Lion said to the King: 'So you think you have got twelve huntsmen, do you?'

'Yes, certainly,' said the King, 'they *are* twelve huntsmen.'

'There you are mistaken,' said the Lion; 'they are twelve maidens.'

'That cannot possibly be,' replied the King; 'how do you mean to prove that?'

'Just have a number of peas strewed over the floor of your ante-chamber,' said the Lion, 'and you will soon see. Men have a strong, firm tread, so that if they happen to walk over peas not one will stir, but girls trip, and slip, and slide, so that the peas roll all about.'

The King was pleased with the Lion's advice, and ordered the peas to be strewn in his ante-room.

Fortunately one of the King's servants had become very partial to the young huntsmen, and hearing of the trial they were to be put to, he went to them and said: 'The Lion wants to persuade the King that you are only girls'; and then told them all the plot.

The King's daughter thanked him for the hint, and after he was gone she said to her maidens: 'Now make every effort to tread firmly on the peas.'

Next morning, when the King sent for his twelve huntsmen, and they passed through the ante-room which was plentifully strewn with peas, they trod so firmly and walked with such a steady, strong step that not a single pea rolled away or even so much as stirred. After they were gone the King

said to the Lion: ‘There now—you have been telling lies—you see yourself they walk like men.’

‘Because they knew they were being put to the test,’ answered the Lion; ‘and so they made an effort; but just have a dozen spinning-wheels placed in the ante-room. When they pass through you’ll see how pleased they will be, quite unlike any man.’

The King was pleased with the advice, and desired twelve spinning-wheels to be placed in his ante-chamber.

But the good-natured servant went to the huntsmen and told them all about this fresh plot. Then, as soon as the King’s daughter was alone with her maidens, she exclaimed: ‘Now, pray make a great effort and don’t even *look* at those spinning-wheels.’

When the King sent for his twelve huntsmen next morning they walked through the ante-room without even casting a glance at the spinning-wheels.

Then the King said once more to the Lion: ‘You have deceived me again; they *are* men, for they never once looked at the spinning-wheels.’

The Lion replied: ‘They knew they were being tried, and they did violence to their feelings.’ But the King declined to believe in the Lion any longer.

So the twelve huntsmen continued to follow the King, and he grew daily fonder of them. One day whilst they were all out hunting it so happened that news was brought that the King’s intended bride was on her way and might soon be expected. When the true bride heard of this she felt as though a knife had pierced her heart, and she fell fainting to the ground. The King, fearing something had happened to his dear huntsman, ran up to help, and began drawing off his gloves. Then he saw the ring which he had given to his first love, and as he gazed into her face he knew her again, and his heart was so touched that he kissed her, and as she opened her eyes, he cried: ‘I am thine and thou art mine, and no power on earth can alter that.’

To the other Princess he despatched a messenger to beg her to return to her own kingdom with all speed. ‘For,’ said he, ‘I have got a wife, and he who finds an old key again does not require a new one.’

Thereupon the wedding was celebrated with great pomp, and the Lion was restored to the royal favour, for after all he had told the truth.

Grimm.

SPINDLE, SHUTTLE, AND NEEDLE

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Once upon a time there lived a girl who lost her father and mother when she was quite a tiny child. Her godmother lived all alone in a little cottage at the far end of the village, and there she earned her living by spinning, weaving, and sewing. The old woman took the little orphan home with her and brought her up in good, pious, industrious habits.

When the girl was fifteen years old, her godmother fell ill, and, calling the child to her bedside, she said: ‘My dear daughter, I feel that my end is near. I leave you my cottage, which will, at least, shelter you, and also my spindle, my weaver’s shuttle, and my needle, with which to earn your bread.’

Then she laid her hands on the girl’s head, blessed her, and added: ‘Mind and be good, and then all will go well with you.’ With that she closed her eyes for the last time, and when she was carried to her grave the girl walked behind her coffin weeping bitterly, and paid her all the last honours.

After this the girl lived all alone in the little cottage. She worked hard, spinning, weaving, and sewing, and her old godmother’s blessing seemed to prosper all she did. The flax seemed to spread and increase; and when she wove a carpet or a piece of linen, or made a shirt, she was sure to find a customer who paid her well, so that not only did she feel no want herself, but she was able to help those who did.

Now, it happened that about this time the King’s son was making a tour through the entire country to look out for a bride. He could not marry a poor woman, and he did not wish for a rich one.

‘She shall be my wife,’ said he, ‘who is at once the poorest and the richest.’

When he reached the village where the girl lived, he inquired who was the richest and who the poorest woman in it. The richest was named first; the poorest, he was told, was a young girl who lived alone in a little cottage at the far end of the village.

The rich girl sat at her door dressed out in all her best clothes, and when the King's son came near she got up, went to meet him, and made him a low curtsey. He looked well at her, said nothing, but rode on further.

When he reached the poor girl's house he did not find her at her door, for she was at work in her room. The Prince reined in his horse, looked in at the window through which the sun was shining brightly, and saw the girl sitting at her wheel busily spinning away.

She looked up, and when she saw the King's son gazing in at her, she blushed red all over, cast down her eyes and span on. Whether the thread was quite as even as usual I really cannot say, but she went on spinning till the King's son had ridden off. Then she stepped to the window and opened the lattice, saying, 'The room is so hot,' but she looked after him as long as she could see the white plumes in his hat.

Then she sat down to her work once more and span on, and as she did so an old saying which, she had often heard her godmother repeat whilst at work, came into her head, and she began to sing:

'Spindle, spindle, go and see, If my love will come to me.'

Lo, and behold! the spindle leapt from her hand and rushed out of the room, and when she had sufficiently recovered from her surprise to look after it she saw it dancing merrily through the fields, dragging a long golden thread after it, and soon it was lost to sight.

The girl, having lost her spindle, took up the shuttle and, seating herself at her loom, began to weave. Meantime the spindle danced on and on, and just as it had come to the end of the golden thread, it reached the King's son.

'What do I see?' he cried; 'this spindle seems to wish to point out the way to me.' So he turned his horses head and rode back beside the golden thread.

Meantime the girl sat weaving, and sang:

'Shuttle, weave both web and woof, Bring my love beneath my roof.'

The shuttle instantly escaped from her hand, and with one bound was out at the door. On the threshold it began weaving the loveliest carpet that was ever seen. Roses and lilies bloomed on both sides, and in the centre a thicket seemed to grow with rabbits and hares running through it, stags and fawns peeping through the branches, whilst on the topmost boughs sat birds of brilliant plumage and so life-like one almost expected to hear

them sing. The shuttle flew from side to side and the carpet seemed almost to grow of itself.

As the shuttle had run away the girl sat down to sew. She took her needle and sang:

‘Needle, needle, stitch away, Make my chamber bright and gay,’

and the needle promptly slipped from her fingers and flew about the room like lightning. You would have thought invisible spirits were at work, for in next to no time the table and benches were covered with green cloth, the chairs with velvet, and elegant silk curtains hung before the windows. The needle had barely put in its last stitch when the girl, glancing at the window, spied the white plumed hat of the King’s son who was being led back by the spindle with the golden thread.

He dismounted and walked over the carpet into the house, and when he entered the room there stood the girl blushing like any rose. ‘You are the poorest and yet the richest,’ said he: ‘come with me, you shall be my bride.’

She said nothing, but she held out her hand. Then he kissed her, and led her out, lifted her on his horse and took her to his royal palace, where the wedding was celebrated with great rejoicings.

The spindle, the shuttle, and the needle were carefully placed in the treasury, and were always held in the very highest honour.

Grimm.

THE CRYSTAL COFFIN

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Now let no one say that a poor tailor can’t get on in the world, and, indeed, even attain to very high honour. Nothing is required but to set the right way to work, but of course the really important thing is to succeed.

A very bright active young tailor once set off on his travels, which led him into a wood, and as he did not know the way he soon lost himself. Night came on, and there seemed to be nothing for it but to seek out the best resting-place he could find. He could have made himself quite comfortable with a bed of soft moss, but the fear of wild beasts disturbed his mind, and at last he determined to spend the night in a tree.

He sought out a tall oak tree, climbed up to the top, and felt devoutly thankful that his big smoothing-iron was in his pocket, for the wind in the tree-tops was so high that he might easily have been blown away altogether.

After passing some hours of the night, not without considerable fear and trembling, he noticed a light shining at a little distance, and hoping it might proceed from some house where he could find a better shelter than in the top of the tree, he cautiously descended and went towards the light. It led him to a little hut all woven together of reeds and rushes. He knocked bravely at the door, which opened, and by the light which shone from within he saw an old gray-haired man dressed in a coat made of bright-coloured patches. ‘Who are you, and what do you want?’ asked the old man roughly.

‘I am a poor tailor,’ replied the youth. ‘I have been benighted in the forest, and I entreat you to let me take shelter in your hut till morning.’

‘Go your way,’ said the old man in a sulky tone, ‘I’ll have nothing to do with tramps. You must just go elsewhere.’

With these words he tried to slip back into his house, but the tailor laid hold of his coat-tails, and begged so hard to be allowed to stay that the old fellow, who was by no means as cross as he appeared, was at length touched by his entreaties, let him come in, and after giving him some

food, showed him quite a nice bed in one corner of the room. The weary tailor required no rocking to rest, but slept sound till early morning, when he was roused from his slumbers by a tremendous noise. Loud screams and shouts pierced the thin walls of the little hut. The tailor, with new-born courage, sprang up, threw on his clothes with all speed and hurried out. There he saw a huge black bull engaged in a terrible fight with a fine large stag. They rushed at each other with such fury that the ground seemed to tremble under them and the whole air to be filled with their cries. For some time it appeared quite uncertain which would be the victor, but at length the stag drove his antlers with such force into his opponent's body that the bull fell to the ground with a terrific roar, and a few more strokes finished him.

The tailor, who had been watching the fight with amazement, was still standing motionless when the stag bounded up to him, and before he had time to escape forked him up with its great antlers, and set off at full gallop over hedges and ditches, hill and dale, through wood and water. The tailor could do nothing but hold on tight with both hands to the stag's horns and resign himself to his fate. He felt as if he were flying along. At length the stag paused before a steep rock and gently let the tailor down to the ground.

Feeling more dead than alive, he paused for a while to collect his scattered senses, but when he seemed somewhat restored the stag struck such a blow on a door in the rock that it flew open. Flames of fire rushed forth, and such clouds of steam followed that the stag had to avert its eyes. The tailor could not think what to do or which way to turn to get away from this awful wilderness, and to find his way back amongst human beings once more.

As he stood hesitating, a voice from the rock cried to him: 'Step in without fear, no harm shall befall you.'

He still lingered, but some mysterious power seemed to impel him, and passing through the door he found himself in a spacious hall, whose ceiling, walls, and floor were covered with polished tiles carved all over with unknown figures. He gazed about, full of wonder, and was just preparing to walk out again when the same voice bade him: 'Tread on the stone in the middle of the hall, and good luck will attend you.'

By this time he had grown so courageous that he did not hesitate to obey the order, and hardly had he stepped on the stone than it began to sink gently with him into the depths below. On reaching firm ground he found himself in a hall of much the same size as the upper one, but with much more in it to wonder at and admire. Round the walls were several niches, in each of which stood glass vessels filled with some bright-coloured spirit or bluish smoke. On the floor stood two large crystal boxes opposite each other, and these attracted his curiosity at once.

Stepping up to one of them, he saw within it what looked like a model in miniature of a fine castle surrounded by farms, barns, stables, and a number of other buildings. Everything was quite tiny, but so beautifully and carefully finished that it might have been the work of an accomplished artist. He would have continued gazing much longer at this remarkable curiosity had not the voice desired him to turn round and look at the crystal coffin which stood opposite.

What was his amazement at seeing a girl of surpassing loveliness lying in it! She lay as though sleeping, and her long, fair hair seemed to wrap her round like some costly mantle. Her eyes were closed, but the bright colour in her face, and the movement of a ribbon, which rose and fell with her breath, left no doubt as to her being alive.

As the tailor stood gazing at her with a beating heart, the maiden suddenly opened her eyes, and started with delighted surprise.

‘Great heavens!’ she cried, ‘my deliverance approaches! Quick, quick, help me out of my prison; only push back the bolt of this coffin and I am free.’

The tailor promptly obeyed, when she quickly pushed back the crystal lid, stepped out of the coffin and hurried to a corner of the hall, when she proceeded to wrap herself in a large cloak. Then she sat down on a stone, desired the young man to come near, and, giving him an affectionate kiss, she said, ‘My long-hoped-for deliverer, kind heaven has led you to me, and has at length put an end to all my sufferings. You are my destined husband, and, beloved by me, and endowed with every kind of riches and power, you shall spend the remainder of your life in peace and happiness. Now sit down and hear my story. I am the daughter of a wealthy nobleman. My parents died when I was very young, and they left me to the care of my eldest brother, by whom I was carefully educated. We loved each other so

tenderly, and our tastes and interests were so much alike that we determined never to marry, but to spend our entire lives together. There was no lack of society at our home. Friends and neighbours paid us frequent visits, and we kept open house for all. Thus it happened that one evening a stranger rode up to the castle and asked for hospitality, as he could not reach the nearest town that night. We granted his request with ready courtesy, and during supper he entertained us with most agreeable conversation, mingled with amusing anecdotes. My brother took such a fancy to him that he pressed him to spend a couple of days with us, which, after a little hesitation, the stranger consented to do. We rose late from table, and whilst my brother was showing our guest to his room I hurried to mine, for I was very tired and longed to get to bed. I had hardly dropped off to sleep when I was roused by the sound of some soft and charming music. Wondering whence it could come, I was about to call to my maid who slept in the room next mine, when, to my surprise, I felt as if some heavy weight on my chest had taken all power from me, and I lay there unable to utter the slightest sound. Meantime, by the light of the night lamp, I saw the stranger enter my room, though the double doors had been securely locked. He drew near and told me that through the power of his magic arts he had caused the soft music to waken me, and had made his way through bolts and bars to offer me his hand and heart. My repugnance to his magic was so great that I would not condescend to give any answer. He waited motionless for some time, hoping no doubt for a favourable reply, but as I continued silent he angrily declared that he would find means to punish my pride, and therewith he left the room in a rage.

‘I spent the night in the greatest agitation, and only fell into a doze towards morning. As soon as I awoke I jumped up, and hurried to tell my brother all that had happened, but he had left his room, and his servant told me that he had gone out at daybreak to hunt with the stranger.

‘My mind misgave me. I dressed in all haste, had my palfrey saddled, and rode of at full gallop towards the forest, attended by one servant only. I pushed on without pausing, and ere long I saw the stranger coming towards me, and leading a fine stag. I asked him where he had left my brother, and how he had got the stag, whose great eyes were overflowing with tears. Instead of answering he began to laugh, and I flew into such a rage that I drew a pistol and fired at him; but the bullet rebounded from

his breast and struck my horse in the forehead. I fell to the ground, and the stranger muttered some words, which robbed me of my senses.

‘When I came to myself I was lying in a crystal coffin in this subterranean vault. The Magician appeared again, and told me that he had transformed my brother into a stag, had reduced our castle and all its defences to miniature and locked them up in a glass box, and after turning all our household into different vapours had banished them into glass phials. If I would only yield to his wishes he could easily open these vessels, and all would then resume their former shapes.

‘I would not say a word more than I had done previously, and he vanished, leaving me in my prison, where a deep sleep soon fell on me. Amongst the many dreams which floated through my brain was a cheering one of a young man who was to come and release me, and to-day, when I opened my eyes, I recognised you and saw that my dream was fulfilled. Now help me to carry out the rest of my vision. The first thing is to place the glass box which contains my castle on this large stone.’

As soon as this was done the stone gently rose through the air and transported them into the upper hall, whence they easily carried the box into the outer air. The lady then removed the lid, and it was marvellous to watch the castle, houses, and farmyards begin to grow and spread themselves till they had regained their proper size. Then the young couple returned by means of the movable stone, and brought up all the glass vessels filled with smoke. No sooner were they uncorked than the blue vapours poured out and became transformed to living people, in whom the lady joyfully recognised her many servants and attendants.

Her delight was complete when her brother (who had killed the Magician under the form of a bull) was seen coming from the forest in his proper shape, and that very day, according to her promise, she gave her hand in marriage to the happy young tailor.

Grimm.

THE THREE SNAKE-LEAVES

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There was once a poor man who could no longer afford to keep his only son at home. So the son said to him, ‘Dear father, you are so poor that I am only a burden to you; I would rather go out into the world and see if I can earn my own living.’ The father gave him his blessing and took leave of him with much sorrow. About this time the King of a very powerful kingdom was carrying on a war; the youth therefore took service under him and went on the campaign. When they came before the enemy, a battle took place, there was some hot fighting, and it rained bullets so thickly that his comrades fell around him on all sides. And when their leader fell too the rest wished to take to flight; but the youth stepped forward and encouraged them and called out, ‘We must not let our country be ruined!’ Then others followed him, and he pressed on and defeated the enemy. When the King heard that he had to thank him alone for the victory, he raised him higher than anyone else in rank, gave him great treasures and made him the first in the kingdom.

The King had a daughter who was very beautiful, but she was also very capricious. She had made a vow to marry no one who would not promise her that if she died first, he would allow himself to be buried alive with her. ‘If he loves me truly,’ she used to say, ‘what use would life be to him then?’ At the same time she was willing to do the same, and if he died first to be buried with him. This curious vow had up to this time frightened away all suitors, but the young man was so captivated by her beauty, that he hesitated at nothing and asked her hand of her father. ‘Do you know,’ asked the King, ‘what you have to promise?’ ‘I shall have to go into her grave with her,’ he answered, ‘if I outlive her, but my love is so great that I do not think of the risk.’ So the King consented, and the wedding was celebrated with great splendour.

Now, they lived for a long time very happily with one another, but then it came to pass that the young Queen fell seriously ill, and no doctor could save her. And when she lay dead, the young King remembered what he had

promised, and it made him shudder to think of lying in her grave alive, but there was no escape. The King had set guards before all the gates, and it was not possible to avoid his fate.

When the day arrived on which the corpse was to be laid in the royal vault, he was led thither, then the entrance was bolted and closed up.

Near the coffin stood a table on which were placed four candles, four loaves of bread, and four bottles of wine. As soon as this provision came to an end he would have to die. So he sat there full of grief and misery, eating every day only a tiny bit of bread, and drinking only a mouthful of ovine, and he watched death creeping nearer and nearer to him. One day as he was sitting staring moodily in front of him, he saw a snake creep out of the corner towards the corpse. Thinking it was going to touch it, he drew his sword and saying, ‘As long as I am alive you shall not harm her,’ he cut it in three pieces. After a little time a second snake crept out of the corner, but when it saw the first one lying dead and in pieces it went back and came again soon, holding three green leaves in its mouth. Then it took the three bits of the snake and laid them in order, and put one of the leaves on each wound. Immediately the pieces joined together, the snake moved itself and became alive and then both hurried away. The leaves remained lying on the ground, and it suddenly occurred to the unfortunate man who had seen everything, that the wonderful power of the leaves might also be exercised upon a human being.

So he picked up the leaves and laid one of them on the mouth and the other two on the eyes of the dead woman. And scarcely had he done this, before the blood began to circulate in her veins, then it mounted and brought colour back to her white face. Then she drew her breath, opened her eyes, and said, ‘Ah! where am I?’ ‘You are with me, dear lady,’ he answered, and told her all that had happened, and how he had brought her to life again. He then gave her some wine and bread, and when all her strength had returned she got up, and they went to the door and knocked and called so loudly that the guards heard them, and told the King. The King came himself to open the door, and there he found both happy and well, and he rejoiced with them that now all trouble was over. But the young King gave the three snake-leaves to a servant, saying to him, ‘Keep them carefully for me, and always carry them with you; who knows but that they may help us in a time of need!’

It seemed, however, as if a change had come over the young Queen after she had been restored to life, and as if all her love for her husband had faded from her heart. Some time afterwards, when he wanted to take a journey over the sea to his old father, and they were on board the ship, she forgot the great love and faithfulness he had shown her and how he had saved her from death, and fell in love with the captain. And one day when the young King was lying asleep, she called the captain to her, and seized the head of the sleeping King and made him take his feet, and together they threw him into the sea. When they had done this wicked deed, she said to him, ‘Now let us go home and say that he died on the journey. I will praise you so much to my father that he will marry me to you and make you the heir to the throne.’ But the faithful servant, who had seen everything, let down a little boat into the sea, unobserved by them, and rowed after his master while the traitors sailed on. He took the drowned man out of the water, and with the help of the three snake-leaves which he carried with him, placing them on his mouth and eyes, he brought him to life again.

They both rowed as hard as they could night and day, and their little boat went so quickly that they reached the old King before the other two did. He was much astonished to see them come back alone, and asked what had happened to them. When he heard the wickedness of his daughter, he said, ‘I cannot believe that she has acted so wrongly, but the truth will soon come to light.’ He made them both go into a secret chamber, and let no one see them.

Soon after this the large ship came in, and the wicked lady appeared before her father with a very sad face. He said to her, ‘Why have you come back alone? Where is your husband?’

‘Ah, dear father,’ she replied, ‘I have come home in great grief; my husband fell ill on the voyage quite suddenly, and died, and if the good captain had not given me help, I should have died too. He was at his death-bed and can tell you everything.’

The King said, ‘I will bring the dead to life again,’ and he opened the door of the room and called them both out. The lady was as if thunderstruck when she caught sight of her husband; she fell on her knees and begged for mercy. But the King said, ‘You shall have no mercy. He

was ready to die with you, and restored you to life again; but you killed him when he was sleeping, and shall receive your deserts.'

So she and her accomplice were put in a ship which was bored through with holes, and were drawn out into the sea, where they soon perished in the waves.

Grimm.

THE RIDDLE

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A King’s son once had a great desire to travel through the world, so he started off, taking no one with him but one trusty servant. One day he came to a great forest, and as evening drew on he could find no shelter, and could not think where to spend the night. All of a sudden he saw a girl going towards a little house, and as he drew nearer he remarked that she was both young and pretty. He spoke to her, and said, ‘Dear child, could I and my servant spend the night in this house?’

‘Oh yes,’ said the girl in a sad tone, ‘you can if you like, but I should not advise you to do so. Better not go in.’

‘Why not?’ asked the King’s son.

The girl sighed and answered, ‘My stepmother deals in black arts, and she is not very friendly to strangers.’

The Prince guessed easily that he had fallen on a witch’s house, but as by this time it was quite dark and he could go no further, and as moreover he was not at all afraid, he stepped in.

An old woman sat in an armchair near the fire, and as the strangers entered she turned her red eyes on them. ‘Good evening,’ she muttered, and pretending to be quite friendly. ‘Won’t you sit down?’

She blew up the fire on which she was cooking something in a little pot, and her daughter secretly warned the travellers to be very careful not to eat or drink anything, as the old woman’s brews were apt to be dangerous.

They went to bed, and slept soundly till morning. When they were ready to start and the King’s son had already mounted his horse the old woman said: ‘Wait a minute, I must give you a stirrup cup.’ Whilst she went to fetch it the King’s son rode off, and the servant who had waited to tighten his saddle-girths was alone when the witch returned.

‘Take that to your master,’ she said; but as she spoke the glass cracked and the poison spurted over the horse, and it was so powerful that the poor creature sank down dead. The servant ran after his master and told him

what had happened, and then, not wishing to lose the saddle as well as the horse, he went back to fetch it. When he got to the spot he saw that a raven had perched on the carcase and was pecking at it. ‘Who knows whether we shall get anything better to eat to-day!’ said the servant, and he shot the raven and carried it off.

Then they rode on all day through the forest without coming to the end. At nightfall they reached an inn, which they entered, and the servant gave the landlord the raven to dress for their supper. Now, as it happened, this inn was a regular resort of a band of murderers, and the old witch too was in the habit of frequenting it.

As soon as it was dark twelve murderers arrived, with the full intention of killing and robbing the strangers. Before they set to work, however, they sat down to table, and the landlord and the old witch joined them, and they all ate some broth in which the flesh of the raven had been stewed down. They had hardly taken a couple of spoonfuls when they all fell down dead, for the poison had passed from the horse to the raven and so into the broth. So there was no one left belonging to the house but the landlord’s daughter, who was a good, well-meaning girl, and had taken no part in all the evil doings.

She opened all the doors, and showed the strangers the treasures the robbers had gathered together; but the Prince bade her keep them all for herself, as he wanted none of them, and so he rode further with his servant.

After travelling about for some length of time they reached a town where lived a lovely but most arrogant Princess. She had given out that anyone who asked her a riddle which she found herself unable to guess should be her husband, but should she guess it he must forfeit his head. She claimed three days in which to think over the riddles, but she was so very clever that she invariably guessed them in a much shorter time. Nine suitors had already lost their lives when the King’s son arrived, and, dazzled by her beauty, determined to risk his life in hopes of winning her.

So he came before her and propounded his riddle. ‘What is this?’ he asked. ‘One slew none and yet killed twelve.’

She could not think what it was! She thought, and thought, and looked through all her books of riddles and puzzles, but she found nothing to help her, and could not guess; in fact, she was at her wits’ end. As she could think of no way to guess the riddle, she ordered her maid to steal at night

into the Prince’s bedroom and to listen, for she thought that he might perhaps talk aloud in his dreams and so betray the secret. But the clever servant had taken his master’s place, and when the maid came he tore off the cloak she had wrapped herself in and hunted her off with a whip.

On the second night the Princess sent her lady-in-waiting, hoping that she might succeed better, but the servant took away her mantle and chased her away also.

On the third night the King’s son thought he really might feel safe, so he went to bed. But in the middle of the night the Princess came herself, all huddled up in a misty grey mantle, and sat down near him. When she thought he was fast asleep, she spoke to him, hoping he would answer in the midst of his dreams, as many people do; but he was wide awake all the time, and heard and understood everything very well.

Then she asked: ‘One slew none—what is that?’ and he answered: ‘A raven which fed on the carcase of a poisoned horse.’

She went on: ‘And yet killed twelve—what is that?’ ‘Those are twelve murderers who ate the raven and died of it.’

As soon as she knew the riddle she tried to slip away, but he held her mantle so tightly that she was obliged to leave it behind.

Next morning the Princess announced that she had guessed the riddle, and sent for the twelve judges, before whom she declared it. But the young man begged to be heard, too, and said: ‘She came by night to question me, otherwise she never could have guessed it.’

The judges said: ‘Bring us some proof.’ So the servant brought out the three cloaks, and when the judges saw the grey one, which the Princess was in the habit of wearing, they said: ‘Let it be embroidered with gold and silver; it shall be your wedding mantle.’

Grimm.

JACK MY HEDGEHOG

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There was once a farmer who lived in great comfort. He had both lands and money, but, though he was so well off, one thing was wanting to complete his happiness; he had no children. Many and many a time, when he met other farmers at the nearest market town, they would teaze him, asking how it came about that he was childless. At length he grew so angry that he exclaimed: ‘I must and will have a child of some sort or kind, even should it only be a hedgehog!’

Not long after this his wife gave birth to a child, but though the lower half of the little creature was a fine boy, from the waist upwards it was a hedgehog, so that when his mother first saw him she was quite frightened, and said to her husband, ‘There now, you have cursed the child yourself.’ The farmer said, ‘What’s the use of making a fuss? I suppose the creature must be christened, but I don’t see how we are to ask anyone to be sponsor to him, and what are we to call him?’

‘There is nothing we can possibly call him but Jack my Hedgehog,’ replied the wife.

So they took him to be christened, and the parson said: ‘You’ll never be able to put that child in a decent bed on account of his prickles.’ Which was true, but they shook down some straw for him behind the stove, and there he lay for eight years. His father grew very tired of him and often wished him dead, but he did not die, but lay on there year after year.

Now one day there was a big fair at the market town to which the farmer meant to go, so he asked his wife what he should bring her from it. ‘Some meat and a couple of big loaves for the house,’ said she. Then he asked the maid what she wanted, and she said a pair of slippers and some stockings. Lastly he said, ‘Well, Jack my Hedgehog, and what shall I bring you?’

‘Daddy,’ said he, ‘do bring me a bagpipe.’ When the farmer came home he gave his wife and the maid the things they had asked for, and then he went behind the stove and gave Jack my Hedgehog the bagpipes.

When Jack had got his bagpipes he said, ‘Daddy, do go to the smithy and have the house cock shod for me; then I’ll ride off and trouble you no more.’ His father, who was delighted at the prospect of getting rid of him, had the cock shod, and when it was ready Jack my Hedgehog mounted on its back and rode off to the forest, followed by all the pigs and asses which he had promised to look after.

Having reached the forest he made the cock fly up to the top of a very tall tree with him, and there he sat looking after his pigs and donkeys, and he sat on and on for several years till he had quite a big herd; but all this time his father knew nothing about him.

As he sat up in his tree he played away on his pipes and drew the loveliest music from them. As he was playing one day a King, who had lost his way, happened to pass close by, and hearing the music he was much surprised, and sent one of his servants to find out where it came from. The man peered about, but he could see nothing but a little creature which looked like a cock with a hedgehog sitting on it, perched up in a tree. The King desired the servant to ask the strange creature why it sat there, and if it knew the shortest way to his kingdom.

On this Jack my Hedgehog stepped down from his tree and said he would undertake to show the King his way home if the King on his part would give him his written promise to let him have whatever first met him on his return.

The King thought to himself, ‘That’s easy enough to promise. The creature won’t understand a word about it, so I can just write what I choose.’

So he took pen and ink and wrote something, and when he had done Jack my Hedgehog pointed out the way and the King got safely home.

Now when the King’s daughter saw her father returning in the distance she was so delighted that she ran to meet him and threw herself into his arms. Then the King remembered Jack my Hedgehog, and he told his daughter how he had been obliged to give a written promise to bestow whatever he first met when he got home on an extraordinary creature which had shown him the way. The creature, said he, rode on a cock as though it had been a horse, and it made lovely music, but as it certainly could not read he had just written that he would *not* give it anything at all. At this the Princess was quite pleased, and said how cleverly her father

had managed, for that of course nothing would induce her to have gone off with Jack my Hedgehog.

Meantime Jack minded his asses and pigs, sat aloft in his tree, played his bagpipes, and was always merry and cheery. After a time it so happened that another King, having lost his way, passed by with his servants and escort, wondering how he could find his way home, for the forest was very vast. He too heard the music, and told one of his men to find out whence it came. The man came under the tree, and looking up to the top there he saw Jack my Hedgehog astride on the cock.

The servant asked Jack what he was doing up there. ‘I’m minding my pigs and donkeys; but what do you want?’ was the reply. Then the servant told him they had lost their way, and wanted some one to show it them. Down came Jack my Hedgehog with his cock, and told the old King he would show him the right way if he would solemnly promise to give him the first thing he met in front of his royal castle.

The King said ‘Yes,’ and gave Jack a written promise to that effect.

Then Jack rode on in front pointing out the way, and the King reached his own country in safety.

Now he had an only daughter who was extremely beautiful, and who, delighted at her father’s return, ran to meet him, threw her arms round his neck and kissed him heartily. Then she asked where he had been wandering so long, and he told her how he had lost his way and might never have reached home at all but for a strange creature, half-man, half-hedgehog, which rode a cock and sat up in a tree making lovely music, and which had shown him the right way. He also told her how he had been obliged to pledge his word to give the creature the first thing which met him outside his castle gate, and he felt very sad at the thought that she had been the first thing to meet him.

But the Princess comforted him, and said she should be quite willing to go with Jack my Hedgehog whenever he came to fetch her, because of the great love she bore to her dear old father.

Jack my Hedgehog continued to herd his pigs, and they increased in number till there were so many that the forest seemed full of them. So he made up his mind to live there no longer, and sent a message to his father telling him to have all the stables and outhouses in the village cleared, as he was going to bring such an enormous herd that all who would might kill

what they chose. His father was much vexed at this news, for he thought Jack had died long ago. Jack my Hedgehog mounted his cock, and driving his pigs before him into the village, he let every one kill as many as they chose, and such a hacking and hewing of pork went on as you might have heard for miles off.

Then said Jack, ‘Daddy, let the blacksmith shoe my cock once more; then I’ll ride off, and I promise you I’ll never come back again as long as I live.’ So the father had the cock shod, and rejoiced at the idea of getting rid of his son.

Then Jack my Hedgehog set off for the first kingdom, and there the King had given strict orders that if anyone should be seen riding a cock and carrying a bagpipe he was to be chased away and shot at, and on no account to be allowed to enter the palace. So when Jack my Hedgehog rode up the guards charged him with their bayonets, but he put spurs to his cock, flew up over the gate right to the King’s windows, let himself down on the sill, and called out that if he was not given what had been promised him, both the King and his daughter should pay for it with their lives. Then the King coaxed and entreated his daughter to go with Jack and so save both their lives.

The Princess dressed herself all in white, and her father gave her a coach with six horses and servants in gorgeous liveries and quantities of money. She stepped into the coach, and Jack my Hedgehog with his cock and pipes took his place beside her. They both took leave, and the King fully expected never to set eyes on them again. But matters turned out very differently from what he had expected, for when they had got a certain distance from the town Jack tore all the Princess’s smart clothes off her, and pricked her all over with his bristles, saying: ‘That’s what you get for treachery. Now go back, I’ll have no more to say to you.’ And with that he hunted her home, and she felt she had been disgraced and put to shame till her life’s end.

Then Jack my Hedgehog rode on with his cock and bagpipes to the country of the second King to whom he had shown the way. Now this King had given orders that, in the event of Jack’s coming the guards were to present arms, the people to cheer, and he was to be conducted in triumph to the royal palace.

When the King’s daughter saw Jack my Hedgehog, she was a good deal startled, for he certainly was very peculiar looking; but after all she considered that she had given her word and it couldn’t be helped. So she made Jack welcome and they were betrothed to each other, and at dinner he sat next her at the royal table, and they ate and drank together.

When they retired to rest the Princess feared lest Jack should kiss her because of his prickles, but he told her not to be alarmed as no harm should befall her. Then he begged the old King to place a watch of four men just outside his bedroom door, and to desire them to make a big fire. When he was about to lie down in bed he would creep out of his hedgehog skin, and leave it lying at the bedside; then the men must rush in, throw the skin into the fire, and stand by till it was entirely burnt up.

And so it was, for when it struck eleven, Jack my Hedgehog went to his room, took off his skin and left it at the foot of the bed. The men rushed in, quickly seized the skin and threw it on the fire, and directly it was all burnt Jack was released from his enchantment and lay in his bed a man from head to foot, but quite black as though he had been severely scorched.

The King sent off for his physician in ordinary, who washed Jack all over with various essences and salves, so that he became white and was a remarkably handsome young man. When the King’s daughter saw him she was greatly pleased, and next day the marriage ceremony was performed, and the old King bestowed his kingdom on Jack my Hedgehog.

After some years Jack and his wife went to visit his father, but the farmer did not recognize him, and declared he had no son; he had had one, but that one was born with bristles like a hedgehog, and had gone off into the wide world. Then Jack told his story, and his old father rejoiced and returned to live with him in his kingdom.

Grimm.

THE GOLDEN LADS

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A poor man and his wife lived in a little cottage, where they supported themselves by catching fish in the nearest river, and got on as best they could, living from hand to mouth. One day it happened that when the fisherman drew in his net he found in it a remarkable fish, for it was entirely of gold. As he was inspecting it with some surprise, the fish opened its mouth and said: ‘Listen to me, fisher; if you will just throw me back into the water I’ll turn your poor little cottage into a splendid castle.’

The fisher replied: ‘What good, pray, will a castle be to me if I have nothing to eat in it?’

‘Oh,’ said the gold fish, ‘I’ll take care of that. There will be a cupboard in the castle, in which you will find dishes of every kind of food you can wish for most.’

‘If that’s the case,’ said the man, ‘I’ve no objection to oblige you.’

‘Yes,’ observed the fish, ‘but there is one condition attached to my offer, and that is that you are not to reveal to a soul where your good fortune comes from. If you say a word about it, it will all vanish.’

The man threw the fish back into the water, and went home. But on the spot where his cottage used to stand he found a spacious castle. He opened his eyes wide, went in and found his wife dressed out in smart clothes, sitting in a splendidly furnished drawing-room. She was in high spirits, and cried out: ‘Oh husband! how can this all have happened? I am so pleased!’

‘Yes,’ said her husband, ‘so am I pleased; but I’m uncommonly hungry, and I want something to eat at once.’

Said his wife, ‘I’ve got nothing, and I don’t know where anything is in this new house.’

‘Never mind,’ replied the man. ‘I see a big cupboard there. Suppose you unlock it.’

When the cupboard was opened they found meat, cakes, fruit, and wine, all spread out in the most tempting fashions. The wife clapped her

hands with joy, and cried: ‘Dear heart! what more can one wish for?’ and they sat down and ate and drank.

When they had finished the wife asked, ‘But husband, where do all these riches come from?’

‘Ah!’ said he, ‘don’t ask me. I dare not tell you. If I reveal the secret to anyone, it will be all up with us.’

‘Very well,’ she replied, ‘if I’m not to be told, of course I don’t want to know anything about it.’

But she was not really in earnest, for her curiosity never left her a moment’s peace by day or night, and she teazed and worried her husband to such a pitch, that at length he quite lost patience and blurted out that it all came from a wonderful golden fish which he had caught and set free again. Hardly were the words well out of his mouth, when castle, cupboard, and all vanished, and there they were sitting in their poor little fishing hut once more.

The man had to betake himself to his former trade, and set to fishing again. As luck would have it, he caught the golden fish a second time.

‘Now listen,’ said the fish, ‘if you’ll throw me back into the water, I’ll give you back the castle and the cupboard with all its good things; but now take care, and don’t for your life betray where you got them, or you’ll just lose them again.’

‘I’ll be very careful,’ promised the fisher, and threw the fish back into the water. When he went home he found all their former splendour restored, and his wife overjoyed at their good fortune. But her curiosity still continued to torment her, and after restraining it with a great effort for a couple of days, she began questioning her husband again, as to what had happened, and how he had managed.

The man kept silence for some time, but at last she irritated him so much that he burst out with the secret, and in one moment the castle was gone, and they sat once more in their wretched old hut.

‘There!’ exclaimed the man, ‘you *would* have it—now we may just go on short commons.’

‘Ah!’ said his wife, ‘after all I’d rather not have all the riches in the world if I can’t know where they come from—I shall not have a moment’s peace.’

The man took to his fishing again, and one day fate brought the gold fish into his net for the third time. ‘Well,’ said the fish, ‘I see that I am evidently destined to fall into your hands. Now take me home, and cut me into six pieces. Give two bits to your wife to eat, two to your horse, and plant the remaining two in your garden, and they will bring you a blessing.’

The man carried the fish home, and did exactly as he had been told. After a time, it came to pass that from the two pieces he had planted in the garden two golden lilies grew up, and that his horse had two golden foals, whilst his wife gave birth to twin boys who were all golden.

The children grew up both tall and handsome, and the foals and the lilies grew with them.

One day the children came to their father and said, ‘Father, we want to mount on golden steeds, and ride forth to see the world.’

Their father answered sadly, ‘How can I bear it if, when you are far away, I know nothing about you?’ and they said, ‘The golden lilies will tell you all about us if you look at them. If they seem to droop, you will know we are ill, and if they fall down and fade away, it will be a sign we are dead.’

So off they rode, and came to an inn where were a number of people who, as soon as they saw the two golden lads, began to laugh and jeer at them. When one of them heard this, his heart failed him, and he thought he would go no further into the world, so he turned back and rode home to his father, but his brother rode on till he reached the outskirts of a huge forest. Here he was told, ‘It will never do for you to ride through the forest, it is full of robbers, and you’re sure to come to grief, especially when they see that you and your horse are golden. They will certainly fall on you and kill you.’ However, he was not to be intimidated, but said, ‘I must and will ride on.’

So he procured some bears’ skins, and covered himself and his horse with them, so that not a particle of gold could be seen, and then rode bravely on into the heart of the forest.

When he had got some way he heard a rustling through the bushes and presently a sound of voices. Someone whispered on one side of him: ‘There goes someone,’ and was answered from the other side: ‘Oh, let him

pass. He’s only a bear-keeper, and as poor as any church mouse.’ So golden lad rode through the forest and no harm befell him.

One day he came to a village, where he saw a girl who struck him as being the loveliest creature in the whole world, and as he felt a great love for her, he went up to her and said: ‘I love you with all my heart; will you be my wife?’ And the girl liked him so much that she put her hand in his and replied: ‘Yes, I will be your wife, and will be true to you as long as I live.’

So they were married, and in the middle of all the festivities and rejoicings the bride’s father came home and was not a little surprised at finding his daughter celebrating her wedding. He enquired: ‘And who is the bridegroom?’

Then someone pointed out to him the golden lad, who was still wrapped up in the bear’s skin, and the father exclaimed angrily: ‘Never shall a mere bear-keeper have my daughter,’ and tried to rush at him and kill him. But the bride did all she could to pacify him, and begged hard, saying: ‘After all he is my husband, and I love him with all my heart,’ so that at length he gave in.

However, he could not dismiss the thought from his mind, and next morning he rose very early, for he felt he must go and look at his daughter’s husband and see whether he really was nothing better than a mere ragged beggar. So he went to his son-in-law’s room, and who should he see lying in the bed but a splendid golden man, and the rough bearskin thrown on the ground close by. Then he slipped quietly away, and thought to himself, ‘How lucky that I managed to control my rage! I should certainly have committed a great crime.’

Meantime the golden lad dreamt that he was out hunting and was giving chase to a noble stag, and when he woke he said to his bride: ‘I must go off and hunt.’ She felt very anxious, and begged he would stay at home, adding: ‘Some mishap might so easily befall you,’ but he answered, ‘I must and will go.’

So he went off into the forest, and before long a fine stag, such as he had seen in his dream, stopped just in front of him. He took aim, and was about to fire when the stag bounded away. Then he started off in pursuit, making his way through bushes and briars, and never stopped all day; but in the evening the stag entirely disappeared, and when golden lad came to

look about him he found himself just opposite a hut in which lived a witch. He knocked at the door, which was opened by a little old woman who asked, ‘What do you want at this late hour in the midst of this great forest?’

He said, ‘Haven’t you seen a stag about here?’

‘Yes,’ said she, ‘I know the stag well,’ and as she spoke a little dog ran out of the house and began barking and snapping at the stranger.

‘Be quiet, you little toad,’ he cried, ‘or I’ll shoot you dead.’

Then the witch flew into a great rage, and screamed out, ‘What! you’ll kill my dog, will you?’ and the next moment he was turned to stone and lay there immovable, whilst his bride waited for him in vain and thought to herself, ‘Alas! no doubt the evil I feared, and which has made my heart so heavy, has befallen him.’

Meantime, the other brother was standing near the golden lilies at home, when suddenly one of them bent over and fell to the ground. ‘Good heavens!’ cried he, ‘some great misfortune has befallen my brother. I must set off at once; perhaps I may still be in time to save him.’

His father entreated him, ‘Stay at home. If I should lose you too, what would become of me?’

But his son replied, ‘I must and will go.’

Then he mounted his golden horse, and rode off till he reached the forest where his brother lay transformed to stone. The old witch came out of her house and called to him, for she would gladly have cast her spells on him too, but he took care not to go near her, and called out: ‘Restore my brother to life at once, or I’ll shoot you down on the spot.’

Reluctantly she touched the stone with her finger, and in a moment it resumed its human shape. The two golden lads fell into each other’s arms and kissed each other with joy, and then rode off together to the edge of the forest, where they parted, one to return to his old father, and the other to his bride.

When the former got home his father said, ‘I knew you had delivered your brother, for all of a sudden the golden lily reared itself up and burst into blossom.’

Then they all lived happily to their lives’ ends, and all things went well with them.

Grimm.

THE WHITE SNAKE

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Not very long ago there lived a King, the fame of whose wisdom was spread far and wide. Nothing appeared to be unknown to him, and it really seemed as if tidings of the most secret matters must be borne to him by the winds. He had one very peculiar habit. Every day, after the dinner table had been cleared, and everyone had retired, a confidential servant brought in a dish. It was covered, and neither the servant nor anyone else had any idea what was on it, for the King never removed the cover or partook of the dish, till he was quite alone.

This went on for some time till, one day, the servant who removed the dish was so overcome with curiosity, that he could not resist carrying it off to his own room. After carefully locking the door, he lifted the cover, and there he saw a white snake lying on the dish. On seeing it he could not restrain his desire to taste it, so he cut off a small piece and put it in his mouth.

Hardly had it touched his tongue than he heard a strange sort of whispering of tiny voices outside his window. He stepped to the casement to listen, and found that the sound proceeded from the sparrows, who were talking together and telling each other all they had seen in the fields and woods. The piece of the white snake which he had eaten had enabled him to understand the language of animals.

Now on this particular day, it so happened that the Queen lost her favourite ring, and suspicion fell on the confidential servant who had access to all parts of the palace. The King sent for him, and threatened him angrily, saying that if he had not found the thief by the next day, he should himself be taken up and tried.

It was useless to assert his innocence; he was dismissed without ceremony. In his agitation and distress, he went down to the yard to think over what he could do in this trouble. Here were a number of ducks resting near a little stream, and pluming, themselves with their bills, whilst they kept up an animated conversation amongst themselves. The servant stood

still listening to them. They were talking of where they had been waddling about all the morning, and of the good food they had found, but one of them remarked rather sadly, ‘There’s something lying very heavy on my stomach, for in my haste I’ve swallowed a ring, which was lying just under the Queen’s window.’

No sooner did the servant hear this than he seized the duck by the neck, carried it off to the kitchen, and said to the cook, ‘Suppose you kill this duck; you see she’s nice and fat.’

‘Yes, indeed,’ said the cook, weighing the duck in his hand, ‘she certainly has spared no pains to stuff herself well, and must have been waiting for the spit for some time.’ So he chopped off her head, and when she was opened there was the Queen’s ring in her stomach.

It was easy enough now for the servant to prove his innocence, and the King, feeling he had done him an injustice, and anxious to make some amends, desired him to ask any favour he chose, and promised to give him the highest post at Court he could wish for.

The servant, however, declined everything, and only begged for a horse and some money to enable him to travel, as he was anxious to see something of the world.

When his request was granted, he set off on his journey, and in the course of it he one day came to a large pond, on the edge of which he noticed three fishes which had got entangled in the reeds and were gasping for water. Though fish are generally supposed to be quite mute, he heard them grieving aloud at the prospect of dying in this wretched manner. Having a very kind heart he dismounted and soon set the prisoners free, and in the water once more. They flapped with joy, and stretching up their heads cried to him: ‘We will remember, and reward you for saving us.’

He rode further, and after a while he thought he heard a voice in the sand under his feet. He paused to listen, and heard the King of the Ants complaining: ‘If only men with their awkward beasts would keep clear of us! That stupid horse is crushing my people mercilessly to death with his great hoofs.’ The servant at once turned into a side path, and the Ant-King called after him, ‘We’ll remember and reward you.’

The road next led through a wood, where he saw a father and a mother raven standing by their nest and throwing out their young: ‘Away with you, you young rascals!’ they cried, ‘we can’t feed you any longer. You are

quite big enough to support yourselves now.' The poor little birds lay on the ground flapping and beating their wings, and shrieked, 'We poor helpless children, feed ourselves indeed! Why, we can't even fly yet; what can we do but die of hunger?' Then the kind youth dismounted, drew his sword, and killing his horse left it there as food for the young ravens. They hopped up, satisfied their hunger, and piped: 'We'll remember, and reward you!'

He was now obliged to trust to his own legs, and after walking a long way he reached a big town. Here he found a great crowd and much commotion in the streets, and a herald rode about announcing, 'The King's daughter seeks a husband, but whoever would woo her must first execute a difficult task, and if he does not succeed he must be content to forfeit his life.' Many had risked their lives, but in vain. When the youth saw the King's daughter, he was so dazzled by her beauty, that he forgot all idea of danger, and went to the King to announce himself a suitor.

On this he was led out to a large lake, and a gold ring was thrown into it before his eyes. The King desired him to dive after it, adding, 'If you return without it you will be thrown back into the lake time after time, till you are drowned in its depths.'

Everyone felt sorry for the handsome young fellow and left him alone on the shore. There he stood thinking and wondering what he could do, when all of a sudden he saw three fishes swimming along, and recognised them as the very same whose lives he had saved. The middle fish held a mussel in its mouth, which it laid at the young man's feet, and when he picked it up and opened it, there was the golden ring inside.

Full of delight he brought it to the King's daughter, expecting to receive his promised reward. The haughty Princess, however, on hearing that he was not her equal by birth despised him, and exacted the fulfilment of a second task.

She went into the garden, and with her own hands she strewed ten sacks full of millet all over the grass. 'He must pick all that up to-morrow morning before sunrise,' she said; 'not a grain must be lost.'

The youth sat down in the garden and wondered how it would be possible for him to accomplish such a task, but he could think of no expedient, and sat there sadly expecting to meet his death at daybreak.

But when the first rays of the rising sun fell on the garden, he saw the ten sacks all completely filled, standing there in a row, and not a single grain missing. The Ant-King, with his thousands and thousands of followers, had come during the night, and the grateful creatures had industriously gathered all the millet together and put it in the sacks.

The King's daughter came down to the garden herself, and saw to her amazement that her suitor had accomplished the task she had given him. But even now she could not bend her proud heart, and she said, 'Though he has executed these two tasks, yet he shall not be my husband till he brings me an apple from the tree of life.'

The young man did not even know where the tree of life grew, but he set off, determined to walk as far as his legs would carry him, though he had no hope of ever finding it.

After journeying through three different kingdoms he reached a wood one night, and lying down under a tree prepared to go to sleep there. Suddenly he heard a sound in the boughs, and a golden apple fell right into his hand. At the same moment three ravens flew down to him, perched on his knee and said, 'We are the three young ravens whom you saved from starvation. When we grew up and heard you were searching for the golden apple, we flew far away over the seas to the end of the world, where the tree of life grows, and fetched the golden apple for you.'

Full of joy the young man started on his way back and brought the golden apple to the lovely Princess, whose objections were now entirely silenced. They divided the apple of life and ate it together, and her heart grew full of love for him, so they lived together to a great age in undisturbed happiness.

Grimm.

THE STORY OF A CLEVER TAILOR

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Once upon a time there lived an exceedingly proud Princess. If any suitor for her hand ventured to present himself, she would give him some riddle or conundrum to guess, and if he failed to do so, he was hunted out of the town with scorn and derision. She gave out publicly that all comers were welcome to try their skill, and that whoever could solve her riddle should be her husband.

Now it happened that three tailors had met together, and the two elder thought, that after having successfully put in so many fine and strong stitches with never a wrong one amongst them, they were certain to do the right thing here too. The third tailor was a lazy young scamp who did not even know his own trade properly, but who thought that surely luck would stand by him now, just for once, for, if not, what *was* to become of him?

The two others said to him, ‘You just stay at home, you’ll never get on much with your small allowance of brains.’ But the little tailor was not to be daunted, and said he had set his mind on it and meant to shift for himself, so off he started as though the whole world belonged to him.

The three tailors arrived at Court, where they had themselves duly presented to the Princess, and begged she would propound her riddles, ‘for,’ said they, ‘here were the right men at last, with wits so sharp and so fine you might almost thread a needle with them.’

Then said the Princess, ‘I have on my head two different kinds of hair. Of what colours are they?’

‘If that’s all,’ said the first tailor, ‘they are most likely black and white, like the kind of cloth we call pepper-and-salt.’

‘Wrong,’ said the Princess.

‘Then,’ said the second tailor, ‘if they are not black and white, no doubt they are red and brown, like my father’s Sunday coat.’

‘Wrong again,’ said the Princess; ‘now let the third speak. I see he thinks he knows all about it.’

Then the young tailor stepped boldly to the front and said, ‘The Princess has one silver and one golden hair on her head, and those are the two colours.’

When the Princess heard this she turned quite pale, and almost fainted away with fear, for the little tailor had hit the mark, and she had firmly believed that not a soul could guess it. When she had recovered herself she said, ‘Don’t fancy you have won me yet, there is something else you must do first. Below in the stable is a bear with whom you must spend the night, and if when I get up in the morning I find you still alive you shall marry me.’

She quite expected to rid herself of the tailor in this way, for the bear had never left anyone alive who had once come within reach of his claws. The tailor, however, had no notion of being scared, but said cheerily, ‘Bravely dared is half won.’

When evening came on he was taken to the stable. The bear tried to get at him at once and to give him a warm welcome with his great paws. ‘Gently, gently,’ said the tailor, ‘I’ll soon teach you to be quiet,’ and he coolly drew a handful of walnuts from his pocket and began cracking and eating them as though he had not a care or anxiety in the world. When the bear saw this he began to long for some nuts himself. The tailor dived into his pocket and gave him a handful, but they were pebbles, not nuts. The bear thrust them into his mouth, but try as he might he could not manage to crack them. ‘Dear me,’ thought he, ‘what a stupid fool I must be—can’t even crack a nut,’ and he said to the tailor, ‘I say, crack my nuts for me, will you?’

‘You’re a nice sort of fellow,’ said the tailor; ‘the idea of having those great jaws and not being able even to crack a walnut!’ So he took the stone, quickly changed it for a nut, and crack! it split open in a moment.

‘Let me try again,’ said the bear; ‘when I see the thing done it looks so easy I fancy I *must* be able to manage it myself.’

So the tailor gave him some more pebbles, and the bear bit and gnawed away as hard as he could, but I need hardly say that he did not succeed in cracking one of them.

Presently the tailor took out a little fiddle and began playing on it. When the bear heard the music he could not help dancing, and after he had danced some time he was so pleased that he said to the tailor, ‘I say, is

fiddling difficult?' 'Mere child's play,' replied the tailor; 'look here! you press the strings with the fingers of the left hand, and with the right, you draw the bow across them, so—then it goes as easily as possible, up and down, tra la la la la—'

'Oh,' cried the bear, 'I do wish I could play like that, then I could dance whenever the fancy took me. What do you think? Would you give me some lessons?'

'With all my heart,' said the tailor, 'if you are sharp about it. But just let me look at your paws. Dear me, your nails are terribly long; I must really cut them first.' Then he fetched a pair of stocks, and the bear laid his paws on them, and the tailor screwed them up tight. 'Now just wait whilst I fetch my scissors,' said he, and left the bear growling away to his heart's content, whilst he lay down in a corner and fell fast asleep.

When the Princess heard the bear growling so loud that night, she made sure he was roaring with delight as he worried the tailor.

Next morning she rose feeling quite cheerful and free from care, but when she looked across towards the stables, there stood the tailor in front of the door looking as fresh and lively as a fish in the water.

After this it was impossible to break the promise she had made so publicly, so the King ordered out the state coach to take her and the tailor to church to be married.

As they were starting, the two bad-hearted other tailors, who were envious of the younger one's happiness, went to the stable and unscrewed the bear. Off he tore after the carriage, foaming with rage. The Princess heard his puffing and roaring, and growing frightened she cried: 'Oh dear! the bear is after us and will certainly catch us up!' The tailor remained quite unmoved. He quietly stood on his head, stuck his legs out at the carriage window and called out to the bear, 'Do you see my stocks? If you don't go home this minute I'll screw you tight into them.'

When the bear saw and heard this he turned right round and ran off as fast as his legs would carry him. The tailor drove on unmolested to church, where he and the Princess were married, and he lived with her many years as happy and merry as a lark. Whoever does not believe this story must pay a dollar.

Grimm.

THE GOLDEN MERMAID

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A powerful king had, among many other treasures, a wonderful tree in his garden, which bore every year beautiful golden apples. But the King was never able to enjoy his treasure, for he might watch and guard them as he liked, as soon as they began to get ripe they were always stolen. At last, in despair, he sent for his three sons, and said to the two eldest, ‘Get yourselves ready for a journey. Take gold and silver with you, and a large retinue of servants, as beseems two noble princes, and go through the world till you find out who it is that steals my golden apples, and, if possible, bring the thief to me that I may punish him as he deserves.’ His sons were delighted at this proposal, for they had long wished to see something of the world, so they got ready for their journey with all haste, bade their father farewell, and left the town.

The youngest Prince was much disappointed that he too was not sent out on his travels; but his father wouldn’t hear of his going, for he had always been looked upon as the stupid one of the family, and the King was afraid of something happening to him. But the Prince begged and implored so long, that at last his father consented to let him go, and furnished him with gold and silver as he had done his brothers. But he gave him the most wretched horse in his stable, because the foolish youth hadn’t asked for a better. So he too set out on his journey to secure the thief, amid the jeers and laughter of the whole court and town.

His path led him first through a wood, and he hadn’t gone very far when he met a lean-looking wolf who stood still as he approached. The Prince asked him if he were hungry, and when the wolf said he was, he got down from his horse and said, ‘If you are really as you say and look, you may take my horse and eat it.’

The wolf didn’t wait to have the offer repeated, but set to work, and soon made an end of the poor beast. When the Prince saw how different the wolf looked when he had finished his meal, he said to him, ‘Now, my friend, since you have eaten up my horse, and I have such a long way to

go, that, with the best will in the world, I couldn't manage it on foot, the least you can do for me is to act as my horse and to take me on your back.'

'Most certainly,' said the wolf, and, letting the Prince mount him, he trotted gaily through the wood. After they had gone a little way he turned round and asked his rider where he wanted to go to, and the Prince proceeded to tell him the whole story of the golden apples that had been stolen out of the King's garden, and how his other two brothers had set forth with many followers to find the thief. When he had finished his story, the wolf, who was in reality no wolf but a mighty magician, said he thought he could tell him who the thief was, and could help him to secure him. 'There lives,' he said, 'in a neighbouring country, a mighty emperor who has a beautiful golden bird in a cage, and this is the creature who steals the golden apples, but it flies so fast that it is impossible to catch it at its theft. You must slip into the Emperor's palace by night and steal the bird with the cage; but be very careful not to touch the walls as you go out.'

The following night the Prince stole into the Emperor's palace, and found the bird in its cage as the wolf had told him he would. He took hold of it carefully, but in spite of all his caution he touched the wall in trying to pass by some sleeping watchmen. They awoke at once, and, seizing him, beat him and put him into chains. Next day he was led before the Emperor, who at once condemned him to death and to be thrown into a dark dungeon till the day of his execution arrived.

The wolf, who, of course, knew by his magic arts all that had happened to the Prince, turned himself at once into a mighty monarch with a large train of followers, and proceeded to the Court of the Emperor, where he was received with every show of honour. The Emperor and he conversed on many subjects, and, among other things, the stranger asked his host if he had many slaves. The Emperor told him he had more than he knew what to do with, and that a new one had been captured that very night for trying to steal his magic bird, but that as he had already more than enough to feed and support, he was going to have this last captive hanged next morning.

'He must have been a most daring thief,' said the King, 'to try and steal the magic bird, for depend upon it the creature must have been well guarded. I would really like to see this bold rascal.' 'By all means,' said the Emperor; and he himself led his guest down to the dungeon where the

unfortunate Prince was kept prisoner. When the Emperor stepped out of the cell with the King, the latter turned to him and said, ‘Most mighty Emperor, I have been much disappointed. I had thought to find a powerful robber, and instead of that I have seen the most miserable creature I can imagine. Hanging is far too good for him. If I had to sentence him I should make him perform some very difficult task, under pain of death. If he did it so much the better for you, and if he didn’t, matters would just be as they are now and he could still be hanged.’ ‘Your counsel,’ said the Emperor, ‘is excellent, and, as it happens, I’ve got the very thing for him to do. My nearest neighbour, who is also a mighty Emperor, possesses a golden horse which he guards most carefully. The prisoner shall be told to steal this horse and bring it to me.’

The Prince was then let out of his dungeon, and told his life would be spared if he succeeded in bringing the golden horse to the Emperor. He did not feel very elated at this announcement, for he did not know how in the world he was to set about the task, and he started on his way weeping bitterly, and wondering what had made him leave his father’s house and kingdom. But before he had gone far his friend the wolf stood before him and said, ‘Dear Prince, why are you so cast down? It is true you didn’t succeed in catching the bird; but don’t let that discourage you, for this time you will be all the more careful, and will doubtless catch the horse.’ With these and like words the wolf comforted the Prince, and warned him specially not to touch the wall or let the horse touch it as he led it out, or he would fail in the same way as he had done with the bird.

After a somewhat lengthy journey the Prince and the wolf came to the kingdom ruled over by the Emperor who possessed the golden horse. One evening late they reached the capital, and the wolf advised the Prince to set to work at once, before their presence in the city had aroused the watchfulness of the guards. They slipped unnoticed into the Emperor’s stables and into the very place where there were the most guards, for there the wolf rightly surmised they would find the horse. When they came to a certain inner door the wolf told the Prince to remain outside, while he went in. In a short time he returned and said, ‘My dear Prince, the horse is most securely watched, but I have bewitched all the guards, and if you will only be careful not to touch the wall yourself, or let the horse touch it as you go out, there is no danger and the game is yours. The Prince, who had

made up his mind to be more than cautious this time, went cheerfully to work. He found all the guards fast asleep, and, slipping into the horse's stall, he seized it by the bridle and led it out; but, unfortunately, before they had got quite clear of the stables a gadfly stung the horse and caused it to switch its tail, whereby it touched the wall. In a moment all the guards awoke, seized the Prince and beat him mercilessly with their horse-whips, after which they bound him with chains, and flung him into a dungeon. Next morning they brought him before the Emperor, who treated him exactly as the King with the golden bird had done, and commanded him to be beheaded on the following day.

When the wolf-magician saw that the Prince had failed this time too, he transformed himself again into a mighty king, and proceeded with an even more gorgeous retinue than the first time to the Court of the Emperor. He was courteously received and entertained, and once more after dinner he led the conversation on to the subject of slaves, and in the course of it again requested to be allowed to see the bold robber who had dared to break into the Emperor's stable to steal his most valuable possession. The Emperor consented, and all happened exactly as it had done at the court of the Emperor with the golden bird; the prisoner's life was to be spared only on condition that within three days he should obtain possession of the golden mermaid, whom hitherto no mortal had ever approached.

Very depressed by his dangerous and difficult task, the Prince left his gloomy prison; but, to his great joy, he met his friend the wolf before he had gone many miles on his journey. The cunning creature pretended he knew nothing of what had happened to the Prince, and asked him how he had fared with the horse. The Prince told him all about his misadventure, and the condition on which the Emperor had promised to spare his life. Then the wolf reminded him that he had twice got him out of prison, and that if he would only trust in him, and do exactly as he told him, he would certainly succeed in this last undertaking. Thereupon they bent their steps towards the sea, which stretched out before them, as far as their eyes could see, all the waves dancing and glittering in the bright sunshine. 'Now,' continued the wolf, 'I am going to turn myself into a boat full of the most beautiful silken merchandise, and you must jump boldly into the boat, and steer with my tail in your hand right out into the open sea. You will soon come upon the golden mermaid. Whatever you do, don't follow her if she

calls you, but on the contrary say to her, “The buyer comes to the seller, not the seller to the buyer.” After which you must steer towards the land, and she will follow you, for she won’t be able to resist the beautiful wares you have on board your ship.’

The Prince promised faithfully to do all he had been told, whereupon the wolf changed himself into a ship full of most exquisite silks, of every shade and colour imaginable. The astonished Prince stepped into the boat, and, holding the wolf’s tail in his hand, he steered boldly out into the open sea, where the sun was gilding the blue waves with its golden rays. Soon he saw the golden mermaid swimming near the ship, beckoning and calling to him to follow her; but, mindful of the wolf’s warning, he told her in a loud voice that if she wished to buy anything she must come to him. With these words he turned his magic ship round and steered back towards the land. The mermaid called out to him to stand still, but he refused to listen to her and never paused till he reached the sand of the shore. Here he stopped and waited for the mermaid, who had swum after him. When she drew near the boat he saw that she was far more beautiful than any mortal he had ever beheld. She swam round the ship for some time, and then swung herself gracefully on board, in order to examine the beautiful silken stuffs more closely. Then the Prince seized her in his arms, and kissing her tenderly on the cheeks and lips, he told her she was his for ever; at the same moment the boat turned into a wolf again, which so terrified the mermaid that she clung to the Prince for protection.

So the golden mermaid was successfully caught, and she soon felt quite happy in her new life when she saw she had nothing to fear either from the Prince or the wolf—she rode on the back of the latter, and the Prince rode behind her. When they reached the country ruled over by the Emperor with the golden horse, the Prince jumped down, and, helping the mermaid to alight, he led her before the Emperor. At the sight of the beautiful mermaid and of the grim wolf, who stuck close to the Prince this time, the guards all made respectful obeisance, and soon the three stood before his Imperial Majesty. When the Emperor heard from the Prince how he had gained possession of his fair prize, he at once recognized that he had been helped by some magic art, and on the spot gave up all claim to the beautiful mermaid. ‘Dear youth,’ he said, ‘forgive me for my shameful conduct to you, and, as a sign that you pardon me, accept the golden horse

as a present. I acknowledge your power to be greater even than I can understand, for you have succeeded in gaining possession of the golden mermaid, whom hitherto no mortal has ever been able to approach.' Then they all sat down to a huge feast, and the Prince had to relate his adventures all over again, to the wonder and astonishment of the whole company.

But the Prince was wearying now to return to his own kingdom, so as soon as the feast was over he took farewell of the Emperor, and set out on his homeward way. He lifted the mermaid on to the golden horse, and swung himself up behind her—and so they rode on merrily, with the wolf trotting behind, till they came to the country of the Emperor with the golden bird. The renown of the Prince and his adventure had gone before him, and the Emperor sat on his throne awaiting the arrival of the Prince and his companions. When the three rode into the courtyard of the palace, they were surprised and delighted to find everything festively illuminated and decorated for their reception. When the Prince and the golden mermaid, with the wolf behind them, mounted the steps of the palace, the Emperor came forward to meet them, and led them to the throne room. At the same moment a servant appeared with the golden bird in its golden cage, and the Emperor begged the Prince to accept it with his love, and to forgive him the indignity he had suffered at his hands. Then the Emperor bent low before the beautiful mermaid, and, offering her his arm, he led her into dinner, closely followed by the Prince and her friend the wolf; the latter seating himself at table, not the least embarrassed that no one had invited him to do so.

As soon as the sumptuous meal was over, the Prince and his mermaid took leave of the Emperor, and, seating themselves on the golden horse, continued their homeward journey. On the way the wolf turned to the Prince and said, 'Dear friends, I must now bid you farewell, but I leave you under such happy circumstances that I cannot feel our parting to be a sad one.' The Prince was very unhappy when he heard these words, and begged the wolf to stay with them always; but this the good creature refused to do, though he thanked the Prince kindly for his invitation, and called out as he disappeared into the thicket, 'Should any evil befall you, dear Prince, at any time, you may rely on my friendship and gratitude.' These were the wolf's parting words, and the Prince could not restrain his

tears when he saw his friend vanishing in the distance; but one glance at his beloved mermaid soon cheered him up again, and they continued on their journey merrily.

The news of his son's adventures had already reached his father's Court, and everyone was more than astonished at the success of the once despised Prince. His elder brothers, who had in vain gone in pursuit of the thief of the golden apples, were furious over their younger brother's good fortune, and plotted and planned how they were to kill him. They hid themselves in the wood through which the Prince had to pass on his way to the palace, and there fell on him, and, having beaten him to death, they carried off the golden horse and the golden bird. But nothing they could do would persuade the golden mermaid to go with them or move from the spot, for ever since she had left the sea, she had so attached herself to her Prince that she asked nothing else than to live or die with him.

For many weeks the poor mermaid sat and watched over the dead body of her lover, weeping salt tears over his loss, when suddenly one day their old friend the wolf appeared and said, 'Cover the Prince's body with all the leaves and flowers you can find in the wood.' The maiden did as he told her, and then the wolf breathed over the flowery grave, and, lo and behold! the Prince lay there sleeping as peacefully as a child. 'Now you may wake him if you like,' said the wolf, and the mermaid bent over him and gently kissed the wounds his brothers had made on his forehead, and the Prince awoke, and you may imagine how delighted he was to find his beautiful mermaid beside him, though he felt a little depressed when he thought of the loss of the golden bird and the golden horse. After a time the wolf, who had likewise fallen on the Prince's neck, advised them to continue their journey, and once more the Prince and his lovely bride mounted on the faithful beast's back.

The King's joy was great when he embraced his youngest son, for he had long since despaired of his return. He received the wolf and the beautiful golden mermaid most cordially too, and the Prince was made to tell his adventures all over from the beginning. The poor old father grew very sad when he heard of the shameful conduct of his elder sons, and had them called before him. They turned as white as death when they saw their brother, whom they thought they had murdered, standing beside them alive and well, and so startled were they that when the King asked them why

they had behaved so wickedly to their brother they could think of no lie, but confessed at once that they had slain the young Prince in order to obtain possession of the golden horse and the golden bird. Their father’s wrath knew no bounds, and he ordered them both to be banished, but he could not do enough to honour his youngest son, and his marriage with the beautiful mermaid was celebrated with much pomp and magnificence. When the festivities were over, the wolf bade them all farewell, and returned once more to his life in the woods, much to the regret of the old King and the young Prince and his bride.

And so ended the adventures of the Prince with his friend the wolf.

Grimm.

THE WAR OF THE WOLF AND THE FOX

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There was once upon a time a man and his wife who had an old cat and an old dog. One day the man, whose name was Simon, said to his wife, whose name was Susan, ‘Why should we keep our old cat any longer? She never catches any mice now-a-days, and is so useless that I have made up my mind to drown her.’

But his wife replied, ‘Don’t do that, for I’m sure she could still catch mice.’

‘Rubbish,’ said Simon. ‘The mice might dance on her and she would never catch one. I’ve quite made up my mind that the next time I see her, I shall put her in the water.’

Susan was very unhappy when she heard this, and so was the cat, who had been listening to the conversation behind the stove. When Simon went off to his work, the poor cat miawed so pitifully, and looked up so pathetically into Susan’s face, that the woman quickly opened the door and said, ‘Fly for your life, my poor little beast, and get well away from here before your master returns.’

The cat took her advice, and ran as quickly as her poor old legs would carry her into the wood, and when Simon came home, his wife told him that the cat had vanished.

‘So much the better for her,’ said Simon. ‘And now we have got rid of her, we must consider what we are to do with the old dog. He is quite deaf and blind, and invariably barks when there is no need, and makes no sound when there is. I think the best thing I can do with him is to hang him.’

But soft-hearted Susan replied, ‘Please don’t do so; he’s surely not so useless as all that.’

‘Don’t be foolish,’ said her husband. ‘The courtyard might be full of thieves and he’d never discover it. No, the first time I see him, it’s all up with him, I can tell you.’

Susan was very unhappy at his words, and so was the dog, who was lying in the corner of the room and had heard everything. As soon as Simon had gone to his work, he stood up and howled so touchingly that Susan quickly opened the door, and said ‘Fly for your life, poor beast, before your master gets home.’ And the dog ran into the wood with his tail between his legs.

When her husband returned, his wife told him that the dog had disappeared.

‘That’s lucky for him,’ said Simon, but Susan sighed, for she had been very fond of the poor creature.

Now it happened that the cat and dog met each other on their travels, and though they had not been the best of friends at home, they were quite glad to meet among strangers. They sat down under a holly tree and both poured forth their woes.

Presently a fox passed by, and seeing the pair sitting together in a disconsolate fashion, he asked them why they sat there, and what they were grumbling about.

The cat replied, ‘I have caught many a mouse in my day, but now that I am old and past work, my master wants to drown me.’

And the dog said, ‘Many a night have I watched and guarded my master’s house, and now that I am old and deaf, he wants to hang me.’

The fox answered, ‘That’s the way of the world. But I’ll help you to get back into your master’s favour, only you must first help me in my own troubles.’

They promised to do their best, and the fox continued, ‘The wolf has declared war against me, and is at this moment marching to meet me in company with the bear and the wild boar, and to-morrow there will be a fierce battle between us.’

‘All right,’ said the dog and the cat, ‘we will stand by you, and if we are killed, it is at any rate better to die on the field of battle than to perish ignobly at home,’ and they shook paws and concluded the bargain. The fox sent word to the wolf to meet him at a certain place, and the three set forth to encounter him and his friends.

The wolf, the bear, and the wild boar arrived on the spot first, and when they had waited some time for the fox, the dog, and the cat, the bear said, ‘I’ll climb up into the oak tree, and look if I can see them coming.’

The first time he looked round he said, ‘I can see nothing,’ and the second time he looked round he said, ‘I can still see nothing.’ But the third time he said, ‘I see a mighty army in the distance, and one of the warriors has the biggest lance you ever saw!’

This was the cat, who was marching along with her tail erect.

And so they laughed and jeered, and it was so hot that the bear said, ‘The enemy won’t be here at this rate for many hours to come, so I’ll just curl myself up in the fork of the tree and have a little sleep.’

And the wolf lay down under the oak, and the wild boar buried himself in some straw, so that nothing was seen of him but one ear.

And while they were lying there, the fox, the cat and the dog arrived. When the cat saw the wild boar’s ear, she pounced upon it, thinking it was a mouse in the straw.

The wild boar got up in a dreadful fright, gave one loud grunt and disappeared into the wood. But the cat was even more startled than the boar, and, spitting with terror, she scrambled up into the fork of the tree, and as it happened right into the bear’s face. Now it was the bear’s turn to be alarmed, and with a mighty growl he jumped down from the oak and fell right on the top of the wolf and killed him as dead as a stone.

On their way home from the war the fox caught score of mice, and when they reached Simon’s cottage he put them all on the stove and said to the cat, ‘Now go and fetch one mouse after the other, and lay them down before your master.’

‘All right,’ said the cat, and did exactly as the fox told her.

When Susan saw this she said to her husband, ‘Just look, here is our old cat back again, and see what a lot of mice she has caught.’

‘Wonders will never cease,’ cried Simon. ‘I certainly never thought the old cat would ever catch another mouse.’

But Susan answered, ‘There, you see, I always said our cat was a most excellent creature—but you men always think you know best.’

In the meantime the fox said to the dog, ‘Our friend Simon has just killed a pig; when it gets a little darker, you must go into the courtyard and bark with all your might.’

‘All right,’ said the dog, and as soon as it grew dusk he began to bark loudly.

Susan, who heard him first, said to her husband, ‘Our dog must have come back, for I hear him barking lustily. Do go out and see what’s the matter; perhaps thieves may be stealing our sausages.’

But Simon answered, ‘The foolish brute is as deaf as a post and is always barking at nothing,’ and he refused to get up.

The next morning Susan got up early to go to church at the neighbouring town, and she thought she would take some sausages to her aunt who lived there. But when she went to her larder, she found all the sausages gone, and a great hole in the floor. She called out to her husband, ‘I was perfectly right. Thieves have been here last night, and they have not left a single sausage. Oh! if you had only got up when I asked you to!’

Then Simon scratched his head and said, ‘I can’t understand it at all. I certainly never believed the old dog was so quick at hearing.’

But Susan replied, ‘I always told you our old dog was the best dog in the world—but as usual you thought you knew so much better. Men are the same all the world over.’

And the fox scored a point too, for he had carried away the sausages himself!

Grimm.

THE STORY OF THE FISHERMAN AND HIS WIFE

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There was once a fisherman and his wife who lived together in a little hut close to the sea, and the fisherman used to go down every day to fish; and he would fish and fish. So he used to sit with his rod and gaze into the shining water; and he would gaze and gaze.

Now, once the line was pulled deep under the water, and when he hauled it up he hauled a large flounder with it. The flounder said to him, ‘Listen, fisherman. I pray you to let me go; I am not a real flounder, I am an enchanted Prince. What good will it do you if you kill me—I shall not taste nice? Put me back into the water and let me swim away.’

‘Well,’ said the man, ‘you need not make so much noise about it; I am sure I had much better let a flounder that can talk swim away.’ With these words he put him back again into the shining water, and the flounder sank to the bottom, leaving a long streak of blood behind. Then the fisherman got up, and went home to his wife in the hut.

‘Husband,’ said his wife, ‘have you caught nothing to-day?’

‘No,’ said the man. ‘I caught a flounder who said he was an enchanted prince, so I let him swim away again.’

‘Did you wish nothing from him?’ said his wife.

‘No,’ said the man; ‘what should I have wished from him?’

‘Ah!’ said the woman, ‘it’s dreadful to have to live all one’s life in this hut that is so small and dirty; you ought to have wished for a cottage. Go now and call him; say to him that we choose to have a cottage, and he will certainly give it you.’

‘Alas!’ said the man, ‘why should I go down there again?’

‘Why,’ said his wife, ‘you caught him, and then let him go again, so he is sure to give you what you ask. Go down quickly.’

The man did not like going at all, but as his wife was not to be persuaded, he went down to the sea.

When he came there the sea was quite green and yellow, and was no longer shining. So he stood on the shore and said:

‘Once a prince, but changed you be Into a flounder in the sea. Come! for my wife, Ilsebel, Wishes what I dare not tell.’

Then the flounder came swimming up and said, ‘Well, what does she want?’

‘Alas!’ said the man, ‘my wife says I ought to have kept you and wished something from you. She does not want to live any longer in the hut; she would like a cottage.’

‘Go home, then,’ said the flounder; ‘she has it.’

So the man went home, and there was his wife no longer in the hut, but in its place was a beautiful cottage, and his wife was sitting in front of the door on a bench. She took him by the hand and said to him, ‘Come inside, and see if this is not much better.’ They went in, and inside the cottage was a tiny hall, and a beautiful sitting-room, and a bedroom in which stood a bed, a kitchen and a dining-room all furnished with the best of everything, and fitted up with every kind of tin and copper utensil. And outside was a little yard in which were chickens and ducks, and also a little garden with vegetables and fruit trees.

‘See,’ said the wife, ‘isn’t this nice?’

‘Yes,’ answered her husband; ‘here we shall remain and live very happily.’

‘We will think about that,’ said his wife.

With these words they had their supper and went to bed. All went well for a week or a fortnight, then the wife said:

‘Listen, husband; the cottage is much too small, and so is the yard and the garden; the flounder might just as well have sent us a larger house. I should like to live in a great stone castle. Go down to the flounder, and tell him to send us a castle.’

‘Ah, wife!’ said the fisherman, ‘the cottage is quite good enough; why do we choose to live in a castle?’

‘Why?’ said the wife. ‘You go down; the flounder can quite well do that.’

‘No, wife,’ said the man; ‘the flounder gave us the cottage. I do not like to go to him again; he might take it amiss.’

‘Go,’ said his wife. ‘He can certainly give it us, and ought to do so willingly. Go at once.’

The fisherman’s heart was very heavy, and he did not like going. He said to himself, ‘It is not right.’ Still, he went down.

When he came to the sea, the water was all violet and dark-blue, and dull and thick, and no longer green and yellow, but it was still smooth.

So he stood there and said:

‘Once a prince, but changed you be Into a flounder in the sea. Come! for my wife, Ilsebel, Wishes what I dare not tell.’

‘What does she want now?’ said the flounder.

‘Ah!’ said the fisherman, half-ashamed, ‘she wants to live in a great stone castle.’

‘Go home; she is standing before the door,’ said the flounder.

The fisherman went home and thought he would find no house. When he came near, there stood a great stone palace, and his wife was standing on the steps, about to enter. She took him by the hand and said, ‘Come inside.’

Then he went with her, and inside the castle was a large hall with a marble floor, and there were heaps of servants who threw open the great doors, and the walls were covered with beautiful tapestry, and in the apartments were gilded chairs and tables, and crystal chandeliers hung from the ceiling, and all the rooms were beautifully carpeted. The best of food and drink also was set before them when they wished to dine. And outside the house was a large courtyard with horse and cow stables and a coach-house—all fine buildings; and a splendid garden with most beautiful flowers and fruit, and in a park quite a league long were deer and roe and hares, and everything one could wish for.

‘Now,’ said the wife, ‘isn’t this beautiful?’

‘Yes, indeed,’ said the fisherman. ‘Now we will stay here and live in this beautiful castle, and be very happy.’

‘We will consider the matter,’ said his wife, and they went to bed.

The next morning the wife woke up first at daybreak, and looked out of the bed at the beautiful country stretched before her. Her husband was still sleeping, so she dug her elbows into his side and said:

‘Husband, get up and look out of the window. Could we not become the king of all this land? Go down to the flounder and tell him we choose to be

king.’

‘Ah, wife!’ replied her husband, ‘why should we be king? I don’t want to be king.’

‘Well,’ said his wife, ‘if you don’t want to be king, I will be king. Go down to the flounder; I will be king.’

‘Alas! wife,’ said the fisherman, ‘why do you want to be king? I can’t ask him that.’

‘And why not?’ said his wife. ‘Go down at once. I must be king.’

So the fisherman went, though much vexed that his wife wanted to be king. ‘It is not right! It is not right,’ he thought. He did not wish to go, yet he went.

When he came to the sea, the water was a dark-grey colour, and it was heaving against the shore. So he stood and said:

‘Once a prince, but changed you be Into a flounder in the sea. Come! for my wife, Ilsebel, Wishes what I dare not tell.’

‘What does she want now?’ asked the flounder.

‘Alas!’ said the fisherman, ‘she wants to be king.’

‘Go home; she is that already,’ said the flounder.

The fisherman went home, and when he came near the palace he saw that it had become much larger, and that it had great towers and splendid ornamental carving on it. A sentinel was standing before the gate, and there were numbers of soldiers with kettledrums and trumpets. And when he went into the palace, he found everything was of pure marble and gold, and the curtains of damask with tassels of gold. Then the doors of the hall flew open, and there stood the whole Court round his wife, who was sitting on a high throne of gold and diamonds; she wore a great golden crown, and had a sceptre of gold and precious stones in her hand, and by her on either side stood six pages in a row, each one a head taller than the other. Then he went before her and said:

‘Ah, wife! are you king now?’

‘Yes,’ said his wife; ‘now I am king.’

He stood looking at her, and when he had looked for some time, he said:

‘Let that be enough, wife, now that you are king! Now we have nothing more to wish for.’

‘Nay, husband,’ said his wife restlessly, ‘my wishing powers are boundless; I cannot restrain them any longer. Go down to the flounder; king I am, now I must be emperor.’

‘Alas! wife,’ said the fisherman, ‘why do you want to be emperor?’

‘Husband,’ said she, ‘go to the flounder; I will be emperor.’

‘Ah, wife,’ he said, ‘he cannot make you emperor; I don’t like to ask him that. There is only one emperor in the kingdom. Indeed and indeed he cannot make you emperor.’

‘What!’ said his wife. ‘I am king, and you are my husband. Will you go at once? Go! If he can make king he can make emperor, and emperor I must and will be. Go!’

So he had to go. But as he went, he felt quite frightened, and he thought to himself, ‘This can’t be right; to be emperor is too ambitious; the flounder will be tired out at last.’

Thinking this he came to the shore. The sea was quite black and thick, and it was breaking high on the beach; the foam was flying about, and the wind was blowing; everything looked bleak. The fisherman was chilled with fear. He stood and said:

‘Once a prince, but changed you be Into a flounder in the sea. Come! for my wife, Ilsebel, Wishes what I dare not tell.’

‘What does she want now?’ asked flounder.

‘Alas! flounder,’ he said, ‘my wife wants to be emperor.’

‘Go home,’ said the flounder; ‘she is that already.’

So the fisherman went home, and when he came there he saw the whole castle was made of polished marble, ornamented with alabaster statues and gold. Before the gate soldiers were marching, blowing trumpets and beating drums. Inside the palace were walking barons, counts, and dukes, acting as servants; they opened the door, which was of beaten gold. And when he entered, he saw his wife upon a throne which was made out of a single block of gold, and which was quite six cubits high. She had on a great golden crown which was three yards high and set with brilliants and sparkling gems. In one hand she held a sceptre, and in the other the imperial globe, and on either side of her stood two rows of halberdiers, each smaller than the other, from a seven-foot giant to the tiniest little dwarf no higher than my little finger. Many princes and dukes were standing before her. The fisherman went up to her quietly and said:

‘Wife, are you emperor now?’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘I am emperor.’

He stood looking at her magnificence, and when he had watched her for some time, said:

‘Ah, wife, let that be enough, now that you are emperor.’

‘Husband,’ said she, ‘why are you standing there? I am emperor now, and I want to be pope too; go down to the flounder.’

‘Alas! wife,’ said the fisherman, ‘what more do you want? You cannot be pope; there is only one pope in Christendom, and he cannot make you that.’

‘Husband,’ she said, ‘I will be pope. Go down quickly; I must be pope to-day.’

‘No, wife,’ said the fisherman; ‘I can’t ask him that. It is not right; it is too much. The flounder cannot make you pope.’

‘Husband, what nonsense!’ said his wife. ‘If he can make emperor, he can make, pope too. Go down this instant; I am emperor and you are my husband. Will you be off at once?’

So he was frightened and went out; but he felt quite faint, and trembled and shook, and his knees and legs began to give way under him. The wind was blowing fiercely across the land, and the clouds flying across the sky looked as gloomy as if it were night; the leaves were being blown from the trees; the water was foaming and seething and dashing upon the shore, and in the distance he saw the ships in great distress, dancing and tossing on the waves. Still the sky was very blue in the middle, although at the sides it was an angry red as in a great storm. So he stood shuddering in anxiety, and said:

‘Once a prince, but changed you be Into a flounder in the sea. Come! for my wife, Ilsebel, Wishes what I dare not tell.’

‘Well, what does she want now?’ asked the flounder.

‘Alas!’ said the fisherman, ‘she wants to be pope.’

‘Go home, then; she is that already,’ said the flounder.

Then he went home, and when he came there he saw, as it were, a large church surrounded by palaces. He pushed his way through the people. The interior was lit up with thousands and thousands of candles, and his wife was dressed in cloth of gold and was sitting on a much higher throne, and she wore three great golden crowns. Round her were numbers of Church

dignitaries, and on either side were standing two rows of tapers, the largest of them as tall as a steeple, and the smallest as tiny as a Christmas-tree candle. All the emperors and kings were on their knees before her, and were kissing her foot.

‘Wife,’ said the fisherman looking at her, ‘are you pope now?’

‘Yes,’ said she; ‘I am pope.’

So he stood staring at her, and it was as if he were looking at the bright sun. When he had watched her for some time he said:

‘Ah, wife, let it be enough now that you are pope.’

But she sat as straight as a tree, and did not move or bend the least bit. He said again:

‘Wife, be content now that you are pope. You cannot become anything more.’

‘We will think about that,’ said his wife.

With these words they went to bed. But the woman was not content; her greed would not allow her to sleep, and she kept on thinking and thinking what she could still become. The fisherman slept well and soundly, for he had done a great deal that day, but his wife could not sleep at all, and turned from one side to another the whole night long, and thought, till she could think no longer, what more she could become. Then the sun began to rise, and when she saw the red dawn she went to the end of the bed and looked at it, and as she was watching the sun rise, out of the window, she thought, ‘Ha! could I not make the sun and man rise?’

‘Husband,’ said she, poking him in the ribs with her elbows, ‘wake up. Go down to the flounder; I will be a god.’

The fisherman was still half asleep, yet he was so frightened that he fell out of bed. He thought he had not heard aright, and opened his eyes wide and said:

‘What did you say, wife?’

‘Husband,’ she said, ‘if I cannot make the sun and man rise when I appear I cannot rest. I shall never have a quiet moment till I can make the sun and man rise.’

He looked at her in horror, and a shudder ran over him.

‘Go down at once; I will be a god.’

‘Alas! wife,’ said the fisherman, falling on his knees before her, ‘the flounder cannot do that. Emperor and pope he can make you. I implore

you, be content and remain pope.’

Then she flew into a passion, her hair hung wildly about her face, she pushed him with her foot and screamed:

‘I am not contented, and I shall not be contented! Will you go?’

So he hurried on his clothes as fast as possible, and ran away as if he were mad.

But the storm was raging so fiercely that he could scarcely stand. Houses and trees were being blown down, the mountains were being shaken, and pieces of rock were rolling in the sea. The sky was as black as ink, it was thundering and lightening, and the sea was tossing in great waves as high as church towers and mountains, and each had a white crest of foam.

So he shouted, not able to hear his own voice:

‘Once a prince, but changed you be Into a flounder in the sea. Come! for my wife, Ilsebel, Wishes what I dare not tell.’

‘Well, what does she want now?’ asked the flounder.

‘Alas!’ said he, ‘she wants to be a god.’

‘Go home, then; she is sitting again in the hut.’

And there they are sitting to this day.

Grimm.

THE THREE MUSICIANS

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Once upon a time three musicians left their home and set out on their travels. They had all learnt music from the same master, and they determined to stick together and to seek their fortune in foreign lands. They wandered merrily from place to place and made quite a good living, and were much appreciated by everyone who heard them play. One evening they came to a village where they delighted all the company with their beautiful music. At last they ceased playing, and began to eat and drink and listen to the talk that was going on around them. They heard all the gossip of the place, and many wonderful things were related and discussed. At last the conversation fell on a castle in the neighbourhood, about which many strange and marvellous things were told. One person said that hidden treasure was to be found there; another that the richest food was always to be had there, although the castle was uninhabited; and a third, that an evil spirit dwelt within the walls, so terrible, that anyone who forced his way into the castle came out of it more dead than alive.

As soon as the three musicians were alone in their bedroom they agreed to go and examine the mysterious castle, and, if possible, to find and carry away the hidden treasure. They determined, too, to make the attempt separately, one after the other, according to age, and they settled that a whole day was to be given to each adventurer in which to try his luck.

The fiddler was the first to set out on his adventures, and did so in the best of spirits and full of courage. When he reached the castle he found the outer gate open, quite as if he were an expected guest, but no sooner had he stepped across the entry than the heavy door closed behind him with a bang, and was bolted with a huge iron bar, exactly as if a sentinel were doing his office and keeping watch, but no human being was to be seen anywhere. An awful terror overcame the fiddler; but it was hopeless to think of turning back or of standing still, and the hopes of finding gold and other treasures gave him strength and courage to force his way further into

the castle. Upstairs and downstairs he wandered, through lofty halls, splendid rooms, and lovely little boudoirs, everything beautifully arranged, and all kept in the most perfect order. But the silence of death reigned everywhere, and no living thing, not even a fly, was to be seen. Notwithstanding, the youth felt his spirits return to him when he entered the lower regions of the castle, for in the kitchen the most tempting and delicious food was spread out, the cellars were full of the most costly wine, and the store-room crammed with pots of every sort of jam you can imagine. A cheerful fire was burning in the kitchen, before which a roast was being basted by unseen hands, and all kinds of vegetables and other dainty dishes were being prepared in like manner. Before the fiddler had time to think, he was ushered into a little room by invisible hands, and there a table was spread for him with all the delicious food he had seen cooking in the kitchen.

The youth first seized his fiddle and played a beautiful air on it which echoed through the silent halls, and then he fell to and began to eat a hearty meal. Before long, however, the door opened and a tiny man stepped into the room, not more than three feet high, clothed in a dressing-gown, and with a small wrinkled face, and a grey beard which reached down to the silver buckles of his shoes. And the little man sat down beside the fiddler and shared his meal. When they got to the game course the fiddler handed the dwarf a knife and fork, and begged him to help himself first, and then to pass the dish on. The little creature nodded, but helped himself so clumsily that he dropped the piece of meat he had carved on to the floor.

The good-natured fiddler bent down to pick it up, but in the twinkling of an eye the little man had jumped on to his back, and beat him till he was black and blue all over his head and body. At last, when the fiddler was nearly dead, the little wretch left off, and shoved the poor fellow out of the iron gate which he had entered in such good spirits a few hours before. The fresh air revived him a little, and in a short time he was able to stagger with aching limbs back to the inn where his companions were staying. It was night when he reached the place, and the other two musicians were fast asleep. The next morning they were much astonished at finding the fiddler in bed beside them, and overwhelmed him with questions; but their friend hid his back and face, and answered them very shortly, saying, ‘Go

there yourselves, and see what's to be seen! It is a ticklish matter, that I can assure you.'

The second musician, who was a trumpeter, now made his way to the castle, and everything happened to him exactly as it had to the fiddler. He was just as hospitably entertained at first, and then just as cruelly beaten and belaboured, so that next morning he too lay in his bed like a wounded hare, assuring his friends that the task of getting into the haunted castle was no enviable one. Notwithstanding the warning of his companions, the third musician, who played the flute, was still determined to try his luck, and, full of courage and daring, he set out, resolved, if possible, to find and secure the hidden treasure.

Fearlessly he wandered the whole castle, and as he roamed through the splendid empty apartments he thought to himself how nice it would be to live there always, especially with a full larder and cellar at his disposal. A table was spread for him too, and when he had wandered about for some time, singing and playing the flute, he sat down as his companions had done, prepared to enjoy the delicious food that was spread out in front of him. Then the little man with the beard entered as before and seated himself beside the flute-player, who wasn't the least startled at his appearance, but chatted away to him as if he had known him all his life. But he didn't find his companion very communicative. At last they came to the game, and, as usual, the little man let his piece fall on the ground. The flute-player was good-naturedly just going to pick it up, when he perceived that the little dwarf was in the act of springing on his back. Then he turned round sharply, and, seizing the little creature by his beard, he gave him such a shaking that he tore his beard out, and the dwarf sank groaning to the ground.

But as soon as the youth had the beard in his hands he felt so strong that he was fit for anything, and he perceived all sorts of things in the castle that he had not noticed before, but, on the other hand, all strength seemed to have gone from the little man. He whined and sobbed out: 'Give, oh give me my beard again, and I will instruct you in all the magic art that surrounds this castle, and will help you to carry off the hidden treasure, which will make you rich and happy for ever.'

But the cunning flute-player replied: 'I will give you back your beard, but you must first help me as you have promised to do. Till you have done

so, I don’t let your beard out of my hands.’

Then the old man found himself obliged to fulfil his promise, though he had had no intention of doing so, and had only desired to get his beard back. He made the youth follow him through dark secret passages, underground vaults, and grey rocks till at last they came to an open field, which looked as if it belonged to a more beautiful world than ours. Then they came to a stream of rushing water; but the little man drew out a wand and touched the waves, whereupon the waters parted and stood still, and the two crossed the river with dry feet. And how beautiful everything on the other side was! lovely green paths leading through woods and fields covered with flowers, birds with gold and silver feathers singing on the trees, lovely butterflies and glittering beetles fluttered and crawled about, and dear little beasts hid in the bushes and hedges. The sky above them was not blue, but like rays of pure gold, and the stars looked twice their usual size, and far more brilliant than on our earth.

The youth grew more and more astonished when the little grey man led him into a castle far bigger and more splendid than the one they had left. Here, too, the deepest silence reigned. They wandered all through the castle, and came at last to a room in the middle of which stood a bed hung all round with heavy curtains. Over the bed hung a bird’s cage, and the bird inside it was singing beautiful songs into the silent space. The little grey man lifted the curtains from the bed and beckoned the youth to approach. On the rich silk cushions embroidered with gold a lovely maiden lay sleeping. She was as beautiful as an angel, with golden hair which fell in curls over her marble shoulders, and a diamond crown sparkled on her forehead. But a sleep as of death held her in its spell, and no noise seemed able to waken the sleeper.

Then the little man turned to the wondering youth and said: ‘See, here is the sleeping child! She is a mighty Princess. This splendid castle and this enchanted land are hers, but for hundreds of years she has slept this magic sleep, and during all that time no human being has been able to find their way here. I alone have kept guard over her, and have gone daily to my own castle to get food and to beat the greedy gold-seekers who forced their way into my dwelling. I have watched over the Princess carefully all these years and saw that no stranger came near her, but all my magic power lay in my beard, and now that you have taken it away I am helpless,

and can no longer hold the beautiful Princess in her enchanted sleep, but am forced to reveal my treasured secret to you. So set to work and do as I tell you. Take the bird which hangs over the Princess's head, and which by its song sang her into this enchanted sleep—a song which it has had to continue ever since; take it and kill it, and cut its little heart out and burn it to a powder, and then put it into the Princess's mouth; then she will instantly awaken, and will bestow on you her heart and hand, her kingdom and castle, and all her treasures.

The little dwarf paused, quite worn out, and the youth did not wait long to do his bidding. He did all he was told carefully and promptly, and having cut the little bird's heart out he proceeded to make it into a powder. No sooner had he placed it in the Princess's mouth than she opened her lovely eyes, and, looking up into the happy youth's face, she kissed him tenderly, thanked him for freeing her from her magic sleep, and promised to be his wife. At the same moment a sound as of thunder was heard all over the castle, and on all the staircases and in every room sounds were to be heard. Then a troop of servants, male and female, flocked into the apartment where the happy couple sat, and after wishing the Princess and her bridegroom joy, they dispersed all over the castle to their different occupations.

But the little grey dwarf began now to demand his beard again from the youth, for in his wicked heart he was determined to make an end of all their happiness; he knew that if only his beard were once more on his chin, he would be able to do what he liked with them all. But the clever flute-player was quite a match for the little man in cunning, and said: 'All right, you needn't be afraid, you shall get your beard back before we part; but you must allow my bride and me to accompany you a bit on your homeward way.'

The dwarf could not refuse this request, and so they all went together through the beautiful green paths and flowery meadows, and came at last to the river which flowed for miles round the Princess's land and formed the boundary of her kingdom. There was no bridge or ferryboat to be seen anywhere, and it was impossible to get over to the other side, for the boldest swimmer would not have dared to brave the fierce current and roaring waters. Then the youth said to the dwarf: 'Give me your wand in order that I may part the waves.'

And the dwarf was forced to do as he was told because the youth still kept his beard from him; but the wicked little creature chuckled with joy and thought to himself: ‘The foolish youth will hand me my beard as soon as we have crossed the river, and then my power will return, and I will seize my wand and prevent them both ever returning to their beautiful country.’

But the dwarf’s wicked intentions were doomed to disappointment. The happy youth struck the water with his wand, and the waves at once parted and stood still, and the dwarf went on in front and crossed the stream. No sooner had he done so than the waters closed behind him, and the youth and his lovely bride stood safe on the other side. Then they threw his beard to the old man across the river, but they kept his wand, so that the wicked dwarf could never again enter their kingdom. So the happy couple returned to their castle, and lived there in peace and plenty for ever after. But the other two musicians waited in vain for the return of their companion; and when he never came they said: ‘Ah, he’s gone to play the flute,’ till the saying passed into a proverb, and was always said of anyone who set out to perform a task from which he never returned.

Grimm.

THE THREE DOGS

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There was once upon a time a shepherd who had two children, a son and a daughter. When he was on his death-bed he turned to them and said, ‘I have nothing to leave you but three sheep and a small house; divide them between you, as you like, but don’t quarrel over them whatever you do.’

When the shepherd was dead, the brother asked his sister which she would like best, the sheep or the little house; and when she had chosen the house he said, ‘Then I’ll take the sheep and go out to seek my fortune in the wide world. I don’t see why I shouldn’t be as lucky as many another who has set out on the same search, and it wasn’t for nothing that I was born on a Sunday.’

And so he started on his travels, driving his three sheep in front of him, and for a long time it seemed as if fortune didn’t mean to favour him at all. One day he was sitting disconsolately at a cross road, when a man suddenly appeared before him with three black dogs, each one bigger than the other.

‘Hullo, my fine fellow,’ said the man, ‘I see you have three fat sheep. I’ll tell you what; if you’ll give them to me, I’ll give you my three dogs.’

In spite of his sadness, the youth smiled and replied, ‘What would I do with your dogs? My sheep at least feed themselves, but I should have to find food for the dogs.’

‘My dogs are not like other dogs,’ said the stranger; ‘they will feed you instead of you them, and will make your fortune. The smallest one is called “Salt,” and will bring you food whenever you wish; the second is called “Pepper,” and will tear anyone to pieces who offers to hurt you; and the great big strong one is called “Mustard,” and is so powerful that it will break iron or steel with its teeth.’

The shepherd at last let himself be persuaded, and gave the stranger his sheep. In order to test the truth of his statement about the dogs, he said at once, ‘Salt, I am hungry,’ and before the words were out of his mouth the dog had disappeared, and returned in a few minutes with a large basket full

of the most delicious food. Then the youth congratulated himself on the bargain he had made, and continued his journey in the best of spirits.

One day he met a carriage and pair, all draped in black; even the horses were covered with black trappings, and the coachman was clothed in crape from top to toe. Inside the carriage sat a beautiful girl in a black dress crying bitterly. The horses advanced slowly and mournfully, with their heads bent on the ground.

‘Coachman, what’s the meaning of all this grief?’ asked the shepherd.

At first the coachman wouldn’t say anything, but when the youth pressed him he told him that a huge dragon dwelt in the neighbourhood, and required yearly the sacrifice of a beautiful maiden. This year the lot had fallen on the King’s daughter, and the whole country was filled with woe and lamentation in consequence.

The shepherd felt very sorry for the lovely maiden, and determined to follow the carriage. In a little it halted at the foot of a high mountain. The girl got out, and walked slowly and sadly to meet her terrible fate. The coachman perceived that the shepherd wished to follow her, and warned him not to do so if he valued his life; but the shepherd wouldn’t listen to his advice. When they had climbed about half-way up the hill they saw a terrible-looking monster with the body of a snake, and with huge wings and claws, coming towards them, breathing forth flames of fire, and preparing to seize its victim. Then the shepherd called, ‘Pepper, come to the rescue,’ and the second dog set upon the dragon, and after a fierce struggle bit it so sharply in the neck that the monster rolled over, and in a few moments breathed its last. Then the dog ate up the body, all except its two front teeth, which the shepherd picked up and put in his pocket.

The Princess was quite overcome with terror and joy, and fell fainting at the feet of her deliverer. When she recovered her consciousness she begged the shepherd to return with her to her father, who would reward him richly. But the youth answered that he wanted to see something of the world, and that he would return again in three years, and nothing would make him change this resolve. The Princess seated herself once more in her carriage, and, bidding each other farewell, she and the shepherd separated, she to return home, and he to see the world.

But while the Princess was driving over a bridge the carriage suddenly stood still, and the coachman turned round to her and said, ‘Your deliverer

has gone, and doesn't thank you for your gratitude. It would be nice of you to make a poor fellow happy; therefore you may tell your father that it was I who slew the dragon, and if you refuse to, I will throw you into the river, and no one will be any the wiser, for they will think the dragon has devoured you.'

The maiden was in a dreadful state when she heard these words; but there was nothing for her to do but to swear that she would give out the coachman as her deliverer, and not to divulge the secret to anyone. So they returned to the capital, and everyone was delighted when they saw the Princess had returned unharmed; the black flags were taken down from all the palace towers, and gay-coloured ones put up in their place, and the King embraced his daughter and her supposed rescuer with tears of joy, and, turning to the coachman, he said, 'You have not only saved the life of my child, but you have also freed the country from a terrible scourge; therefore, it is only fitting that you should be richly rewarded. Take, therefore, my daughter for your wife; but as she is still so young, do not let the marriage be celebrated for another year.'

The coachman thanked the King for his graciousness, and was then led away to be richly dressed and instructed in all the arts and graces that befitted his new position. But the poor Princess wept bitterly, though she did not dare to confide her grief to anyone. When the year was over, she begged so hard for another year's respite that it was granted to her. But this year passed also, and she threw herself at her father's feet, and begged so piteously for one more year that the King's heart was melted, and he yielded to her request, much to the Princess's joy, for she knew that her real deliverer would appear at the end of the third year. And so the year passed away like the other two, and the wedding-day was fixed, and all the people were prepared to feast and make merry.

But on the wedding-day it happened that a stranger came to the town with three black dogs. He asked what the meaning of all the feasting and fuss was, and they told him that the King's daughter was just going to be married to the man who had slain the terrible dragon. The stranger at once denounced the coachman as a liar; but no one would listen to him, and he was seized and thrown into a cell with iron doors.

While he was lying on his straw pallet, pondering mournfully on his fate, he thought he heard the low whining of his dogs outside; then an idea

dawned on him, and he called out as loudly as he could, ‘Mustard, come to my help,’ and in a second he saw the paws of his biggest dog at the window of his cell, and before he could count two the creature had bitten through the iron bars and stood beside him. Then they both let themselves out of the prison by the window, and the poor youth was free once more, though he felt very sad when he thought that another was to enjoy the reward that rightfully belonged to him. He felt hungry too, so he called his dog ‘Salt,’ and asked him to bring home some food. The faithful creature trotted off, and soon returned with a table-napkin full of the most delicious food, and the napkin itself was embroidered with a kingly crown.

The King had just seated himself at the wedding-feast with all his Court, when the dog appeared and licked the Princess’s hand in an appealing manner. With a joyful start she recognised the beast, and bound her own table-napkin round his neck. Then she plucked up her courage and told her father the whole story. The King at once sent a servant to follow the dog, and in a short time the stranger was led into the Kings presence. The former coachman grew as white as a sheet when he saw the shepherd, and, falling on his knees, begged for mercy and pardon. The Princess recognized her deliverer at once, and did not need the proof of the two dragon’s teeth which he drew from his pocket. The coachman was thrown into a dark dungeon, and the shepherd took his place at the Princess’s side, and this time, you may be sure, she did not beg for the wedding to be put off.

The young couple lived for some time in great peace and happiness, when suddenly one day the former shepherd bethought himself of his poor sister and expressed a wish to see her again, and to let her share in his good fortune. So they sent a carriage to fetch her, and soon she arrived at the court, and found herself once more in her brother’s arms. Then one of the dogs spoke and said, ‘Our task is done; you have no more need of us. We only waited to see that you did not forget your sister in your prosperity.’ And with these words the three dogs became three birds and flew away into the heavens.

Grimm.

THE YELLOW FAIRY BOOK

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PREFACE

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The Editor thinks that children will readily forgive him for publishing another Fairy Book. We have had the Blue, the Red, the Green, and here is the Yellow. If children are pleased, and they are so kind as to say that they are pleased, the Editor does not care very much for what other people may say. Now, there is one gentleman who seems to think that it is not quite right to print so many fairy tales, with pictures, and to publish them in red and blue covers. He is named Mr. G. Laurence Gomme, and he is president of a learned body called the Folk Lore Society. Once a year he makes his address to his subjects, of whom the Editor is one, and Mr. Joseph Jacobs (who has published many delightful fairy tales with pretty pictures)[1] is another. Fancy, then, the dismay of Mr. Jacobs, and of the Editor, when they heard their president say that he did not think it very nice in them to publish fairy books, above all, red, green, and blue fairy books! They said that they did not see any harm in it, and they were ready to ‘put themselves on their country,’ and be tried by a jury of children. And, indeed, they still see no harm in what they have done; nay, like Father William in the poem, they are ready ‘to do it again and again.’

Where is the harm? The truth is that the Folk Lore Society—made up of the most clever, learned, and beautiful men and women of the country—is fond of studying the history and geography of Fairy Land. This is contained in very old tales, such as country people tell, and savages:

‘Little Sioux and little Crow,
Little frosty Eskimo.’

These people are thought to know most about fairyland and its inhabitants. But, in the Yellow Fairy Book, and the rest, are many tales by persons who are neither savages nor rustics, such as Madame D’Aulnoy and Herr Hans Christian Andersen. The Folk Lore Society, or its president, say that THEIR tales are not so true as the rest, and should not be published with the rest. But WE say that all the stories which are pleasant

to read are quite true enough for us; so here they are, with pictures by Mr. Ford, and we do not think that either the pictures or the stories are likely to mislead children.

As to whether there are really any fairies or not, that is a difficult question. Professor Huxley thinks there are none. The Editor never saw any himself, but he knows several people who have seen them—in the Highlands—and heard their music. If ever you are in Nether Lochaber, go to the Fairy Hill, and you may hear the music yourself, as grown-up people have done, but you must goon a fine day. Again, if there are really no fairies, why do people believe in them, all over the world? The ancient Greeks believed, so did the old Egyptians, and the Hindoos, and the Red Indians, and is it likely, if there are no fairies, that so many different peoples would have seen and heard them? The Rev. Mr. Baring-Gould saw several fairies when he was a boy, and was travelling in the land of the Troubadours. For these reasons, the Editor thinks that there are certainly fairies, but they never do anyone any harm; and, in England, they have been frightened away by smoke and schoolmasters. As to Giants, they have died out, but real Dwarfs are common in the forests of Africa. Probably a good many stories not perfectly true have been told about fairies, but such stories have also been told about Napoleon, Claverhouse, Julius Caesar, and Joan of Arc, all of whom certainly existed. A wise child will, therefore, remember that, if he grows up and becomes a member of the Folk Lore Society, ALL the tales in this book were not offered to him as absolutely truthful, but were printed merely for his entertainment. The exact facts he can learn later, or he can leave them alone.

There are Russian, German, French, Icelandic, Red Indian, and other stories here. They were translated by Miss Cheape, Miss Alma, and Miss Thyra Alleyne, Miss Sellar, Mr. Craigie (he did the Icelandic tales), Miss Blackley, Mrs. Dent, and Mrs. Lang, but the Red Indian stories are copied from English versions published by the Smithsonian Bureau of Ethnology, in America. Mr. Ford did the pictures, and it is hoped that children will find the book not less pleasing than those which have already been submitted to their consideration. The Editor cannot say ‘good-bye’ without advising them, as they pursue their studies, to read The Rose and the Ring, by the late Mr. Thackeray, with pictures by the author. This book he thinks

quite indispensable in every child’s library, and parents should be urged to purchase it at the first opportunity, as without it no education is complete.

A. LANG.

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1. You may buy them from Mr. Nutt, in the Strand.

THE CAT AND THE MOUSE IN PARTNERSHIP

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A cat had made acquaintance with a mouse, and had spoken so much of the great love and friendship she felt for her, that at last the Mouse consented to live in the same house with her, and to go shares in the housekeeping. ‘But we must provide for the winter or else we shall suffer hunger,’ said the Cat. ‘You, little Mouse, cannot venture everywhere in case you run at last into a trap.’ This good counsel was followed, and a little pot of fat was bought. But they did not know where to put it. At length, after long consultation, the Cat said, ‘I know of no place where it could be better put than in the church. No one will trouble to take it away from there. We will hide it in a corner, and we won’t touch it till we are in want.’ So the little pot was placed in safety; but it was not long before the Cat had a great longing for it, and said to the Mouse, ‘I wanted to tell you, little Mouse, that my cousin has a little son, white with brown spots, and she wants me to be godmother to it. Let me go out to-day, and do you take care of the house alone.’

‘Yes, go certainly,’ replied the Mouse, ‘and when you eat anything good, think of me; I should very much like a drop of the red christening wine.’

But it was all untrue. The Cat had no cousin, and had not been asked to be godmother. She went straight to the church, slunk to the little pot of fat, began to lick it, and licked the top off. Then she took a walk on the roofs of the town, looked at the view, stretched herself out in the sun, and licked her lips whenever she thought of the little pot of fat. As soon as it was evening she went home again.

‘Ah, here you are again!’ said the Mouse; ‘you must certainly have had an enjoyable day.’

‘It went off very well,’ answered the Cat.

‘What was the child’s name?’ asked the Mouse.

‘Top Off,’ said the Cat drily.

‘Topoff!’ echoed the Mouse, ‘it is indeed a wonderful and curious name. Is it in your family?’

‘What is there odd about it?’ said the Cat. ‘It is not worse than Breadthief, as your godchild is called.’

Not long after this another great longing came over the Cat. She said to the Mouse, ‘You must again be kind enough to look after the house alone, for I have been asked a second time to stand godmother, and as this child has a white ring round its neck, I cannot refuse.’

The kind Mouse agreed, but the Cat slunk under the town wall to the church, and ate up half of the pot of fat. ‘Nothing tastes better,’ said she, ‘than what one eats by oneself,’ and she was very much pleased with her day’s work. When she came home the Mouse asked, ‘What was this child called?’

‘Half Gone,’ answered the Cat.

‘Halfgone! what a name! I have never heard it in my life. I don’t believe it is in the calendar.’

Soon the Cat’s mouth began to water once more after her licking business. ‘All good things in threes,’ she said to the Mouse; ‘I have again to stand godmother. The child is quite black, and has very white paws, but not a single white hair on its body. This only happens once in two years, so you will let me go out?’

‘Topoff! Halfgone!’ repeated the Mouse, ‘they are such curious names; they make me very thoughtful.’

‘Oh, you sit at home in your dark grey coat and your long tail,’ said the Cat, ‘and you get fanciful. That comes of not going out in the day.’

The Mouse had a good cleaning out while the Cat was gone, and made the house tidy; but the greedy Cat ate the fat every bit up.

‘When it is all gone one can be at rest,’ she said to herself, and at night she came home sleek and satisfied. The Mouse asked at once after the third child’s name.

‘It won’t please you any better,’ said the Cat, ‘he was called Clean Gone.’

‘Cleangone!’ repeated the Mouse. ‘I do not believe that name has been printed any more than the others. Cleangone! What can it mean?’ She shook her head, curled herself up, and went to sleep.

From this time on no one asked the Cat to stand godmother; but when the winter came and there was nothing to be got outside, the Mouse remembered their provision and said, ‘Come, Cat, we will go to our pot of fat which we have stored away; it will taste very good.’

‘Yes, indeed,’ answered the Cat; ‘it will taste as good to you as if you stretched your thin tongue out of the window.’

They started off, and when they reached it they found the pot in its place, but quite empty!

‘Ah,’ said the Mouse,’ ‘now I know what has happened! It has all come out! You are a true friend to me! You have eaten it all when you stood godmother; first the top off, then half of it gone, then——’

‘Will you be quiet!’ screamed the Cat. ‘Another word and I will eat you up.’

‘Clean-gone’ was already on the poor Mouse’s tongue, and scarcely was it out than the Cat made a spring at her, seized and swallowed her.

You see that is the way of the world.

THE SIX SWANS

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A king was once hunting in a great wood, and he hunted the game so eagerly that none of his courtiers could follow him. When evening came on he stood still and looked round him, and he saw that he had quite lost himself. He sought a way out, but could find none. Then he saw an old woman with a shaking head coming towards him; but she was a witch.

‘Good woman,’ he said to her, ‘can you not show me the way out of the wood?’

‘Oh, certainly, Sir King,’ she replied, ‘I can quite well do that, but on one condition, which if you do not fulfil you will never get out of the wood, and will die of hunger.’

‘What is the condition?’ asked the King.

‘I have a daughter,’ said the old woman, ‘who is so beautiful that she has not her equal in the world, and is well fitted to be your wife; if you will make her lady-queen I will show you the way out of the wood.’

The King in his anguish of mind consented, and the old woman led him to her little house where her daughter was sitting by the fire. She received the King as if she were expecting him, and he saw that she was certainly very beautiful; but she did not please him, and he could not look at her without a secret feeling of horror. As soon as he had lifted the maiden on to his horse the old woman showed him the way, and the King reached his palace, where the wedding was celebrated.

The King had already been married once, and had by his first wife seven children, six boys and one girl, whom he loved more than anything in the world. And now, because he was afraid that their stepmother might not treat them well and might do them harm, he put them in a lonely castle that stood in the middle of a wood. It lay so hidden, and the way to it was so hard to find, that he himself could not have found it out had not a wise-woman given him a reel of thread which possessed a marvellous property: when he threw it before him it unwound itself and showed him the way. But the King went so often to his dear children that the Queen was

offended at his absence. She grew curious, and wanted to know what he had to do quite alone in the wood. She gave his servants a great deal of money, and they betrayed the secret to her, and also told her of the reel which alone could point out the way. She had no rest now till she had found out where the King guarded the reel, and then she made some little white shirts, and, as she had learnt from her witch-mother, sewed an enchantment in each of them.

And when the King had ridden off she took the little shirts and went into the wood, and the reel showed her the way. The children, who saw someone coming in the distance, thought it was their dear father coming to them, and sprang to meet him very joyfully. Then she threw over each one a little shirt, which when it had touched their bodies changed them into swans, and they flew away over the forest. The Queen went home quite satisfied, and thought she had got rid of her step-children; but the girl had not run to meet her with her brothers, and she knew nothing of her.

The next day the King came to visit his children, but he found no one but the girl.

‘Where are your brothers?’ asked the King.

‘Alas! dear father,’ she answered, ‘they have gone away and left me all alone.’ And she told him that looking out of her little window she had seen her brothers flying over the wood in the shape of swans, and she showed him the feathers which they had let fall in the yard, and which she had collected. The King mourned, but he did not think that the Queen had done the wicked deed, and as he was afraid the maiden would also be taken from him, he wanted to take her with him. But she was afraid of the stepmother, and begged the King to let her stay just one night more in the castle in the wood. The poor maiden thought, ‘My home is no longer here; I will go and seek my brothers.’ And when night came she fled away into the forest. She ran all through the night and the next day, till she could go no farther for weariness. Then she saw a little hut, went in, and found a room with six little beds. She was afraid to lie down on one, so she crept under one of them, lay on the hard floor, and was going to spend the night there. But when the sun had set she heard a noise, and saw six swans flying in at the window. They stood on the floor and blew at one another, and blew all their feathers off, and their swan-skin came off like a shirt. Then the maiden recognised her brothers, and overjoyed she crept out from

under the bed. Her brothers were not less delighted than she to see their little sister again, but their joy did not last long.

‘You cannot stay here,’ they said to her. ‘This is a den of robbers; if they were to come here and find you they would kill you.’

‘Could you not protect me?’ asked the little sister.

‘No,’ they answered, ‘for we can only lay aside our swan skins for a quarter of an hour every evening. For this time we regain our human forms, but then we are changed into swans again.’

Then the little sister cried and said, ‘Can you not be freed?’

‘Oh, no,’ they said, ‘the conditions are too hard. You must not speak or laugh for six years, and must make in that time six shirts for us out of star-flowers. If a single word comes out of your mouth, all your labour is vain.’ And when the brothers had said this the quarter of an hour came to an end, and they flew away out of the window as swans.

But the maiden had determined to free her brothers even if it should cost her her life. She left the hut, went into the forest, climbed a tree, and spent the night there. The next morning she went out, collected star-flowers, and began to sew. She could speak to no one, and she had no wish to laugh, so she sat there, looking only at her work.

When she had lived there some time, it happened that the King of the country was hunting in the forest, and his hunters came to the tree on which the maiden sat. They called to her and said ‘Who are you?’

But she gave no answer.

‘Come down to us,’ they said, ‘we will do you no harm.’

But she shook her head silently. As they pressed her further with questions, she threw them the golden chain from her neck. But they did not leave off, and she threw them her girdle, and when this was no use, her garters, and then her dress. The huntsmen would not leave her alone, but climbed the tree, lifted the maiden down, and led her to the King. The King asked, ‘Who are you? What are you doing up that tree?’

But she answered nothing.

He asked her in all the languages he knew, but she remained as dumb as a fish. Because she was so beautiful, however, the King’s heart was touched, and he was seized with a great love for her. He wrapped her up in his cloak, placed her before him on his horse, and brought her to his castle. There he had her dressed in rich clothes, and her beauty shone out as

bright as day, but not a word could be drawn from her. He set her at table by his side, and her modest ways and behaviour pleased him so much that he said, ‘I will marry this maiden and none other in the world,’ and after some days he married her. But the King had a wicked mother who was displeased with the marriage, and said wicked things of the young Queen. ‘Who knows who this girl is?’ she said; ‘she cannot speak, and is not worthy of a king.’

After a year, when the Queen had her first child, the old mother took it away from her. Then she went to the King and said that the Queen had killed it. The King would not believe it, and would not allow any harm to be done her. But she sat quietly sewing at the shirts and troubling herself about nothing. The next time she had a child the wicked mother did the same thing, but the King could not make up his mind to believe her. He said, ‘She is too sweet and good to do such a thing as that. If she were not dumb and could defend herself, her innocence would be proved.’ But when the third child was taken away, and the Queen was again accused, and could not utter a word in her own defence, the King was obliged to give her over to the law, which decreed that she must be burnt to death. When the day came on which the sentence was to be executed, it was the last day of the six years in which she must not speak or laugh, and now she had freed her dear brothers from the power of the enchantment. The six shirts were done; there was only the left sleeve wanting to the last.

When she was led to the stake, she laid the shirts on her arm, and as she stood on the pile and the fire was about to be lighted, she looked around her and saw six swans flying through the air. Then she knew that her release was at hand and her heart danced for joy. The swans fluttered round her, and hovered low so that she could throw the shirts over them. When they had touched them the swan-skins fell off, and her brothers stood before her living, well and beautiful. Only the youngest had a swan’s wing instead of his left arm. They embraced and kissed each other, and the Queen went to the King, who was standing by in great astonishment, and began to speak to him, saying, ‘Dearest husband, now I can speak and tell you openly that I am innocent and have been falsely accused.’

She told him of the old woman’s deceit, and how she had taken the three children away and hidden them. Then they were fetched, to the great joy of the King, and the wicked mother came to no good end.

But the King and the Queen with their six brothers lived many years in happiness and peace.

THE DRAGON OF THE NORTH[2]

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Very long ago, as old people have told me, there lived a terrible monster, who came out of the North, and laid waste whole tracts of country, devouring both men and beasts; and this monster was so destructive that it was feared that unless help came no living creature would be left on the face of the earth. It had a body like an ox, and legs like a frog, two short fore-legs, and two long ones behind, and besides that it had a tail like a serpent, ten fathoms in length. When it moved it jumped like a frog, and with every spring it covered half a mile of ground. Fortunately its habit, was to remain for several years in the same place, and not to move on till the whole neighbourhood was eaten up. Nothing could hunt it, because its whole body was covered with scales, which were harder than stone or metal; its two great eyes shone by night, and even by day, like the brightest lamps, and anyone who had the ill luck to look into those eyes became as it were bewitched, and was obliged to rush of his own accord into the monster’s jaws. In this way the Dragon was able to feed upon both men and beasts without the least trouble to itself, as it needed not to move from the spot where it was lying. All the neighbouring kings had offered rich rewards to anyone who should be able to destroy the monster, either by force or enchantment, and many had tried their luck, but all had miserably failed. Once a great forest in which the Dragon lay had been set on fire; the forest was burnt down, but the fire did not do the monster the least harm. However, there was a tradition amongst the wise men of the country that the Dragon might be overcome by one who possessed King Solomon’s signet-ring, upon which a secret writing was engraved. This inscription would enable anyone who was wise enough to interpret it to find out how the Dragon could be destroyed. Only no one knew where the ring was hidden, nor was there any sorcerer or learned man to be found who would be able to explain the inscription.

At last a young man, with a good heart and plenty of courage, set out to search for the ring. He took his way towards the sunrising, because he

knew that all the wisdom of old time comes from the East. After some years he met with a famous Eastern magician, and asked for his advice in the matter. The magician answered:

‘Mortal men have but little wisdom, and can give you no help, but the birds of the air would be better guides to you if you could learn their language. I can help you to understand it if you will stay with me a few days.’

The youth thankfully accepted the magician’s offer, and said, ‘I cannot now offer you any reward for your kindness, but should my undertaking succeed your trouble shall be richly repaid.’

Then the magician brewed a powerful potion out of nine sorts of herbs which he had gathered himself all alone by moonlight, and he gave the youth nine spoonfuls of it daily for three days, which made him able to understand the language of birds.

At parting the magician said to him. ‘If you ever find Solomon’s ring and get possession of it, then come back to me, that I may explain the inscription on the ring to you, for there is no one else in the world who can do this.’

From that time the youth never felt lonely as he walked along; he always had company, because he understood the language of birds; and in this way he learned many things which mere human knowledge could never have taught him. But time went on, and he heard nothing about the ring. It happened one evening, when he was hot and tired with walking, and had sat down under a tree in a forest to eat his supper, that he saw two gaily-plumaged birds, that were strange to him, sitting at the top of the tree talking to one another about him. The first bird said:

‘I know that wandering fool under the tree there, who has come so far without finding what he seeks. He is trying to find King Solomon’s lost ring.’

The other bird answered, ‘He will have to seek help from the Witch-maiden,[3] who will doubtless be able to put him on the right track. If she has not got the ring herself, she knows well enough who has it.’

‘But where is he to find the Witch-maiden?’ said the first bird. ‘She has no settled dwelling, but is here to-day and gone to-morrow. He might as well try to catch the wind.’

The other replied, ‘I do not know, certainly, where she is at present, but in three nights from now she will come to the spring to wash her face, as she does every month when the moon is full, in order that she may never grow old nor wrinkled, but may always keep the bloom of youth.’

‘Well,’ said the first bird, ‘the spring is not far from here. Shall we go and see how it is she does it?’

‘Willingly, if you like,’ said the other.

The youth immediately resolved to follow the birds to the spring, only two things made him uneasy: first, lest he might be asleep when the birds went, and secondly, lest he might lose sight of them, since he had not wings to carry him along so swiftly. He was too tired to keep awake all night, yet his anxiety prevented him from sleeping soundly, and when with the earliest dawn he looked up to the tree-top, he was glad to see his feathered companions still asleep with their heads under their wings. He ate his breakfast, and waited until the birds should start, but they did not leave the place all day. They hopped about from one tree to another looking for food, all day long until the evening, when they went back to their old perch to sleep. The next day the same thing happened, but on the third morning one bird said to the other, ‘To-day we must go to the spring to see the Witch-maiden wash her face.’ They remained on the tree till noon; then they flew away and went towards the south. The young man’s heart beat with anxiety lest he should lose sight of his guides, but he managed to keep the birds in view until they again perched upon a tree. The young man ran after them until he was quite exhausted and out of breath, and after three short rests the birds at length reached a small open space in the forest, on the edge of which they placed themselves on the top of a high tree. When the youth had overtaken them, he saw that there was a clear spring in the middle of the space. He sat down at the foot of the tree upon which the birds were perched, and listened attentively to what they were saying to each other.

‘The sun is not down yet,’ said the first bird; ‘we must wait yet awhile till the moon rises and the maiden comes to the spring. Do you think she will see that young man sitting under the tree?’

‘Nothing is likely to escape her eyes, certainly not a young man, said the other bird. ‘Will the youth have the sense not to let himself be caught in her toils?’

‘We will wait,’ said the first bird, ‘and see how they get on together.’

The evening light had quite faded, and the full moon was already shining down upon the forest, when the young man heard a slight rustling sound. After a few moments there came out of the forest a maiden, gliding over the grass so lightly that her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground, and stood beside the spring. The youth could not turn away his eyes from the maiden, for he had never in his life seen a woman so beautiful. Without seeming to notice anything, she went to the spring, looked up to the full moon, then knelt down and bathed her face nine times, then looked up to the moon again and walked nine times round the well, and as she walked she sang this song:

‘Full-faced moon with light unshaded,
Let my beauty ne’er be faded.
Never let my cheek grow pale!
While the moon is waning nightly,
May the maiden bloom more brightly,
May her freshness never fail!’

Then she dried her face with her long hair, and was about to go away, when her eye suddenly fell upon the spot where the young man was sitting, and she turned towards the tree. The youth rose and stood waiting. Then the maiden said, ‘You ought to have a heavy punishment because you have presumed to watch my secret doings in the moonlight. But I will forgive you this time, because you are a stranger and knew no better. But you must tell me truly who you are and how you came to this place, where no mortal has ever set foot before.’

The youth answered humbly: ‘Forgive me, beautiful maiden, if I have unintentionally offended you. I chanced to come here after long wandering, and found a good place to sleep under this tree. At your coming I did not know what to do, but stayed where I was, because I thought my silent watching could not offend you.’

The maiden answered kindly, ‘Come and spend this night with us. You will sleep better on a pillow than on damp moss.’

The youth hesitated for a little, but presently he heard the birds saying from the top of the tree, ‘Go where she calls you, but take care to give no

blood, or you will sell your soul.’ So the youth went with her, and soon they reached a beautiful garden, where stood a splendid house, which glittered in the moonlight as if it was all built out of gold and silver. When the youth entered he found many splendid chambers, each one finer than the last. Hundreds of tapers burnt upon golden candlesticks, and shed a light like the brightest day. At length they reached a chamber where a table was spread with the most costly dishes. At the table were placed two chairs, one of silver, the other of gold. The maiden seated herself upon the golden chair, and offered the silver one to her companion. They were served by maidens dressed in white, whose feet made no sound as they moved about, and not a word was spoken during the meal. Afterwards the youth and the Witch-maiden conversed pleasantly together, until a woman, dressed in red, came in to remind them that it was bedtime. The youth was now shown into another room, containing a silken bed with down cushions, where he slept delightfully, yet he seemed to hear a voice near his bed which repeated to him, ‘Remember to give no blood!’

The next morning the maiden asked him whether he would not like to stay with her always in this beautiful place, and as he did not answer immediately, she continued: ‘You see how I always remain young and beautiful, and I am under no one’s orders, but can do just what I like, so that I have never thought of marrying before. But from the moment I saw you I took a fancy to you, so if you agree, we might be married and might live together like princes, because I have great riches.’

The youth could not but be tempted with the beautiful maiden’s offer, but he remembered how the birds had called her the witch, and their warning always sounded in his ears. Therefore he answered cautiously, ‘Do not be angry, dear maiden, if I do not decide immediately on this important matter. Give me a few days to consider before we come to an understanding.’

‘Why not?’ answered the maiden. ‘Take some weeks to consider if you like, and take counsel with your own heart.’ And to make the time pass pleasantly, she took the youth over every part of her beautiful dwelling, and showed him all her splendid treasures. But these treasures were all produced by enchantment, for the maiden could make anything she wished appear by the help of King Solomon’s signet ring; only none of these things remained fixed; they passed away like the wind without leaving a

trace behind. But the youth did not know this; he thought they were all real.

One day the maiden took him into a secret chamber, where a little gold box was standing on a silver table. Pointing to the box, she said, ‘Here is my greatest treasure, whose like is not to be found in the whole world. It is a precious gold ring. When you marry me, I will give you this ring as a marriage gift, and it will make you the happiest of mortal men. But in order that our love may last for ever, you must give me for the ring three drops of blood from the little finger of your left hand.’

When the youth heard these words a cold shudder ran over him, for he remembered that his soul was at stake. He was cunning enough, however, to conceal his feelings and to make no direct answer, but he only asked the maiden, as if carelessly, what was remarkable about the ring?

She answered, ‘No mortal is able entirely to understand the power of this ring, because no one thoroughly understands the secret signs engraved upon it. But even with my half-knowledge I can work great wonders. If I put the ring upon the little finger of my left hand, then I can fly like a bird through the air wherever I wish to go. If I put it on the third finger of my left hand I am invisible, and I can see everything that passes around me, though no one can see me. If I put the ring upon the middle finger of my left hand, then neither fire nor water nor any sharp weapon can hurt me. If I put it on the forefinger of my left hand, then I can with its help produce whatever I wish. I can in a single moment build houses or anything I desire. Finally, as long as I wear the ring on the thumb of my left hand, that hand is so strong that it can break down rocks and walls. Besides these, the ring has other secret signs which, as I said, no one can understand. No doubt it contains secrets of great importance. The ring formerly belonged to King Solomon, the wisest of kings, during whose reign the wisest men lived. But it is not known whether this ring was ever made by mortal hands: it is supposed that an angel gave it to the wise King.’

When the youth heard all this he determined to try and get possession of the ring, though he did not quite believe in all its wonderful gifts. He wished the maiden would let him have it in his hand, but he did not quite like to ask her to do so, and after a while she put it back into the box. A few days after they were again speaking of the magic ring, and the youth

said, ‘I do not think it possible that the ring can have all the power you say it has.’

Then the maiden opened the box and took the ring out, and it glittered as she held it like the clearest sunbeam. She put it on the middle finger of her left hand, and told the youth to take a knife and try as hard as he could to cut her with it, for he would not be able to hurt her. He was unwilling at first, but the maiden insisted. Then he tried, at first only in play, and then seriously, to strike her with the knife, but an invisible wall of iron seemed to be between them, and the maiden stood before him laughing and unhurt. Then she put the ring on her third finger, and in an instant she had vanished from his eyes. Presently she was beside him again laughing, and holding the ring between her fingers.

‘Do let me try,’ said the youth, ‘whether I can do these wonderful things.’

The maiden, suspecting no treachery, gave him the magic ring.

The youth pretended to have forgotten what to do, and asked what finger he must put the ring on so that no sharp weapon could hurt him?’

‘Oh, the middle finger of your left hand,’ the maiden answered, laughing.

She took the knife and tried to strike the youth, and he even tried to cut himself with it, but found it impossible. Then he asked the maiden to show him how to split stones and rocks with the help of the ring. So she led him into a courtyard where stood a great boulder-stone. ‘Now,’ she said, ‘put the ring upon the thumb of your left hand, and you will see how strong that hand has become. The youth did so, and found to his astonishment that with a single blow of his fist the stone flew into a thousand pieces. Then the youth bethought him that he who does not use his luck when he has it is a fool, and that this was a chance which once lost might never return. So while they stood laughing at the shattered stone he placed the ring, as if in play, upon the third finger of his left hand.

‘Now,’ said the maiden, ‘you are invisible to me until you take the ring off again.’

But the youth had no mind to do that; on the contrary, he went farther off, then put the ring on the little finger of his left hand, and soared into the air like a bird.

When the maiden saw him flying away she thought at first that he was still in play, and cried, ‘Come back, friend, for now you see I have told you the truth.’ But the young man never came back.

Then the maiden saw she was deceived, and bitterly repented that she had ever trusted him with the ring.

The young man never halted in his flight until he reached the dwelling of the wise magician who had taught him the speech of birds. The magician was delighted to find that his search had been successful, and at once set to work to interpret the secret signs engraved upon the ring, but it took him seven weeks to make them out clearly. Then he gave the youth the following instructions how to overcome the Dragon of the North: ‘You must have an iron horse cast, which must have little wheels under each foot. You must also be armed with a spear two fathoms long, which you will be able to wield by means of the magic ring upon your left thumb. The spear must be as thick in the middle as a large tree, and both its ends must be sharp. In the middle of the spear you must have two strong chains ten fathoms in length. As soon as the Dragon has made himself fast to the spear, which you must thrust through his jaws, you must spring quickly from the iron horse and fasten the ends of the chains firmly to the ground with iron stakes, so that he cannot get away from them. After two or three days the monster’s strength will be so far exhausted that you will be able to come near him. Then you can put Solomon’s ring upon your left thumb and give him the finishing stroke, but keep the ring on your third finger until you have come close to him, so that the monster cannot see you, else he might strike you dead with his long tail. But when all is done, take care you do not lose the ring, and that no one takes it from you by cunning.’

The young man thanked the magician for his directions, and promised, should they succeed, to reward him. But the magician answered, ‘I have profited so much by the wisdom the ring has taught me that I desire no other reward.’ Then they parted, and the youth quickly flew home through the air. After remaining in his own home for some weeks, he heard people say that the terrible Dragon of the North was not far off, and might shortly be expected in the country. The King announced publicly that he would give his daughter in marriage, as well as a large part of his kingdom, to whosoever should free the country from the monster. The youth then went to the King and told him that he had good hopes of subduing the Dragon, if

the King would grant him all he desired for the purpose. The King willingly agreed, and the iron horse, the great spear, and the chains were all prepared as the youth requested. When all was ready, it was found that the iron horse was so heavy that a hundred men could not move it from the spot, so the youth found there was nothing for it but to move it with his own strength by means of the magic ring. The Dragon was now so near that in a couple of springs he would be over the frontier. The youth now began to consider how he should act, for if he had to push the iron horse from behind he could not ride upon it as the sorcerer had said he must. But a raven unexpectedly gave him this advice: ‘Ride upon the horse, and push the spear against the ground, as if you were pushing off a boat from the land.’ The youth did so, and found that in this way he could easily move forwards. The Dragon had his monstrous jaws wide open, all ready for his expected prey. A few paces nearer, and man and horse would have been swallowed up by them! The youth trembled with horror, and his blood ran cold, yet he did not lose his courage; but, holding the iron spear upright in his hand, he brought it down with all his might right through the monster’s lower jaw. Then quick as lightning he sprang from his horse before the Dragon had time to shut his mouth. A fearful clap like thunder, which could be heard for miles around, now warned him that the Dragon’s jaws had closed upon the spear. When the youth turned round he saw the point of the spear sticking up high above the Dragon’s upper jaw, and knew that the other end must be fastened firmly to the ground; but the Dragon had got his teeth fixed in the iron horse, which was now useless. The youth now hastened to fasten down the chains to the ground by means of the enormous iron pegs which he had provided. The death struggle of the monster lasted three days and three nights; in his writhing he beat his tail so violently against the ground, that at ten miles’ distance the earth trembled as if with an earthquake. When he at length lost power to move his tail, the youth with the help of the ring took up a stone which twenty ordinary men could not have moved, and beat the Dragon so hard about the head with it that very soon the monster lay lifeless before him.

You can fancy how great was the rejoicing when the news was spread abroad that the terrible monster was dead. His conqueror was received into the city with as much pomp as if he had been the mightiest of kings. The old King did not need to urge his daughter to marry the slayer of the

Dragon; he found her already willing to bestow her hand upon this hero, who had done all alone what whole armies had tried in vain to do. In a few days a magnificent wedding was celebrated, at which the rejoicings lasted four whole weeks, for all the neighbouring kings had met together to thank the man who had freed the world from their common enemy. But everyone forgot amid the general joy that they ought to have buried the Dragon's monstrous body, for it began now to have such a bad smell that no one could live in the neighbourhood, and before long the whole air was poisoned, and a pestilence broke out which destroyed many hundreds of people. In this distress, the King's son-in-law resolved to seek help once more from the Eastern magician, to whom he at once travelled through the air like a bird by the help of the ring. But there is a proverb which says that ill-gotten gains never prosper, and the Prince found that the stolen ring brought him ill-luck after all. The Witch-maiden had never rested night nor day until she had found out where the ring was. As soon as she had discovered by means of magical arts that the Prince in the form of a bird was on his way to the Eastern magician, she changed herself into an eagle and watched in the air until the bird she was waiting for came in sight, for she knew him at once by the ring which was hung round his neck by a ribbon. Then the eagle pounced upon the bird, and the moment she seized him in her talons she tore the ring from his neck before the man in bird's shape had time to prevent her. Then the eagle flew down to the earth with her prey, and the two stood face to face once more in human form.

'Now, villain, you are in my power!' cried the Witch-maiden. 'I favoured you with my love, and you repaid me with treachery and theft. You stole my most precious jewel from me, and do you expect to live happily as the King's son-in-law? Now the tables are turned; you are in my power, and I will be revenged on you for your crimes.'

'Forgive me! forgive me!' cried the Prince; 'I know too well how deeply I have wronged you, and most heartily do I repent it.'

The maiden answered, 'Your prayers and your repentance come too late, and if I were to spare you everyone would think me a fool. You have doubly wronged me; first you scorned my love, and then you stole my ring, and you must bear the punishment.'

With these words she put the ring upon her left thumb, lifted the young man with one hand, and walked away with him under her arm. This time

she did not take him to a splendid palace, but to a deep cave in a rock, where there were chains hanging from the wall. The maiden now chained the young man's hands and feet so that he could not escape; then she said in an angry voice, 'Here you shall remain chained up until you die. I will bring you every day enough food to prevent you dying of hunger, but you need never hope for freedom any more.' With these words she left him.

The old King and his daughter waited anxiously for many weeks for the Prince's return, but no news of him arrived. The King's daughter often dreamed that her husband was going through some great suffering: she therefore begged her father to summon all the enchanters and magicians, that they might try to find out where the Prince was and how he could be set free. But the magicians, with all their arts, could find out nothing, except that he was still living and undergoing great suffering; but none could tell where he was to be found. At last a celebrated magician from Finland was brought before the King, who had found out that the King's son-in-law was imprisoned in the East, not by men, but by some more powerful being. The King now sent messengers to the East to look for his son-in-law, and they by good luck met with the old magician who had interpreted the signs on King Solomon's ring, and thus was possessed of more wisdom than anyone else in the world. The magician soon found out what he wished to know, and pointed out the place where the Prince was imprisoned, but said: 'He is kept there by enchantment, and cannot be set free without my help. I will therefore go with you myself.'

So they all set out, guided by birds, and after some days came to the cave where the unfortunate Prince had been chained up for nearly seven years. He recognised the magician immediately, but the old man did not know him, he had grown so thin. However, he undid the chains by the help of magic, and took care of the Prince until he recovered and became strong enough to travel. When he reached home he found that the old King had died that morning, so that he was now raised to the throne. And now after his long suffering came prosperity, which lasted to the end of his life; but he never got back the magic ring, nor has it ever again been seen by mortal eyes.

Now, if YOU had been the Prince, would you not rather have stayed with the pretty witch-maiden?

2. ‘Der Norlands Drache,’ from Esthnische Mahrchen. Kreutzwald.

3. Hollenmadchen.

STORY OF THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES[4]

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Many years ago there lived an Emperor who was so fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on them in order to be beautifully dressed. He did not care about his soldiers, he did not care about the theatre; he only liked to go out walking to show off his new clothes. He had a coat for every hour of the day; and just as they say of a king, 'He is in the council-chamber,' they always said here, 'The Emperor is in the wardrobe.'

In the great city in which he lived there was always something going on; every day many strangers came there. One day two impostors arrived who gave themselves out as weavers, and said that they knew how to manufacture the most beautiful cloth imaginable. Not only were the texture and pattern uncommonly beautiful, but the clothes which were made of the stuff possessed this wonderful property that they were invisible to anyone who was not fit for his office, or who was unpardonably stupid.

'Those must indeed be splendid clothes,' thought the Emperor. 'If I had them on I could find out which men in my kingdom are unfit for the offices they hold; I could distinguish the wise from the stupid! Yes, this cloth must be woven for me at once.' And he gave both the impostors much money, so that they might begin their work.

They placed two weaving-looms, and began to do as if they were working, but they had not the least thing on the looms. They also demanded the finest silk and the best gold, which they put in their pockets, and worked at the empty looms till late into the night.

'I should like very much to know how far they have got on with the cloth,' thought the Emperor. But he remembered when he thought about it that whoever was stupid or not fit for his office would not be able to see it. Now he certainly believed that he had nothing to fear for himself, but he wanted first to send somebody else in order to see how he stood with regard to his office. Everybody in the whole town knew what a wonderful

power the cloth had, and they were all curious to see how bad or how stupid their neighbour was.

‘I will send my old and honoured minister to the weavers,’ thought the Emperor. ‘He can judge best what the cloth is like, for he has intellect, and no one understands his office better than he.’

Now the good old minister went into the hall where the two impostors sat working at the empty weaving-looms. ‘Dear me!’ thought the old minister, opening his eyes wide, ‘I can see nothing!’ But he did not say so.

Both the impostors begged him to be so kind as to step closer, and asked him if it were not a beautiful texture and lovely colours. They pointed to the empty loom, and the poor old minister went forward rubbing his eyes; but he could see nothing, for there was nothing there.

‘Dear, dear!’ thought he, ‘can I be stupid? I have never thought that, and nobody must know it! Can I be not fit for my office? No, I must certainly not say that I cannot see the cloth!’

‘Have you nothing to say about it?’ asked one of the men who was weaving.

‘Oh, it is lovely, most lovely!’ answered the old minister, looking through his spectacles. ‘What a texture! What colours! Yes, I will tell the Emperor that it pleases me very much.’

‘Now we are delighted at that,’ said both the weavers, and thereupon they named the colours and explained the make of the texture.

The old minister paid great attention, so that he could tell the same to the Emperor when he came back to him, which he did.

The impostors now wanted more money, more silk, and more gold to use in their weaving. They put it all in their own pockets, and there came no threads on the loom, but they went on as they had done before, working at the empty loom. The Emperor soon sent another worthy statesman to see how the weaving was getting on, and whether the cloth would soon be finished. It was the same with him as the first one; he looked and looked, but because there was nothing on the empty loom he could see nothing.

‘Is it not a beautiful piece of cloth?’ asked the two impostors, and they pointed to and described the splendid material which was not there.

‘Stupid I am not!’ thought the man, ‘so it must be my good office for which I am not fitted. It is strange, certainly, but no one must be allowed to notice it.’ And so he praised the cloth which he did not see, and

expressed to them his delight at the beautiful colours and the splendid texture. ‘Yes, it is quite beautiful,’ he said to the Emperor.

Everybody in the town was talking of the magnificent cloth.

Now the Emperor wanted to see it himself while it was still on the loom. With a great crowd of select followers, amongst whom were both the worthy statesmen who had already been there before, he went to the cunning impostors, who were now weaving with all their might, but without fibre or thread.

‘Is it not splendid!’ said both the old statesmen who had already been there. ‘See, your Majesty, what a texture! What colours!’ And then they pointed to the empty loom, for they believed that the others could see the cloth quite well.

‘What!’ thought the Emperor, ‘I can see nothing! This is indeed horrible! Am I stupid? Am I not fit to be Emperor? That were the most dreadful thing that could happen to me. Oh, it is very beautiful,’ he said. ‘It has my gracious approval.’ And then he nodded pleasantly, and examined the empty loom, for he would not say that he could see nothing.

His whole Court round him looked and looked, and saw no more than the others; but they said like the Emperor, ‘Oh! it is beautiful!’ And they advised him to wear these new and magnificent clothes for the first time at the great procession which was soon to take place. ‘Splendid! Lovely! Most beautiful!’ went from mouth to mouth; everyone seemed delighted over them, and the Emperor gave to the impostors the title of Court weavers to the Emperor.

Throughout the whole of the night before the morning on which the procession was to take place, the impostors were up and were working by the light of over sixteen candles. The people could see that they were very busy making the Emperor’s new clothes ready. They pretended they were taking the cloth from the loom, cut with huge scissors in the air, sewed with needles without thread, and then said at last, ‘Now the clothes are finished!’

The Emperor came himself with his most distinguished knights, and each impostor held up his arm just as if he were holding something, and said, ‘See! here are the breeches! Here is the coat! Here the cloak!’ and so on.

‘Spun clothes are so comfortable that one would imagine one had nothing on at all; but that is the beauty of it!’

‘Yes,’ said all the knights, but they could see nothing, for there was nothing there.

‘Will it please your Majesty graciously to take off your clothes,’ said the impostors, ‘then we will put on the new clothes, here before the mirror.’

The Emperor took off all his clothes, and the impostors placed themselves before him as if they were putting on each part of his new clothes which was ready, and the Emperor turned and bent himself in front of the mirror.

‘How beautifully they fit! How well they sit!’ said everybody. ‘What material! What colours! It is a gorgeous suit!’

‘They are waiting outside with the canopy which your Majesty is wont to have borne over you in the procession,’ announced the Master of the Ceremonies.

‘Look, I am ready,’ said the Emperor. ‘Doesn’t it sit well!’ And he turned himself again to the mirror to see if his finery was on all right.

The chamberlains who were used to carry the train put their hands near the floor as if they were lifting up the train; then they did as if they were holding something in the air. They would not have it noticed that they could see nothing.

So the Emperor went along in the procession under the splendid canopy, and all the people in the streets and at the windows said, ‘How matchless are the Emperor’s new clothes! That train fastened to his dress, how beautifully it hangs!’

No one wished it to be noticed that he could see nothing, for then he would have been unfit for his office, or else very stupid. None of the Emperor’s clothes had met with such approval as these had.

‘But he has nothing on!’ said a little child at last.

‘Just listen to the innocent child!’ said the father, and each one whispered to his neighbour what the child had said.

‘But he has nothing on!’ the whole of the people called out at last.

This struck the Emperor, for it seemed to him as if they were right; but he thought to himself, ‘I must go on with the procession now. And the

chamberlains walked along still more uprightly, holding up the train which was not there at all.

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4. Andersen.

THE GOLDEN CRAB[5]

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Once upon a time there was a fisherman who had a wife and three children. Every morning he used to go out fishing, and whatever fish he caught he sold to the King. One day, among the other fishes, he caught a golden crab. When he came home he put all the fishes together into a great dish, but he kept the Crab separate because it shone so beautifully, and placed it upon a high shelf in the cupboard. Now while the old woman, his wife, was cleaning the fish, and had tucked up her gown so that her feet were visible, she suddenly heard a voice, which said:

‘Let down, let down thy petticoat
That lets thy feet be seen.’

She turned round in surprise, and then she saw the little creature, the Golden Crab.

‘What! You can speak, can you, you ridiculous crab?’ she said, for she was not quite pleased at the Crab’s remarks. Then she took him up and placed him on a dish.

When her husband came home and they sat down to dinner, they presently heard the Crab’s little voice saying, ‘Give me some too.’ They were all very much surprised, but they gave him something to eat. When the old man came to take away the plate which had contained the Crab’s dinner, he found it full of gold, and as the same thing happened every day he soon became very fond of the Crab.

One day the Crab said to the fisherman’s wife, ‘Go to the King and tell him I wish to marry his younger daughter.’

The old woman went accordingly, and laid the matter before the King, who laughed a little at the notion of his daughter marrying a crab, but did not decline the proposal altogether, because he was a prudent monarch, and knew that the Crab was likely to be a prince in disguise. He said, therefore, to the fisherman’s wife, ‘Go, old woman, and tell the Crab I will give him my daughter if by to-morrow morning he can build a wall in

front of my castle much higher than my tower, upon which all the flowers of the world must grow and bloom.'

The fisherman's wife went home and gave this message.

Then the Crab gave her a golden rod, and said, 'Go and strike with this rod three times upon the ground on the place which the King showed you, and to-morrow morning the wall will be there.'

The old woman did so and went away again.

The next morning, when the King awoke, what do you think he saw? The wall stood there before his eyes, exactly as he had bespoken it!

Then the old woman went back to the King and said to him, 'Your Majesty's orders have been fulfilled.'

'That is all very well,' said the King, 'but I cannot give away my daughter until there stands in front of my palace a garden in which there are three fountains, of which the first must play gold, the second diamonds, and the third brilliants.'

So the old woman had to strike again three times upon the ground with the rod, and the next morning the garden was there. The King now gave his consent, and the wedding was fixed for the very next day.

Then the Crab said to the old fisherman, 'Now take this rod; go and knock with it on a certain mountain; then a black man[6] will come out and ask you what you wish for. Answer him thus: ''Your master, the King, has sent me to tell you that you must send him his golden garment that is like the sun.'' Make him give you, besides, the queenly robes of gold and precious stones which are like the flowery meadows, and bring them both to me. And bring me also the golden cushion.'

The old man went and did his errand. When he had brought the precious robes, the Crab put on the golden garment and then crept upon the golden cushion, and in this way the fisherman carried him to the castle, where the Crab presented the other garment to his bride. Now the ceremony took place, and when the married pair were alone together the Crab made himself known to his young wife, and told her how he was the son of the greatest king in the world, and how he was enchanted, so that he became a crab by day and was a man only at night; and he could also change himself into an eagle as often as he wished. No sooner had he said this than he shook himself, and immediately became a handsome youth,

but the next morning he was forced to creep back again into his crab-shell. And the same thing happened every day. But the Princess's affection for the Crab, and the polite attention with which she behaved to him, surprised the royal family very much. They suspected some secret, but though they spied and spied, they could not discover it. Thus a year passed away, and the Princess had a son, whom she called Benjamin. But her mother still thought the whole matter very strange. At last she said to the King that he ought to ask his daughter whether she would not like to have another husband instead of the Crab? But when the daughter was questioned she only answered:

'I am married to the Crab, and him only will I have.'

Then the King said to her, 'I will appoint a tournament in your honour, and I will invite all the princes in the world to it, and if any one of them pleases you, you shall marry him.'

In the evening the Princess told this to the Crab, who said to her, 'Take this rod, go to the garden gate and knock with it, then a black man will come out and say to you, ''Why have you called me, and what do you require of me?'' Answer him thus: 'Your master the King has sent me hither to tell you to send him his golden armour and his steed and the silver apple.'' And bring them to me.'

The Princess did so, and brought him what he desired.

The following evening the Prince dressed himself for the tournament. Before he went he said to his wife, 'Now mind you do not say when you see me that I am the Crab. For if you do this evil will come of it. Place yourself at the window with your sisters; I will ride by and throw you the silver apple. Take it in your hand, but if they ask you who I am, say that you do not know.' So saying, he kissed her, repeated his warning once more, and went away.

The Princess went with her sisters to the window and looked on at the tournament. Presently her husband rode by and threw the apple up to her. She caught it in her hand and went with it to her room, and by-and-by her husband came back to her. But her father was much surprised that she did not seem to care about any of the Princes; he therefore appointed a second tournament.

The Crab then gave his wife the same directions as before, only this time the apple which she received from the black man was of gold. But

before the Prince went to the tournament he said to his wife, ‘Now I know you will betray me to-day.’

But she swore to him that she would not tell who he was. He then repeated his warning and went away.

In the evening, while the Princess, with her mother and sisters, was standing at the window, the Prince suddenly galloped past on his steed and threw her the golden apple.

Then her mother flew into a passion, gave her a box on the ear, and cried out, ‘Does not even that prince please you, you fool?’

The Princess in her fright exclaimed, ‘That is the Crab himself!’

Her mother was still more angry because she had not been told sooner, ran into her daughter’s room where the crab-shell was still lying, took it up and threw it into the fire. Then the poor Princess cried bitterly, but it was of no use; her husband did not come back.

Now we must leave the Princess and turn to the other persons in the story. One day an old man went to a stream to dip in a crust of bread which he was going to eat, when a dog came out of the water, snatched the bread from his hand, and ran away. The old man ran after him, but the dog reached a door, pushed it open, and ran in, the old man following him. He did not overtake the dog, but found himself above a staircase, which he descended. Then he saw before him a stately palace, and, entering, he found in a large hall a table set for twelve persons. He hid himself in the hall behind a great picture, that he might see what would happen. At noon he heard a great noise, so that he trembled with fear. When he took courage to look out from behind the picture, he saw twelve eagles flying in. At this sight his fear became still greater. The eagles flew to the basin of a fountain that was there and bathed themselves, when suddenly they were changed into twelve handsome youths. Now they seated themselves at the table, and one of them took up a goblet filled with wine, and said, ‘A health to my father!’ And another said, ‘A health to my mother!’ and so the healths went round. Then one of them said:

‘A health to my dearest lady,
Long may she live and well!
But a curse on the cruel mother
That burnt my golden shell!’

And so saying he wept bitterly. Then the youths rose from the table, went back to the great stone fountain, turned themselves into eagles again, and flew away.

Then the old man went away too, returned to the light of day, and went home. Soon after he heard that the Princess was ill, and that the only thing that did her good was having stories told to her. He therefore went to the royal castle, obtained an audience of the Princess, and told her about the strange things he had seen in the underground palace. No sooner had he finished than the Princess asked him whether he could find the way to that palace.

‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘certainly.’

And now she desired him to guide her thither at once. The old man did so, and when they came to the palace he hid her behind the great picture and advised her to keep quite still, and he placed himself behind the picture also. Presently the eagles came flying in, and changed themselves into young men, and in a moment the Princess recognised her husband amongst them all, and tried to come out of her hiding-place; but the old man held her back. The youths seated themselves at the table; and now the Prince said again, while he took up the cup of wine:

‘A health to my dearest lady,
Long may she live and well!
But a curse on the cruel mother
That burnt my golden shell!’

Then the Princess could restrain herself no longer, but ran forward and threw her arms round her husband. And immediately he knew her again, and said:

‘Do you remember how I told you that day that you would betray me? Now you see that I spoke the truth. But all that bad time is past. Now listen to me: I must still remain enchanted for three months. Will you stay here with me till that time is over?’

So the Princess stayed with him, and said to the old man, ‘Go back to the castle and tell my parents that I am staying here.’

Her parents were very much vexed when the old man came back and told them this, but as soon as the three months of the Prince’s enchantment

were over, he ceased to be an eagle and became once more a man, and they returned home together. And then they lived happily, and we who hear the story are happier still.

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5. ‘Prinz Krebs,’ from Griechische Mahrchen. Schmidt.

6. Ein Mohr.

THE IRON STOVE[7]

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Once upon a time when wishes came true there was a king's son who was enchanted by an old witch, so that he was obliged to sit in a large iron stove in a wood. There he lived for many years, and no one could free him. At last a king's daughter came into the wood; she had lost her way, and could not find her father's kingdom again. She had been wandering round and round for nine days, and she came at last to the iron case. A voice came from within and asked her, 'Where do you come from, and where do you want to go?' She answered, 'I have lost my way to my father's kingdom, and I shall never get home again.' Then the voice from the iron stove said, 'I will help you to find your home again, and that in a very short time, if you will promise to do what I ask you. I am a greater prince than you are a princess, and I will marry you.' Then she grew frightened, and thought, 'What can a young lassie do with an iron stove?' But as she wanted very much to go home to her father, she promised to do what he wished.

He said, 'You must come again, and bring a knife with you to scrape a hole in the iron.'

Then he gave her someone for a guide, who walked near her and said nothing, but he brought her in two hours to her house. There was great joy in the castle when the Princess came back, and the old King fell on her neck and kissed her. But she was very much troubled, and said, 'Dear father, listen to what has befallen me! I should never have come home again out of the great wild wood if I had not come to an iron stove, to whom I have had to promise that I will go back to free him and marry him!' The old King was so frightened that he nearly fainted, for she was his only daughter. So they consulted together, and determined that the miller's daughter, who was very beautiful, should take her place. They took her there, gave her a knife, and said she must scrape at the iron stove. She scraped for twenty-four hours, but did not make the least impression. When the day broke, a voice called from the iron stove, 'It seems to me

that it is day outside.' Then she answered, 'It seems so to me; I think I hear my father's mill rattling.'

'So you are a miller's daughter! Then go away at once, and tell the King's daughter to come.'

Then she went away, and told the old King that the thing inside the iron stove would not have her, but wanted the Princess. The old King was frightened, and his daughter wept. But they had a swineherd's daughter who was even more beautiful than the miller's daughter, and they gave her a piece of gold to go to the iron stove instead of the Princess. Then she was taken out, and had to scrape for four-and-twenty hours, but she could make no impression. As soon as the day broke the voice from the stove called out, 'It seems to be daylight outside.' Then she answered, 'It seems so to me too; I think I hear my father blowing his horn.' 'So you are a swineherd's daughter! Go away at once, and let the King's daughter come. And say to her that what I foretell shall come to pass, and if she does not come everything in the kingdom shall fall into ruin, and not one stone shall be left upon another.' When the Princess heard this she began to cry, but it was no good; she had to keep her word. She took leave of her father, put a knife in her belt, and went to the iron stove in the wood. As soon as she reached it she began to scrape, and the iron gave way and before two hours had passed she had made a little hole. Then she peeped in and saw such a beautiful youth all shining with gold and precious stones that she fell in love with him on the spot. So she scraped away harder than ever, and made the hole so large that he could get out. Then he said, 'You are mine, and I am thine; you are my bride and have set me free!' He wanted to take her with him to his kingdom, but she begged him just to let her go once more to her father; and the Prince let her go, but told her not to say more than three words to her father, then to come back again. So she went home, but alas! she said MORE THAN THREE WORDS; and immediately the iron stove vanished and went away over a mountain of glass and sharp swords. But the Prince was free, and was no longer shut up in it. Then she said good-bye to her father, and took a little money with her, and went again into the great wood to look for the iron stove; but she could not find it. She sought it for nine days, and then her hunger became so great that she did not know how she could live any longer. And when it was evening she climbed a little tree and wished that the night would not come, because

she was afraid of the wild beasts. When midnight came she saw afar off a little light, and thought, ‘Ah! if only I could reach that!’ Then she got down from the tree and went towards the light. She came to a little old house with a great deal of grass growing round, and stood in front of a little heap of wood. She thought, ‘Alas! what am I coming to?’ and peeped through the window; but she saw nothing inside except big and little toads, and a table beautifully spread with roast meats and wine, and all the dishes and drinking-cups were of silver. Then she took heart and knocked. Then a fat toad called out:

‘Little green toad with leg like crook,
Open wide the door, and look
Who it was the latch that shook.’

And a little toad came forward and let her in. When she entered they all bid her welcome, and made her sit down. They asked her how she came there and what she wanted. Then she told everything that had happened to her, and how, because she had exceeded her permission only to speak three words, the stove had disappeared with the Prince; and how she had searched a very long time, and must wander over mountain and valley till she found him.

Then the old toad said:

‘Little green toad whose leg doth twist,
Go to the corner of which you wist,
And bring to me the large old kist.’

And the little toad went and brought out a great chest. Then they gave her food and drink, and led her to a beautifully made bed of silk and samite, on which she lay down and slept soundly. When the day dawned she arose, and the old toad gave her three things out of the huge chest to take with her. She would have need of them, for she had to cross a high glass mountain, three cutting swords, and a great lake. When she had passed these she would find her lover again. So she was given three large needles, a plough-wheel, and three nuts, which she was to take great care of. She set out with these things, and when she came to the glass mountain

which was so slippery she stuck the three needles behind her feet and then in front, and so got over it, and when she was on the other side put them carefully away.

Then she reached the three cutting swords, and got on her plough-wheel and rolled over them. At last she came to a great lake, and, when she had crossed that, arrived at a beautiful castle. She went in and gave herself out as a servant, a poor maid who would gladly be engaged. But she knew that the Prince whom she had freed from the iron stove in the great wood was in the castle. So she was taken on as a kitchen-maid for very small wages. Now the Prince was about to marry another princess, for he thought she was dead long ago.

In the evening, when she had washed up and was ready, she felt in her pocket and found the three nuts which the old toad had given her. She cracked one and was going to eat the kernel, when behold! there was a beautiful royal dress inside it! When the bride heard of this, she came and begged for the dress, and wanted to buy it, saying that it was not a dress for a serving-maid. Then she said she would not sell it unless she was granted one favour—namely, to sleep by the Prince's door. The bride granted her this, because the dress was so beautiful and she had so few like it. When it was evening she said to her bridegroom, 'That stupid maid wants to sleep by your door.'

'If you are contented, I am,' he said. But she gave him a glass of wine in which she had poured a sleeping-draught. Then they both went to his room, but he slept so soundly that she could not wake him. The maid wept all night long, and said, 'I freed you in the wild wood out of the iron stove; I have sought you, and have crossed a glassy mountain, three sharp swords, and a great lake before I found you, and will you not hear me now?' The servants outside heard how she cried the whole night, and they told their master in the morning.

When she had washed up the next evening she bit the second nut, and there was a still more beautiful dress inside. When the bride saw it she wanted to buy it also. But the maid did not want money, and asked that she should sleep again by the Prince's door. The bride, however, gave him a sleeping-draught, and he slept so soundly that he heard nothing. But the kitchen-maid wept the whole night long, and said, 'I have freed you in a wood and from an iron stove; I sought you and have crossed a glassy

mountain, three sharp swords, and a great lake to find you, and now you will not hear me!' The servants outside heard how she cried the whole night, and in the morning they told their master.

And when she had washed up on the third night she bit the third nut, and there was a still more beautiful dress inside that was made of pure gold. When the bride saw it she wanted to have it, but the maid would only give it her on condition that she should sleep for the third time by the Prince's door. But the Prince took care not to drink the sleeping-draught. When she began to weep and to say, 'Dearest sweetheart, I freed you in the horrible wild wood, and from an iron stove,' he jumped up and said, 'You are right. You are mine, and I am thine.' Though it was still night, he got into a carriage with her, and they took the false bride's clothes away, so that she could not follow them. When they came to the great lake they rowed across, and when they reached the three sharp swords they sat on the plough-wheel, and on the glassy mountain they stuck the three needles in. So they arrived at last at the little old house, but when they stepped inside it turned into a large castle. The toads were all freed, and were beautiful King's children, running about for joy. There they were married, and they remained in the castle, which was much larger than that of the Princess's father's. But because the old man did not like being left alone, they went and fetched him. So they had two kingdoms and lived in great wealth.

A mouse has run,
My story's done.

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7. Grimm.

THE DRAGON AND HIS GRANDMOTHER

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There was once a great war, and the King had a great many soldiers, but he gave them so little pay that they could not live upon it. Then three of them took counsel together and determined to desert.

One of them said to the others, ‘If we are caught, we shall be hanged on the gallows; how shall we set about it?’ The other said, ‘Do you see that large cornfield there? If we were to hide ourselves in that, no one could find us. The army cannot come into it, and to-morrow it is to march on.’

They crept into the corn, but the army did not march on, but remained encamped close around them. They sat for two days and two nights in the corn, and grew so hungry that they nearly died; but if they were to venture out, it was certain death.

They said at last, ‘What use was it our deserting? We must perish here miserably.’

Whilst they were speaking a fiery dragon came flying through the air. It hovered near them, and asked why they were hidden there.

They answered, ‘We are three soldiers, and have deserted because our pay was so small. Now if we remain here we shall die of hunger, and if we move out we shall be strung up on the gallows.’

‘If you will serve me for seven years,’ said the dragon, I will lead you through the midst of the army so that no one shall catch you.’ ‘We have no choice, and must take your offer,’ said they. Then the dragon seized them in his claws, took them through the air over the army, and set them down on the earth a long way from it.

He gave them a little whip, saying, ‘Whip and slash with this, and as much money as you want will jump up before you. You can then live as great lords, keep horses, and drive about in carriages. But after seven years you are mine.’ Then he put a book before them, which he made all three of them sign. ‘I will then give you a riddle,’ he said; ‘if you guess it, you shall be free and out of my power.’ The dragon then flew away, and they

journeyed on with their little whip. They had as much money as they wanted, wore grand clothes, and made their way into the world. Wherever they went they lived in merrymaking and splendour, drove about with horses and carriages, ate and drank, but did nothing wrong.

The time passed quickly away, and when the seven years were nearly ended two of them grew terribly anxious and frightened, but the third made light of it, saying, ‘Don’t be afraid, brothers, I wasn’t born yesterday; I will guess the riddle.’

They went into a field, sat down, and the two pulled long faces. An old woman passed by, and asked them why they were so sad. ‘Alas! what have you to do with it? You cannot help us.’ ‘Who knows?’ she answered. ‘Only confide your trouble in me.’

Then they told her that they had become the servants of the Dragon for seven long years, and how he had given them money as plentifully as blackberries; but as they had signed their names they were his, unless when the seven years had passed they could guess a riddle. The old woman said, ‘If you would help yourselves, one of you must go into the wood, and there he will come upon a tumble-down building of rocks which looks like a little house. He must go in, and there he will find help.’

The two melancholy ones thought, ‘That won’t save us!’ and they remained where they were. But the third and merry one jumped up and went into the wood till he found the rock hut. In the hut sat a very old woman, who was the Dragon’s grandmother. She asked him how he came, and what was his business there. He told her all that happened, and because she was pleased with him she took compassion on him, and said she would help him.

She lifted up a large stone which lay over the cellar, saying, ‘Hide yourself there; you can hear all that is spoken in this room. Only sit still and don’t stir. When the Dragon comes, I will ask him what the riddle is, for he tells me everything; then listen carefully what he answers.’

At midnight the Dragon flew in, and asked for his supper. His grandmother laid the table, and brought out food and drink till he was satisfied, and they ate and drank together. Then in the course of the conversation she asked him what he had done in the day, and how many souls he had conquered.

‘I haven’t had much luck to-day,’ he said, ‘but I have a tight hold on three soldiers.’

‘Indeed! three soldiers!’ said she. ‘Who cannot escape you?’

‘They are mine,’ answered the Dragon scornfully, ‘for I shall only give them one riddle which they will never be able to guess.’

‘What sort of a riddle is it?’ she asked.

‘I will tell you this. In the North Sea lies a dead sea-cat—that shall be their roast meat; and the rib of a whale—that shall be their silver spoon; and the hollow foot of a dead horse—that shall be their wineglass.’

When the Dragon had gone to bed, his old grandmother pulled up the stone and let out the soldier.

‘Did you pay attention to everything?’

‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘I know enough, and can help myself splendidly.’

Then he went by another way through the window secretly, and in all haste back to his comrades. He told them how the Dragon had been outwitted by his grandmother, and how he had heard from his own lips the answer to the riddle.

Then they were all delighted and in high spirits, took out their whip, and cracked so much money that it came jumping up from the ground. When the seven years had quite gone, the Fiend came with his book, and, pointing at the signatures, said, ‘I will take you underground with me; you shall have a meal there. If you can tell me what you will get for your roast meat, you shall be free, and shall also keep the whip.’

Then said the first soldier, ‘In the North Sea lies a dead sea-cat; that shall be the roast meat.’

The Dragon was much annoyed, and hummed and hawed a good deal, and asked the second, ‘But what shall be your spoon?’

‘The rib of a whale shall be our silver spoon.’

The Dragon-made a face, and growled again three times, ‘Hum, hum, hum,’ and said to the third, ‘Do you know what your wineglass shall be?’

‘An old horse’s hoof shall be our wineglass.’

Then the Dragon flew away with a loud shriek, and had no more power over them. But the three soldiers took the little whip, whipped as much money as they wanted, and lived happily to their lives end.

THE DONKEY CABBAGE

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There was once a young Hunter who went boldly into the forest. He had a merry and light heart, and as he went whistling along there came an ugly old woman, who said to him, ‘Good-day, dear hunter! You are very merry and contented, but I suffer hunger and thirst, so give me a trifle.’ The Hunter was sorry for the poor old woman, and he felt in his pocket and gave her all he could spare. He was going on then, but the old woman stopped him and said, ‘Listen, dear hunter, to what I say. Because of your kind heart I will make you a present. Go on your way, and in a short time you will come to a tree on which sit nine birds who have a cloak in their claws and are quarrelling over it. Then take aim with your gun and shoot in the middle of them; they will let the cloak fall, but one of the birds will be hit and will drop down dead. Take the cloak with you; it is a wishing-cloak, and when you throw it on your shoulders you have only to wish yourself at a certain place, and in the twinkling of an eye you are there. Take the heart out of the dead bird and swallow it whole, and early every morning when you get up you will find a gold piece under your pillow.’

The Hunter thanked the wise woman, and thought to himself ‘These are splendid things she has promised me, if only they come to pass!’ So he walked on about a hundred yards, and then he heard above him in the branches such a screaming and chirping that he looked up, and there he saw a heap of birds tearing a cloth with their beaks and feet, shrieking, tugging, and fighting, as if each wanted it for himself. ‘Well,’ said the Hunter, ‘this is wonderful! It is just as the old woman said’; and he took his gun on his shoulder, pulled the trigger, and shot into the midst of them, so that their feathers flew about. Then the flock took flight with much screaming, but one fell dead, and the cloak fluttered down. Then the Hunter did as the old woman had told him: he cut open the bird, found its heart, swallowed it, and took the cloak home with him. The next morning when he awoke he remembered the promise, and wanted to see if it had come true. But when he lifted up his pillow, there sparkled the gold piece,

and the next morning he found another, and so on every time he got up. He collected a heap of gold, but at last he thought to himself, ‘What good is all my gold to me if I stay at home? I will travel and look a bit about me in the world.’ So he took leave of his parents, slung his hunting knapsack and his gun round him, and journeyed into the world.

It happened that one day he went through a thick wood, and when he came to the end of it there lay in the plain before him a large castle. At one of the windows in it stood an old woman with a most beautiful maiden by her side, looking out. But the old woman was a witch, and she said to the girl, ‘There comes one out of the wood who has a wonderful treasure in his body which we must manage to possess ourselves of, darling daughter; we have more right to it than he. He has a bird’s heart in him, and so every morning there lies a gold piece under his pillow.’

She told her how they could get hold of it, and how she was to coax it from him, and at last threatened her angrily, saying, ‘And if you do not obey me, you shall repent it!’

When the Hunter came nearer he saw the maiden, and said to himself, ‘I have travelled so far now that I will rest, and turn into this beautiful castle; money I have in plenty.’ But the real reason was that he had caught sight of the lovely face.

He went into the house, and was kindly received and hospitably entertained. It was not long before he was so much in love with the witch-maiden that he thought of nothing else, and only looked in her eyes, and whatever she wanted, that he gladly did. Then the old witch said, ‘Now we must have the bird-heart; he will not feel when it is gone.’ She prepared a drink, and when it was ready she poured it in a goblet and gave it to the maiden, who had to hand it to the hunter.

‘Drink to me now, my dearest,’ she said. Then he took the goblet, and when he had swallowed the drink the bird-heart came out of his mouth. The maiden had to get hold of it secretly and then swallow it herself, for the old witch wanted to have it. Thenceforward he found no more gold under his pillow, and it lay under the maiden’s; but he was so much in love and so much bewitched that he thought of nothing except spending all his time with the maiden.

Then the old witch said, ‘We have the bird-heart, but we must also get the wishing-cloak from him.’

The maiden answered, ‘We will leave him that; he has already lost his wealth!’

The old witch grew angry, and said, ‘Such a cloak is a wonderful thing, it is seldom to be had in the world, and have it I must and will.’ She beat the maiden, and said that if she did not obey it would go ill with her.

So she did her mother’s bidding, and, standing one day by the window, she looked away into the far distance as if she were very sad.

‘Why are you standing there looking so sad?’ asked the Hunter.

‘Alas, my love,’ she replied, ‘over there lies the granite mountain where the costly precious stones grow. I have a great longing to go there, so that when I think of it I am very sad. For who can fetch them? Only the birds who fly; a man, never.’

‘If you have no other trouble,’ said the Hunter, ‘that one I can easily remove from your heart.’

So he wrapped her round in his cloak and wished themselves to the granite mountain, and in an instant there they were, sitting on it! The precious stones sparkled so brightly on all sides that it was a pleasure to see them, and they collected the most beautiful and costly together. But now the old witch had through her caused the Hunter’s eyes to become heavy.

He said to the maiden, ‘We will sit down for a little while and rest; I am so tired that I can hardly stand on my feet.’

So they sat down, and he laid his head on her lap and fell asleep. As soon as he was sound asleep she unfastened the cloak from his shoulders, threw it on her own, left the granite and stones, and wished herself home again.

But when the Hunter had finished his sleep and awoke, he found that his love had betrayed him and left him alone on the wild mountain. ‘Oh,’ said he, ‘why is faithlessness so great in the world?’ and he sat down in sorrow and trouble, not knowing what to do.

But the mountain belonged to fierce and huge giants, who lived on it and traded there, and he had not sat long before he saw three of them striding towards him. So he lay down as if he had fallen into a deep sleep.

The giants came up, and the first pushed him with his foot, and said, ‘What sort of an earthworm is that?’

The second said, ‘Crush him dead.’

But the third said contemptuously, ‘It is not worth the trouble! Let him live; he cannot remain here, and if he goes higher up the mountain the clouds will take him and carry him off.’

Talking thus they went away. But the Hunter had listened to their talk, and as soon as they had gone he rose and climbed to the summit. When he had sat there a little while a cloud swept by, and, seizing him, carried him away. It travelled for a time in the sky, and then it sank down and hovered over a large vegetable garden surrounded by walls, so that he came safely to the ground amidst cabbages and vegetables. The Hunter then looked about him, saying, ‘If only I had something to eat! I am so hungry, and it will go badly with me in the future, for I see here not an apple or pear or fruit of any kind—nothing but vegetables everywhere.’ At last he thought, ‘At a pinch I can eat a salad; it does not taste particularly nice, but it will refresh me.’ So he looked about for a good head and ate it, but no sooner had he swallowed a couple of mouthfuls than he felt very strange, and found himself wonderfully changed. Four legs began to grow on him, a thick head, and two long ears, and he saw with horror that he had changed into a donkey. But as he was still very hungry and this juicy salad tasted very good to his present nature, he went on eating with a still greater appetite. At last he got hold of another kind of cabbage, but scarcely had swallowed it when he felt another change, and he once more regained his human form.

The Hunter now lay down and slept off his weariness. When he awoke the next morning he broke off a head of the bad and a head of the good cabbage, thinking, ‘This will help me to regain my own, and to punish faithlessness.’ Then he put the heads in his pockets, climbed the wall, and started off to seek the castle of his love. When he had wandered about for a couple of days he found it quite easily. He then browned his face quickly, so that his own mother would not have known him, and went into the castle, where he begged for a lodging.

‘I am so tired,’ he said, ‘I can go no farther.’

The witch asked, ‘Countryman, who are you, and what is your business?’

He answered, ‘I am a messenger of the King, and have been sent to seek the finest salad that grows under the sun. I have been so lucky as to find it, and am bringing it with me; but the heat of the sun is so great that

the tender cabbage threatens to grow soft, and I do not know if I shall be able to bring it any farther.'

When the old witch heard of the fine salad she wanted to eat it, and said, 'Dear countryman, just let me taste the wonderful salad.'

'Why not?' he answered; 'I have brought two heads with me, and will give you one.'

So saying, he opened his sack and gave her the bad one. The witch suspected no evil, and her mouth watered to taste the new dish, so that she went into the kitchen to prepare it herself. When it was ready she could not wait till it was served at the table, but she immediately took a couple of leaves and put them in her mouth. No sooner, however, had she swallowed them than she lost human form, and ran into the courtyard in the shape of a donkey.

Now the servant came into the kitchen, and when she saw the salad standing there ready cooked she was about to carry it up, but on the way, according to her old habit, she tasted it and ate a couple of leaves. Immediately the charm worked, and she became a donkey, and ran out to join the old witch, and the dish with the salad in it fell to the ground. In the meantime, the messenger was sitting with the lovely maiden, and as no one came with the salad, and she wanted very much to taste it, she said, 'I don't know where the salad is.'

Then thought the Hunter, 'The cabbage must have already begun to work.' And he said, 'I will go to the kitchen and fetch it myself.'

When he came there he saw the two donkeys running about in the courtyard, but the salad was lying on the ground.

'That's all right,' said he; 'two have had their share!' And lifting the remaining leaves up, he laid them on the dish and brought them to the maiden.

'I am bringing you the delicious food my own self,' he said, 'so that you need not wait any longer.'

Then she ate, and, as the others had done, she at once lost her human form, and ran as a donkey into the yard.

When the Hunter had washed his face, so that the changed ones might know him, he went into the yard, saying, 'Now you shall receive a reward for your faithlessness.'

He tied them all three with a rope, and drove them away till he came to a mill. He knocked at the window, and the miller put his head out and asked what he wanted.

‘I have three tiresome animals,’ he answered, ‘which I don’t want to keep any longer. If you will take them, give them food and stabling, and do as I tell you with them, I will pay you as much as you want.’

The miller replied, ‘Why not? What shall I do with them?’

Then the Hunter said that to the old donkey, which was the witch, three beatings and one meal; to the younger one, which was the servant, one beating and three meals; and to the youngest one, which was the maiden, no beating and three meals; for he could not find it in his heart to let the maiden be beaten.

Then he went back into the castle, and he found there all that he wanted. After a couple of days the miller came and said that he must tell him that the old donkey which was to have three beatings and only one meal had died. ‘The two others,’ he added, ‘are certainly not dead, and get their three meals every day, but they are so sad that they cannot last much longer.’

Then the Hunter took pity on them, laid aside his anger, and told the miller to drive them back again. And when they came he gave them some of the good cabbage to eat, so that they became human again. Then the beautiful maiden fell on her knees before him, saying, ‘Oh, my dearest, forgive me the ill I have done you! My mother compelled me to do it; it was against my will, for I love you dearly. Your wishing-cloak is hanging in a cupboard, and as for the bird-heart I will make a drink and give it back to you.’

But he changed his mind, and said, ‘Keep it; it makes no difference, for I will take you to be my own dear true wife.’

And the wedding was celebrated, and they lived happy together till death.

THE LITTLE GREEN FROG[8]

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In a part of the world whose name I forget lived once upon a time two kings, called Peridor and Diamantino. They were cousins as well as neighbours, and both were under the protection of the fairies; though it is only fair to say that the fairies did not love them half so well as their wives did.

Now it often happens that as princes can generally manage to get their own way it is harder for them to be good than it is for common people. So it was with Peridor and Diamantino; but of the two, the fairies declared that Diamantino was much the worst; indeed, he behaved so badly to his wife Aglantino, that the fairies would not allow him to live any longer; and he died, leaving behind him a little daughter. As she was an only child, of course this little girl was the heiress of the kingdom, but, being still only a baby, her mother, the widow of Diamantino, was proclaimed regent. The Queen-dowager was wise and good, and tried her best to make her people happy. The only thing she had to vex her was the absence of her daughter; for the fairies, for reasons of their own, determined to bring up the little Princess Serpentine among themselves.

As to the other King, he was really fond of his wife, Queen Constance, but he often grieved her by his thoughtless ways, and in order to punish him for his carelessness, the fairies caused her to die quite suddenly. When she was gone the King felt how much he had loved her, and his grief was so great (though he never neglected his duties) that his subjects called him Peridor the Sorrowful. It seems hardly possible that any man should live like Peridor for fifteen years plunged in such depth of grief, and most likely he would have died too if it had not been for the fairies.

The one comfort the poor King had was his son, Prince Saphir, who was only three years old at the time of his mother’s death, and great care was given to his education. By the time he was fifteen Saphir had learnt everything that a prince should know, and he was, besides, charming and agreeable.

It was about this time that the fairies suddenly took fright lest his love for his father should interfere with the plans they had made for the young prince. So, to prevent this, they placed in a pretty little room of which Saphir was very fond a little mirror in a black frame, such as were often brought from Venice. The Prince did not notice for some days that there was anything new in the room, but at last he perceived it, and went up to look at it more closely. What was his surprise to see reflected in the mirror, not his own face, but that of a young girl as lovely as the morning! And, better still, every movement of the girl, just growing out of childhood, was also reflected in the wonderful glass.

As might have been expected, the young Prince lost his heart completely to the beautiful image, and it was impossible to get him out of the room, so busy was he in watching the lovely unknown. Certainly it was very delightful to be able to see her whom he loved at any moment he chose, but his spirits sometimes sank when he wondered what was to be the end of this adventure.

The magic mirror had been for about a year in the Prince’s possession, when one day a new subject of disquiet seized upon him. As usual, he was engaged in looking at the girl, when suddenly he thought he saw a second mirror reflected in the first, exactly like his own, and with the same power. And in this he was perfectly right. The young girl had only possessed it for a short time, and neglected all her duties for the sake of the mirror. Now it was not difficult for Saphir to guess the reason of the change in her, nor why the new mirror was consulted so often; but try as he would he could never see the face of the person who was reflected in it, for the young girl’s figure always came between. All he knew was that the face was that of a man, and this was quite enough to make him madly jealous. This was the doing of the fairies, and we must suppose that they had their reasons for acting as they did.

When these things happened Saphir was about eighteen years old, and fifteen years had passed away since the death of his mother. King Peridor had grown more and more unhappy as time went on, and at last he fell so ill that it seemed as if his days were numbered. He was so much beloved by his subjects that this sad news was heard with despair by the nation, and more than all by the Prince.

During his whole illness the King never spoke of anything but the Queen, his sorrow at having grieved her, and his hope of one day seeing her again. All the doctors and all the water-cures in the kingdom had been tried, and nothing would do him any good. At last he persuaded them to let him lie quietly in his room, where no one came to trouble him.

Perhaps the worst pain he had to bear was a sort of weight on his chest, which made it very hard for him to breathe. So he commanded his servants to leave the windows open in order that he might get more air. One day, when he had been left alone for a few minutes, a bird with brilliant plumage came and fluttered round the window, and finally rested on the sill. His feathers were sky-blue and gold, his feet and his beak of such glittering rubies that no one could bear to look at them, his eyes made the brightest diamonds look dull, and on his head he wore a crown. I cannot tell you what the crown was made of, but I am quite certain that it was still more splendid than all the rest. As to his voice I can say nothing about that, for the bird never sang at all. In fact, he did nothing but gaze steadily at the King, and as he gazed, the King felt his strength come back to him. In a little while the bird flew into the room, still with his eyes fixed on the King, and at every glance the strength of the sick man became greater, till he was once more as well as he used to be before the Queen died. Filled with joy at his cure, he tried to seize the bird to whom he owed it all, but, swifter than a swallow, it managed to avoid him. In vain he described the bird to his attendants, who rushed at his first call; in vain they sought the wonderful creature both on horse and foot, and summoned the fowlers to their aid: the bird could nowhere be found. The love the people bore King Peridor was so strong, and the reward he promised was so large, that in the twinkling of an eye every man, woman, and child had fled into the fields, and the towns were quite empty.

All this bustle, however, ended in nothing but confusion, and, what was worse, the King soon fell back into the same condition as he was in before. Prince Saphir, who loved his father very dearly, was so unhappy at this that he persuaded himself that he might succeed where the others had failed, and at once prepared himself for a more distant search. In spite of the opposition he met with, he rode away, followed by his household, trusting to chance to help him. He had formed no plan, and there was no reason that he should choose one path more than another. His only idea was to

make straight for those spots which were the favourite haunts of birds. But in vain he examined all the hedges and all the thickets; in vain he questioned everyone he met along the road. The more he sought the less he found.

At last he came to one of the largest forests in all the world, composed entirely of cedars. But in spite of the deep shadows cast by the wide-spreading branches of the trees, the grass underneath was soft and green, and covered with the rarest flowers. It seemed to Saphir that this was exactly the place where the birds would choose to live, and he determined not to quit the wood until he had examined it from end to end. And he did more. He ordered some nets to be prepared and painted of the same colours as the bird's plumage, thinking that we are all easily caught by what is like ourselves. In this he had to help him not only the fowlers by profession, but also his attendants, who excelled in this art. For a man is not a courtier unless he can do everything.

After searching as usual for nearly a whole day Prince Saphir began to feel overcome with thirst. He was too tired to go any farther, when happily he discovered a little way off a bubbling fountain of the clearest water. Being an experienced traveller, he drew from his pocket a little cup (without which no one should ever take a journey), and was just about to dip it in the water, when a lovely little green frog, much prettier than frogs generally are, jumped into the cup. Far from admiring its beauty, Saphir shook it impatiently off; but it was no good, for quick as lightning the frog jumped back again. Saphir, who was raging with thirst, was just about to shake it off anew, when the little creature fixed upon him the most beautiful eyes in the world, and said, 'I am a friend of the bird you are seeking, and when you have quenched your thirst listen to me.'

So the Prince drank his fill, and then, by the command of the Little Green Frog, he lay down on the grass to rest himself.

'Now,' she began, 'be sure you do exactly in every respect what I tell you. First you must call together your attendants, and order them to remain in a little hamlet close by until you want them. Then go, quite alone, down a road that you will find on your right hand, looking southwards. This road is planted all the way with cedars of Lebanon; and after going down it a long way you will come at last to a magnificent castle. And now,' she went on, 'attend carefully to what I am going to say.

Take this tiny grain of sand, and put it into the ground as close as you can to the gate of the castle. It has the virtue both of opening the gate and also of sending to sleep all the inhabitants. Then go at once to the stable, and pay no heed to anything except what I tell you. Choose the handsomest of all the horses, leap quickly on its back, and come to me as fast as you can. Farewell, Prince; I wish you good luck,' and with these words the Little Frog plunged into the water and disappeared.

The Prince, who felt more hopeful than he had done since he left home, did precisely as he had been ordered. He left his attendants in the hamlet, found the road the frog had described to him, and followed it all alone, and at last he arrived at the gate of the castle, which was even more splendid than he had expected, for it was built of crystal, and all its ornaments were of massive gold. However, he had no thoughts to spare for its beauty, and quickly buried his grain of sand in the earth. In one instant the gates flew open, and all the dwellers inside fell sound asleep. Saphir flew straight to the stable, and already had his hand on the finest horse it contained, when his eye was caught by a suit of magnificent harness hanging up close by. It occurred to him directly that the harness belonged to the horse, and without ever thinking of harm (for indeed he who steals a horse can hardly be blamed for taking his saddle), he hastily placed it on the animal's back. Suddenly the people in the castle became broad awake, and rushed to the stable. They flung themselves on the Prince, seized him, and dragged him before their lord; but, luckily for the Prince, who could only find very lame excuses for his conduct, the lord of the castle took a fancy to his face, and let him depart without further questions.

Very sad, and very much ashamed of himself poor Saphir crept back to the fountain, where the Frog was awaiting him with a good scolding.

'Whom do you take me for?' she exclaimed angrily. 'Do you really believe that it was just for the pleasure of talking that I gave you the advice you have neglected so abominably?'

But the Prince was so deeply grieved, and apologised so very humbly, that after some time the heart of the good little Frog was softened, and she gave him another tiny little grain, but instead of being sand it was now a grain of gold. She directed him to do just as he had done before, with only this difference, that instead of going to the stable which had been the ruin of his hopes, he was to enter right into the castle itself, and to glide as fast

as he could down the passages till he came to a room filled with perfume, where he would find a beautiful maiden asleep on a bed. He was to wake the maiden instantly and carry her off, and to be sure not to pay any heed to whatever resistance she might make.

The Prince obeyed the Frog's orders one by one, and all went well for this second time also. The gate opened, the inhabitants fell sound asleep, and he walked down the passage till he found the girl on her bed, exactly as he had been told he would. He woke her, and begged her firmly, but politely, to follow him quickly. After a little persuasion the maiden consented, but only on condition that she was allowed first to put on her dress. This sounded so reasonable and natural that it did not enter the Prince's head to refuse her request.

But the maiden's hand had hardly touched the dress when the palace suddenly awoke from its sleep, and the Prince was seized and bound. He was so vexed with his own folly, and so taken aback at the disaster, that he did not attempt to explain his conduct, and things would have gone badly with him if his friends the fairies had not softened the hearts of his captors, so that they once more allowed him to leave quietly. However, what troubled him most was the idea of having to meet the Frog who had been his benefactress. How was he ever to appear before her with this tale? Still, after a long struggle with himself, he made up his mind that there was nothing else to be done, and that he deserved whatever she might say to him. And she said a great deal, for she had worked herself into a terrible passion; but the Prince humbly implored her pardon, and ventured to point out that it would have been very hard to refuse the young lady's reasonable request. 'You must learn to do as you are told,' was all the Frog would reply.

But poor Saphir was so unhappy, and begged so hard for forgiveness, that at last the Frog's anger gave way, and she held up to him a tiny diamond stone. 'Go back,' she said, 'to the castle, and bury this little diamond close to the door. But be careful not to return to the stable or to the bedroom; they have proved too fatal to you. Walk straight to the garden and enter through a portico, into a small green wood, in the midst of which is a tree with a trunk of gold and leaves of emeralds. Perched on this tree you will see the beautiful bird you have been seeking so long. You must cut the branch on which it is sitting, and bring it back to me without

delay. But I warn you solemnly that if you disobey my directions, as you have done twice before, you have nothing more to expect either of me or anyone else.'

With these words she jumped into the water, and the Prince, who had taken her threats much to heart, took his departure, firmly resolved not to deserve them. He found it all just as he had been told: the portico, the wood, the magnificent tree, and the beautiful bird, which was sleeping soundly on one of the branches. He speedily lopped off the branch, and though he noticed a splendid golden cage hanging close by, which would have been very useful for the bird to travel in, he left it alone, and came back to the fountain, holding his breath and walking on tip-toe all the way, for fear lest he should awake his prize. But what was his surprise, when instead of finding the fountain in the spot where he had left it, he saw in its place a little rustic palace built in the best taste, and standing in the doorway a charming maiden, at whose sight his mind seemed to give way.

'What! Madam!' he cried, hardly knowing what he said. 'What! Is it you?'

The maiden blushed and answered: 'Ah, my lord, it is long since I first beheld your face, but I did not think you had ever seen mine.'

'Oh, madam,' replied he, 'you can never guess the days and the hours I have passed lost in admiration of you.' And after these words they each related all the strange things that had happened, and the more they talked the more they felt convinced of the truth of the images they had seen in their mirrors. After some time spent in the most tender conversation, the Prince could not restrain himself from asking the lovely unknown by what lucky chance she was wandering in the forest; where the fountain had gone; and if she knew anything of the Frog to whom he owed all his happiness, and to whom he must give up the bird, which, somehow or other, was still sound asleep.

'Ah, my lord,' she replied, with rather an awkward air, 'as to the Frog, she stands before you. Let me tell you my story; it is not a long one. I know neither my country nor my parents, and the only thing I can say for certain is that I am called Serpentine. The fairies, who have taken care of me ever since I was born, wished me to be in ignorance as to my family, but they have looked after my education, and have bestowed on me endless kindness. I have always lived in seclusion, and for the last two years I have

wished for nothing better. I had a mirror’—here shyness and embarrassment choked her words—but regaining her self-control, she added, ‘You know that fairies insist on being obeyed without questioning. It was they who changed the little house you saw before you into the fountain for which you are now asking, and, having turned me into a frog, they ordered me to say to the first person who came to the fountain exactly what I repeated to you. But, my lord, when you stood before me, it was agony to my heart, filled as it was with thoughts of you, to appear to your eyes under so monstrous a form. However, there was no help for it, and, painful as it was, I had to submit. I desired your success with all my soul, not only for your own sake, but also for my own, because I could not get back my proper shape till you had become master of the beautiful bird, though I am quite ignorant as to your reason for seeking it.’

On this Saphir explained about the state of his father’s health, and all that has been told before.

On hearing this story Serpentine grew very sad, and her lovely eyes filled with tears.

‘Ah, my lord,’ she said, ‘you know nothing of me but what you have seen in the mirror; and I, who cannot even name my parents, learn that you are a king’s son.’

In vain Saphir declared that love made them equal; Serpentine would only reply: ‘I love you too much to allow you to marry beneath your rank. I shall be very unhappy, of course, but I shall never alter my mind. If I do not find from the fairies that my birth is worthy of you, then, whatever be my feelings, I will never accept your hand.’

The conversation was at this point, and bid fair to last some time longer, when one of the fairies appeared in her ivory car, accompanied by a beautiful woman past her early youth. At this moment the bird suddenly awakened, and, flying on to Saphir’s shoulder (which it never afterwards left), began fondling him as well as a bird can do. The fairy told Serpentine that she was quite satisfied with her conduct, and made herself very agreeable to Saphir, whom she presented to the lady she had brought with her, explaining that the lady was no other than his Aunt Aglantine, widow of Diamantino.

Then they all fell into each other’s arms, till the fairy mounted her chariot, placed Aglantine by her side, and Saphir and Serpentine on the

front seat. She also sent a message to the Prince’s attendants that they might travel slowly back to the Court of King Peridor, and that the beautiful bird had really been found. This matter being comfortably arranged, she started off her chariot. But in spite of the swiftness with which they flew through the air, the time passed even quicker for Saphir and Serpentine, who had so much to think about.

They were still quite confused with the pleasure of seeing each other, when the chariot arrived at King Peridor’s palace. He had had himself carried to a room on the roof, where his nurses thought that he would die at any moment. Directly the chariot drew within sight of the castle the beautiful bird took flight, and, making straight for the dying King, at once cured him of his sickness. Then she resumed her natural shape, and he found that the bird was no other than the Queen Constance, whom he had long believed to be dead. Peridor was rejoiced to embrace his wife and his son once more, and with the help of the fairies began to make preparations for the marriage of Saphir and Serpentine, who turned out to be the daughter of Aglantine and Diamantino, and as much a princess as he was a prince. The people of the kingdom were delighted, and everybody lived happy and contented to the end of their lives.

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8. Cabinet des Fees.

THE SEVEN-HEADED SERPENT[9]

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Once upon a time there was a king who determined to take a long voyage. He assembled his fleet and all the seamen, and set out. They went straight on night and day, until they came to an island which was covered with large trees, and under every tree lay a lion. As soon as the King had landed his men, the lions all rose up together and tried to devour them. After a long battle they managed to overcome the wild beasts, but the greater number of the men were killed. Those who remained alive now went on through the forest and found on the other side of it a beautiful garden, in which all the plants of the world flourished together.

There were also in the garden three springs: the first flowed with silver, the second with gold, and the third with pearls. The men unbuckled their knapsacks and filled them with those precious things. In the middle of the garden they found a large lake, and when they reached the edge of it the Lake began to speak, and said to them, ‘What men are you, and what brings you here? Are you come to visit our king?’ But they were too much frightened to answer.

Then the Lake said, ‘You do well to be afraid, for it is at your peril that you are come hither. Our king, who has seven heads, is now asleep, but in a few minutes he will wake up and come to me to take his bath! Woe to anyone who meets him in the garden, for it is impossible to escape from him. This is what you must do if you wish to save your lives. Take off your clothes and spread them on the path which leads from here to the castle. The King will then glide over something soft, which he likes very much, and he will be so pleased with that that he will not devour you. He will give you some punishment, but then he will let you go.’

The men did as the Lake advised them, and waited for a time. At noon the earth began to quake, and opened in many places, and out of the openings appeared lions, tigers, and other wild beasts, which surrounded the castle, and thousands and thousands of beasts came out of the castle following their king, the Seven-headed Serpent. The Serpent glided over

the clothes which were spread for him, came to the Lake, and asked it who had strewed those soft things on the path? The Lake answered that it had been done by people who had come to do him homage. The King commanded that the men should be brought before him. They came humbly on their knees, and in a few words told him their story. Then he spoke to them with a mighty and terrible voice, and said, ‘Because you have dared to come here, I lay upon you the punishment. Every year you must bring me from among your people twelve youths and twelve maidens, that I may devour them. If you do not do this, I will destroy your whole nation.’

Then he desired one of his beasts to show the men the way out of the garden, and dismissed them. They then left the island and went back to their own country, where they related what had happened to them. Soon the time came round when the king of the beasts would expect the youths and maidens to be brought to him. The King therefore issued a proclamation inviting twelve youths and twelve maidens to offer themselves up to save their country; and immediately many young people, far more than enough, hastened to do so. A new ship was built, and set with black sails, and in it the youths and maidens who were appointed for the king of the beasts embarked and set out for his country. When they arrived there they went at once to the Lake, and this time the lions did not stir, nor did the springs flow, and neither did the Lake speak. So they waited then, and it was not long before the earth quaked even more terribly than the first time. The Seven-headed Serpent came without his train of beasts, saw his prey waiting for him, and devoured it at one mouthful. Then the ship’s crew returned home, and the same thing happened yearly until many years had passed.

Now the King of this unhappy country was growing old, and so was the Queen, and they had no children. One day the Queen was sitting at the window weeping bitterly because she was childless, and knew that the crown would therefore pass to strangers after the King’s death. Suddenly a little old woman appeared before her, holding an apple in her hand, and said, ‘Why do you weep, my Queen, and what makes you so unhappy?’

‘Alas, good mother,’ answered the Queen, ‘I am unhappy because I have no children.’

‘Is that what vexes you?’ said the old woman. ‘Listen to me. I am a nun from the Spinning Convent,[10] and my mother when she died left me this apple. Whoever eats this apple shall have a child.’

The Queen gave money to the old woman, and bought the apple from her. Then she peeled it, ate it, and threw the rind out of the window, and it so happened that a mare that was running loose in the court below ate up the rind. After a time the Queen had a little boy, and the mare also had a male foal. The boy and the foal grew up together and loved each other like brothers. In course of time the King died, and so did the Queen, and their son, who was now nineteen years old, was left alone. One day, when he and his horse were talking together, the Horse said to him, ‘Listen to me, for I love you and wish for your good and that of the country. If you go on every year sending twelve youths and twelve maidens to the King of the Beasts, your country will very soon be ruined. Mount upon my back: I will take you to a woman who can direct you how to kill the Seven-headed Serpent.’

Then the youth mounted his horse, who carried him far away to a mountain which was hollow, for in its side was a great underground cavern. In the cavern sat an old woman spinning. This was the cloister of the nuns, and the old woman was the Abbess. They all spent their time in spinning, and that is why the convent has this name. All round the walls of the cavern there were beds cut out of the solid rock, upon which the nuns slept, and in the middle a light was burning. It was the duty of the nuns to watch the light in turns, that it might never go out, and if anyone of them let it go out the others put her to death.

As soon as the King’s son saw the old Abbess spinning he threw himself at her feet and entreated her to tell him how he could kill the Seven-headed Serpent.

She made the youth rise, embraced him, and said, ‘Know, my son, that it is I who sent the nun to your mother and caused you to be born, and with you the horse, with whose help you will be able to free the world from the monster. I will tell you what you have to do. Load your horse with cotton, and go by a secret passage which I will show you, which is hidden from the wild beasts, to the Serpent’s palace. You will find the King asleep upon his bed, which is all hung round with bells, and over his bed you will see a sword hanging. With this sword only it is possible to kill the Serpent,

because even if its blade breaks a new one will grow again for every head the monster has. Thus you will be able to cut off all his seven heads. And this you must also do in order to deceive the King: you must slip into his bed-chamber very softly, and stop up all the bells which are round his bed with cotton. Then take down the sword gently, and quickly give the monster a blow on his tail with it. This will make him waken up, and if he catches sight of you he will seize you. But you must quickly cut off his first head, and then wait till the next one comes up. Then strike it off also, and so go on till you have cut off all his seven heads.'

The old Abbess then gave the Prince her blessing, and he set out upon his enterprise, arrived at the Serpent's castle by following the secret passage which she had shown him, and by carefully attending to all her directions he happily succeeded in killing the monster. As soon as the wild beasts heard of their king's death, they all hastened to the castle, but the youth had long since mounted his horse and was already far out of their reach. They pursued him as fast as they could, but they found it impossible to overtake him, and he reached home in safety. Thus he freed his country from this terrible oppression.

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9. 'Die Siebenkopfige Schlange,' from Schmidt's Griechische Mahrchen.

10. Convent Gnothi.

THE GRATEFUL BEASTS[11]

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There was once upon a time a man and woman who had three fine-looking sons, but they were so poor that they had hardly enough food for themselves, let alone their children. So the sons determined to set out into the world and to try their luck. Before starting their mother gave them each a loaf of bread and her blessing, and having taken a tender farewell of her and their father the three set forth on their travels.

The youngest of the three brothers, whose name was Ferko, was a beautiful youth, with a splendid figure, blue eyes, fair hair, and a complexion like milk and roses. His two brothers were as jealous of him as they could be, for they thought that with his good looks he would be sure to be more fortunate than they would ever be.

One day all the three were sitting resting under a tree, for the sun was hot and they were tired of walking. Ferko fell fast asleep, but the other two remained awake, and the eldest said to the second brother, ‘What do you say to doing our brother Ferko some harm? He is so beautiful that everyone takes a fancy to him, which is more than they do to us. If we could only get him out of the way we might succeed better.’

‘I quite agree with you,’ answered the second brother, ‘and my advice is to eat up his loaf of bread, and then to refuse to give him a bit of ours until he has promised to let us put out his eyes or break his legs.’

His eldest brother was delighted with this proposal, and the two wicked wretches seized Ferko’s loaf and ate it all up, while the poor boy was still asleep.

When he did awake he felt very hungry and turned to eat his bread, but his brothers cried out, ‘You ate your loaf in your sleep, you glutton, and you may starve as long as you like, but you won’t get a scrap of ours.’

Ferko was at a loss to understand how he could have eaten in his sleep, but he said nothing, and fasted all that day and the next night. But on the following morning he was so hungry that he burst into tears, and implored his brothers to give him a little bit of their bread. Then the cruel creatures

laughed, and repeated what they had said the day before; but when Ferko continued to beg and beseech them, the eldest said at last, ‘If you will let us put out one of your eyes and break one of your legs, then we will give you a bit of our bread.’

At these words poor Ferko wept more bitterly than before, and bore the torments of hunger till the sun was high in the heavens; then he could stand it no longer, and he consented to allow his left eye to be put out and his left leg to be broken. When this was done he stretched out his hand eagerly for the piece of bread, but his brothers gave him such a tiny scrap that the starving youth finished it in a moment and besought them for a second bit.

But the more Ferko wept and told his brothers that he was dying of hunger, the more they laughed and scolded him for his greed. So he endured the pangs of starvation all that day, but when night came his endurance gave way, and he let his right eye be put out and his right leg broken for a second piece of bread.

After his brothers had thus successfully maimed and disfigured him for life, they left him groaning on the ground and continued their journey without him.

Poor Ferko ate up the scrap of bread they had left him and wept bitterly, but no one heard him or came to his help. Night came on, and the poor blind youth had no eyes to close, and could only crawl along the ground, not knowing in the least where he was going. But when the sun was once more high in the heavens, Ferko felt the blazing heat scorch him, and sought for some cool shady place to rest his aching limbs. He climbed to the top of a hill and lay down in the grass, and as he thought under the shadow of a big tree. But it was no tree he leant against, but a gallows on which two ravens were seated. The one was saying to the other as the weary youth lay down, ‘Is there anything the least wonderful or remarkable about this neighbourhood?’

‘I should just think there was,’ replied the other; ‘many things that don’t exist anywhere else in the world. There is a lake down there below us, and anyone who bathes in it, though he were at death’s door, becomes sound and well on the spot, and those who wash their eyes with the dew on this hill become as sharp-sighted as the eagle, even if they have been blind from their youth.’

‘Well,’ answered the first raven, ‘my eyes are in no want of this healing bath, for, Heaven be praised, they are as good as ever they were; but my wing has been very feeble and weak ever since it was shot by an arrow many years ago, so let us fly at once to the lake that I may be restored to health and strength again.’ And so they flew away.

Their words rejoiced Ferko’s heart, and he waited impatiently till evening should come and he could rub the precious dew on his sightless eyes.

At last it began to grow dusk, and the sun sank behind the mountains; gradually it became cooler on the hill, and the grass grew wet with dew. Then Ferko buried his face in the ground till his eyes were damp with dewdrops, and in a moment he saw clearer than he had ever done in his life before. The moon was shining brightly, and lighted him to the lake where he could bathe his poor broken legs.

Then Ferko crawled to the edge of the lake and dipped his limbs in the water. No sooner had he done so than his legs felt as sound and strong as they had been before, and Ferko thanked the kind fate that had led him to the hill where he had overheard the ravens’ conversation. He filled a bottle with the healing water, and then continued his journey in the best of spirits.

He had not gone far before he met a wolf, who was limping disconsolately along on three legs, and who on perceiving Ferko began to howl dismally.

‘My good friend,’ said the youth, ‘be of good cheer, for I can soon heal your leg,’ and with these words he poured some of the precious water over the wolf’s paw, and in a minute the animal was springing about sound and well on all fours. The grateful creature thanked his benefactor warmly, and promised Ferko to do him a good turn if he should ever need it.

Ferko continued his way till he came to a ploughed field. Here he noticed a little mouse creeping wearily along on its hind paws, for its front paws had both been broken in a trap.

Ferko felt so sorry for the little beast that he spoke to it in the most friendly manner, and washed its small paws with the healing water. In a moment the mouse was sound and whole, and after thanking the kind physician it scampered away over the ploughed furrows.

Ferko again proceeded on his journey, but he hadn't gone far before a queen bee flew against him, trailing one wing behind her, which had been cruelly torn in two by a big bird. Ferko was no less willing to help her than he had been to help the wolf and the mouse, so he poured some healing drops over the wounded wing. On the spot the queen bee was cured, and turning to Ferko she said, 'I am most grateful for your kindness, and shall reward you some day.' And with these words she flew away humming, gaily.

Then Ferko wandered on for many a long day, and at length reached a strange kingdom. Here, he thought to himself, he might as well go straight to the palace and offer his services to the King of the country, for he had heard that the King's daughter was as beautiful as the day.

So he went to the royal palace, and as he entered the door the first people he saw were his two brothers who had so shamefully ill-treated him. They had managed to obtain places in the King's service, and when they recognised Ferko with his eyes and legs sound and well they were frightened to death, for they feared he would tell the King of their conduct, and that they would be hung.

No sooner had Ferko entered the palace than all eyes were turned on the handsome youth, and the King's daughter herself was lost in admiration, for she had never seen anyone so handsome in her life before. His brothers noticed this, and envy and jealousy were added to their fear, so much so that they determined once more to destroy him. They went to the King and told him that Ferko was a wicked magician, who had come to the palace with the intention of carrying off the Princess.

Then the King had Ferko brought before him, and said, 'You are accused of being a magician who wishes to rob me of my daughter, and I condemn you to death; but if you can fulfil three tasks which I shall set you to do your life shall be spared, on condition you leave the country; but if you cannot perform what I demand you shall be hung on the nearest tree.'

And turning to the two wicked brothers he said, 'Suggest something for him to do; no matter how difficult, he must succeed in it or die.'

They did not think long, but replied, 'Let him build your Majesty in one day a more beautiful palace than this, and if he fails in the attempt let him be hung.'

The King was pleased with this proposal, and commanded Ferko to set to work on the following day. The two brothers were delighted, for they thought they had now got rid of Ferko for ever. The poor youth himself was heart-broken, and cursed the hour he had crossed the boundary of the King's domain. As he was wandering disconsolately about the meadows round the palace, wondering how he could escape being put to death, a little bee flew past, and settling on his shoulder whispered in his ear, 'What is troubling you, my kind benefactor? Can I be of any help to you? I am the bee whose wing you healed, and would like to show my gratitude in some way.'

Ferko recognised the queen bee, and said, 'Alas! how could you help me? for I have been set to do a task which no one in the whole world could do, let him be ever such a genius! To-morrow I must build a palace more beautiful than the King's, and it must be finished before evening.'

'Is that all?' answered the bee, 'then you may comfort yourself; for before the sun goes down to-morrow night a palace shall be built unlike any that King has dwelt in before. Just stay here till I come again and tell you that it is finished.' Having said this she flew merrily away, and Ferko, reassured by her words, lay down on the grass and slept peacefully till the next morning.

Early on the following day the whole town was on its feet, and everyone wondered how and where the stranger would build the wonderful palace. The Princess alone was silent and sorrowful, and had cried all night till her pillow was wet, so much did she take the fate of the beautiful youth to heart.

Ferko spent the whole day in the meadows waiting the return of the bee. And when evening was come the queen bee flew by, and perching on his shoulder she said, 'The wonderful palace is ready. Be of good cheer, and lead the King to the hill just outside the city walls.' And humming gaily she flew away again.

Ferko went at once to the King and told him the palace was finished. The whole court went out to see the wonder, and their astonishment was great at the sight which met their eyes. A splendid palace reared itself on the hill just outside the walls of the city, made of the most exquisite flowers that ever grew in mortal garden. The roof was all of crimson roses, the windows of lilies, the walls of white carnations, the floors of glowing

auriculas and violets, the doors of gorgeous tulips and narcissi with sunflowers for knockers, and all round hyacinths and other sweet-smelling flowers bloomed in masses, so that the air was perfumed far and near and enchanted all who were present.

This splendid palace had been built by the grateful queen bee, who had summoned all the other bees in the kingdom to help her.

The King's amazement knew no bounds, and the Princess's eyes beamed with delight as she turned them from the wonderful building on the delighted Ferko. But the two brothers had grown quite green with envy, and only declared the more that Ferko was nothing but a wicked magician.

The King, although he had been surprised and astonished at the way his commands had been carried out, was very vexed that the stranger should escape with his life, and turning to the two brothers he said, 'He has certainly accomplished the first task, with the aid no doubt of his diabolical magic; but what shall we give him to do now? Let us make it as difficult as possible, and if he fails he shall die.'

Then the eldest brother replied, 'The corn has all been cut, but it has not yet been put into barns; let the knave collect all the grain in the kingdom into one big heap before to-morrow night, and if as much as a stalk of corn is left let him be put to death.

The Princess grew white with terror when she heard these words; but Ferko felt much more cheerful than he had done the first time, and wandered out into the meadows again, wondering how he was to get out of the difficulty. But he could think of no way of escape. The sun sank to rest and night came on, when a little mouse started out of the grass at Ferko's feet, and said to him, 'I'm delighted to see you, my kind benefactor; but why are you looking so sad? Can I be of any help to you, and thus repay your great kindness to me?'

Then Ferko recognised the mouse whose front paws he had healed, and replied, 'Alas I how can you help me in a matter that is beyond any human power! Before to-morrow night all the grain in the kingdom has to be gathered into one big heap, and if as much as a stalk of corn is wanting I must pay for it with my life.'

'Is that all?' answered the mouse; 'that needn't distress you much. Just trust in me, and before the sun sets again you shall hear that your task is

done.’ And with these words the little creature scampered away into the fields.

Ferko, who never doubted that the mouse would be as good as its word, lay down comforted on the soft grass and slept soundly till next morning. The day passed slowly, and with the evening came the little mouse and said, ‘Now there is not a single stalk of corn left in any field; they are all collected in one big heap on the hill out there.’

Then Ferko went joyfully to the King and told him that all he demanded had been done. And the whole Court went out to see the wonder, and were no less astonished than they had been the first time. For in a heap higher than the King’s palace lay all the grain of the country, and not a single stalk of corn had been left behind in any of the fields. And how had all this been done? The little mouse had summoned every other mouse in the land to its help, and together they had collected all the grain in the kingdom.

The King could not hide his amazement, but at the same time his wrath increased, and he was more ready than ever to believe the two brothers, who kept on repeating that Ferko was nothing more nor less than a wicked magician. Only the beautiful Princess rejoiced over Ferko’s success, and looked on him with friendly glances, which the youth returned.

The more the cruel King gazed on the wonder before him, the more angry he became, for he could not, in the face of his promise, put the stranger to death. He turned once more to the two brothers and said, ‘His diabolical magic has helped him again, but now what third task shall we set him to do? No matter how impossible it is, he must do it or die.’

The eldest answered quickly, ‘Let him drive all the wolves of the kingdom on to this hill before to-morrow night. If he does this he may go free; if not he shall be hung as you have said.’

At these words the Princess burst into tears, and when the King saw this he ordered her to be shut up in a high tower and carefully guarded till the dangerous magician should either have left the kingdom or been hung on the nearest tree.

Ferko wandered out into the fields again, and sat down on the stump of a tree wondering what he should do next. Suddenly a big wolf ran up to him, and standing still said, ‘I’m very glad to see you again, my kind benefactor. What are you thinking about all alone by yourself? If I can

help you in any way only say the word, for I would like to give you a proof of my gratitude.'

Ferko at once recognised the wolf whose broken leg he had healed, and told him what he had to do the following day if he wished to escape with his life. 'But how in the world,' he added, 'am I to collect all the wolves of the kingdom on to that hill over there?'

'If that's all you want done,' answered the wolf, 'you needn't worry yourself. I'll undertake the task, and you'll hear from me again before sunset to-morrow. Keep your spirits up.' And with these words he trotted quickly away.

Then the youth rejoiced greatly, for now he felt that his life was safe; but he grew very sad when he thought of the beautiful Princess, and that he would never see her again if he left the country. He lay down once more on the grass and soon fell fast asleep.

All the next day he spent wandering about the fields, and toward evening the wolf came running to him in a great hurry and said, 'I have collected together all the wolves in the kingdom, and they are waiting for you in the wood. Go quickly to the King, and tell him to go to the hill that he may see the wonder you have done with his own eyes. Then return at once to me and get on my back, and I will help you to drive all the wolves together.'

Then Ferko went straight to the palace and told the King that he was ready to perform the third task if he would come to the hill and see it done. Ferko himself returned to the fields, and mounting on the wolf's back he rode to the wood close by.

Quick as lightning the wolf flew round the wood, and in a minute many hundred wolves rose up before him, increasing in number every moment, till they could be counted by thousands. He drove them all before him on to the hill, where the King and his whole Court and Ferko's two brothers were standing. Only the lovely Princess was not present, for she was shut up in her tower weeping bitterly.

The wicked brothers stamped and foamed with rage when they saw the failure of their wicked designs. But the King was overcome by a sudden terror when he saw the enormous pack of wolves approaching nearer and nearer, and calling out to Ferko he said, 'Enough, enough, we don't want any more.'

But the wolf on whose back Ferko sat, said to its rider, ‘Go on! go on!’ and at the same moment many more wolves ran up the hill, howling horribly and showing their white teeth.

The King in his terror called out, ‘Stop a moment; I will give you half my kingdom if you will drive all the wolves away.’ But Ferko pretended not to hear, and drove some more thousands before him, so that everyone quaked with horror and fear.

Then the King raised his voice again and called out, ‘Stop! you shall have my whole kingdom, if you will only drive these wolves back to the places they came from.’

But the wolf kept on encouraging Ferko, and said, ‘Go on! go on!’ So he led the wolves on, till at last they fell on the King and on the wicked brothers, and ate them and the whole Court up in a moment.

Then Ferko went straight to the palace and set the Princess free, and on the same day he married her and was crowned King of the country. And the wolves all went peacefully back to their own homes, and Ferko and his bride lived for many years in peace and happiness together, and were much beloved by great and small in the land.

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11. From the Hungarian. Kletke.

THE GIANTS AND THE HERD-BOY[12]

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There was once upon a time a poor boy who had neither father nor mother. In order to gain a living he looked after the sheep of a great Lord. Day and night he spent out in the open fields, and only when it was very wet and stormy did he take refuge in a little hut on the edge of a big forest. Now one night, when he was sitting on the grass beside his flocks, he heard not very far from him the sound as of some one crying. He rose up and followed the direction of the noise. To his dismay and astonishment he found a Giant lying at the entrance of the wood; he was about to run off as fast as his legs could carry him, when the Giant called out: ‘Don’t be afraid, I won’t harm you. On the contrary, I will reward you handsomely if you will bind up my foot. I hurt it when I was trying to root up an oak-tree.’ The Herd-boy took off his shirt, and bound up the Giant’s wounded foot with it. Then the Giant rose up and said, ‘Now come and I will reward you. We are going to celebrate a marriage to-day, and I promise you we shall have plenty of fun. Come and enjoy yourself, but in order that my brothers mayn’t see you, put this band round your waist and then you’ll be invisible.’ With these words he handed the Herd-boy a belt, and walking on in front he led him to a fountain where hundreds of Giants and Giantesses were assembled preparing to hold a wedding. They danced and played different games till midnight; then one of the Giants tore up a plant by its roots, and all the Giants and Giantesses made themselves so thin that they disappeared into the earth through the hole made by the uprooting of the plant. The wounded Giant remained behind to the last and called out, ‘Herd-boy, where are you?’ ‘Here I am, close to you,’ was the reply. ‘Touch me,’ said the Giant, ‘so that you too may come with us under ground.’ The Herd-boy did as he was told, and before he could have believed it possible he found himself in a big hall, where even the walls were made of pure gold. Then to his astonishment he saw that the hall was furnished with the tables and chairs that belonged to his master. In a few minutes the company began to eat and drink.

The banquet was a very gorgeous one, and the poor youth fell to and ate and drank lustily. When he had eaten and drunk as much as he could he thought to himself, ‘Why shouldn’t I put a loaf of bread in my pocket? I shall be glad of it to-morrow.’ So he seized a loaf when no one was looking and stowed it away under his tunic. No sooner had he done so than the wounded Giant limped up to him and whispered softly, ‘Herd-boy, where are you?’ ‘Here I am,’ replied the youth. ‘Then hold on to me,’ said the Giant, ‘so that I may lead you up above again.’ So the Herd-boy held on to the Giant, and in a few moments he found himself on the earth once more, but the Giant had vanished. The Herd-boy returned to his sheep, and took off the invisible belt which he hid carefully in his bag.

The next morning the lad felt hungry, and thought he would cut off a piece of the loaf he had carried away from the Giants’ wedding feast, and eat it. But although he tried with all his might, he couldn’t cut off the smallest piece. Then in despair he bit the loaf, and what was his astonishment when a piece of gold fell out of his mouth and rolled at his feet. He bit the bread a second and third time, and each time a piece of gold fell out of his mouth; but the bread remained untouched. The Herd-boy was very much delighted over his stroke of good fortune, and, hiding the magic loaf in his bag, he hurried off to the nearest village to buy himself something to eat, and then returned to his sheep.

Now the Lord whose sheep the Herd-boy looked after had a very lovely daughter, who always smiled and nodded to the youth when she walked with her father in his fields. For a long time the Herd-boy had made up his mind to prepare a surprise for this beautiful creature on her birthday. So when the day approached he put on his invisible belt, took a sack of gold pieces with him, and slipping into her room in the middle of the night, he placed the bag of gold beside her bed and returned to his sheep. The girl’s joy was great, and so was her parents’ next day when they found the sack full of gold pieces. The Herd-boy was so pleased to think what pleasure he had given that the next night he placed another bag of gold beside the girl’s bed. And this he continued to do for seven nights, and the girl and her parents made up their minds that it must be a good Fairy who brought the gold every night. But one night they determined to watch, and see from their hiding place who the bringer of the sack of gold really was.

On the eighth night a fearful storm of wind and rain came on while the Herd-boy was on his way to bring the beautiful girl another bag of gold. Then for the first time he noticed, just as he reached his master's house, that he had forgotten the belt which made him invisible. He didn't like the idea of going back to his hut in the wind and wet, so he just stepped as he was into the girl's room, laid the sack of gold beside her, and was turning to leave the room, when his master confronted him and said, 'You young rogue, so you were going to steal the gold that a good Fairy brings every night, were you?' The Herd-boy was so taken aback by his words, that he stood trembling before him, and did not dare to explain his presence. Then his master spoke. 'As you have hitherto always behaved well in my service I will not send you to prison; but leave your place instantly and never let me see your face again.' So the Herd-boy went back to his hut, and taking his loaf and belt with him, he went to the nearest town. There he bought himself some fine clothes, and a beautiful coach with four horses, hired two servants, and drove back to his master. You may imagine how astonished he was to see his Herd-boy returning to him in this manner! Then the youth told him of the piece of good luck that had befallen him, and asked him for the hand of his beautiful daughter. This was readily granted, and the two lived in peace and happiness to the end of their lives.

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12. From the Bukowniaer. Von Wliolocki.

THE INVISIBLE PRINCE

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Once upon a time there lived a Fairy who had power over the earth, the sea, fire, and the air; and this Fairy had four sons. The eldest, who was quick and lively, with a vivid imagination, she made Lord of Fire, which was in her opinion the noblest of all the elements. To the second son, whose wisdom and prudence made amends for his being rather dull, she gave the government of the earth. The third was wild and savage, and of monstrous stature; and the Fairy, his mother, who was ashamed of his defects, hoped to hide them by creating him King of the Seas. The youngest, who was the slave of his passions and of a very uncertain temper, became Prince of the Air.

Being the youngest, he was naturally his mother’s favourite; but this did not blind her to his weaknesses, and she foresaw that some day he would suffer much pain through falling in love. So she thought the best thing she could do was to bring him up with a horror of women; and, to her great delight, she saw this dislike only increased as he grew older. From his earliest childhood he heard nothing but stories of princes who had fallen into all sorts of troubles through love; and she drew such terrible pictures of poor little Cupid that the young man had no difficulty in believing that he was the root of all evil.

All the time that this wise mother could spare from filling her son with hatred for all womenkind she passed in giving him a love of the pleasures of the chase, which henceforth became his chief joy. For his amusement she had made a new forest, planted with the most splendid trees, and turned loose in it every animal that could be found in any of the four quarters of the globe. In the midst of this forest she built a palace which had not its equal for beauty in the whole world, and then she considered that she had done enough to make any prince happy.

Now it is all very well to abuse the God of Love, but a man cannot struggle against his fate. In his secret heart the Prince got tired of his mother’s constant talk on this subject; and when one day she quitted the

palace to attend to some business, begging him never to go beyond the grounds, he at once jumped at the chance of disobeying her.

Left to himself the Prince soon forgot the wise counsels of his mother, and feeling very much bored with his own company, he ordered some of the spirits of the air to carry him to the court of a neighbouring sovereign. This kingdom was situated in the Island of Roses, where the climate is so delicious that the grass is always green and the flowers always sweet. The waves, instead of beating on the rocks, seemed to die gently on the shore; clusters of golden bushes covered the land, and the vines were bent low with grapes.

The King of this island had a daughter named Rosalie, who was more lovely than any girl in the whole world. No sooner had the eyes of the Prince of the Air rested on her than he forgot all the terrible woes which had been prophesied to him ever since he was born, for in one single moment the plans of years are often upset. He instantly began to think how best to make himself happy, and the shortest way that occurred to him was to have Rosalie carried off by his attendant spirits.

It is easy to imagine the feelings of the King when he found that his daughter had vanished. He wept her loss night and day, and his only comfort was to talk over it with a young and unknown prince, who had just arrived at the Court. Alas! he did not know what a deep interest the stranger had in Rosalie, for he too had seen her, and had fallen a victim to her charms.

One day the King, more sorrowful than usual, was walking sadly along the sea-shore, when after a long silence the unknown Prince, who was his only companion, suddenly spoke. ‘There is no evil without a remedy,’ he said to the unhappy father; ‘and if you will promise me your daughter in marriage, I will undertake to bring her back to you.’

‘You are trying to soothe me by vain promises,’ answered the King. ‘Did I not see her caught up into the air, in spite of cries which would have softened the heart of any one but the barbarian who has robbed me of her? The unfortunate girl is pining away in some unknown land, where perhaps no foot of man has ever trod, and I shall see her no more. But go, generous stranger; bring back Rosalie if you can, and live happy with her ever after in this country, of which I now declare you heir.’

Although the stranger’s name and rank were unknown to Rosalie’s father, he was really the son of the King of the Golden Isle, which had for capital a city that extended from one sea to another. The walls, washed by the quiet waters, were covered with gold, which made one think of the yellow sands. Above them was a rampart of orange and lemon trees, and all the streets were paved with gold.

The King of this beautiful island had one son, for whom a life of adventure had been foretold at his birth. This so frightened his father and mother that in order to comfort them a Fairy, who happened to be present at the time, produced a little pebble which she told them to keep for the Prince till he grew up, as by putting it in his mouth he would become invisible, as long as he did not try to speak, for if he did the stone would lose all its virtue. In this way the good fairy hoped that the Prince would be protected against all dangers.

No sooner did the Prince begin to grow out of boyhood than he longed to see if the other countries of the world were as splendid as the one in which he lived. So, under pretence of visiting some small islands that belonged to his father, he set out. But a frightful storm drove his ship on to unknown shores, where most of his followers were put to death by the savages, and the Prince himself only managed to escape by making use of his magic pebble. By this means he passed through the midst of them unseen, and wandered on till he reached the coast, where he re-embarked on board his ship.

The first land he sighted was the Island of Roses, and he went at once to the court of the King, Rosalie’s father. The moment his eyes beheld the Princess, he fell in love with her like everyone else.

He had already spent several months in this condition when the Prince of the Air whirled her away, to the grief and despair of every man on the island. But sad though everybody was, the Prince of the Golden Isle was perfectly inconsolable, and he passed both days and nights in bemoaning his loss.

‘Alas!’ he cried; ‘shall I never see my lovely Princess again?’ Who knows where she may be, and what fairy may have her in his keeping? I am only a man, but I am strong in my love, and I will seek the whole world through till I find her.’

So saying, he left the court, and made ready for his journey.

He travelled many weary days without hearing a single word of the lost Princess, till one morning, as he was walking through a thick forest, he suddenly perceived a magnificent palace standing at the end of a pine avenue, and his heart bounded to think that he might be gazing on Rosalie's prison. He hastened his steps, and quickly arrived at the gate of the palace, which was formed of a single agate. The gate swung open to let him through, and he next passed successively three courts, surrounded by deep ditches filled with running water, with birds of brilliant plumage flying about the banks. Everything around was rare and beautiful, but the Prince scarcely raised his eyes to all these wonders. He thought only of the Princess and where he should find her, but in vain he opened every door and searched in every corner; he neither saw Rosalie nor anyone else. At last there was no place left for him to search but a little wood, which contained in the centre a sort of hall built entirely of orange-trees, with four small rooms opening out of the corners. Three of these were empty except for statues and wonderful things, but in the fourth the Invisible Prince caught sight of Rosalie. His joy at beholding her again was, however, somewhat lessened by seeing that the Prince of the Air was kneeling at her feet, and pleading his own cause. But it was in vain that he implored her to listen; she only shook her head. 'No,' was all she would say; 'you snatched me from my father whom I loved, and all the splendour in the world can never console me. Go! I can never feel anything towards you but hate and contempt.' With these words she turned away and entered her own apartments.

Unknown to herself the Invisible Prince had followed her, but fearing to be discovered by the Princess in the presence of others, he made up his mind to wait quietly till dark; and employed the long hours in writing a poem to the Princess, which he laid on the bed beside her. This done, he thought of nothing but how best to deliver Rosalie, and he resolved to take advantage of a visit which the Prince of the Air paid every year to his mother and brothers in order to strike the blow.

One day Rosalie was sitting alone in her room thinking of her troubles when she suddenly saw a pen get up from off the desk and begin to write all by itself on a sheet of white paper. As she did not know that it was guided by an invisible hand she was very much astonished, and the moment that the pen had ceased to move she instantly went over to the

table, where she found some lovely verses, telling her that another shared her distresses, whatever they might be, and loved her with all his heart; and that he would never rest until he had delivered her from the hands of the man she hated. Thus encouraged, she told him all her story, and of the arrival of a young stranger in her father's palace, whose looks had so charmed her that since that day she had thought of no one else. At these words the Prince could contain himself no longer. He took the pebble from his mouth, and flung himself at Rosalie's feet.

When they had got over the first rapture of meeting they began to make plans to escape from the power of the Prince of the Air. But this did not prove easy, for the magic stone would only serve for one person at a time, and in order to save Rosalie the Prince of the Golden Isle would have to expose himself to the fury of his enemy. But Rosalie would not hear of this.

'No, Prince,' she said; 'since you are here this island no longer feels a prison. Besides, you are under the protection of a Fairy, who always visits your father's court at this season. Go instantly and seek her, and when she is found implore the gift of another stone with similar powers. Once you have that, there will be no further difficulty in the way of escape.'

The Prince of the Air returned a few days later from his mother's palace, but the Invisible Prince had already set out. He had, however, entirely forgotten the road by which he had come, and lost himself for so long in the forest, that when at last he reached home the Fairy had already left, and, in spite of all his grief, there was nothing for it but to wait till the Fairy's next visit, and allow Rosalie to suffer three months longer. This thought drove him to despair, and he had almost made up his mind to return to the place of her captivity, when one day, as he was strolling along an alley in the woods, he saw a huge oak open its trunk, and out of it step two Princes in earnest conversation. As our hero had the magic stone in his mouth they imagined themselves alone, and did not lower their voices.

'What!' said one, 'are you always going to allow yourself to be tormented by a passion which can never end happily, and in your whole kingdom can you find nothing else to satisfy you?'

'What is the use,' replied the other, 'of being Prince of the Gnomes, and having a mother who is queen over all the four elements, if I cannot win the love of the Princess Argentine? From the moment that I first saw

her, sitting in the forest surrounded by flowers, I have never ceased to think of her night and day, and, although I love her, I am quite convinced that she will never care for me. You know that I have in my palace the cabinets of the years. In the first, great mirrors reflect the past; in the second, we contemplate the present; in the third, the future can be read. It was here that I fled after I had gazed on the Princess Argentine, but instead of love I only saw scorn and contempt. Think how great must be my devotion, when, in spite of my fate, I still love on!'

Now the Prince of the Golden Isle was enchanted with this conversation, for the Princess Argentine was his sister, and he hoped, by means of her influence over the Prince of the Gnomes, to obtain from his brother the release of Rosalie. So he joyfully returned to his father's palace, where he found his friend the Fairy, who at once presented him with a magic pebble like his own. As may be imagined, he lost no time in setting out to deliver Rosalie, and travelled so fast that he soon arrived at the forest, in the midst of which she lay a captive. But though he found the palace he did not find Rosalie. He hunted high and low, but there was no sign of her, and his despair was so great that he was ready, a thousand times over, to take his own life. At last he remembered the conversation of the two Princes about the cabinets of the years, and that if he could manage to reach the oak tree, he would be certain to discover what had become of Rosalie. Happily, he soon found out the secret of the passage and entered the cabinet of the present, where he saw reflected in the mirrors the unfortunate Rosalie sitting on the floor weeping bitterly, and surrounded with genii, who never left her night or day.

This sight only increased the misery of the Prince, for he did not know where the castle was, nor how to set about finding it. However, he resolved to seek the whole world through till he came to the right place. He began by setting sail in a favourable wind, but his bad luck followed him even on the sea. He had scarcely lost sight of the land when a violent storm arose, and after several hours of beating about, the vessel was driven on to some rocks, on which it dashed itself to bits. The Prince was fortunate enough to be able to lay hold of a floating spar, and contrived to keep himself afloat; and, after a long struggle with the winds and waves, he was cast upon a strange island. But what was his surprise, on reaching the shore, to hear sounds of the most heartrending distress, mingled with the sweetest songs

which had ever charmed him! His curiosity was instantly roused, and he advanced cautiously till he saw two huge dragons guarding the gate of a wood. They were terrible indeed to look upon. Their bodies were covered with glittering scales; their curly tails extended far over the land; flames darted from their mouths and noses, and their eyes would have made the bravest shudder; but as the Prince was invisible and they did not see him, he slipped past them into the wood. He found himself at once in a labyrinth, and wandered about for a long time without meeting anyone; in fact, the only sight he saw was a circle of human hands, sticking out of the ground above the wrist, each with a bracelet of gold, on which a name was written. The farther he advanced in the labyrinth the more curious he became, till he was stopped by two corpses lying in the midst of a cypress alley, each with a scarlet cord round his neck and a bracelet on his arm on which were engraved their own names, and those of two Princesses.

The invisible Prince recognised these dead men as Kings of two large islands near his own home, but the names of the Princesses were unknown to him. He grieved for their unhappy fate, and at once proceeded to bury them; but no sooner had he laid them in their graves, than their hands started up through the earth and remained sticking up like those of their fellows.

The Prince went on his way, thinking about this strange adventure, when suddenly at the turn of the walk he perceived a tall man whose face was the picture of misery, holding in his hands a silken cord of the exact colour of those round the necks of the dead men. A few steps further this man came up with another as miserable to the full as he himself; they silently embraced, and then without a word passed the cords round their throats, and fell dead side by side. In vain the Prince rushed to their assistance and strove to undo the cord. He could not loosen it; so he buried them like the others and continued his path.

He felt, however, that great prudence was necessary, or he himself might become the victim of some enchantment; and he was thankful to slip past the dragons, and enter a beautiful park, with clear streams and sweet flowers, and a crowd of men and maidens. But he could not forget the terrible things he had seen, and hoped eagerly for a clue to the mystery. Noticing two young people talking together, he drew near thinking that he might get some explanation of what puzzled him. And so he did.

‘You swear,’ said the Prince, ‘that you will love me till you die, but I fear your faithless heart, and I feel that I shall soon have to seek the Fairy Despair, ruler of half this island. She carries off the lovers who have been cast away by their mistresses, and wish to have done with life. She places them in a labyrinth where they are condemned to walk for ever, with a bracelet on their arms and a cord round their necks, unless they meet another as miserable as themselves. Then the cord is pulled and they lie where they fall, till they are buried by the first passer by. Terrible as this death would be,’ added the Prince, ‘it would be sweeter than life if I had lost your love.’

The sight of all these happy lovers only made the Prince grieve the more, and he wandered along the seashore spending his days; but one day he was sitting on a rock bewailing his fate, and the impossibility of leaving the island, when all in a moment the sea appeared to raise itself nearly to the skies, and the caves echoed with hideous screams. As he looked a woman rose from the depths of the sea, flying madly before a furious giant. The cries she uttered softened the heart of the Prince; he took the stone from his mouth, and drawing his sword he rushed after the giant, so as to give the lady time to escape. But hardly had he come within reach of the enemy, than the giant touched him with a ring that he held in his hand, and the Prince remained immovable where he stood. The giant then hastily rejoined his prey, and, seizing her in his arms, he plunged her into the sea. Then he sent some tritons to bind chains about the Prince of the Golden Isle, and he too felt himself borne to the depths of the ocean, and without the hope of ever again seeing the Princess.

Now the giant whom the invisible had so rashly attacked was the Lord of the Sea, and the third son of the Queen of the Elements, and he had touched the youth with a magic ring which enabled a mortal to live under water. So the Prince of the Golden Isle found, when bound in chains by the tritons, he was carried through the homes of strange monsters and past immense seaweed forests, till he reached a vast sandy space, surrounded by huge rocks. On the tallest of the rocks sat the giant as on a throne.

‘Rash mortal,’ said he, when the Prince was dragged before him, ‘you have deserved death, but you shall live only to suffer more cruelly. Go, and add to the number of those whom it is my pleasure to torture.’

At these words the unhappy Prince found himself tied to a rock; but he was not alone in his misfortunes, for all round him were chained Princes and Princesses, whom the giant had led captive. Indeed, it was his chief delight to create a storm, in order to add to the list of his prisoners.

As his hands were fastened, it was impossible for the Prince of the Golden Isle to make use of his magic stone, and he passed his nights and days dreaming of Rosalie. But at last the time came when the giant took it into his head to amuse himself by arranging fights between some of his captives. Lots were drawn, and one fell upon our Prince, whose chains were immediately loosened. The moment he was set free, he snatched up his stone, and became invisible.

The astonishment of the giant at the sudden disappearance of the Prince may well be imagined. He ordered all the passages to be watched, but it was too late, for the Prince had already glided between two rocks. He wandered for a long while through the forests, where he met nothing but fearful monsters; he climbed rock after rock, steered his way from tree to tree, till at length he arrived at the edge of the sea, at the foot of a mountain that he remembered to have seen in the cabinet of the present, where Rosalie was held captive.

Filled with joy, he made his way to the top of the mountain which pierced the clouds, and there he found a palace. He entered, and in the middle of a long gallery he discovered a crystal room, in the midst of which sat Rosalie, guarded night and day by genii. There was no door anywhere, nor any window. At this sight the Prince became more puzzled than ever, for he did not know how he was to warn Rosalie of his return. Yet it broke his heart to see her weeping from dawn till dark.

One day, as Rosalie was walking up and down her room, she was surprised to see that the crystal which served for a wall had grown cloudy, as if some one had breathed on it, and, what was more, wherever she moved the brightness of the crystal always became clouded. This was enough to cause the Princess to suspect that her lover had returned. In order to set the Prince of the Air’s mind at rest she began by being very gracious to him, so that when she begged that her captivity might be a little lightened she should not be refused. At first the only favour she asked was to be allowed to walk for one hour every day up and down the long gallery. This was granted, and the Invisible Prince speedily took the

opportunity of handing her the stone, which she at once slipped into her mouth. No words can paint the fury of her captor at her disappearance. He ordered the spirits of the air to fly through all space, and to bring back Rosalie wherever she might be. They instantly flew off to obey his commands, and spread themselves over the whole earth.

Meantime Rosalie and the Invisible Prince had reached, hand in hand, a door of the gallery which led through a terrace into the gardens. In silence they glided along, and thought themselves already safe, when a furious monster dashed itself by accident against Rosalie and the Invisible Prince, and in her fright she let go his hand. No one can speak as long as he is invisible, and besides, they knew that the spirits were all around them, and at the slightest sound they would be recognised; so all they could do was to feel about in the hope that their hands might once more meet.

But, alas! the joy of liberty lasted but a short time. The Princess, having wandered in vain up and down the forest, stopped at last on the edge of a fountain. As she walked she wrote on the trees: ‘If ever the Prince, my lover, comes this way, let him know that it is here I dwell, and that I sit daily on the edge of this fountain, mingling my tears with its waters.’

These words were read by one of the genii, who repeated them to his master. The Prince of the Air, in his turn making himself invisible, was led to the fountain, and waited for Rosalie. When she drew near he held out his hand, which she grasped eagerly, taking it for that of her lover; and, seizing his opportunity, the Prince passed a cord round her arms, and throwing off his invisibility cried to his spirits to drag her into the lowest pit.

It was at this moment that the Invisible Prince appeared, and at the sight of the Prince of the Genii mounting into the air, holding a silken cord, he guessed instantly that he was carrying off Rosalie.

He felt so overwhelmed by despair that he thought for an instant of putting an end to his life. ‘Can I survive my misfortunes?’ he cried. ‘I fancied I had come to an end of my troubles, and now they are worse than ever. What will become of me? Never can I discover the place where this monster will hide Rosalie.’

The unhappy youth had determined to let himself die, and indeed his sorrow alone was enough to kill him, when the thought that by means of the cabinets of the years he might find out where the Princess was imprisoned, gave him a little ray of comfort. So he continued to walk on through the forest, and after some hours he arrived at the gate of a temple, guarded by two huge lions. Being invisible, he was able to enter unharmed. In the middle of the temple was an altar, on which lay a book, and behind the altar hung a great curtain. The Prince approached the altar and opened the book, which contained the names of all the lovers in the world: and in it he read that Rosalie had been carried off by the Prince of the Air to an abyss which had no entrance except the one that lay by way of the Fountain of Gold.

Now, as the Prince had not the smallest idea where this fountain was to be found, it might be thought that he was not much nearer Rosalie than before. This was not, however, the view taken by the Prince.

‘Though every step that I take may perhaps lead me further from her,’ he said to himself, ‘I am still thankful to know that she is alive somewhere.’

On leaving the temple the Invisible Prince saw six paths lying before him, each of which led through the wood. He was hesitating which to choose, when he suddenly beheld two people coming towards him, down the track which lay most to his right. They turned out to be the Prince Gnome and his friend, and the sudden desire to get some news of his sister, Princess Argentine, caused the Invisible Prince to follow them and to listen to their conversation.

‘Do you think,’ the Prince Gnome was saying, ‘do you think that I would not break my chains if I could? I know that the Princess Argentine will never love me, yet each day I feel her dearer still. And as if this were not enough, I have the horror of feeling that she probably loves another. So I have resolved to put myself out of my pain by means of the Golden Fountain. A single drop of its water falling on the sand around will trace the name of my rival in her heart. I dread the test, and yet this very dread convinces me of my misfortune.’

It may be imagined that after listening to these words the Invisible Prince followed Prince Gnome like his shadow, and after walking some time they arrived at the Golden Fountain. The unhappy lover stooped down

with a sigh, and dipping his finger in the water let fall a drop on the sand. It instantly wrote the name of Prince Flame, his brother. The shock of this discovery was so real, that Prince Gnome sank fainting into the arms of his friend.

Meanwhile the Invisible Prince was turning over in his mind how he could best deliver Rosalie. As, since he had been touched by the Giant's ring, he had the power to live in the water as well as on land, he at once dived into the fountain. He perceived in one corner a door leading into the mountain, and at the foot of the mountain was a high rock on which was fixed an iron ring with a cord attached. The Prince promptly guessed that the cord was used to chain the Princess, and drew his sword and cut it. In a moment he felt the Princess's hand in his, for she had always kept her magic pebble in her mouth, in spite of the prayers and entreaties of the Prince of the Air to make herself visible.

So hand in hand the invisible Prince and Rosalie crossed the mountain; but as the Princess had no power of living under water, she could not pass the Golden Fountain. Speechless and invisible they clung together on the brink, trembling at the frightful tempest the Prince of the Air had raised in his fury. The storm had already lasted many days when tremendous heat began to make itself felt. The lightning flashed, the thunder rattled, fire bolts fell from heaven, burning up the forests and even the fields of corn. In one instant the very streams were dried up, and the Prince, seizing his opportunity, carried the Princess over the Golden Fountain.

It took them a long time still to reach the Golden Isle, but at last they got there, and we may be quite sure they never wanted to leave it any more.

THE CROW[13]

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Once upon a time there were three Princesses who were all three young and beautiful; but the youngest, although she was not fairer than the other two, was the most loveable of them all.

About half a mile from the palace in which they lived there stood a castle, which was uninhabited and almost a ruin, but the garden which surrounded it was a mass of blooming flowers, and in this garden the youngest Princess used often to walk.

One day when she was pacing to and fro under the lime trees, a black crow hopped out of a rose-bush in front of her. The poor beast was all torn and bleeding, and the kind little Princess was quite unhappy about it. When the crow saw this it turned to her and said:

‘I am not really a black crow, but an enchanted Prince, who has been doomed to spend his youth in misery. If you only liked, Princess, you could save me. But you would have to say good-bye to all your own people and come and be my constant companion in this ruined castle. There is one habitable room in it, in which there is a golden bed; there you will have to live all by yourself, and don’t forget that whatever you may see or hear in the night you must not scream out, for if you give as much as a single cry my sufferings will be doubled.’

The good-natured Princess at once left her home and her family and hurried to the ruined castle, and took possession of the room with the golden bed.

When night approached she lay down, but though she shut her eyes tight sleep would not come. At midnight she heard to her great horror some one coming along the passage, and in a minute her door was flung wide open and a troop of strange beings entered the room. They at once proceeded to light a fire in the huge fireplace; then they placed a great cauldron of boiling water on it. When they had done this, they approached the bed on which the trembling girl lay, and, screaming and yelling all the time, they dragged her towards the cauldron. She nearly died with fright,

but she never uttered a sound. Then of a sudden the cock crew, and all the evil spirits vanished.

At the same moment the crow appeared and hopped all round the room with joy. It thanked the Princess most heartily for her goodness, and said that its sufferings had already been greatly lessened.

Now one of the Princess's elder sisters, who was very inquisitive, had found out about everything, and went to pay her youngest sister a visit in the ruined castle. She implored her so urgently to let her spend the night with her in the golden bed, that at last the good-natured little Princess consented. But at midnight, when the odd folk appeared, the elder sister screamed with terror, and from this time on the youngest Princess insisted always on keeping watch alone.

So she lived in solitude all the daytime, and at night she would have been frightened, had she not been so brave; but every day the crow came and thanked her for her endurance, and assured her that his sufferings were far less than they had been.

And so two years passed away, when one day the crow came to the Princess and said: 'In another year I shall be freed from the spell I am under at present, because then the seven years will be over. But before I can resume my natural form, and take possession of the belongings of my forefathers, you must go out into the world and take service as a maidservant.'

The young Princess consented at once, and for a whole year she served as a maid; but in spite of her youth and beauty she was very badly treated, and suffered many things. One evening, when she was spinning flax, and had worked her little white hands weary, she heard a rustling beside her and a cry of joy. Then she saw a handsome youth standing beside her; who knelt down at her feet and kissed the little weary white hands.

'I am the Prince,' he said, 'who you in your goodness, when I was wandering about in the shape of a black crow, freed from the most awful torments. Come now to my castle with me, and let us live there happily together.'

So they went to the castle where they had both endured so much. But when they reached it, it was difficult to believe that it was the same, for it had all been rebuilt and done up again. And there they lived for a hundred years, a hundred years of joy and happiness.

13. From the Polish. Kletke.

HOW SIX MEN TRAVELLED THROUGH THE WIDE WORLD

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There was once upon a time a man who understood all sorts of arts; he served in the war, and bore himself bravely and well; but when the war was over, he got his discharge, and set out on his travels with three farthings of his pay in his pocket. ‘Wait,’ he said; ‘that does not please me; only let me find the right people, and the King shall yet give me all the treasures of his kingdom.’ He strode angrily into the forest, and there he saw a man standing who had uprooted six trees as if they were straws. He said to him, ‘Will you be my servant and travel with me?’

‘Yes,’ he answered; ‘but first of all I will take this little bundle of sticks home to my mother,’ and he took one of the trees and wound it round the other five, raised the bundle on his shoulders and bore it off. Then he came back and went with his master, who said, ‘We two ought to be able to travel through the wide world!’ And when they had gone a little way they came upon a hunter, who was on his knees, his gun on his shoulder, aiming at something. The master said to him, ‘Hunter, what are you aiming at?’

He answered, ‘Two miles from this place sits a fly on a branch of an oak; I want to shoot out its left eye.’

‘Oh, go with me,’ said the man; ‘if we three are together we shall easily travel through the wide world.’

The hunter agreed and went with him, and they came to seven windmills whose sails were going round quite fast, and yet there was not a breath of wind, nor was a leaf moving. The man said, ‘I don’t know what is turning those windmills; there is not the slightest breeze blowing.’ So he walked on with his servants, and when they had gone two miles they saw a man sitting on a tree, holding one of his nostrils and blowing out of the other.

‘Fellow, what are you puffing at up there?’ asked the man.

He replied, ‘Two miles from this place are standing seven windmills; see, I am blowing to drive them round.’

‘Oh, go with me,’ said the man; ‘if we four are together we shall easily travel through the wide world.’

So the blower got down and went with him, and after a time they saw a man who was standing on one leg, and had unstrapped the other and laid it near him. Then said the master, ‘You have made yourself very comfortable to rest!’

‘I am a runner,’ answered he; ‘and so that I shall not go too quickly, I have unstrapped one leg; when I run with two legs, I go faster than a bird flies.’

‘Oh, go with me; if we five are together, we shall easily travel through the wide world.’ So he went with him, and, not long afterwards, they met a man who wore a little hat, but he had it slouched over one ear.

‘Manners, manners!’ said the master to him; ‘don’t hang your hat over one ear; you look like a madman!’

‘I dare not,’ said the other, ‘for if I were to put my hat on straight, there would come such a frost that the very birds in the sky would freeze and fall dead on the earth.’

‘Oh, go with me,’ said the master; ‘if we six are together, we shall easily travel through the wide world.

Now the Six came to a town in which the King had proclaimed that whoever should run with his daughter in a race, and win, should become her husband; but if he lost, he must lose his head. This was reported to the man who declared he would compete, ‘but,’ he said, ‘I shall let my servant run for me.’

The King replied, ‘Then both your heads must be staked, and your head and his must be guaranteed for the winner.’

When this was agreed upon and settled, the man strapped on the runner’s other leg, saying to him, ‘Now be nimble, and see that we win!’ It was arranged that whoever should first bring water out of a stream a long way off, should be the victor. Then the runner got a pitcher, and the King’s daughter another, and they began to run at the same time; but in a moment, when the King’s daughter was only just a little way off, no spectator could see the runner, and it seemed as if the wind had whistled past. In a short time he reached the stream, filled his pitcher with water, and turned round

again. But, half way home, a great drowsiness came over him; he put down his pitcher, lay down, and fell asleep. He had, however, put a horse's skull which was lying on the ground, for his pillow, so that he should not be too comfortable and might soon wake up.

In the meantime the King's daughter, who could also run well, as well as an ordinary man could, reached the stream, and hastened back with her pitcher full of water. When she saw the runner lying there asleep, she was delighted, and said, 'My enemy is given into my hands!' She emptied his pitcher and ran on.

Everything now would have been lost, if by good luck the hunter had not been standing on the castle tower and had seen everything with his sharp eyes.

'Ah,' said he, 'the King's daughter shall not overreach us;' and, loading his gun, he shot so cleverly, that he shot away the horse's skull from under the runner's head, without its hurting him. Then the runner awoke, jumped up, and saw that his pitcher was empty and the King's daughter far ahead. But he did not lose courage, and ran back to the stream with his pitcher, filled it once more with water, and was home ten minutes before the King's daughter arrived.

'Look,' said he, 'I have only just exercised my legs; that was nothing of a run.'

But the King was angry, and his daughter even more so, that she should be carried away by a common, discharged soldier. They consulted together how they could destroy both him and his companions.

'Then,' said the King to her, 'I have found a way. Don't be frightened; they shall not come home again.' He said to them, 'You must now make merry together, and eat and drink,' and he led them into a room which had a floor of iron; the doors were also of iron, and the windows were barred with iron. In the room was a table spread with delicious food. The King said to them, 'Go in and enjoy yourselves,' and as soon as they were inside he had the doors shut and bolted. Then he made the cook come, and ordered him to keep up a large fire under the room until the iron was red-hot. The cook did so, and the Six sitting round the table felt it grow very warm, and they thought this was because of their good fare; but when the heat became still greater and they wanted to go out, but found the doors

and windows fastened, then they knew that the King meant them harm and was trying to suffocate them.

‘But he shall not succeed,’ cried he of the little hat, ‘I will make a frost come which shall make the fire ashamed and die out!’ So he put his hat on straight, and at once there came such a frost that all the heat disappeared and the food on the dishes began to freeze. When a couple of hours had passed, and the King thought they must be quite dead from the heat, he had the doors opened and went in himself to see.

But when the doors were opened, there stood all Six, alive and well, saying they were glad they could come out to warm themselves, for the great cold in the room had frozen all the food hard in the dishes. Then the King went angrily to the cook, and scolded him, and asked him why he had not done what he was told.

But the cook answered, ‘There is heat enough there; see for yourself.’ Then the King saw a huge fire burning under the iron room, and understood that he could do no harm to the Six in this way. The King now began again to think how he could free himself from his unwelcome guests. He commanded the master to come before him, and said, ‘If you will take gold, and give up your right to my daughter, you shall have as much as you like.’

‘Oh, yes, your Majesty,’ answered he, ‘give me as much as my servant can carry, and I will give up your daughter.’

The King was delighted, and the man said, ‘I will come and fetch it in fourteen days.’

Then he called all the tailors in the kingdom together, and made them sit down for fourteen days sewing at a sack. When it was finished, he made the strong man who had uprooted the trees take the sack on his shoulder and go with him to the King. Then the King said, ‘What a powerful fellow that is, carrying that bale of linen as large as a house on his shoulder!’ and he was much frightened, and thought ‘What a lot of gold he will make away with!’ Then he had a ton of gold brought, which sixteen of the strongest men had to carry; but the strong man seized it with one hand, put it in the sack, saying, ‘Why don’t you bring me more? That scarcely covers the bottom!’ Then the King had to send again and again to fetch his treasures, which the strong man shoved into the sack, and the sack was only half full.

‘Bring more,’ he cried, ‘these crumbs don’t fill it.’ So seven thousand waggons of the gold of the whole kingdom were driven up; these the strong man shoved into the sack, oxen and all.

‘I will no longer be particular,’ he said, ‘and will take what comes, so that the sack shall be full.’

When everything was put in and there was not yet enough, he said, ‘I will make an end of this; it is easy to fasten a sack when it is not full.’ Then he threw it on his back and went with his companions.

Now, when the King saw how a single man was carrying away the wealth of the whole country he was very angry, and made his cavalry mount and pursue the Six, and bring back the strong man with the sack. Two regiments soon overtook them, and called to them, ‘You are prisoners! lay down the sack of gold or you shall be cut down.’

‘What do you say?’ said the blower, ‘we are prisoners? Before that, you shall dance in the air!’ And he held one nostril and blew with the other at the two regiments; they were separated and blown away in the blue sky over the mountains, one this way, and the other that. A sergeant-major cried for mercy, saying he had nine wounds, and was a brave fellow, and did not deserve this disgrace. So the blower let him off, and he came down without hurt. Then he said to him, ‘Now go home to the King, and say that if he sends any more cavalry I will blow them all into the air.’

When the King received the message, he said, ‘Let the fellows go; they are bewitched.’ Then the Six brought the treasure home, shared it among themselves, and lived contentedly till the end of their days.

THE WIZARD KING[14]

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In very ancient times there lived a King, whose power lay not only in the vast extent of his dominions, but also in the magic secrets of which he was master. After spending the greater part of his early youth in pleasure, he met a Princess of such remarkable beauty that he at once asked her hand in marriage, and, having obtained it, considered himself the happiest of men.

After a year's time a son was born, worthy in every way of such distinguished parents, and much admired by the whole Court. As soon as the Queen thought him strong enough for a journey she set out with him secretly to visit her Fairy godmother. I said secretly, because the Fairy had warned the Queen that the King was a magician; and as from time immemorial there had been a standing feud between the Fairies and the Wizards, he might not have approved of his wife's visit.

The Fairy godmother, who took the deepest interest in all the Queen's concerns, and who was much pleased with the little Prince, endowed him with the power of pleasing everybody from his cradle, as well as with a wonderful ease in learning everything which could help to make him a perfectly accomplished Prince. Accordingly, to the delight of his teachers, he made the most rapid progress in his education, constantly surpassing everyone's expectations. Before he was many years old, however, he had the great sorrow of losing his mother, whose last words were to advise him never to undertake anything of importance without consulting the Fairy under whose protection she had placed him.

The Prince's grief at the death of his mother was great, but it was nothing compared to that of the King, his father, who was quite inconsolable for the loss of his dear wife. Neither time nor reason seemed to lighten his sorrow, and the sight of all the familiar faces and things about him only served to remind him of his loss. He therefore resolved to travel for change, and by means of his magic art was able to visit every country he came to see under different shapes, returning every few weeks to the place where he had left a few followers.

Having travelled from land to land in this fashion without finding anything to rivet his attention, it occurred to him to take the form of an eagle, and in this shape he flew across many countries and arrived at length in a new and lovely spot, where the air seemed filled with the scent of jessamine and orange flowers with which the ground was thickly planted. Attracted by the sweet perfume he flew lower, and perceived some large and beautiful gardens filled with the rarest flowers, and with fountains throwing up their clear waters into the air in a hundred different shapes. A wide stream flowed through the garden, and on it floated richly ornamented barges and gondolas filled with people dressed in the most elegant manner and covered with jewels.

In one of these barges sat the Queen of that country with her only daughter, a maiden more beautiful than the Day Star, and attended by the ladies of the Court. No more exquisitely lovely mortal was ever seen than this Princess, and it needed all an eagle's strength of sight to prevent the King being hopelessly dazzled. He perched on the top of a large orange tree, whence he was able to survey the scene and to gaze at pleasure on the Princess's charms.

Now, an eagle with a King's heart in his breast is apt to be bold, and accordingly he instantly made up his mind to carry off the lovely damsel, feeling sure that having once seen her he could not live without her.

He waited till he saw her in the act of stepping ashore, when, suddenly swooping down, he carried her off before her equerry in attendance had advanced to offer her his hand. The Princess, on finding herself in an eagle's talons, uttered the most heart-breaking shrieks and cries; but her captor, though touched by her distress, would not abandon his lovely prey, and continued to fly through the air too fast to allow of his saying anything to comfort her.

At length, when he thought they had reached a safe distance, he began to lower his flight, and gradually descending to earth, deposited his burden in a flowery meadow. He then entreated her pardon for his violence, and told her that he was about to carry her to a great kingdom over which he ruled, and where he desired she should rule with him, adding many tender and consoling expressions.

For some time the Princess remained speechless; but recovering herself a little, she burst into a flood of tears. The King, much moved,

said, ‘Adorable Princess, dry your tears. I implore you. My only wish is to make you the happiest person in the world.’

‘If you speak truth, my lord,’ replied the Princess, ‘restore to me the liberty you have deprived me of. Otherwise I can only look on you as my worst enemy.’

The King retorted that her opposition filled him with despair, but that he hoped to carry her to a place where all around would respect her, and where every pleasure would surround her. So saying, he seized her once more, and in spite of all her cries he rapidly bore her off to the neighbourhood of his capital. Here he gently placed her on a lawn, and as he did so she saw a magnificent palace spring up at her feet. The architecture was imposing, and in the interior the rooms were handsome and furnished in the best possible taste.

The Princess, who expected to be quite alone, was pleased at finding herself surrounded by a number of pretty girls, all anxious to wait on her, whilst a brilliantly-coloured parrot said the most agreeable things in the world.

On arriving at this palace the King had resumed his own form, and though no longer young, he might well have pleased any other than this Princess, who had been so prejudiced against him by his violence that she could only regard him with feelings of hatred, which she was at no pains to conceal. The King hoped, however, that time might not only soften her anger, but accustom her to his sight. He took the precaution of surrounding the palace with a dense cloud, and then hastened to his Court, where his prolonged absence was causing much anxiety.

The Prince and all the courtiers were delighted to see their beloved King again, but they had to submit themselves to more frequent absences than ever on his part. He made business a pretext for shutting himself up in his study, but it was really in order to spend the time with the Princess, who remained inflexible.

Not being able to imagine what could be the cause of so much obstinacy the King began to fear, lest, in spite of all his precautions, she might have heard of the charms of the Prince his son, whose goodness, youth and beauty, made him adored at Court. This idea made him horribly uneasy, and he resolved to remove the cause of his fears by sending the Prince on his travels escorted by a magnificent retinue.

The Prince, after visiting several Courts, arrived at the one where the lost Princess was still deeply mourned. The King and Queen received him most graciously, and some festivities were revived to do him honour.

One day when the Prince was visiting the Queen in her own apartments he was much struck by a most beautiful portrait. He eagerly inquired whose it was, and the Queen, with many tears, told him it was all that was left her of her beloved daughter, who had suddenly been carried off, she knew neither where nor how.

The Prince was deeply moved, and vowed that he would search the world for the Princess, and take no rest till he had found and restored her to her mother's arms. The Queen assured him of her eternal gratitude, and promised, should he succeed, to give him her daughter in marriage, together with all the estates she herself owned.

The Prince, far more attracted by the thoughts of possessing the Princess than her promised dower, set forth in his quest after taking leave of the King and Queen, the latter giving him a miniature of her daughter which she was in the habit of wearing. His first act was to seek the Fairy under whose protection he had been placed, and he implored her to give him all the assistance of her art and counsel in this important matter.

After listening attentively to the whole adventure, the Fairy asked for time to consult her books. After due consideration she informed the Prince that the object of his search was not far distant, but that it was too difficult for him to attempt to enter the enchanted palace where she was, as the King his father had surrounded it with a thick cloud, and that the only expedient she could think of would be to gain possession of the Princess's parrot. This, she added, did not appear impossible, as it often flew about to some distance in the neighbourhood.

Having told the Prince all this, the Fairy went out in hopes of seeing the parrot, and soon returned with the bird in her hand. She promptly shut it up in a cage, and, touching the Prince with her wand, transformed him into an exactly similar parrot; after which, she instructed him how to reach the Princess.

The Prince reached the palace in safety, but was so dazzled at first by the Princess's beauty, which far surpassed his expectations, that he was quite dumb for a time. The Princess was surprised and anxious, and fearing the parrot, who was her greatest comfort, had fallen ill, she took

him in her hand and caressed him. This soon reassured the Prince, and encouraged him to play his part well, and he began to say a thousand agreeable things which charmed the Princess.

Presently the King appeared, and the parrot noticed with joy how much he was disliked. As soon as the King left, the Princess retired to her dressing-room, the parrot flew after her and overheard her lamentations at the continued persecutions of the King, who had pressed her to consent to their marriage. The parrot said so many clever and tender things to comfort her that she began to doubt whether this could indeed be her own parrot.

When he saw her well-disposed towards him, he exclaimed: ‘Madam, I have a most important secret to confide to you, and I beg you not to be alarmed by what I am about to say. I am here on behalf of the Queen your mother, with the object of delivering your Highness; to prove which, behold this portrait which she gave me herself.’ So saying he drew forth the miniature from under his wing. The Princess’s surprise was great, but after what she had seen and heard it was impossible not to indulge in hope, for she had recognised the likeness of herself which her mother always wore.

The parrot, finding she was not much alarmed, told her who he was, all that her mother had promised him and the help he had already received from a Fairy who had assured him that she would give him means to transport the Princess to her mother’s arms.

When he found her listening attentively to him, he implored the Princess to allow him to resume his natural shape. She did not speak, so he drew a feather from his wing, and she beheld before her a Prince of such surpassing beauty that it was impossible not to hope that she might owe her liberty to so charming a person.

Meantime the Fairy had prepared a chariot, to which she harnessed two powerful eagles; then placing the cage, with the parrot in it, she charged the bird to conduct it to the window of the Princess’s dressing-room. This was done in a few minutes, and the Princess, stepping into the chariot with the Prince, was delighted to find her parrot again.

As they rose through the air the Princess remarked a figure mounted on an eagle’s back flying in front of the chariot. She was rather alarmed, but

the Prince reassured her, telling her it was the good Fairy to whom she owed so much, and who was now conducting her in safety to her mother.

That same morning the King woke suddenly from a troubled sleep. He had dreamt that the Princess was being carried off from him, and, transforming himself into an eagle, he flew to the palace. When he failed to find her he flew into a terrible rage, and hastened home to consult his books, by which means he discovered that it was his son who had deprived him of this precious treasure. Immediately he took the shape of a harpy, and, filled with rage, was determined to devour his son, and even the Princess too, if only he could overtake them.

He set out at full speed; but he started too late, and was further delayed by a strong wind which the Fairy raised behind the young couple so as to baffle any pursuit.

You may imagine the rapture with which the Queen received the daughter she had given up for lost, as well as the amiable Prince who had rescued her. The Fairy entered with them, and warned the Queen that the Wizard King would shortly arrive, infuriated by his loss, and that nothing could preserve the Prince and Princess from his rage and magic unless they were actually married.

The Queen hastened to inform the King her husband, and the wedding took place on the spot.

As the ceremony was completed the Wizard King arrived. His despair at being so late bewildered him so entirely that he appeared in his natural form and attempted to sprinkle some black liquid over the bride and bridegroom, which was intended to kill them, but the Fairy stretched out her wand and the liquid dropped on the Magician himself. He fell down senseless, and the Princess’s father, deeply offended at the cruel revenge which had been attempted, ordered him to be removed and locked up in prison.

Now as magicians lose all their power as soon as they are in prison, the King felt himself much embarrassed at being thus at the mercy of those he had so greatly offended. The Prince implored and obtained his father’s pardon, and the prison doors were opened.

No sooner was this done than the Wizard King was seen in the air under the form of some unknown bird, exclaiming as he flew off that he

would never forgive either his son or the Fairy the cruel wrong they had done him.

Everyone entreated the Fairy to settle in the kingdom where she now was, to which she consented. She built herself a magnificent palace, to which she transported her books and fairy secrets, and where she enjoyed the sight of the perfect happiness she had helped to bestow on the entire royal family.

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14. From Les fees illustres.

THE NIXY[15]

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There was once upon a time a miller who was very well off, and had as much money and as many goods as he knew what to do with. But sorrow comes in the night, and the miller all of a sudden became so poor that at last he could hardly call the mill in which he sat his own. He wandered about all day full of despair and misery, and when he lay down at night he could get no rest, but lay awake all night sunk in sorrowful thoughts.

One morning he rose up before dawn and went outside, for he thought his heart would be lighter in the open air. As he wandered up and down on the banks of the mill-pond he heard a rustling in the water, and when he looked near he saw a white woman rising up from the waves.

He realised at once that this could be none other than the nixy of the mill-pond, and in his terror he didn't know if he should fly away or remain where he was. While he hesitated the nixy spoke, called him by his name, and asked him why he was so sad.

When the miller heard how friendly her tone was, he plucked up heart and told her how rich and prosperous he had been all his life up till now, when he didn't know what he was to do for want and misery.

Then the nixy spoke comforting words to him, and promised that she would make him richer and more prosperous than he had ever been in his life before, if he would give her in return the youngest thing in his house.

The miller thought she must mean one of his puppies or kittens, so promised the nixy at once what she asked, and returned to his mill full of hope. On the threshold he was greeted by a servant with the news that his wife had just given birth to a boy.

The poor miller was much horrified by these tidings, and went in to his wife with a heavy heart to tell her and his relations of the fatal bargain he had just struck with the nixy. 'I would gladly give up all the good fortune she promised me,' he said, 'if I could only save my child.' But no one could think of any advice to give him, beyond taking care that the child never went near the mill-pond.

So the boy throve and grew big, and in the meantime all prospered with the miller, and in a few years he was richer than he had ever been before. But all the same he did not enjoy his good fortune, for he could not forget his compact with the nixy, and he knew that sooner or later she would demand his fulfilment of it. But year after year went by, and the boy grew up and became a great hunter, and the lord of the land took him into his service, for he was as smart and bold a hunter as you would wish to see. In a short time he married a pretty young wife, and lived with her in great peace and happiness.

One day when he was out hunting a hare sprang up at his feet, and ran for some way in front of him in the open field. The hunter pursued it hotly for some time, and at last shot it dead. Then he proceeded to skin it, never noticing that he was close to the mill-pond, which from childhood up he had been taught to avoid. He soon finished the skinning, and went to the water to wash the blood off his hands. He had hardly dipped them in the pond when the nixy rose up in the water, and seizing him in her wet arms she dragged him down with her under the waves.

When the hunter did not come home in the evening his wife grew very anxious, and when his game bag was found close to the mill-pond she guessed at once what had befallen him. She was nearly beside herself with grief, and roamed round and round the pond calling on her husband without ceasing. At last, worn out with sorrow and fatigue, she fell asleep and dreamt that she was wandering along a flowery meadow, when she came to a hut where she found an old witch, who promised to restore her husband to her.

When she awoke next morning she determined to set out and find the witch; so she wandered on for many a day, and at last she reached the flowery meadow and found the hut where the old witch lived. The poor wife told her all that had happened and how she had been told in a dream of the witch’s power to help her.

The witch counselled her to go to the pond the first time there was a full moon, and to comb her black hair with a golden comb, and then to place the comb on the bank. The hunter’s wife gave the witch a handsome present, thanked her heartily, and returned home.

Time dragged heavily till the time of the full moon, but it passed at last, and as soon as it rose the young wife went to the pond, combed her

black hair with a golden comb, and when she had finished, placed the comb on the bank; then she watched the water impatiently. Soon she heard a rushing sound, and a big wave rose suddenly and swept the comb off the bank, and a minute after the head of her husband rose from the pond and gazed sadly at her. But immediately another wave came, and the head sank back into the water without having said a word. The pond lay still and motionless, glittering in the moonshine, and the hunter's wife was not a bit better off than she had been before.

In despair she wandered about for days and nights, and at last, worn out by fatigue, she sank once more into a deep sleep, and dreamt exactly the same dream about the old witch. So next morning she went again to the flowery meadow and sought the witch in her hut, and told her of her grief. The old woman counselled her to go to the mill-pond the next full moon and play upon a golden flute, and then to lay the flute on the bank.

As soon as the next moon was full the hunter's wife went to the mill-pond, played on a golden flute, and when she had finished placed it on the bank. Then a rushing sound was heard, and a wave swept the flute off the bank, and soon the head of the hunter appeared and rose up higher and higher till he was half out of the water. Then he gazed sadly at his wife and stretched out his arms towards her. But another rushing wave arose and dragged him under once more. The hunter's wife, who had stood on the bank full of joy and hope, sank into despair when she saw her husband snatched away again before her eyes.

But for her comfort she dreamt the same dream a third time, and betook herself once more to the old witch's hut in the flowery meadow. This time the old woman told her to go the next full moon to the mill-pond, and to spin there with a golden spinning-wheel, and then to leave the spinning-wheel on the bank.

The hunter's wife did as she was advised, and the first night the moon was full she sat and spun with a golden spinning-wheel, and then left the wheel on the bank. In a few minutes a rushing sound was heard in the waters, and a wave swept the spinning-wheel from the bank. Immediately the head of the hunter rose up from the pond, getting higher and higher each moment, till at length he stepped on to the bank and fell on his wife's neck.

But the waters of the pond rose up suddenly, overflowed the bank where the couple stood, and dragged them under the flood. In her despair the young wife called on the old witch to help her, and in a moment the hunter was turned into a frog and his wife into a toad. But they were not able to remain together, for the water tore them apart, and when the flood was over they both resumed their own shapes again, but the hunter and the hunter’s wife found themselves each in a strange country, and neither knew what had become of the other.

The hunter determined to become a shepherd, and his wife too became a shepherdess. So they herded their sheep for many years in solitude and sadness.

Now it happened once that the shepherd came to the country where the shepherdess lived. The neighbourhood pleased him, and he saw that the pasture was rich and suitable for his flocks. So he brought his sheep there, and herded them as before. The shepherd and shepherdess became great friends, but they did not recognise each other in the least.

But one evening when the moon was full they sat together watching their flocks, and the shepherd played upon his flute. Then the shepherdess thought of that evening when she had sat at the full moon by the mill-pond and had played on the golden flute; the recollection was too much for her, and she burst into tears. The shepherd asked her why she was crying, and left her no peace till she told him all her story. Then the scales fell from the shepherd’s eyes, and he recognised his wife, and she him. So they returned joyfully to their own home, and lived in peace and happiness ever after.

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15. From the German. Kletke.

THE GLASS MOUNTAIN[16]

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Once upon a time there was a Glass Mountain at the top of which stood a castle made of pure gold, and in front of the castle there grew an apple-tree on which there were golden apples.

Anyone who picked an apple gained admittance into the golden castle, and there in a silver room sat an enchanted Princess of surpassing fairness and beauty. She was as rich too as she was beautiful, for the cellars of the castle were full of precious stones, and great chests of the finest gold stood round the walls of all the rooms.

Many knights had come from afar to try their luck, but it was in vain they attempted to climb the mountain. In spite of having their horses shod with sharp nails, no one managed to get more than half-way up, and then they all fell back right down to the bottom of the steep slippery hill. Sometimes they broke an arm, sometimes a leg, and many a brave man had broken his neck even.

The beautiful Princess sat at her window and watched the bold knights trying to reach her on their splendid horses. The sight of her always gave men fresh courage, and they flocked from the four quarters of the globe to attempt the work of rescuing her. But all in vain, and for seven years the Princess had sat now and waited for some one to scale the Glass Mountain.

A heap of corpses both of riders and horses lay round the mountain, and many dying men lay groaning there unable to go any farther with their wounded limbs. The whole neighbourhood had the appearance of a vast churchyard. In three more days the seven years would be at an end, when a knight in golden armour and mounted on a spirited steed was seen making his way towards the fatal hill.

Sticking his spurs into his horse he made a rush at the mountain, and got up half-way, then he calmly turned his horse’s head and came down again without a slip or stumble. The following day he started in the same way; the horse trod on the glass as if it had been level earth, and sparks of fire flew from its hoofs. All the other knights gazed in astonishment, for

he had almost gained the summit, and in another moment he would have reached the apple-tree; but of a sudden a huge eagle rose up and spread its mighty wings, hitting as it did so the knight's horse in the eye.

The beast shied, opened its wide nostrils and tossed its mane, then rearing high up in the air, its hind feet slipped and it fell with its rider down the steep mountain side. Nothing was left of either of them except their bones, which rattled in the battered golden armour like dry peas in a pod.

And now there was only one more day before the close of the seven years. Then there arrived on the scene a mere schoolboy—a merry, happy-hearted youth, but at the same time strong and well-grown. He saw how many knights had broken their necks in vain, but undaunted he approached the steep mountain on foot and began the ascent.

For long he had heard his parents speak of the beautiful Princess who sat in the golden castle at the top of the Glass Mountain. He listened to all he heard, and determined that he too would try his luck. But first he went to the forest and caught a lynx, and cutting off the creature's sharp claws, he fastened them on to his own hands and feet.

Armed with these weapons he boldly started up the Glass Mountain.

The sun was nearly going down, and the youth had not got more than half-way up. He could hardly draw breath he was so worn out, and his mouth was parched by thirst. A huge black cloud passed over his head, but in vain did he beg and beseech her to let a drop of water fall on him. He opened his mouth, but the black cloud sailed past and not as much as a drop of dew moistened his dry lips.

His feet were torn and bleeding, and he could only hold on now with his hands. Evening closed in, and he strained his eyes to see if he could behold the top of the mountain. Then he gazed beneath him, and what a sight met his eyes! A yawning abyss, with certain and terrible death at the bottom, reeking with half-decayed bodies of horses and riders! And this had been the end of all the other brave men who like himself had attempted the ascent.

It was almost pitch dark now, and only the stars lit up the Glass Mountain. The poor boy still clung on as if glued to the glass by his blood-stained hands. He made no struggle to get higher, for all his strength had left him, and seeing no hope he calmly awaited death. Then all of a sudden

he fell into a deep sleep, and forgetful of his dangerous position, he slumbered sweetly. But all the same, although he slept, he had stuck his sharp claws so firmly into the glass that he was quite safe not to fall.

Now the golden apple-tree was guarded by the eagle which had overthrown the golden knight and his horse. Every night it flew round the Glass Mountain keeping a careful look-out, and no sooner had the moon emerged from the clouds than the bird rose up from the apple-tree, and circling round in the air, caught sight of the sleeping youth.

Greedy for carrion, and sure that this must be a fresh corpse, the bird swooped down upon the boy. But he was awake now, and perceiving the eagle, he determined by its help to save himself.

The eagle dug its sharp claws into the tender flesh of the youth, but he bore the pain without a sound, and seized the bird's two feet with his hands. The creature in terror lifted him high up into the air and began to circle round the tower of the castle. The youth held on bravely. He saw the glittering palace, which by the pale rays of the moon looked like a dim lamp; and he saw the high windows, and round one of them a balcony in which the beautiful Princess sat lost in sad thoughts. Then the boy saw that he was close to the apple-tree, and drawing a small knife from his belt, he cut off both the eagle's feet. The bird rose up in the air in its agony and vanished into the clouds, and the youth fell on to the broad branches of the apple-tree.

Then he drew out the claws of the eagle's feet that had remained in his flesh, and put the peel of one of the golden apples on the wound, and in one moment it was healed and well again. He pulled several of the beautiful apples and put them in his pocket; then he entered the castle. The door was guarded by a great dragon, but as soon as he threw an apple at it, the beast vanished.

At the same moment a gate opened, and the youth perceived a courtyard full of flowers and beautiful trees, and on a balcony sat the lovely enchanted Princess with her retinue.

As soon as she saw the youth, she ran towards him and greeted him as her husband and master. She gave him all her treasures, and the youth became a rich and mighty ruler. But he never returned to the earth, for only the mighty eagle, who had been the guardian of the Princess and of the castle, could have carried on his wings the enormous treasure down to

the world. But as the eagle had lost its feet it died, and its body was found in a wood on the Glass Mountain.

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One day when the youth was strolling about in the palace garden with the Princess, his wife, he looked down over the edge of the Glass Mountain and saw to his astonishment a great number of people gathered there. He blew his silver whistle, and the swallow who acted as messenger in the golden castle flew past.

‘Fly down and ask what the matter is,’ he said to the little bird, who sped off like lightning and soon returned saying:

‘The blood of the eagle has restored all the people below to life. All those who have perished on this mountain are awakening up to-day, as it were from a sleep, and are mounting their horses, and the whole population are gazing on this unheard-of wonder with joy and amazement.’

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16. From the Polish. Kletke.

ALPHEGE, OR THE GREEN MONKEY

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Many years ago there lived a King, who was twice married. His first wife, a good and beautiful woman, died at the birth of her little son, and the King her husband was so overwhelmed with grief at her loss that his only comfort was in the sight of his heir.

When the time for the young Prince's christening came the King chose as godmother a neighbouring Princess, so celebrated for her wisdom and goodness that she was commonly called 'the Good Queen.' She named the baby Alphege, and from that moment took him to her heart.

Time wipes away the greatest griefs, and after two or three years the King married again. His second wife was a Princess of undeniable beauty, but by no means of so amiable a disposition as the first Queen. In due time a second Prince was born, and the Queen was devoured with rage at the thought that Prince Alphege came between her son and the throne. She took care however to conceal her jealous feelings from the King.

At length she could control herself no longer, so she sent a trusty servant to her old and faithful friend the Fairy of the Mountain, to beg her to devise some means by which she might get rid of her stepson.

The Fairy replied that, much as she desired to be agreeable to the Queen in every way, it was impossible for her to attempt anything against the young Prince, who was under the protection of some greater Power than her own.

The 'Good Queen' on her side watched carefully over her godson. She was obliged to do so from a distance, her own country being a remote one, but she was well informed of all that went on and knew all about the Queen's wicked designs. She therefore sent the Prince a large and splendid ruby, with injunctions to wear it night and day as it would protect him from all attacks, but added that the talisman only retained its power as long as the Prince remained within his father's dominions. The Wicked Queen knowing this made every attempt to get the Prince out of the

country, but her efforts failed, till one day accident did what she was unable to accomplish.

The King had an only sister who was deeply attached to him, and who was married to the sovereign of a distant country. She had always kept up a close correspondence with her brother, and the accounts she heard of Prince Alphege made her long to become acquainted with so charming a nephew. She entreated the King to allow the Prince to visit her, and after some hesitation which was overruled by his wife, he finally consented.

Prince Alphege was at this time fourteen years old, and the handsomest and most engaging youth imaginable. In his infancy he had been placed in the charge of one of the great ladies of the Court, who, according to the prevailing custom, acted first as his head nurse and then as his governess. When he outgrew her care her husband was appointed as his tutor and governor, so that he had never been separated from this excellent couple, who loved him as tenderly as they did their only daughter Zayda, and were warmly loved by him in return.

When the Prince set forth on his travels it was but natural that this devoted couple should accompany him, and accordingly he started with them and attended by a numerous retinue.

For some time he travelled through his father’s dominions and all went well; but soon after passing the frontier they had to cross a desert plain under a burning sun. They were glad to take shelter under a group of trees near, and here the Prince complained of burning thirst. Luckily a tiny stream ran close by and some water was soon procured, but no sooner had he tasted it than he sprang from his carriage and disappeared in a moment. In vain did his anxious followers seek for him, he was nowhere to be found.

As they were hunting and shouting through the trees a black monkey suddenly appeared on a point of rock and said: ‘Poor sorrowing people, you are seeking your Prince in vain. Return to your own country and know that he will not be restored to you till you have for some time failed to recognise him.’

With these words he vanished, leaving the courtiers sadly perplexed; but as all their efforts to find the Prince were useless they had no choice but to go home, bringing with them the sad news, which so greatly distressed the King that he fell ill and died not long after.

The Queen, whose ambition was boundless, was delighted to see the crown on her son's head and to have the power in her own hands. Her hard rule made her very unpopular, and it was commonly believed that she had made away with Prince Alphege. Indeed, had the King her son not been deservedly beloved a revolution would certainly have arisen.

Meantime the former governess of the unfortunate Alphege, who had lost her husband soon after the King's death, retired to her own house with her daughter, who grew up a lovely and most loveable girl, and both continued to mourn the loss of their dear Prince.

The young King was devoted to hunting, and often indulged in his favourite pastime, attended by the noblest youths in his kingdom.

One day, after a long morning's chase he stopped to rest near a brook in the shade of a little wood, where a splendid tent had been prepared for him. Whilst at luncheon he suddenly spied a little monkey of the brightest green sitting on a tree and gazing so tenderly at him that he felt quite moved. He forbade his courtiers to frighten it, and the monkey, noticing how much attention was being paid him, sprang from bough to bough, and at length gradually approached the King, who offered him some food. The monkey took it very daintily and finally came to the table. The King took him on his knees, and, delighted with his capture, brought him home with him. He would trust no one else with its care, and the whole Court soon talked of nothing but the pretty green monkey.

One morning, as Prince Alphege's governess and her daughter were alone together, the little monkey sprang in through an open window. He had escaped from the palace, and his manners were so gentle and caressing that Zayda and her mother soon got over the first fright he had given them. He had spent some time with them and quite won their hearts by his insinuating ways, when the King discovered where he was and sent to fetch him back. But the monkey made such piteous cries, and seemed so unhappy when anyone attempted to catch him, that the two ladies begged the King to leave him a little longer with them, to which he consented.

One evening, as they sat by the fountain in the garden, the little monkey kept gazing at Zayda with such sad and loving eyes that she and her mother could not think what to make of it, and they were still more surprised when they saw big tears rolling down his cheeks.

Next day both mother and daughter were sitting in a jessamine bower in the garden, and they began to talk of the green monkey and his strange ways. The mother said, ‘My dear child, I can no longer hide my feelings from you. I cannot get the thought out of my mind that the green monkey is no other than our beloved Prince Alphege, transformed in this strange fashion. I know the idea sounds wild, but I cannot get it out of my heart, and it leaves me no peace.’

As she spoke she glanced up, and there sat the little monkey, whose tears and gestures seemed to confirm her words.

The following night the elder lady dreamt that she saw the Good Queen, who said, ‘Do not weep any longer but follow my directions. Go into your garden and lift up the little marble slab at the foot of the great myrtle tree. You will find beneath it a crystal vase filled with a bright green liquid. Take it with you and place the thing which is at present most in your thoughts into a bath filled with roses and rub it well with the green liquid.’

At these words the sleeper awoke, and lost no time in rising and hurrying to the garden, where she found all as the Good Queen had described. Then she hastened to rouse her daughter and together they prepared the bath, for they would not let their women know what they were about. Zayda gathered quantities of roses, and when all was ready they put the monkey into a large jasper bath, where the mother rubbed him all over with the green liquid.

Their suspense was not long, for suddenly the monkey skin dropped off, and there stood Prince Alphege, the handsomest and most charming of men. The joy of such a meeting was beyond words. After a time the ladies begged the Prince to relate his adventures, and he told them of all his sufferings in the desert when he was first transformed. His only comfort had been in visits from the Good Queen, who had at length put him in the way of meeting his brother.

Several days were spent in these interesting conversations, but at length Zayda’s mother began to think of the best means for placing the Prince on the throne, which was his by right.

The Queen on her side was feeling very anxious. She had felt sure from the first that her son’s pet monkey was no other than Prince Alphege, and

she longed to put an end to him. Her suspicions were confirmed by the Fairy of the Mountain, and she hastened in tears to the King, her son.

‘I am informed,’ she cried, ‘that some ill-disposed people have raised up an impostor in the hopes of dethroning you. You must at once have him put to death.’

The King, who was very brave, assured the Queen that he would soon punish the conspirators. He made careful inquiries into the matter, and thought it hardly probable that a quiet widow and a young girl would think of attempting anything of the nature of a revolution.

He determined to go and see them, and to find out the truth for himself; so one night, without saying anything to the Queen or his ministers, he set out for the palace where the two ladies lived, attended only by a small band of followers.

The two ladies were at the moment deep in conversation with Prince Alphege, and hearing a knocking so late at night begged him to keep out of sight for a time. What was their surprise when the door was opened to see the King and his suite.

‘I know,’ said the King, ‘that you are plotting against my crown and person, and I have come to have an explanation with you.’

As she was about to answer Prince Alphege, who had heard all, came forward and said, ‘It is from me you must ask an explanation, brother.’ He spoke with such grace and dignity that everyone gazed at him with mute surprise.

At length the King, recovering from his astonishment at recognising the brother who had been lost some years before, exclaimed, ‘Yes, you are indeed my brother, and now that I have found you, take the throne to which I have no longer a right.’ So saying, he respectfully kissed the Prince’s hand.

Alphege threw himself into his arms, and the brothers hastened to the royal palace, where in the presence of the entire court he received the crown from his brother’s hand. To clear away any possible doubt, he showed the ruby which the Good Queen had given him in his childhood. As they were gazing at it, it suddenly split with a loud noise, and at the same moment the Wicked Queen expired.

King Alphege lost no time in marrying his dear and lovely Zayda, and his joy was complete when the Good Queen appeared at his wedding. She

assured him that the Fairy of the Mountain had henceforth lost all power over him, and after spending some time with the young couple, and bestowing the most costly presents on them, she retired to her own country.

King Alphege insisted on his brother sharing his throne, and they all lived to a good old age, universally beloved and admired.

FAIRER-THAN-A-FAIRY

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Once there lived a King who had no children for many years after his marriage. At length heaven granted him a daughter of such remarkable beauty that he could think of no name so appropriate for her as ‘Fairer-than-a-Fairy.’

It never occurred to the good-natured monarch that such a name was certain to call down the hatred and jealousy of the fairies in a body on the child, but this was what happened. No sooner had they heard of this presumptuous name than they resolved to gain possession of her who bore it, and either to torment her cruelly, or at least to conceal her from the eyes of all men.

The eldest of their tribe was entrusted to carry out their revenge. This Fairy was named Lagree; she was so old that she only had one eye and one tooth left, and even these poor remains she had to keep all night in a strengthening liquid. She was also so spiteful that she gladly devoted all her time to carrying out all the mean or ill-natured tricks of the whole body of fairies.

With her large experience, added to her native spite, she found but little difficulty in carrying off Fairer-than-a-Fairy. The poor child, who was only seven years old, nearly died of fear on finding herself in the power of this hideous creature. However, when after an hour’s journey underground she found herself in a splendid palace with lovely gardens, she felt a little reassured, and was further cheered when she discovered that her pet cat and dog had followed her.

The old Fairy led her to a pretty room which she said should be hers, at the same time giving her the strictest orders never to let out the fire which was burning brightly in the grate. She then gave two glass bottles into the Princess’s charge, desiring her to take the greatest care of them, and having enforced her orders with the most awful threats in case of disobedience, she vanished, leaving the little girl at liberty to explore the

palace and grounds and a good deal relieved at having only two apparently easy tasks set her.

Several years passed, during which time the Princess grew accustomed to her lonely life, obeyed the Fairy's orders, and by degrees forgot all about the court of the King her father.

One day, whilst passing near a fountain in the garden, she noticed that the sun's rays fell on the water in such a manner as to produce a brilliant rainbow. She stood still to admire it, when, to her great surprise, she heard a voice addressing her which seemed to come from the centre of its rays. The voice was that of a young man, and its sweetness of tone and the agreeable things it uttered, led one to infer that its owner must be equally charming; but this had to be a mere matter of fancy, for no one was visible.

The beautiful Rainbow informed Fairer-than-a-Fairy that he was young, the son of a powerful king, and that the Fairy, Lagree, who owed his parents a grudge, had revenged herself by depriving him of his natural shape for some years; that she had imprisoned him in the palace, where he had found his confinement hard to bear for some time, but now, he owned, he no longer sighed for freedom since he had seen and learned to love Fairer-than-a-Fairy.

He added many other tender speeches to this declaration, and the Princess, to whom such remarks were a new experience, could not help feeling pleased and touched by his attentions.

The Prince could only appear or speak under the form of a Rainbow, and it was therefore necessary that the sun should shine on water so as to enable the rays to form themselves.

Fairer-than-a-Fairy lost no moment in which she could meet her lover, and they enjoyed many long and interesting interviews. One day, however, their conversation became so absorbing and time passed so quickly that the Princess forgot to attend to the fire, and it went out. Lagree, on her return, soon found out the neglect, and seemed only too pleased to have the opportunity of showing her spite to her lovely prisoner. She ordered Fairer-than-a-Fairy to start next day at dawn to ask Locrinos for fire with which to relight the one she had allowed to go out.

Now this Locrinos was a cruel monster who devoured everyone he came across, and especially enjoyed a chance of catching and eating any young girls. Our heroine obeyed with great sweetness, and without having

been able to take leave of her lover she set off to go to Locrinos as to certain death. As she was crossing a wood a bird sang to her to pick up a shining pebble which she would find in a fountain close by, and to use it when needed. She took the bird's advice, and in due time arrived at the house of Locrinos. Luckily she only found his wife at home, who was much struck by the Princess's youth and beauty and sweet gentle manners, and still further impressed by the present of the shining pebble.

She readily let Fairer-than-a-Fairy have the fire, and in return for the stone she gave her another, which, she said, might prove useful some day. Then she sent her away without doing her any harm.

Lagree was as much surprised as displeased at the happy result of this expedition, and Fairer-than-a Fairy waited anxiously for an opportunity of meeting Prince Rainbow and telling him her adventures. She found, however, that he had already been told all about them by a Fairy who protected him, and to whom he was related.

The dread of fresh dangers to his beloved Princess made him devise some more convenient way of meeting than by the garden fountain, and Fairer-than-a-Fairy carried out his plan daily with entire success. Every morning she placed a large basin full of water on her window-sill, and as soon as the sun's rays fell on the water the Rainbow appeared as clearly as it had ever done in the fountain. By this means they were able to meet without losing sight of the fire or of the two bottles in which the old Fairy kept her eye and her tooth at night, and for some time the lovers enjoyed every hour of sunshine together.

One day Prince Rainbow appeared in the depths of woe. He had just heard that he was to be banished from this lovely spot, but he had no idea where he was to go. The poor young couple were in despair, and only parted with the last ray of sunshine, and in hopes of meeting next morning. Alas! next day was dark and gloomy, and it was only late in the afternoon that the sun broke through the clouds for a few minutes.

Fairer-than-a-Fairy eagerly ran to the window, but in her haste she upset the basin, and spilt all the water with which she had carefully filled it overnight. No other water was at hand except that in the two bottles. It was the only chance of seeing her lover before they were separated, and she did not hesitate to break the bottle and pour their contents into the basin, when the Rainbow appeared at once. Their farewells were full of

tenderness; the Prince made the most ardent and sincere protestations, and promised to neglect nothing which might help to deliver his dear Fairer-than-a-Fairy from her captivity, and implored her to consent to their marriage as soon as they should both be free. The Princess, on her side, vowed to have no other husband, and declared herself willing to brave death itself in order to rejoin him.

They were not allowed much time for their adieus; the Rainbow vanished, and the Princess, resolved to run all risks, started off at once, taking nothing with her but her dog, her cat, a sprig of myrtle, and the stone which the wife of Locrinos gave her.

When Lagree became aware of her prisoner's flight she was furious, and set off at full speed in pursuit. She overtook her just as the poor girl, overcome by fatigue, had lain down to rest in a cave which the stone had formed itself into to shelter her. The little dog who was watching her mistress promptly flew at Lagree and bit her so severely that she stumbled against a corner of the cave and broke off her only tooth. Before she had recovered from the pain and rage this caused her, the Princess had time to escape, and was some way on her road. Fear gave her strength for some time, but at last she could go no further, and sank down to rest. As she did so, the sprig of myrtle she carried touched the ground, and immediately a green and shady bower sprang up round her, in which she hoped to sleep in peace.

But Lagree had not given up her pursuit, and arrived just as Fairer-than-a-Fairy had fallen fast asleep. This time she made sure of catching her victim, but the cat spied her out, and, springing from one of the boughs of the arbour she flew at Lagree's face and tore out her only eye, thus delivering the Princess for ever from her persecutor.

One might have thought that all would now be well, but no sooner had Lagree been put to fight than our heroine was overwhelmed with hunger and thirst. She felt as though she should certainly expire, and it was with some difficulty that she dragged herself as far as a pretty little green and white house, which stood at no great distance. Here she was received by a beautiful lady dressed in green and white to match the house, which apparently belonged to her, and of which she seemed the only inhabitant.

She greeted the fainting Princess most kindly, gave her an excellent supper, and after a long night's rest in a delightful bed told her that after

many troubles she should finally attain her desire.

As the green and white lady took leave of the Princess she gave her a nut, desiring her only to open it in the most urgent need.

After a long and tiring journey Fairer-than-a-Fairy was once more received in a house, and by a lady exactly like the one she had quitted. Here again she received a present with the same injunctions, but instead of a nut this lady gave her a golden pomegranate. The mournful Princess had to continue her weary way, and after many troubles and hardships she again found rest and shelter in a third house exactly similar to the two others.

These houses belonged to three sisters, all endowed with fairy gifts, and all so alike in mind and person that they wished their houses and garments to be equally alike. Their occupation consisted in helping those in misfortune, and they were as gentle and benevolent as Lagree had been cruel and spiteful.

The third Fairy comforted the poor traveller, begged her not to lose heart, and assured her that her troubles should be rewarded.

She accompanied her advice by the gift of a crystal smelling-bottle, with strict orders only to open it in case of urgent need. Fairer-than-a-Fairy thanked her warmly, and resumed her way cheered by pleasant thoughts.

After a time her road led through a wood, full of soft airs and sweet odours, and before she had gone a hundred yards she saw a wonderful silver Castle suspended by strong silver chains to four of the largest trees. It was so perfectly hung that a gentle breeze rocked it sufficiently to send you pleasantly to sleep.

Fairer-than-a-Fairy felt a strong desire to enter this Castle, but besides being hung a little above the ground there seemed to be neither doors nor windows. She had no doubt (though really I cannot think why) that the moment had come in which to use the nut which had been given her. She opened it, and out came a diminutive hall porter at whose belt hung a tiny chain, at the end of which was a golden key half as long as the smallest pin you ever saw.

The Princess climbed up one of the silver chains, holding in her hand the little porter who, in spite of his minute size, opened a secret door with his golden key and let her in. She entered a magnificent room which

appeared to occupy the entire Castle, and which was lighted by gold and jewelled stars in the ceiling. In the midst of this room stood a couch, draped with curtains of all the colours of the rainbow, and suspended by golden cords so that it swayed with the Castle in a manner which rocked its occupant delightfully to sleep.

On this elegant couch lay Prince Rainbow, looking more beautiful than ever, and sunk in profound slumber, in which he had been held ever since his disappearance.

Fairy-than-a-Fairy, who now saw him for the first time in his real shape, hardly dared to gaze at him, fearing lest his appearance might not be in keeping with the voice and language which had won her heart. At the same time she could not help feeling rather hurt at the apparent indifference with which she was received.

She related all the dangers and difficulties she had gone through, and though she repeated the story twenty times in a loud clear voice, the Prince slept on and took no heed. She then had recourse to the golden pomegranate, and on opening it found that all the seeds were as many little violins which flew up in the vaulted roof and at once began playing melodiously.

The Prince was not completely roused, but he opened his eyes a little and looked all the handsomer.

Impatient at not being recognised, Fairer-than-a-Fairy now drew out her third present, and on opening the crystal scent-bottle a little syren flew out, who silenced the violins and then sang close to the Prince’s ear the story of all his lady love had suffered in her search for him. She added some gentle reproaches to her tale, but before she had got far he was wide awake, and transported with joy threw himself at the Princess’s feet. At the same moment the walls of the room expanded and opened out, revealing a golden throne covered with jewels. A magnificent Court now began to assemble, and at the same time several elegant carriages filled with ladies in magnificent dresses drove up. In the first and most splendid of these carriages sat Prince Rainbow’s mother. She fondly embraced her son, after which she informed him that his father had been dead for some years, that the anger of the Fairies was at length appeased, and that he might return in peace to reign over his people, who were longing for his presence.

The Court received the new King with joyful acclamations which would have delighted him at any other time, but all his thoughts were full of Fairer-than-a-Fairy. He was just about to present her to his mother and the Court, feeling sure that her charms would win all hearts, when the three green and white sisters appeared.

They declared the secret of Fairy-than-a-Fairy's royal birth, and the Queen taking the two lovers in her carriage set off with them for the capital of the kingdom.

Here they were received with tumultuous joy. The wedding was celebrated without delay, and succeeding years diminished neither the virtues, beauty, nor the mutual affection of King Rainbow and his Queen, Fairer-than-a-Fairy.

THE THREE BROTHERS[17]

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There was once upon a time a witch, who in the shape of a hawk used every night to break the windows of a certain village church. In the same village there lived three brothers, who were all determined to kill the mischievous hawk. But in vain did the two eldest mount guard in the church with their guns; as soon as the bird appeared high above their heads, sleep overpowered them, and they only awoke to hear the windows crashing in.

Then the youngest brother took his turn of guarding the windows, and to prevent his being overcome by sleep he placed a lot of thorns under his chin, so that if he felt drowsy and nodded his head, they would prick him and keep him awake.

The moon was already risen, and it was as light as day, when suddenly he heard a fearful noise, and at the same time a terrible desire to sleep overpowered him.

His eyelids closed, and his head sank on his shoulders, but the thorns ran into him and were so painful that he awoke at once. He saw the hawk swooping down upon the church, and in a moment he had seized his gun and shot at the bird. The hawk fell heavily under a big stone, severely wounded in its right wing. The youth ran to look at it, and saw that a huge abyss had opened below the stone. He went at once to fetch his brothers, and with their help dragged a lot of pine-wood and ropes to the spot. They fastened some of the burning pine-wood to the end of the rope, and let it slowly down to the bottom of the abyss. At first it was quite dark, and the flaming torch only lit up dirty grey stone walls. But the youngest brother determined to explore the abyss, and letting himself down by the rope he soon reached the bottom. Here he found a lovely meadow full of green trees and exquisite flowers.

In the middle of the meadow stood a huge stone castle, with an iron gate leading to it, which was wide open. Everything in the castle seemed to be made of copper, and the only inhabitant he could discover was a lovely

girl, who was combing her golden hair; and he noticed that whenever one of her hairs fell on the ground it rang out like pure metal. The youth looked at her more closely, and saw that her skin was smooth and fair, her blue eyes bright and sparkling, and her hair as golden as the sun. He fell in love with her on the spot, and kneeling at her feet, he implored her to become his wife.

The lovely girl accepted his proposal gladly; but at the same time she warned him that she could never come up to the world above till her mother, the old witch, was dead. And she went on to tell him that the only way in which the old creature could be killed was with the sword that hung up in the castle; but the sword was so heavy that no one could lift it.

Then the youth went into a room in the castle where everything was made of silver, and here he found another beautiful girl, the sister of his bride. She was combing her silver hair, and every hair that fell on the ground rang out like pure metal. The second girl handed him the sword, but though he tried with all his strength he could not lift it. At last a third sister came to him and gave him a drop of something to drink, which she said would give him the needful strength. He drank one drop, but still he could not lift the sword; then he drank a second, and the sword began to move; but only after he had drunk a third drop was he able to swing the sword over his head.

Then he hid himself in the castle and awaited the old witch's arrival. At last as it was beginning to grow dark she appeared. She swooped down upon a big apple-tree, and after shaking some golden apples from it, she pounced down upon the earth. As soon as her feet touched the ground she became transformed from a hawk into a woman. This was the moment the youth was waiting for, and he swung his mighty sword in the air with all his strength and the witch's head fell off, and her blood spurted up on the walls.

Without fear of any further danger, he packed up all the treasures of the castle into great chests, and gave his brothers a signal to pull them up out of the abyss. First the treasures were attached to the rope and then the three lovely girls. And now everything was up above and only he himself remained below. But as he was a little suspicious of his brothers, he fastened a heavy stone on to the rope and let them pull it up. At first they

heaved with a will, but when the stone was half way up they let it drop suddenly, and it fell to the bottom broken into a hundred pieces.

‘So that’s what would have happened to my bones had I trusted myself to them,’ said the youth sadly; and he began to cry bitterly, not because of the treasures, but because of the lovely girl with her swanlike neck and golden hair.

For a long time he wandered sadly all through the beautiful underworld, and one day he met a magician who asked him the cause of his tears. The youth told him all that had befallen him, and the magician said:

‘Do not grieve, young man! If you will guard the children who are hidden in the golden apple-tree, I will bring you at once up to the earth. Another magician who lives in this land always eats my children up. It is in vain that I have hidden them under the earth and locked them into the castle. Now I have hidden them in the apple-tree; hide yourself there too, and at midnight you will see my enemy.’

The youth climbed up the tree, and picked some of the beautiful golden apples, which he ate for his supper.

At midnight the wind began to rise, and a rustling sound was heard at the foot of the tree. The youth looked down and beheld a long thick serpent beginning to crawl up the tree. It wound itself round the stem and gradually got higher and higher. It stretched its huge head, in which the eyes glittered fiercely, among the branches, searching for the nest in which the little children lay. They trembled with terror when they saw the hideous creature, and hid themselves beneath the leaves.

Then the youth swung his mighty sword in the air, and with one blow cut off the serpent’s head. He cut up the rest of the body into little bits and strewed them to the four winds.

The father of the rescued children was so delighted over the death of his enemy that he told the youth to get on his back, and in this way he carried him up to the world above.

With what joy did he hurry now to his brothers’ house! He burst into a room where they were all assembled, but no one knew who he was. Only his bride, who was serving as cook to her sisters, recognised her lover at once.

His brothers, who had quite believed he was dead, yielded him up his treasures at once, and flew into the woods in terror. But the good youth forgave them all they had done, and divided his treasures with them. Then he built himself a big castle with golden windows, and there he lived happily with his golden-haired wife till the end of their lives.

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17. From the Polish. Kletke.

THE BOY AND THE WOLVES, OR THE BROKEN PROMISE[18]

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Once upon a time an Indian hunter built himself a house in the middle of a great forest, far away from all his tribe; for his heart was gentle and kind, and he was weary of the treachery and cruel deeds of those who had been his friends. So he left them, and took his wife and three children, and they journeyed on until they found a spot near to a clear stream, where they began to cut down trees, and to make ready their wigwam. For many years they lived peacefully and happily in this sheltered place, never leaving it except to hunt the wild animals, which served them both for food and clothes. At last, however, the strong man felt sick, and before long he knew he must die.

So he gathered his family round him, and said his last words to them. ‘You, my wife, the companion of my days, will follow me ere many moons have waned to the island of the blest. But for you, O my children, whose lives are but newly begun, the wickedness, unkindness, and ingratitude from which I fled are before you. Yet I shall go hence in peace, my children, if you will promise always to love each other, and never to forsake your youngest brother.

‘Never!’ they replied, holding out their hands. And the hunter died content.

Scarcely eight moons had passed when, just as he had said, the wife went forth, and followed her husband; but before leaving her children she bade the two elder ones think of their promise never to forsake the younger, for he was a child, and weak. And while the snow lay thick upon the ground, they tended him and cherished him; but when the earth showed green again, the heart of the young man stirred within him, and he longed to see the wigwams of the village where his father’s youth was spent.

Therefore he opened all his heart to his sister, who answered: ‘My brother, I understand your longing for our fellow-men, whom here we

cannot see. But remember our father's words. Shall we not seek our own pleasures, and forget the little one?'

But he would not listen, and, making no reply, he took his bow and arrows and left the hut. The snows fell and melted, yet he never returned; and at last the heart of the girl grew cold and hard, and her little boy became a burden in her eyes, till one day she spoke thus to him: 'See, there is food for many days to come. Stay here within the shelter of the hut. I go to seek our brother, and when I have found him I shall return hither.'

But when, after hard journeying, she reached the village where her brother dwelt, and saw that he had a wife and was happy, and when she, too, was sought by a young brave, then she also forgot the boy alone in the forest, and thought only of her husband.

Now as soon as the little boy had eaten all the food which his sister had left him, he went out into the woods, and gathered berries and dug up roots, and while the sun shone he was contented and had his fill. But when the snows began and the wind howled, then his stomach felt empty and his limbs cold, and he hid in trees all the night, and only crept out to eat what the wolves had left behind. And by-and-by, having no other friends, he sought their company, and sat by while they devoured their prey, and they grew to know him, and gave him food. And without them he would have died in the snow.

But at last the snows melted, and the ice upon the great lake, and as the wolves went down to the shore, the boy went after them. And it happened one day that his big brother was fishing in his canoe near the shore, and he heard the voice of a child singing in the Indian tone—

'My brother, my brother!
I am becoming a wolf,
I am becoming a wolf!'

And when he had so sung he howled as wolves howl. Then the heart of the elder sunk, and he hastened towards him, crying, 'Brother, little brother, come to me;' but he, being half a wolf, only continued his song. And the louder the elder called him, 'Brother, little brother, come to me,'

the swifter he fled after his brothers the wolves, and the heavier grew his skin, till, with a long howl, he vanished into the depths of the forest.

So, with shame and anguish in his soul, the elder brother went back to his village, and, with his sister, mourned the little boy and the broken promise till the end of his life.

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18. A North American Indian story.

THE GLASS AXE[19]

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There was once upon a time a King and Queen who had everything they could possibly wish for in this world except a child. At last, after twelve years, the Queen gave birth to a son; but she did not live long to enjoy her happiness, for on the following day she died. But before her death she called her husband to her and said, ‘Never let the child put his feet on the ground, for as soon as he does so he will fall into the power of a wicked Fairy, who will do him much harm.’ And these were the last words the poor Queen spoke.

The boy throve and grew big, and when he was too heavy for his nurse to carry, a chair was made for him on little wheels, in which he could wander through the palace gardens without help; at other times he was carried about on a litter, and he was always carefully watched and guarded for fear he should at any time put his feet to the ground.

But as this sort of life was bad for his health, the doctors ordered him horse exercise, and he soon became a first-rate rider, and used to go out for long excursions on horseback, accompanied always by his father’s stud-groom and a numerous retinue.

Every day he rode through the neighbouring fields and woods, and always returned home in the evening safe and well. In this way many years passed, and the Prince grew to manhood, and hardly anyone remembered the Queen’s warning, though precautions were still taken, more from use and wont than for any other reason.

One day the Prince and his suite went out for a ride in a wood where his father sometimes held a hunt. Their way led through a stream whose banks were overgrown with thick brushwood. Just as the horsemen were about to ford the river, a hare, startled by the sound of the horses’ hoofs, started up from the grass and ran towards the thicket. The young Prince pursued the little creature, and had almost overtaken it, when the girth of his saddle suddenly broke in two and he fell heavily to the ground. No

sooner had his foot touched the earth than he disappeared before the eyes of the horrified courtiers.

They sought for him far and near, but all in vain, and they were forced to recognise the power of the evil Fairy, against which the Queen had warned them on her death-bed. The old King was much grieved when they brought him the news of his son's disappearance, but as he could do nothing to free him from his fate, he gave himself up to an old age of grief and loneliness, cherishing at the same time the hope that some lucky chance might one day deliver the youth out of the hands of his enemy.

Hardly had the Prince touched the ground than he felt himself violently seized by an unseen power, and hurried away he knew not whither. A whole new world stretched out before him, quite unlike the one he had left. A splendid castle surrounded by a huge lake was the abode of the Fairy, and the only approach to it was over a bridge of clouds. On the other side of the lake high mountains rose up, and dark woods stretched along the banks; over all hung a thick mist, and deep silence reigned everywhere.

No sooner had the Fairy reached her own domain than she made herself visible, and turning to the Prince she told him that unless he obeyed all her commands down to the minutest detail he would be severely punished. Then she gave him an axe made of glass, and bade him cross the bridge of clouds and go into the wood beyond and cut down all the trees there before sunset. At the same time she cautioned him with many angry words against speaking to a black girl he would most likely meet in the wood.

The Prince listened to her words meekly, and when she had finished took up the glass axe and set out for the forest. At every step he seemed to sink into the clouds, but fear gave wings to his feet, and he crossed the lake in safety and set to work at once.

But no sooner had he struck the first blow with his axe than it broke into a thousand pieces against the tree. The poor youth was so terrified he did not know what to do, for he was in mortal dread of the punishment the wicked old Fairy would inflict on him. He wandered to and fro in the wood, not knowing where he was going, and at last, worn out by fatigue and misery, he sank on the ground and fell fast asleep.

He did not know how long he had slept when a sudden sound awoke him, and opening his eyes he saw a black girl standing beside him.

Mindful of the Fairy's warning he did not dare to address her, but she on her part greeted him in the most friendly manner, and asked him at once if he were under the power of the wicked Fairy. The Prince nodded his head silently in answer.

Then the black girl told him that she too was in the power of the Fairy, who had doomed her to wander about in her present guise until some youth should take pity on her and bear her in safety to the other side of the river which they saw in the distance, and on the other side of which the Fairy's domain and power ended.

The girl's words so inspired the Prince with confidence that he told her all his tale of woe, and ended up by asking her advice as to how he was to escape the punishment the Fairy would be sure to inflict on him when she discovered that he had not cut down the trees in the wood and that he had broken her axe.

'You must know,' answered the black girl, 'that the Fairy in whose power we both are is my own mother, but you must not betray this secret, for it would cost me my life. If you will only promise to try and free me I will stand by you, and will accomplish for you all the tasks which my mother sets you.'

The Prince promised joyfully all she asked; then having once more warned him not to betray her confidence, she handed him a draught to drink which very soon sunk his senses in a deep slumber.

His astonishment was great when he awoke to find the glass axe whole and unbroken at his side, and all the trees of the wood lying felled around him!

He made all haste across the bridge of clouds, and told the Fairy that her commands were obeyed. She was much amazed when she heard that all the wood was cut down, and saw the axe unbroken in his hand, and since she could not believe that he had done all this by himself, she questioned him narrowly if he had seen or spoken to the black girl. But the Prince lied manfully, and swore he had never looked up from his work for a moment. Seeing she could get nothing more out of him, she gave him a little bread and water, and showing him to a small dark cupboard she told him he might sleep there.

Morning had hardly dawned when the Fairy awoke the Prince, and giving him the glass axe again she told him to cut up all the wood he had

felled the day before, and to put it in bundles ready for firewood; at the same time she warned him once more against approaching or speaking a word to the black girl if he met her in the wood.

Although his task was no easier than that of the day before, the youth set out much more cheerfully, because he knew he could count an the help of the black girl. With quicker and lighter step he crossed the bridge of clouds, and hardly had he reached the other side than his friend stood before him and greeted him cheerfully. When she heard what the Fairy demanded this time, she answered smilingly, ‘Never fear,’ and handed him another draught, which very soon caused the Prince to sink into a deep sleep.

When he awoke everything, was done. All the trees of the wood were cut up into firewood and arranged in bundles ready for use.

He returned to the castle as quickly as he could, and told the Fairy that her commands were obeyed. She was even more amazed than she had been before, and asked him again if he had either seen or spoken to the black girl; but the Prince knew better than to betray his word, and once more lied freely.

On the following day the Fairy set him a third task to do, even harder than the other two. She told him he must build a castle on the other side of the lake, made of nothing but gold, silver, and precious stones, and unless he could accomplish this within an hour, the most frightful doom awaited him.

The Prince heard her words without anxiety, so entirely did he rely on the help of his black friend. Full of hope he hurried across the bridge, and recognised at once the spot where the castle was to stand, for spades, hammers, axes, and every other building implement lay scattered on the ground ready for the workman’s hand, but of gold, silver, and precious stones there was not a sign. But before the Prince had time to feel despondent the black girl beckoned to him in the distance from behind a rock, where she had hidden herself for fear her mother should catch sight of her. Full of joy the youth hurried towards her, and begged her aid and counsel in the new piece of work he had been given to do.

But this time the Fairy had watched the Prince’s movements from her window, and she saw him hiding himself behind the rock with her daughter. She uttered a piercing shriek so that the mountains re-echoed

with the sound of it, and the terrified pair had hardly dared to look out from their hiding-place when the enraged woman, with her dress and hair flying in the wind, hurried over the bridge of clouds. The Prince at once gave himself up for lost, but the girl told him to be of good courage and to follow her as quickly as he could. But before they left their shelter she broke off a little bit of the rock, spoke some magic words over it, and threw it in the direction her mother was coming from. In a moment a glittering palace arose before the eyes of the Fairy which blinded her with its dazzling splendour, and with its many doors and passages prevented her for some time from finding her way out of it.

In the meantime the black girl hurried on with the Prince, hastening to reach the river, where once on the other side they would for ever be out of the wicked Fairy's power. But before they had accomplished half the way they heard again the rustle of her garments and her muttered curses pursuing them closely.

The Prince was terrified; he dared not look back, and he felt his strength giving way. But before he had time to despair the girl uttered some more magic words, and immediately she herself was changed into a pond, and the Prince into a duck swimming on its surface.

When the Fairy saw this her rage knew no bounds, and she used all her magic wits to make the pond disappear; she caused a hill of sand to arise at her feet, meaning it to dry up the water at once. But the sand hill only drove the pond a little farther away, and its waters seemed to increase instead of diminishing. When the old woman saw that the powers of her magic were of so little avail, she had recourse to cunning. She threw a lot of gold nuts into the pond, hoping in this way to catch the duck, but all her efforts were fruitless, for the little creature refused to let itself be caught.

Then a new idea struck the wicked old woman, and hiding herself behind the rock which had sheltered the fugitives, she waited behind it, watching carefully for the moment when the Prince and her daughter should resume their natural forms and continue their journey.

She had not to wait long, for as soon as the girl thought her mother was safely out of the way, she changed herself and the Prince once more into their human shape, and set out cheerfully for the river.

But they had not gone many steps when the wicked Fairy hurried after them, a drawn dagger in her hand, and was close upon them, when

suddenly, instead of the Prince and her daughter, she found herself in front of a great stone church, whose entrance was carefully guarded by a huge monk.

Breathless with rage and passion, she tried to plunge her dagger into the monk's heart, but it fell shattered in pieces at her feet. In her desperation she determined to pull down the church, and thus to destroy her two victims for ever. She stamped three times on the ground, and the earth trembled, and both the church and the monk began to shake. As soon as the Fairy saw this she retreated to some distance from the building, so as not to be hurt herself by its fall. But once more her scheme was doomed to failure, for hardly had she gone a yard from the church than both it and the monk disappeared, and she found herself in a wood black as night, and full of wolves and bears and wild animals of all sorts and descriptions.

Then her wrath gave place to terror, for she feared every moment to be torn in pieces by the beasts who one and all seemed to defy her power. She thought it wisest to make her way as best she could out of the forest, and then to pursue the fugitives once more and accomplish their destruction either by force or cunning.

In the meantime the Prince and the black girl had again assumed their natural forms, and were hurrying on as fast as they could to reach the river. But when they got there they found that there was no way in which they could cross it, and the girl's magic art seemed no longer to have any power. Then turning to the Prince she said, 'The hour for my deliverance has not yet come, but as you promised to do all you could to free me, you must do exactly as I bid you now. Take this bow and arrow and kill every beast you see with them, and be sure you spare no living creature.'

With these words she disappeared, and hardly had she done so than a huge wild boar started out of the thicket near and made straight for the Prince. But the youth did not lose his presence of mind, and drawing his bow he pierced the beast with his arrow right through the skull. The creature fell heavily on the ground, and out of its side sprang a little hare, which ran like the wind along the river bank. The Prince drew his bow once more, and the hare lay dead at his feet; but at the same moment a dove rose up in the air, and circled round the Prince's head in the most confiding manner. But mindful of the black girl's commands, he dared not spare the little creature's life, and taking another arrow from his quiver he

laid it as dead as the boar and the hare. But when he went to look at the body of the bird he found instead of the dove a round white egg lying on the ground.

While he was gazing on it and wondering what it could mean, he heard the sweeping of wings above him, and looking up he saw a huge vulture with open claws swooping down upon him. In a moment he seized the egg and flung it at the bird with all his might, and lo and behold! instead of the ugly monster the most beautiful girl he had ever seen stood before the astonished eyes of the Prince.

But while all this was going on the wicked old Fairy had managed to make her way out of the wood, and was now using the last resource in her power to overtake her daughter and the Prince. As soon as she was in the open again she mounted her chariot, which was drawn by a fiery dragon, and flew through the air in it. But just as she got to the river she saw the two lovers in each other's arms swimming through the water as easily as two fishes.

Quick as lightning, and forgetful of every danger, she flew down upon them. But the waters seized her chariot and sunk it in the lowest depths, and the waves bore the wicked old woman down the stream till she was caught in some thorn bushes, where she made a good meal for all the little fishes that were swimming about.

And so at last the Prince and his lovely Bride were free. They hurried as quickly as they could to the old King, who received them with joy and gladness. On the following day a most gorgeous wedding feast was held, and as far as we know the Prince and his bride lived happily for ever afterwards.

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19. From the Hungarian. Kletke.

THE DEAD WIFE[20]

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Once upon a time there were a man and his wife who lived in the forest, very far from the rest of the tribe. Very often they spent the day in hunting together, but after a while the wife found that she had so many things to do that she was obliged to stay at home; so he went alone, though he found that when his wife was not with him he never had any luck. One day, when he was away hunting, the woman fell ill, and in a few days she died.

Her husband grieved bitterly, and buried her in the house where she had passed her life; but as the time went on he felt so lonely without her that he made a wooden doll about her height and size for company, and dressed it in her clothes. He seated it in front of the fire, and tried to think he had his wife back again. The next day he went out to hunt, and when he came home the first thing he did was to go up to the doll and brush off some of the ashes from the fire which had fallen on its face. But he was very busy now, for he had to cook and mend, besides getting food, for there was no one to help him. And so a whole year passed away.

At the end of that time he came back from hunting one night and found some wood by the door and a fire within. The next night there was not only wood and fire, but a piece of meat in the kettle, nearly ready for eating. He searched all about to see who could have done this, but could find no one. The next time he went to hunt he took care not to go far, and came in quite early. And while he was still a long way off he saw a woman going into the house with wood on her shoulders. So he made haste, and opened the door quickly, and instead of the wooden doll, his wife sat in front of the fire.

Then she spoke to him and said, ‘The Great Spirit felt sorry for you, because you would not be comforted, so he let me come back to you, but you must not stretch out your hand to touch me till we have seen the rest of our people. If you do, I shall die.’

So the man listened to her words, and the woman dwelt there, and brought the wood and kindled the fire, till one day her husband said to her,

‘It is now two years since you died. Let us now go back to our tribe. Then you will be well, and I can touch you.’

And with that he prepared food for the journey, a string of deer’s flesh for her to carry, and one for himself; and so they started. Now the camp of the tribe was distant six days’ journey, and when they were yet one day’s journey off it began to snow, and they felt weary and longed for rest. Therefore they made a fire, cooked some food, and spread out their skins to sleep.

Then the heart of the man was greatly stirred, and he stretched out his arms to his wife, but she waved her hands and said, ‘We have seen no one yet; it is too soon.’

But he would not listen to her, and caught her to him, and behold! he was clasping the wooden doll. And when he saw it was the doll he pushed it from him in his misery and rushed away to the camp, and told them all his story. And some doubted, and they went back with him to the place where he and his wife had stopped to rest, and there lay the doll, and besides, they saw in the snow the steps of two people, and the foot of one was like the foot of the doll. And the man grieved sore all the days of his life.

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20. From the Iroquois.

IN THE LAND OF SOULS[21]

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Far away, in North America, where the Red Indians dwell, there lived a long time ago a beautiful maiden, who was lovelier than any other girl in the whole tribe. Many of the young braves sought her in marriage, but she would listen to one only—a handsome chief, who had taken her fancy some years before. So they were to be married, and great rejoicings were made, and the two looked forward to a long life of happiness together, when the very night before the wedding feast a sudden illness seized the girl, and, without a word to her friends who were weeping round her, she passed silently away.

The heart of her lover had been set upon her, and the thought of her remained with him night and day. He put aside his bow, and went neither to fight nor to hunt, but from sunrise to sunset he sat by the place where she was laid, thinking of his happiness that was buried there. At last, after many days, a light seemed to come to him out of the darkness. He remembered having heard from the old, old people of the tribe, that there was a path that led to the Land of Souls—that if you sought carefully you could find it.

So the next morning he got up early, and put some food in his pouch and slung an extra skin over his shoulders, for he knew not how long his journey would take, nor what sort of country he would have to go through. Only one thing he knew, that if the path was there, he would find it. At first he was puzzled, as there seemed no reason he should go in one direction more than another. Then all at once he thought he had heard one of the old men say that the Land of Souls lay to the south, and so, filled with new hope and courage, he set his face southwards. For many, many miles the country looked the same as it did round his own home. The forests, the hills, and the rivers all seemed exactly like the ones he had left. The only thing that was different was the snow, which had lain thick upon the hills and trees when he started, but grew less and less the farther he went south, till it disappeared altogether. Soon the trees put forth their buds, and

flowers sprang up under his feet, and instead of thick clouds there was blue sky over his head, and everywhere the birds were singing. Then he knew that he was in the right road.

The thought that he should soon behold his lost bride made his heart beat for joy, and he sped along lightly and swiftly. Now his way led through a dark wood, and then over some steep cliffs, and on the top of these he found a hut or wigwam. An old man clothed in skins, and holding a staff in his hand, stood in the doorway; and he said to the young chief who was beginning to tell his story, ‘I was waiting for you, wherefore you have come I know. It is but a short while since she whom you seek was here. Rest in my hut, as she also rested, and I will tell you what you ask, and whither you should go.’

On hearing these words, the young man entered the hut, but his heart was too eager within him to suffer him to rest, and when he arose, the old man rose too, and stood with him at the door. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘at the water which lies far out yonder, and the plains which stretch beyond. That is the Land of Souls, but no man enters it without leaving his body behind him. So, lay down your body here; your bow and arrows, your skin and your dog. They shall be kept for you safely.’

Then he turned away, and the young chief, light as air, seemed hardly to touch the ground; and as he flew along the scents grew sweeter and the flowers more beautiful, while the animals rubbed their noses against him, instead of hiding as he approached, and birds circled round him, and fishes lifted up their heads and looked as he went by. Very soon he noticed with wonder, that neither rocks nor trees barred his path. He passed through them without knowing it, for indeed, they were not rocks and trees at all, but only the souls of them; for this was the Land of Shadows.

So he went on with winged feet till he came to the shores of a great lake, with a lovely island in the middle of it; while on the bank of the lake was a canoe of glittering stone, and in the canoe were two shining paddles.

The chief jumped straight into the canoe, and seizing the paddles pushed off from the shore, when to his joy and wonder he saw following him in another canoe exactly like his own the maiden for whose sake he had made this long journey. But they could not touch each other, for between them rolled great waves, which looked as if they would sink the boats, yet never did. And the young man and the maiden shrank with fear,

for down in the depths of the water they saw the bones of those who had died before, and in the waves themselves men and women were struggling, and but few passed over. Only the children had no fear, and reached the other side in safety. Still, though the chief and the young girl quailed in terror at these horrible sights and sounds, no harm came to them, for their lives had been free from evil, and the Master of Life had said that no evil should happen unto them. So they reached unhurt the shore of the Happy Island, and wandered through the flowery fields and by the banks of rushing streams, and they knew not hunger nor thirst; neither cold nor heat. The air fed them and the sun warmed them, and they forgot the dead, for they saw no graves, and the young man's thoughts turned not to wars, neither to the hunting of animals. And gladly would these two have walked thus for ever, but in the murmur of the wind he heard the Master of Life saying to him, 'Return whither you came, for I have work for you to do, and your people need you, and for many years you shall rule over them. At the gate my messenger awaits you, and you shall take again your body which you left behind, and he will show you what you are to do. Listen to him, and have patience, and in time to come you shall rejoin her whom you must now leave, for she is accepted, and will remain ever young and beautiful, as when I called her hence from the Land of Snows.'

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21. From the Red Indian.

THE WHITE DUCK

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Once upon a time a great and powerful King married a lovely Princess. No couple were ever so happy; but before their honeymoon was over they were forced to part, for the King had to go on a warlike expedition to a far country, and leave his young wife alone at home. Bitter were the tears she shed, while her husband sought in vain to soothe her with words of comfort and counsel, warning her, above all things, never to leave the castle, to hold no intercourse with strangers, to beware of evil counsellors, and especially to be on her guard against strange women. And the Queen promised faithfully to obey her royal lord and master in these four matters.

So when the King set out on his expedition she shut herself up with her ladies in her own apartments, and spent her time in spinning and weaving, and in thinking of her royal husband. Often she was very sad and lonely, and it happened that one day while she was seated at the window, letting salt tears drop on her work, an old woman, a kind, homely-looking old body, stepped up to the window, and, leaning upon her crutch, addressed the Queen in friendly, flattering tones, saying:

‘Why are you sad and cast down, fair Queen? You should not mope all day in your rooms, but should come out into the green garden, and hear the birds sing with joy among the trees, and see the butterflies fluttering above the flowers, and hear the bees and insects hum, and watch the sunbeams chase the dew-drops through the rose-leaves and in the lily-cups. All the brightness outside would help to drive away your cares, O Queen.’

For long the Queen resisted her coaxing words, remembering the promise she had given the King, her husband; but at last she thought to herself: After all, what harm would it do if I were to go into the garden for a short time and enjoy myself among the trees and flowers, and the singing birds and fluttering butterflies and humming insects, and look at the dew-drops hiding from the sunbeams in the hearts of the roses and lilies, and wander about in the sunshine, instead of remaining all day in this room?

For she had no idea that the kind-looking old woman leaning on her crutch was in reality a wicked witch, who envied the Queen her good fortune, and was determined to ruin her. And so, in all ignorance, the Queen followed her out into the garden and listened to her smooth, flattering words. Now, in the middle of the garden there was a pond of water, clear as crystal, and the old woman said to the Queen:

‘The day is so warm, and the sun’s rays so scorching, that the water in the pond looks very cool and inviting. Would you not like to bathe in it, fair Queen?’

‘No, I think not,’ answered the Queen; but the next moment she regretted her words, and thought to herself: Why shouldn’t I bathe in that cool, fresh water? No harm could come of it. And, so saying, she slipped off her robes and stepped into the water. But scarcely had her tender feet touched the cool ripples when she felt a great shove on her shoulders, and the wicked witch had pushed her into the deep water, exclaiming:

‘Swim henceforth, White Duck!’

And the witch herself assumed the form of the Queen, and decked herself out in the royal robes, and sat among the Court ladies, awaiting the King’s return. And suddenly the tramp of horses’ hoofs was heard, and the barking of dogs, and the witch hastened forward to meet the royal carriages, and, throwing her arms round the King’s neck, kissed him. And in his great joy the King did not know that the woman he held in his arms was not his own dear wife, but a wicked witch.

In the meantime, outside the palace walls, the poor White Duck swam up and down the pond; and near it laid three eggs, out of which there came one morning two little fluffy ducklings and a little ugly drake. And the White Duck brought the little creatures up, and they paddled after her in the pond, and caught gold-fish, and hopped upon the bank and waddled about, ruffling their feathers and saying ‘Quack, quack’ as they strutted about on the green banks of the pond. But their mother used to warn them not to stray too far, telling them that a wicked witch lived in the castle beyond the garden, adding, ‘She has ruined me, and she will do her best to ruin you.’ But the young ones did not listen to their mother, and, playing about the garden one day, they strayed close up to the castle windows. The witch at once recognised them by their smell, and ground her teeth with anger; but she hid her feelings, and, pretending to be very kind she called

them to her and joked with them, and led them into a beautiful room, where she gave them food to eat, and showed them a soft cushion on which they might sleep. Then she left them and went down into the palace kitchens, where she told the servants to sharpen the knives, and to make a great fire ready, and hang a large kettleful of water over it.

In the meantime the two little ducklings had fallen asleep, and the little drake lay between them, covered up by their wings, to be kept warm under their feathers. But the little drake could not go to sleep, and as he lay there wide awake in the night he heard the witch come to the door and say:

‘Little ones, are you asleep?’

And the little drake answered for the other two:

‘We cannot sleep, we wake and weep,
Sharp is the knife, to take our life;
The fire is hot, now boils the pot,
And so we wake, and lie and quake.’

‘They are not asleep yet,’ muttered the witch to herself; and she walked up and down in the passage, and then came back to the door, and said:

‘Little ones, are you asleep?’

And again the little drake answered for his sisters:

‘We cannot sleep, we wake and weep,
Sharp is the knife, to take our life;
The fire is hot, now boils the pot,
And so we wake, and lie and quake.’

‘Just the same answer,’ muttered the witch; ‘I think I’ll go in and see.’ So she opened the door gently, and seeing the two little ducklings sound asleep, she there and then killed them.

The next morning the White Duck wandered round the pond in a distracted manner, looking for her little ones; she called and she searched, but could find no trace of them. And in her heart she had a foreboding that evil had befallen them, and she fluttered up out of the water and flew to

the palace. And there, laid out on the marble floor of the court, dead and stone cold, were her three children. The White Duck threw herself upon them, and, covering up their little bodies with her wings, she cried:

‘Quack, quack—my little loves!
Quack, quack—my turtle-doves!
I brought you up with grief and pain,
And now before my eyes you’re slain.

I gave you always of the best;
I kept you warm in my soft nest.
I loved and watched you day and night—
You were my joy, my one delight.’

The King heard the sad complaint of the White Duck, and called to the witch: ‘Wife, what a wonder is this? Listen to that White Duck.’

But the witch answered, ‘My dear husband, what do you mean? There is nothing wonderful in a duck’s quacking. Here, servants! Chase that duck out of the courtyard.’ But though the servants chased and chevied, they could not get rid of the duck; for she circled round and round, and always came back to the spot where her children lay, crying:

‘Quack, quack—my little loves!
Quack, quack—my turtle-doves!
The wicked witch your lives did take—
The wicked witch, the cunning snake.
First she stole my King away,
Then my children did she slay.
Changed me, from a happy wife,
To a duck for all my life.
Would I were the Queen again;
Would that you had never been slain.’

And as the King heard her words he began to suspect that he had been deceived, and he called out to the servants, ‘Catch that duck, and bring it here.’ But, though they ran to and fro, the duck always fled past them, and

would not let herself be caught. So the King himself stepped down amongst them, and instantly the duck fluttered down into his hands. And as he stroked her wings she was changed into a beautiful woman, and he recognised his dear wife. And she told him that a bottle would be found in her nest in the garden, containing some drops from the spring of healing. And it was brought to her; and the ducklings and little drake were sprinkled with the water, and from the little dead bodies three lovely children arose. And the King and Queen were overjoyed when they saw their children, and they all lived happily together in the beautiful palace. But the wicked witch was taken by the King’s command, and she came to no good end.

THE WITCH AND HER SERVANTS[22]

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Long time ago there lived a King who had three sons; the eldest was called Szabo, the second Warza, and the youngest Iwanich.

One beautiful spring morning the King was walking through his gardens with these three sons, gazing with admiration at the various fruit-trees, some of which were a mass of blossom, whilst others were bowed to the ground laden with rich fruit. During their wanderings they came unperceived on a piece of waste land where three splendid trees grew. The King looked on them for a moment, and then, shaking his head sadly, he passed on in silence.

The sons, who could not understand why he did this, asked him the reason of his dejection, and the King told them as follows:

‘These three trees, which I cannot see without sorrow, were planted by me on this spot when I was a youth of twenty. A celebrated magician, who had given the seed to my father, promised him that they would grow into the three finest trees the world had ever seen. My father did not live to see his words come true; but on his death-bed he bade me transplant them here, and to look after them with the greatest care, which I accordingly did. At last, after the lapse of five long years, I noticed some blossoms on the branches, and a few days later the most exquisite fruit my eyes had ever seen.

‘I gave my head-gardener the strictest orders to watch the trees carefully, for the magician had warned my father that if one unripe fruit were plucked from the tree, all the rest would become rotten at once. When it was quite ripe the fruit would become a golden yellow.

‘Every day I gazed on the lovely fruit, which became gradually more and more tempting-looking, and it was all I could do not to break the magician’s commands.

‘One night I dreamt that the fruit was perfectly ripe; I ate some of it, and it was more delicious than anything I had ever tasted in real life. As

soon as I awoke I sent for the gardener and asked him if the fruit on the three trees had not ripened in the night to perfection.

‘But instead of replying, the gardener threw himself at my feet and swore that he was innocent. He said that he had watched by the trees all night, but in spite of it, and as if by magic, the beautiful trees had been robbed of all their fruit.

‘Grieved as I was over the theft, I did not punish the gardener, of whose fidelity I was well assured, but I determined to pluck off all the fruit in the following year before it was ripe, as I had not much belief in the magician’s warning.

‘I carried out my intention, and had all the fruit picked off the tree, but when I tasted one of the apples it was bitter and unpleasant, and the next morning the rest of the fruit had all rotted away.

‘After this I had the beautiful fruit of these trees carefully guarded by my most faithful servants; but every year, on this very night, the fruit was plucked and stolen by an invisible hand, and next morning not a single apple remained on the trees. For some time past I have given up even having the trees watched.’

When the King had finished his story, Szabo, his eldest son, said to him: ‘Forgive me, father, if I say I think you are mistaken. I am sure there are many men in your kingdom who could protect these trees from the cunning arts of a thieving magician; I myself, who as your eldest son claim the first right to do so, will mount guard over the fruit this very night.’

The King consented, and as soon as evening drew on Szabo climbed up on to one of the trees, determined to protect the fruit even if it cost him his life. So he kept watch half the night; but a little after midnight he was overcome by an irresistible drowsiness, and fell fast asleep. He did not awake till it was bright daylight, and all the fruit on the trees had vanished.

The following year Warza, the second brother, tried his luck, but with the same result. Then it came to the turn of the third and youngest son.

Iwanich was not the least discouraged by the failure of his elder brothers, though they were both much older and stronger than he was, and when night came climbed up the tree as they had done, The moon had risen, and with her soft light lit up the whole neighbourhood, so that the observant Prince could distinguish the smallest object distinctly.

At midnight a gentle west wind shook the tree, and at the same moment a snow-white swan-like bird sank down gently on his breast. The Prince hastily seized the bird's wings in his hands, when, lo! to his astonishment he found he was holding in his arms not a bird but the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

'You need not fear Militza,' said the beautiful girl, looking at the Prince with friendly eyes. 'An evil magician has not robbed you of your fruit, but he stole the seed from my mother, and thereby caused her death. When she was dying she bade me take the fruit, which you have no right to possess, from the trees every year as soon as it was ripe. This I would have done to-night too, if you had not seized me with such force, and so broken the spell I was under.'

Iwanich, who had been prepared to meet a terrible magician and not a lovely girl, fell desperately in love with her. They spent the rest of the night in pleasant conversation, and when Militza wished to go away he begged her not to leave him.

'I would gladly stay with you longer,' said Militza, 'but a wicked witch once cut off a lock of my hair when I was asleep, which has put me in her power, and if morning were still to find me here she would do me some harm, and you, too, perhaps.'

Having said these words, she drew a sparkling diamond ring from her finger, which she handed to the Prince, saying: 'Keep this ring in memory of Militza, and think of her sometimes if you never see her again. But if your love is really true, come and find me in my own kingdom. I may not show you the way there, but this ring will guide you.

'If you have love and courage enough to undertake this journey, whenever you come to a cross-road always look at this diamond before you settle which way you are going to take. If it sparkles as brightly as ever go straight on, but if its lustre is dimmed choose another path.'

Then Militza bent over the Prince and kissed him on his forehead, and before he had time to say a word she vanished through the branches of the tree in a little white cloud.

Morning broke, and the Prince, still full of the wonderful apparition, left his perch and returned to the palace like one in a dream, without even knowing if the fruit had been taken or not; for his whole mind was absorbed by thoughts of Militza and how he was to find her.

As soon as the head-gardener saw the Prince going towards the palace he ran to the trees, and when he saw them laden with ripe fruit he hastened to tell the King the joyful news. The King was beside himself for joy, and hurried at once to the garden and made the gardener pick him some of the fruit. He tasted it, and found the apple quite as luscious as it had been in his dream. He went at once to his son Iwanich, and after embracing him tenderly and heaping praises on him, he asked him how he had succeeded in protecting the costly fruit from the power of the magician.

This question placed Iwanich in a dilemma. But as he did not want the real story to be known, he said that about midnight a huge wasp had flown through the branches, and buzzed incessantly round him. He had warded it off with his sword, and at dawn, when he was becoming quite worn out, the wasp had vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

The King, who never doubted the truth of this tale, bade his son go to rest at once and recover from the fatigues of the night; but he himself went and ordered many feasts to be held in honour of the preservation of the wonderful fruit.

The whole capital was in a stir, and everyone shared in the King’s joy; the Prince alone took no part in the festivities.

While the King was at a banquet, Iwanich took some purses of gold, and mounting the quickest horse in the royal stable, he sped off like the wind without a single soul being any the wiser.

It was only on the next day that they missed him; the King was very distressed at his disappearance, and sent search-parties all over the kingdom to look for him, but in vain; and after six months they gave him up as dead, and in another six months they had forgotten all about him. But in the meantime the Prince, with the help of his ring, had had a most successful journey, and no evil had befallen him.

At the end of three months he came to the entrance of a huge forest, which looked as if it had never been trodden by human foot before, and which seemed to stretch out indefinitely. The Prince was about to enter the wood by a little path he had discovered, when he heard a voice shouting to him: ‘Hold, youth! Whither are you going?’

Iwanich turned round, and saw a tall, gaunt-looking man, clad in miserable rags, leaning on a crooked staff and seated at the foot of an oak

tree, which was so much the same colour as himself that it was little wonder the Prince had ridden past the tree without noticing him.

‘Where else should I be going,’ he said, ‘than through the wood?’

‘Through the wood?’ said the old man in amazement. ‘It’s easily seen that you have heard nothing of this forest, that you rush so blindly to meet your doom. Well, listen to me before you ride any further; let me tell you that this wood hides in its depths a countless number of the fiercest tigers, hyenas, wolves, bears, and snakes, and all sorts of other monsters. If I were to cut you and your horse up into tiny morsels and throw them to the beasts, there wouldn’t be one bit for each hundred of them. Take my advice, therefore, and if you wish to save your life follow some other path.’

The Prince was rather taken aback by the old man’s words, and considered for a minute what he should do; then looking at his ring, and perceiving that it sparkled as brightly as ever, he called out: ‘If this wood held even more terrible things than it does, I cannot help myself, for I must go through it.’

Here he spurred his horse and rode on; but the old beggar screamed so loudly after him that the Prince turned round and rode back to the oak tree.

‘I am really sorry for you,’ said the beggar, ‘but if you are quite determined to brave the dangers of the forest, let me at least give you a piece of advice which will help you against these monsters.

‘Take this bagful of bread-crumbs and this live hare. I will make you a present of them both, as I am anxious to save your life; but you must leave your horse behind you, for it would stumble over the fallen trees or get entangled in the briers and thorns. When you have gone about a hundred yards into the wood the wild beasts will surround you. Then you must instantly seize your bag, and scatter the bread-crumbs among them. They will rush to eat them up greedily, and when you have scattered the last crumb you must lose no time in throwing the hare to them; as soon as the hare feels itself on the ground it will run away as quickly as possible, and the wild beasts will turn to pursue it. In this way you will be able to get through the wood unhurt.’

Iwanich thanked the old man for his counsel, dismounted from his horse, and, taking the bag and the hare in his arms, he entered the forest. He had hardly lost sight of his gaunt grey friend when he heard growls and

snarls in the thicket close to him, and before he had time to think he found himself surrounded by the most dreadful-looking creatures. On one side he saw the glittering eye of a cruel tiger, on the other the gleaming teeth of a great she-wolf; here a huge bear growled fiercely, and there a horrible snake coiled itself in the grass at his feet.

But Iwanich did not forget the old man's advice, and quickly put his hand into the bag and took out as many bread-crumbs as he could hold in his hand at a time. He threw them to the beasts, but soon the bag grew lighter and lighter, and the Prince began to feel a little frightened. And now the last crumb was gone, and the hungry beasts thronged round him, greedy for fresh prey. Then he seized the hare and threw it to them.

No sooner did the little creature feel itself on the ground than it lay back its ears and flew through the wood like an arrow from a bow, closely pursued by the wild beasts, and the Prince was left alone. He looked at his ring, and when he saw that it sparkled as brightly as ever he went straight on through the forest.

He hadn't gone very far when he saw a most extraordinary looking man coming towards him. He was not more than three feet high, his legs were quite crooked, and all his body was covered with prickles like a hedgehog. Two lions walked with him, fastened to his side by the two ends of his long beard.

He stopped the Prince and asked him in a harsh voice: 'Are you the man who has just fed my body-guard?'

Iwanich was so startled that he could hardly reply, but the little man continued: 'I am most grateful to you for your kindness; what can I give you as a reward?'

'All I ask,' replied Iwanich, 'is, that I should be allowed to go through this wood in safety.'

'Most certainly,' answered the little man; 'and for greater security I will give you one of my lions as a protector. But when you leave this wood and come near a palace which does not belong to my domain, let the lion go, in order that he may not fall into the hands of an enemy and be killed.'

With these words he loosened the lion from his beard and bade the beast guard the youth carefully.

With this new protector Iwanich wandered on through the forest, and though he came upon a great many more wolves, hyenas, leopards, and

other wild beasts, they always kept at a respectful distance when they saw what sort of an escort the Prince had with him.

Iwanich hurried through the wood as quickly as his legs would carry him, but, nevertheless, hour after hour went by and not a trace of a green field or a human habitation met his eyes. At length, towards evening, the mass of trees grew more transparent, and through the interlaced branches a wide plain was visible.

At the exit of the wood the lion stood still, and the Prince took leave of him, having first thanked him warmly for his kind protection. It had become quite dark, and Iwanich was forced to wait for daylight before continuing his journey.

He made himself a bed of grass and leaves, lit a fire of dry branches, and slept soundly till the next morning.

Then he got up and walked towards a beautiful white palace which he saw gleaming in the distance. In about an hour he reached the building, and opening the door he walked in.

After wandering through many marble halls, he came to a huge staircase made of porphyry, leading down to a lovely garden.

The Prince burst into a shout of joy when he suddenly perceived Militza in the centre of a group of girls who were weaving wreaths of flowers with which to deck their mistress.

As soon as Militza saw the Prince she ran up to him and embraced him tenderly; and after he had told her all his adventures, they went into the palace, where a sumptuous meal awaited them. Then the Princess called her court together, and introduced Iwanich to them as her future husband.

Preparations were at once made for the wedding, which was held soon after with great pomp and magnificence.

Three months of great happiness followed, when Militza received one day an invitation to visit her mother’s sister.

Although the Princess was very unhappy at leaving her husband, she did not like to refuse the invitation, and, promising to return in seven days at the latest, she took a tender farewell of the Prince, and said: ‘Before I go I will hand you over all the keys of the castle. Go everywhere and do anything you like; only one thing I beg and beseech you, do not open the little iron door in the north tower, which is closed with seven locks and seven bolts; for if you do, we shall both suffer for it.’

Iwanich promised what she asked, and Militza departed, repeating her promise to return in seven days.

When the Prince found himself alone he began to be tormented by pangs of curiosity as to what the room in the tower contained. For two days he resisted the temptation to go and look, but on the third he could stand it no longer, and taking a torch in his hand he hurried to the tower, and unfastened one lock after the other of the little iron door until it burst open.

What an unexpected sight met his gaze! The Prince perceived a small room black with smoke, lit up feebly by a fire from which issued long blue flames. Over the fire hung a huge cauldron full of boiling pitch, and fastened into the cauldron by iron chains stood a wretched man screaming with agony.

Iwanich was much horrified at the sight before him, and asked the man what terrible crime he had committed to be punished in this dreadful fashion.

‘I will tell you everything,’ said the man in the cauldron; ‘but first relieve my torments a little, I implore you.’

‘And how can I do that?’ asked the Prince.

‘With a little water,’ replied the man; ‘only sprinkle a few drops over me and I shall feel better.’

The Prince, moved by pity, without thinking what he was doing, ran to the courtyard of the castle, and filled a jug with water, which he poured over the man in the cauldron.

In a moment a most fearful crash was heard, as if all the pillars of the palace were giving way, and the palace itself, with towers and doors, windows and the cauldron, whirled round the bewildered Prince’s head. This continued for a few minutes, and then everything vanished into thin air, and Iwanich found himself suddenly alone upon a desolate heath covered with rocks and stones.

The Prince, who now realised what his heedlessness had done, cursed too late his spirit of curiosity. In his despair he wandered on over the heath, never looking where he put his feet, and full of sorrowful thoughts. At last he saw a light in the distance, which came from a miserable-looking little hut.

The owner of it was none other than the kind-hearted gaunt grey beggar who had given the Prince the bag of bread-crumbs and the hare. Without recognising Iwanich, he opened the door when he knocked and gave him shelter for the night.

On the following morning the Prince asked his host if he could get him any work to do, as he was quite unknown in the neighbourhood, and had not enough money to take him home.

‘My son,’ replied the old man, ‘all this country round here is uninhabited; I myself have to wander to distant villages for my living, and even then I do not very often find enough to satisfy my hunger. But if you would like to take service with the old witch Corva, go straight up the little stream which flows below my hut for about three hours, and you will come to a sand-hill on the left-hand side; that is where she lives.’

Iwanich thanked the gaunt grey beggar for his information, and went on his way.

After walking for about three hours the Prince came upon a dreary-looking grey stone wall; this was the back of the building and did not attract him; but when he came upon the front of the house he found it even less inviting, for the old witch had surrounded her dwelling with a fence of spikes, on every one of which a man’s skull was stuck. In this horrible enclosure stood a small black house, which had only two grated windows, all covered with cobwebs, and a battered iron door.

The Prince knocked, and a rasping woman’s voice told him to enter.

Iwanich opened the door, and found himself in a smoke-begrimed kitchen, in the presence of a hideous old woman who was warming her skinny hands at a fire. The Prince offered to become her servant, and the old hag told him she was badly in want of one, and he seemed to be just the person to suit her.

When Iwanich asked what his work, and how much his wages would be, the witch bade him follow her, and led the way through a narrow damp passage into a vault, which served as a stable. Here he perceived two pitch-black horses in a stall.

‘You see before you,’ said the old woman, ‘a mare and her foal; you have nothing to do but to lead them out to the fields every day, and to see that neither of them runs away from you. If you look after them both for a whole year I will give you anything you like to ask; but if, on the other

hand, you let either of the animals escape you, your last hour is come, and your head shall be stuck on the last spike of my fence. The other spikes, as you see, are already adorned, and the skulls are all those of different servants I have had who have failed to do what I demanded.'

Iwanich, who thought he could not be much worse off than he was already, agreed to the witch's proposal.

At daybreak nest morning he drove his horses to the field, and brought them back in the evening without their ever having attempted to break away from him. The witch stood at her door and received him kindly, and set a good meal before him.

So it continued for some time, and all went well with the Prince.

Early every morning he led the horses out to the fields, and brought them home safe and sound in the evening.

One day, while he was watching the horses, he came to the banks of a river, and saw a big fish, which through some mischance had been cast on the land, struggling hard to get back into the water.

Iwanich, who felt sorry for the poor creature, seized it in his arms and flung it into the stream. But no sooner did the fish find itself in the water again, than, to the Prince's amazement, it swam up to the bank and said:

'My kind benefactor, how can I reward you for your goodness?'

'I desire nothing,' answered the Prince. 'I am quite content to have been able to be of some service to you.'

'You must do me the favour,' replied the fish, 'to take a scale from my body, and keep it carefully. If you should ever need my help, throw it into the river, and I will come to your aid at once.'

Iwanich bowed, loosened a scale from the body of the grateful beast, put it carefully away, and returned home.

A short time after this, when he was going early one morning to the usual grazing place with his horses, he noticed a flock of birds assembled together making a great noise and flying wildly backwards and forwards.

Full of curiosity, Iwanich hurried up to the spot, and saw that a large number of ravens had attacked an eagle, and although the eagle was big and powerful and was making a brave fight, it was overpowered at last by numbers, and had to give in.

But the Prince, who was sorry for the poor bird, seized the branch of a tree and hit out at the ravens with it; terrified at this unexpected onslaught

they flew away, leaving many of their number dead or wounded on the battlefield.

As soon as the eagle saw itself free from its tormentors it plucked a feather from its wing, and, handing it to the Prince, said: ‘Here, my kind benefactor, take this feather as a proof of my gratitude; should you ever be in need of my help blow this feather into the air, and I will help you as much as is in my power.’

Iwanich thanked the bird, and placing the feather beside the scale he drove the horses home.

Another day he had wandered farther than usual, and came close to a farmyard; the place pleased the Prince, and as there was plenty of good grass for the horses he determined to spend the day there. Just as he was sitting down under a tree he heard a cry close to him, and saw a fox which had been caught in a trap placed there by the farmer.

In vain did the poor beast try to free itself; then the good-natured Prince came once more to the rescue, and let the fox out of the trap.

The fox thanked him heartily, tore two hairs out of his bushy tail, and said: ‘Should you ever stand in need of my help throw these two hairs into the fire, and in a moment I shall be at your side ready to obey you.’

Iwanich put the fox’s hairs with the scale and the feather, and as it was getting dark he hastened home with his horses.

In the meantime his service was drawing near to an end, and in three more days the year was up, and he would be able to get his reward and leave the witch.

On the first evening of these last three days, when he came home and was eating his supper, he noticed the old woman stealing into the stables.

The Prince followed her secretly to see what she was going to do. He crouched down in the doorway and heard the wicked witch telling the horses to wait next morning till Iwanich was asleep, and then to go and hide themselves in the river, and to stay there till she told them to return; and if they didn’t do as she told them the old woman threatened to beat them till they bled.

When Iwanich heard all this he went back to his room, determined that nothing should induce him to fall asleep next day. On the following morning he led the mare and foal to the fields as usual, but bound a cord round them both which he kept in his hand.

But after a few hours, by the magic arts of the old witch, he was overpowered by sleep, and the mare and foal escaped and did as they had been told to do. The Prince did not awake till late in the evening; and when he did, he found, to his horror, that the horses had disappeared. Filled with despair, he cursed the moment when he had entered the service of the cruel witch, and already he saw his head sticking up on the sharp spike beside the others.

Then he suddenly remembered the fish's scale, which, with the eagle's feather and the fox's hairs, he always carried about with him. He drew the scale from his pocket, and hurrying to the river he threw it in. In a minute the grateful fish swam towards the bank on which Iwanich was standing, and said: 'What do you command, my friend and benefactor?'

The Prince replied: 'I had to look after a mare and foal, and they have run away from me and have hidden themselves in the river; if you wish to save my life drive them back to the land.'

'Wait a moment,' answered the fish, 'and I and my friends will soon drive them out of the water.' With these words the creature disappeared into the depths of the stream.

Almost immediately a rushing hissing sound was heard in the waters, the waves dashed against the banks, the foam was tossed into the air, and the two horses leapt suddenly on to the dry land, trembling and shaking with fear.

Iwanich sprang at once on to the mare's back, seized the foal by its bridle, and hastened home in the highest spirits.

When the witch saw the Prince bringing the horses home she could hardly conceal her wrath, and as soon as she had placed Iwanich's supper before him she stole away again to the stables. The Prince followed her, and heard her scolding the beasts harshly for not having hidden themselves better. She bade them wait next morning till Iwanich was asleep and then to hide themselves in the clouds, and to remain there till she called. If they did not do as she told them she would beat them till they bled.

The next morning, after Iwanich had led his horses to the fields, he fell once more into a magic sleep. The horses at once ran away and hid themselves in the clouds, which hung down from the mountains in soft billowy masses.

When the Prince awoke and found that both the mare and the foal had disappeared, he bethought him at once of the eagle, and taking the feather out of his pocket he blew it into the air.

In a moment the bird swooped down beside him and asked: ‘What do you wish me to do?’

‘My mare and foal,’ replied the Prince, ‘have run away from me, and have hidden themselves in the clouds; if you wish to save my life, restore both animals to me.’

‘Wait a minute,’ answered the eagle; ‘with the help of my friends I will soon drive them back to you.’

With these words the bird flew up into the air and disappeared among the clouds.

Almost directly Iwanich saw his two horses being driven towards him by a host of eagles of all sizes. He caught the mare and foal, and having thanked the eagle he drove them cheerfully home again.

The old witch was more disgusted than ever when she saw him appearing, and having set his supper before him she stole into the stables, and Iwanich heard her abusing the horses for not having hidden themselves better in the clouds. Then she bade them hide themselves next morning, as soon as Iwanich was asleep, in the King’s hen-house, which stood on a lonely part of the heath, and to remain there till she called. If they failed to do as she told them she would certainly beat them this time till they bled.

On the following morning the Prince drove his horses as usual to the fields. After he had been overpowered by sleep, as on the former days, the mare and foal ran away and hid themselves in the royal hen house.

When the Prince awoke and found the horses gone he determined to appeal to the fox; so, lighting a fire, he threw the two hairs into it, and in a few moments the fox stood beside him and asked: ‘In what way can I serve you?’

‘I wish to know,’ replied Iwanich, ‘where the King’s hen-house is.’

‘Hardly an hour’s walk from here,’ answered the fox, and offered to show the Prince the way to it.

While they were walking along the fox asked him what he wanted to do at the royal hen-house. The Prince told him of the misfortune that had befallen him, and of the necessity of recovering the mare and foal.

‘That is no easy matter,’ replied the fox. ‘But wait a moment. I have an idea. Stand at the door of the hen-house, and wait there for your horses. In the meantime I will slip in among the hens through a hole in the wall and give them a good chase, so that the noise they make will arouse the royal henwives, and they will come to see what is the matter. When they see the horses they will at once imagine them to be the cause of the disturbance, and will drive them out. Then you must lay hands on the mare and foal and catch them.

All turned out exactly as the sly fox had foreseen. The Prince swung himself on the mare, seized the foal by its bridle, and hurried home.

While he was riding over the heath in the highest of spirits the mare suddenly said to her rider: ‘You are the first person who has ever succeeded in outwitting the old witch Corva, and now you may ask what reward you like for your service. If you promise never to betray me I will give you a piece of advice which you will do well to follow.’

The Prince promised never to betray her confidence, and the mare continued: ‘Ask nothing else as a reward than my foal, for it has not its like in the world, and is not to be bought for love or money; for it can go from one end of the earth to another in a few minutes. Of course the cunning Corva will do her best to dissuade you from taking the foal, and will tell you that it is both idle and sickly; but do not believe her, and stick to your point.’

Iwanich longed to possess such an animal, and promised the mare to follow her advice.

This time Corva received him in the most friendly manner, and set a sumptuous repast before him. As soon as he had finished she asked him what reward he demanded for his year’s service.

‘Nothing more nor less,’ replied the Prince, ‘than the foal of your mare.’

The witch pretended to be much astonished at his request, and said that he deserved something much better than the foal, for the beast was lazy and nervous, blind in one eye, and, in short, was quite worthless.

But the Prince knew what he wanted, and when the old witch saw that he had made up his mind to have the foal, she said, ‘I am obliged to keep my promise and to hand you over the foal; and as I know who you are and what you want, I will tell you in what way the animal will be useful to you.

The man in the cauldron of boiling pitch, whom you set free, is a mighty magician; through your curiosity and thoughtlessness Militza came into his power, and he has transported her and her castle and belongings into a distant country.

‘You are the only person who can kill him; and in consequence he fears you to such an extent that he has set spies to watch you, and they report your movements to him daily.

‘When you have reached him, beware of speaking a single word to him, or you will fall into the power of his friends. Seize him at once by the beard and dash him to the ground.’

Iwanich thanked the old witch, mounted his foal, put spurs to its sides, and they flew like lightning through the air.

Already it was growing dark, when Iwanich perceived some figures in the distance; they soon came up to them, and then the Prince saw that it was the magician and his friends who were driving through the air in a carriage drawn by owls.

When the magician found himself face to face with Iwanich, without hope of escape, he turned to him with false friendliness and said: ‘Thrice my kind benefactor!’

But the Prince, without saying a word, seized him at once by his beard and dashed him to the ground. At the same moment the foal sprang on the top of the magician and kicked and stamped on him with his hoofs till he died.

Then Iwanich found himself once more in the palace of his bride, and Militza herself flew into his arms.

From this time forward they lived in undisturbed peace and happiness till the end of their lives.

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22. From the Russian. Kletke.

THE MAGIC RING

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Once upon a time there lived an old couple who had one son called Martin. Now when the old man's time had come, he stretched himself out on his bed and died. Though all his life long he had toiled and moiled, he only left his widow and son two hundred florins. The old woman determined to put by the money for a rainy day; but alas! the rainy day was close at hand, for their meal was all consumed, and who is prepared to face starvation with two hundred florins at their disposal? So the old woman counted out a hundred of her florins, and giving them to Martin, told him to go into the town and lay in a store of meal for a year.

So Martin started off for the town. When he reached the meat-market he found the whole place in turmoil, and a great noise of angry voices and barking of dogs. Mixing in the crowd, he noticed a stag-hound which the butchers had caught and tied to a post, and which was being flogged in a merciless manner. Overcome with pity, Martin spoke to the butchers, saying:

'Friends, why are you beating the poor dog so cruelly?'

'We have every right to beat him,' they replied; 'he has just devoured a newly-killed pig.'

'Leave off beating him,' said Martin, 'and sell him to me instead.'

'If you choose to buy him,' answered the butchers derisively; 'but for such a treasure we won't take a penny less than a hundred florins.'

'A hundred!' exclaimed Martin. 'Well, so be it, if you will not take less;' and, taking the money out of his pocket, he handed it over in exchange for the dog, whose name was Schurka.

When Martin got home, his mother met him with the question:

'Well, what have you bought?'

'Schurka, the dog,' replied Martin, pointing to his new possession. Whereupon his mother became very angry, and abused him roundly. He ought to be ashamed of himself, when there was scarcely a handful of meal in the house, to have spent the money on a useless brute like that. On

the following day she sent him back to the town, saying, ‘Here, take our last hundred florins, and buy provisions with them. I have just emptied the last grains of meal out of the chest, and baked a bannock; but it won’t last over to-morrow.’

Just as Martin was entering the town he met a rough-looking peasant who was dragging a cat after him by a string which was fastened round the poor beast’s neck.

‘Stop,’ cried Martin; ‘where are you dragging that poor cat?’

‘I mean to drown him,’ was the answer.

‘What harm has the poor beast done?’ said Martin.

‘It has just killed a goose,’ replied the peasant.

‘Don’t drown him, sell him to me instead,’ begged Martin.

‘Not for a hundred florins,’ was the answer.

‘Surely for a hundred florins you’ll sell it?’ said Martin. ‘See! here is the money;’ and, so saying, he handed him the hundred florins, which the peasant pocketed, and Martin took possession of the cat, which was called Waska.

When he reached his home his mother greeted him with the question:

‘Well, what have you brought back?’

‘I have brought this cat, Waska,’ answered Martin.

‘And what besides?’

‘I had no money over to buy anything else with,’ replied Martin.

‘You useless ne’er-do-weel!’ exclaimed his mother in a great passion. ‘Leave the house at once, and go and beg your bread among strangers;’ and as Martin did not dare to contradict her, he called Schurka and Waska and started off with them to the nearest village in search of work. On the way he met a rich peasant, who asked him where he was going.

‘I want to get work as a day labourer,’ he answered.

‘Come along with me, then. But I must tell you I engage my labourers without wages. If you serve me faithfully for a year, I promise you it shall be for your advantage.’

So Martin consented, and for a year he worked diligently, and served his master faithfully, not sparing himself in any way. When the day of reckoning had come the peasant led him into a barn, and pointing to two full sacks, said: ‘Take whichever of these you choose.’

Martin examined the contents of the sacks, and seeing that one was full of silver and the other of sand, he said to himself:

‘There must be some trick about this; I had better take the sand.’ And throwing the sack over his shoulders he started out into the world, in search of fresh work. On and on he walked, and at last he reached a great gloomy wood. In the middle of the wood he came upon a meadow, where a fire was burning, and in the midst of the fire, surrounded by flames, was a lovely damsel, more beautiful than anything that Martin had ever seen, and when she saw him she called to him:

‘Martin, if you would win happiness, save my life. Extinguish the flames with the sand that you earned in payment of your faithful service.’

‘Truly,’ thought Martin to himself, ‘it would be more sensible to save a fellow-being’s life with this sand than to drag it about on one’s back, seeing what a weight it is.’ And forthwith he lowered the sack from his shoulders and emptied its contents on the flames, and instantly the fire was extinguished; but at the same moment lo! and behold the lovely damsel turned into a Serpent, and, darting upon him, coiled itself round his neck, and whispered lovingly in his ear:

‘Do not be afraid of me, Martin; I love you, and will go with you through the world. But first you must follow me boldly into my Father’s Kingdom, underneath the earth; and when we get there, remember this—he will offer you gold and silver, and dazzling gems, but do not touch them. Ask him, instead, for the ring which he wears on his little finger, for in that ring lies a magic power; you have only to throw it from one hand to the other, and at once twelve young men will appear, who will do your bidding, no matter how difficult, in a single night.’

So they started on their way, and after much wandering they reached a spot where a great rock rose straight up in the middle of the road. Instantly the Serpent uncoiled itself from his neck, and, as it touched the damp earth, it resumed the shape of the lovely damsel. Pointing to the rock, she showed him an opening just big enough for a man to wriggle through. Passing into it, they entered a long underground passage, which led out on to a wide field, above which spread a blue sky. In the middle of the field stood a magnificent castle, built out of porphyry, with a roof of gold and with glittering battlements. And his beautiful guide told him that this was

the palace in which her father lived and reigned over his kingdom in the Under-world.

Together they entered the palace, and were received by the King with great kindness. Turning to his daughter, he said:

‘My child, I had almost given up the hope of ever seeing you again. Where have you been all these years?’

‘My father,’ she replied, ‘I owe my life to this youth, who saved me from a terrible death.’

Upon which the King turned to Martin with a gracious smile, saying: ‘I will reward your courage by granting you whatever your heart desires. Take as much gold, silver, and precious stones as you choose.’

‘I thank you, mighty King, for your gracious offer,’ answered Martin,’ ‘but I do not covet either gold, silver, or precious stones; yet if you will grant me a favour, give me, I beg, the ring from off the little finger of your royal hand. Every time my eye falls on it I shall think of your gracious Majesty, and when I marry I shall present it to my bride.’

So the King took the ring from his finger and gave it to Martin, saying: ‘Take it, good youth; but with it I make one condition—you are never to confide to anyone that this is a magic ring. If you do, you will straightway bring misfortune on yourself.’

Martin took the ring, and, having thanked the King, he set out on the same road by which he had come down into the Under-world. When he had regained the upper air he started for his old home, and having found his mother still living in the old house where he had left her, they settled down together very happily. So uneventful was their life that it almost seemed as if it would go on in this way always, without let or hindrance. But one day it suddenly came into his mind that he would like to get married, and, moreover, that he would choose a very grand wife—a King’s daughter, in short. But as he did not trust himself as a wooer, he determined to send his old mother on the mission.

‘You must go to the King,’ he said to her, ‘and demand the hand of his lovely daughter in marriage for me.’

‘What are you thinking of, my son?’ answered the old woman, aghast at the idea. ‘Why cannot you marry someone in your own rank? That would be far more fitting than to send a poor old woman like me a-wooing to the King’s Court for the hand of a Princess. Why, it is as much as our

heads are worth. Neither my life nor yours would be worth anything if I went on such a fool's errand.'

'Never fear, little mother,' answered Martin. 'Trust me; all will be well. But see that you do not come back without an answer of some kind.'

And so, obedient to her son's behest, the old woman hobbled off to the palace, and, without being hindered, reached the courtyard, and began to mount the flight of steps leading to the royal presence chamber. At the head of the landing rows of courtiers were collected in magnificent attire, who stared at the queer old figure, and called to her, and explained to her, with every kind of sign, that it was strictly forbidden to mount those steps. But their stern words and forbidding gestures made no impression whatever on the old woman, and she resolutely continued to climb the stairs, bent on carrying out her son's orders. Upon this some of the courtiers seized her by the arms, and held her back by sheer force, at which she set up such a yell that the King himself heard it, and stepped out on to the balcony to see what was the matter. When he beheld the old woman flinging her arms wildly about, and heard her scream that she would not leave the place till she had laid her case before the King, he ordered that she should be brought into his presence. And forthwith she was conducted into the golden presence chamber, where, leaning back amongst cushions of royal purple, the King sat, surrounded by his counsellors and courtiers. Courtesying low, the old woman stood silent before him. 'Well, my good old dame, what can I do for you?' asked the King.

'I have come,' replied Martin's mother—'and your Majesty must not be angry with me—I have come a-wooing.'

'Is the woman out of her mind?' said the King, with an angry frown.

But Martin's mother answered boldly: 'If the King will only listen patiently to me, and give me a straightforward answer, he will see that I am not out of my mind. You, O King, have a lovely daughter to give in marriage. I have a son—a wooer—as clever a youth and as good a son-in-law as you will find in your whole kingdom. There is nothing that he cannot do. Now tell me, O King, plump and plain, will you give your daughter to my son as wife?' The King listened to the end of the old woman's strange request, but every moment his face grew blacker, and his features sterner; till all at once he thought to himself, 'Is it worth while

that I, the King, should be angry with this poor old fool?' And all the courtiers and counsellors were amazed when they saw the hard lines round his mouth and the frown on his brow grow smooth, and heard the mild but mocking tones in which he answered the old woman, saying:

'If your son is as wonderfully clever as you say, and if there is nothing in the world that he cannot do, let him build a magnificent castle, just opposite my palace windows, in four and twenty hours. The palace must be joined together by a bridge of pure crystal. On each side of the bridge there must be growing trees, having golden and silver apples, and with birds of Paradise among the branches. At the right of the bridge there must be a church, with five golden cupolas; in this church your son shall be wedded to my daughter, and we will keep the wedding festivities in the new castle. But if he fails to execute this my royal command, then, as a just but mild monarch, I shall give orders that you and he are taken, and first dipped in tar and then in feathers, and you shall be executed in the market-place for the entertainment of my courtiers.'

And a smile played round the King's lips as he finished speaking, and his courtiers and counsellors shook with laughter when they thought of the old woman's folly, and praised the King's wise device, and said to each other, 'What a joke it will be when we see the pair of them tarred and feathered! The son is just as able to grow a beard on the palm of his hand as to execute such a task in twenty-four hours.'

Now the poor old woman was mortally afraid and, in a trembling voice she asked:

'Is that really your royal will, O King? Must I take this order to my poor son?'

'Yes, old dame; such is my command. If your son carries out my order, he shall be rewarded with my daughter; but if he fails, away to the tar-barrel and the stake with you both!'

On her way home the poor old woman shed bitter tears, and when she saw Martin she told him what the King had said, and sobbed out:

'Didn't I tell you, my son, that you should marry someone of your own rank? It would have been better for us this day if you had. As I told you, my going to Court has been as much as our lives are worth, and now we will both be tarred and feathered, and burnt in the public market-place. It is terrible!' and she moaned and cried.

‘Never fear, little mother,’ answered Martin; ‘trust me, and you will see all will be well. You may go to sleep with a quiet mind.’

And, stepping to the front of the hut, Martin threw his ring from the palm of one hand into the other, upon which twelve youths instantly appeared, and demanded what he wanted them to do. Then he told them the King’s commands, and they answered that by next morning all should be accomplished exactly as the King had ordered.

Next morning when the King awoke, and looked out of his window, to his amazement he beheld a magnificent castle, just opposite his own palace, and joined to it a bridge of pure crystal.

At each side of the bridge trees were growing, from whose branches hung golden and silver apples, among which birds of Paradise perched. At the right, gleaming in the sun, were the five golden cupolas of a splendid church, whose bells rang out, as if they would summon people from all corners of the earth to come and behold the wonder. Now, though the King would much rather have seen his future son-in-law tarred, feathered, and burnt at the stake, he remembered his royal oath, and had to make the best of a bad business. So he took heart of grace, and made Martin a Duke, and gave his daughter a rich dowry, and prepared the grandest wedding-feast that had ever been seen, so that to this day the old people in the country still talk of it.

After the wedding Martin and his royal bride went to dwell in the magnificent new palace, and here Martin lived in the greatest comfort and luxury, such luxury as he had never imagined. But though he was as happy as the day was long, and as merry as a grig, the King’s daughter fretted all day, thinking of the indignity that had been done her in making her marry Martin, the poor widow’s son, instead of a rich young Prince from a foreign country. So unhappy was she that she spent all her time wondering how she should get rid of her undesirable husband. And first she determined to learn the secret of his power, and, with flattering, caressing words, she tried to coax him to tell her how he was so clever that there was nothing in the world that he could not do. At first he would tell her nothing; but once, when he was in a yielding mood, she approached him with a winning smile on her lovely face, and, speaking flattering words to him, she gave him a potion to drink, with a sweet, strong taste. And when he had drunk it Martin’s lips were unsealed, and he told her that all his

power lay in the magic ring that he wore on his finger, and he described to her how to use it, and, still speaking, he fell into a deep sleep. And when she saw that the potion had worked, and that he was sound asleep, the Princess took the magic ring from his finger, and, going into the courtyard, she threw it from the palm of one hand into the other.

On the instant the twelve youths appeared, and asked her what she commanded them to do. Then she told them that by the next morning they were to do away with the castle, and the bridge, and the church, and put in their stead the humble hut in which Martin used to live with his mother, and that while he slept her husband was to be carried to his old lowly room; and that they were to bear her away to the utmost ends of the earth, where an old King lived who would make her welcome in his palace, and surround her with the state that befitted a royal Princess.

'You shall be obeyed,' answered the twelve youths at the same moment. And lo and behold! the following morning, when the King awoke and looked out of his window he beheld to his amazement that the palace, bridge, church, and trees had all vanished, and there was nothing in their place but a bare, miserable-looking hut.

Immediately the King sent for his son-in-law, and commanded him to explain what had happened. But Martin looked at his royal father-in-law, and answered never a word. Then the King was very angry, and, calling a council together, he charged Martin with having been guilty of witchcraft, and of having deceived the King, and having made away with the Princess; and he was condemned to imprisonment in a high stone tower, with neither meat nor drink, till he should die of starvation.

Then, in the hour of his dire necessity, his old friends Schurka (the dog) and Waska (the cat) remembered how Martin had once saved them from a cruel death; and they took counsel together as to how they should help him. And Schurka growled, and was of opinion that he would like to tear everyone in pieces; but Waska purred meditatively, and scratched the back of her ear with a velvet paw, and remained lost in thought. At the end of a few minutes she had made up her mind, and, turning to Schurka, said: 'Let us go together into the town, and the moment we meet a baker you must make a rush between his legs and upset the tray from off his head; I will lay hold of the rolls, and will carry them off to our master.' No sooner said than done. Together the two faithful creatures trotted off into the

town, and very soon they met a baker bearing a tray on his head, and looking round on all sides, while he cried:

‘Fresh rolls, sweet cake,
Fancy bread of every kind.
Come and buy, come and take,
Sure you’ll find it to your mind,’

At that moment Schurka made a rush between his legs—the baker stumbled, the tray was upset, the rolls fell to the ground, and, while the man angrily pursued Schurka, Waska managed to drag the rolls out of sight behind a bush. And when a moment later Schurka joined her, they set off at full tilt to the stone tower where Martin was a prisoner, taking the rolls with them. Waska, being very agile, climbed up by the outside to the grated window, and called in an anxious voice:

‘Are you alive, master?’

‘Scarcely alive—almost starved to death,’ answered Martin in a weak voice. ‘I little thought it would come to this, that I should die of hunger.’

‘Never fear, dear master. Schurka and I will look after you,’ said Waska. And in another moment she had climbed down and brought him back a roll, and then another, and another, till she had brought him the whole tray-load. Upon which she said: ‘Dear master, Schurka and I are going off to a distant kingdom at the utmost ends of the earth to fetch you back your magic ring. You must be careful that the rolls last till our return.’

And Waska took leave of her beloved master, and set off with Schurka on their journey. On and on they travelled, looking always to right and left for traces of the Princess, following up every track, making inquiries of every cat and dog they met, listening to the talk of every wayfarer they passed; and at last they heard that the kingdom at the utmost ends of the earth where the twelve youths had borne the Princess was not very far off. And at last one day they reached that distant kingdom, and, going at once to the palace, they began to make friends with all the dogs and cats in the place, and to question them about the Princess and the magic ring; but no one could tell them much about either. Now one day it chanced that Waska had gone down to the palace cellar to hunt for mice and rats, and seeing an

especially fat, well-fed mouse, she pounced upon it, buried her claws in its soft fur, and was just going to gobble it up, when she was stopped by the pleading tones of the little creature, saying, ‘If you will only spare my life I may be of great service to you. I will do everything in my power for you; for I am the King of the Mice, and if I perish the whole race will die out.’

‘So be it,’ said Waska. ‘I will spare your life; but in return you must do something for me. In this castle there lives a Princess, the wicked wife of my dear master. She has stolen away his magic ring. You must get it away from her at whatever cost; do you hear? Till you have done this I won’t take my claws out of your fur.’

‘Good!’ replied the mouse; ‘I will do what you ask.’ And, so saying, he summoned all the mice in his kingdom together. A countless number of mice, small and big, brown and grey, assembled, and formed a circle round their king, who was a prisoner under Waska’s claws. Turning to them he said: ‘Dear and faithful subjects, who ever among you will steal the magic ring from the strange Princess will release me from a cruel death; and I shall honour him above all the other mice in the kingdom.’

Instantly a tiny mouse stepped forward and said: ‘I often creep about the Princess’s bedroom at night, and I have noticed that she has a ring which she treasures as the apple of her eye. All day she wears it on her finger, and at night she keeps it in her mouth. I will undertake, sire, to steal away the ring for you.’

And the tiny mouse tripped away into the bedroom of the Princess, and waited for nightfall; then, when the Princess had fallen asleep, it crept up on to her bed, and gnawed a hole in the pillow, through which it dragged one by one little down feathers, and threw them under the Princess’s nose. And the fluff flew into the Princess’s nose, and into her mouth, and starting up she sneezed and coughed, and the ring fell out of her mouth on to the coverlet. In a flash the tiny mouse had seized it, and brought it to Waska as a ransom for the King of the Mice. Thereupon Waska and Schurka started off, and travelled night and day till they reached the stone tower where Martin was imprisoned; and the cat climbed up the window, and called out to him:

‘Martin, dear master, are you still alive?’

‘Ah! Waska, my faithful little cat, is that you?’ replied a weak voice. ‘I am dying of hunger. For three days I have not tasted food.’

‘Be of good heart, dear master,’ replied Waska; ‘from this day forth you will know nothing but happiness and prosperity. If this were a moment to trouble you with riddles, I would make you guess what Schurka and I have brought you back. Only think, we have got you your ring!’

At these words Martin’s joy knew no bounds, and he stroked her fondly, and she rubbed up against him and purred happily, while below Schurka bounded in the air, and barked joyfully. Then Martin took the ring, and threw it from one hand into the other, and instantly the twelve youths appeared and asked what they were to do.

‘Fetch me first something to eat and drink, as quickly as possible; and after that bring musicians hither, and let us have music all day long.’

Now when the people in the town and palace heard music coming from the tower they were filled with amazement, and came to the King with the news that witchcraft must be going on in Martin’s Tower, for, instead of dying of starvation, he was seemingly making merry to the sound of music, and to the clatter of plates, and glass, and knives and forks; and the music was so enchantingly sweet that all the passers-by stood still to listen to it. On this the King sent at once a messenger to the Starvation Tower, and he was so astonished with what he saw that he remained rooted to the spot. Then the King sent his chief counsellors, and they too were transfixed with wonder. At last the King came himself, and he likewise was spellbound by the beauty of the music.

Then Martin summoned the twelve youths, spoke to them, saying, ‘Build up my castle again, and join it to the King’s Palace with a crystal bridge; do not forget the trees with the golden and silver apples, and with the birds of Paradise in the branches; and put back the church with the five cupolas, and let the bells ring out, summoning the people from the four corners of the kingdom. And one thing more: bring back my faithless wife, and lead her into the women’s chamber.’

And it was all done as he commanded, and, leaving the Starvation Tower, he took the King, his father-in-law, by the arm, and led him into the new palace, where the Princess sat in fear and trembling, awaiting her death. And Martin spoke to the King, saying, ‘King and royal father, I have suffered much at the hands of your daughter. What punishment shall be dealt to her?’

Then the mild King answered: ‘Beloved Prince and son-in-law, if you love me, let your anger be turned to grace—forgive my daughter, and restore her to your heart and favour.’

And Martin’s heart was softened and he forgave his wife, and they lived happily together ever after. And his old mother came and lived with him, and he never parted with Schurka and Waska; and I need hardly tell you that he never again let the ring out of his possession.

THE FLOWER QUEEN'S DAUGHTER[23]

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A young Prince was riding one day through a meadow that stretched for miles in front of him, when he came to a deep open ditch. He was turning aside to avoid it, when he heard the sound of someone crying in the ditch. He dismounted from his horse, and stepped along in the direction the sound came from. To his astonishment he found an old woman, who begged him to help her out of the ditch. The Prince bent down and lifted her out of her living grave, asking her at the same time how she had managed to get there.

'My son,' answered the old woman, 'I am a very poor woman, and soon after midnight I set out for the neighbouring town in order to sell my eggs in the market on the following morning; but I lost my way in the dark, and fell into this deep ditch, where I might have remained for ever but for your kindness.'

Then the Prince said to her, 'You can hardly walk; I will put you on my horse and lead you home. Where do you live?'

'Over there, at the edge of the forest in the little hut you see in the distance,' replied the old woman.

The Prince lifted her on to his horse, and soon they reached the hut, where the old woman got down, and turning to the Prince said, 'Just wait a moment, and I will give you something.' And she disappeared into her hut, but returned very soon and said, 'You are a mighty Prince, but at the same time you have a kind heart, which deserves to be rewarded. Would you like to have the most beautiful woman in the world for your wife?'

'Most certainly I would,' replied the Prince.

So the old woman continued, 'The most beautiful woman in the whole world is the daughter of the Queen of the Flowers, who has been captured by a dragon. If you wish to marry her, you must first set her free, and this I will help you to do. I will give you this little bell: if you ring it once, the King of the Eagles will appear; if you ring it twice, the King of the Foxes will come to you; and if you ring it three times, you will see the King of

the Fishes by your side. These will help you if you are in any difficulty. Now farewell, and heaven prosper your undertaking.' She handed him the little bell, and there disappeared hut and all, as though the earth had swallowed her up.

Then it dawned on the Prince that he had been speaking to a good fairy, and putting the little bell carefully in his pocket, he rode home and told his father that he meant to set the daughter of the Flower Queen free, and intended setting out on the following day into the wide world in search of the maid.

So the next morning the Prince mounted his fine horse and left his home. He had roamed round the world for a whole year, and his horse had died of exhaustion, while he himself had suffered much from want and misery, but still he had come on no trace of her he was in search of. At last one day he came to a hut, in front of which sat a very old man. The Prince asked him, 'Do you not know where the Dragon lives who keeps the daughter of the Flower Queen prisoner?'

'No, I do not,' answered the old man. 'But if you go straight along this road for a year, you will reach a hut where my father lives, and possibly he may be able to tell you.'

The Prince thanked him for his information, and continued his journey for a whole year along the same road, and at the end of it came to the little hut, where he found a very old man. He asked him the same question, and the old man answered, 'No, I do not know where the Dragon lives. But go straight along this road for another year, and you will come to a hut in which my father lives. I know he can tell you.'

And so the Prince wandered on for another year, always on the same road, and at last reached the hut where he found the third old man. He put the same question to him as he had put to his son and grandson; but this time the old man answered, 'The Dragon lives up there on the mountain, and he has just begun his year of sleep. For one whole year he is always awake, and the next he sleeps. But if you wish to see the Flower Queen's daughter go up the second mountain: the Dragon's old mother lives there, and she has a ball every night, to which the Flower Queen's daughter goes regularly.'

So the Prince went up the second mountain, where he found a castle all made of gold with diamond windows. He opened the big gate leading into

the courtyard, and was just going to walk in, when seven dragons rushed on him and asked him what he wanted?

The Prince replied, ‘I have heard so much of the beauty and kindness of the Dragon’s Mother, and would like to enter her service.’

This flattering speech pleased the dragons, and the eldest of them said, ‘Well, you may come with me, and I will take you to the Mother Dragon.’

They entered the castle and walked through twelve splendid halls, all made of gold and diamonds. In the twelfth room they found the Mother Dragon seated on a diamond throne. She was the ugliest woman under the sun, and, added to it all, she had three heads. Her appearance was a great shock to the Prince, and so was her voice, which was like the croaking of many ravens. She asked him, ‘Why have you come here?’

The Prince answered at once, ‘I have heard so much of your beauty and kindness, that I would very much like to enter your service.’

‘Very well,’ said the Mother Dragon; ‘but if you wish to enter my service, you must first lead my mare out to the meadow and look after her for three days; but if you don’t bring her home safely every evening, we will eat you up.’

The Prince undertook the task and led the mare out to the meadow.

But no sooner had they reached the grass than she vanished. The Prince sought for her in vain, and at last in despair sat down on a big stone and contemplated his sad fate. As he sat thus lost in thought, he noticed an eagle flying over his head. Then he suddenly bethought him of his little bell, and taking it out of his pocket he rang it once. In a moment he heard a rustling sound in the air beside him, and the King of the Eagles sank at his feet.

‘I know what you want of me,’ the bird said. ‘You are looking for the Mother Dragon’s mare who is galloping about among the clouds. I will summon all the eagles of the air together, and order them to catch the mare and bring her to you.’ And with these words the King of the Eagles flew away. Towards evening the Prince heard a mighty rushing sound in the air, and when he looked up he saw thousands of eagles driving the mare before them. They sank at his feet on to the ground and gave the mare over to him. Then the Prince rode home to the old Mother Dragon, who was full of wonder when she saw him, and said, ‘You have succeeded to-day in looking after my mare, and as a reward you shall come to my ball to-

night.’ She gave him at the same time a cloak made of copper, and led him to a big room where several young he-dragons and she-dragons were dancing together. Here, too, was the Flower Queen’s beautiful daughter. Her dress was woven out of the most lovely flowers in the world, and her complexion was like lilies and roses. As the Prince was dancing with her he managed to whisper in her ear, ‘I have come to set you free!’

Then the beautiful girl said to him, ‘If you succeed in bringing the mare back safely the third day, ask the Mother Dragon to give you a foal of the mare as a reward.’

The ball came to an end at midnight, and early next morning the Prince again led the Mother Dragon’s mare out into the meadow. But again she vanished before his eyes. Then he took out his little bell and rang it twice.

In a moment the King of the Foxes stood before him and said: ‘I know already what you want, and will summon all the foxes of the world together to find the mare who has hidden herself in a hill.’

With these words the King of the Foxes disappeared, and in the evening many thousand foxes brought the mare to the Prince.

Then he rode home to the Mother-Dragon, from whom he received this time a cloak made of silver, and again she led him to the ball-room.

The Flower Queen’s daughter was delighted to see him safe and sound, and when they were dancing together she whispered in his ear: ‘If you succeed again to-morrow, wait for me with the foal in the meadow. After the ball we will fly away together.’

On the third day the Prince led the mare to the meadow again; but once more she vanished before his eyes. Then the Prince took out his little bell and rang it three times.

In a moment the King of the Fishes appeared, and said to him: ‘I know quite well what you want me to do, and I will summon all the fishes of the sea together, and tell them to bring you back the mare, who is hiding herself in a river.’

Towards evening the mare was returned to him, and when he led her home to the Mother Dragon she said to him:

‘You are a brave youth, and I will make you my body-servant. But what shall I give you as a reward to begin with?’

The Prince begged for a foal of the mare, which the Mother Dragon at once gave him, and over and above, a cloak made of gold, for she had

fallen in love with him because he had praised her beauty.

So in the evening he appeared at the ball in his golden cloak; but before the entertainment was over he slipped away, and went straight to the stables, where he mounted his foal and rode out into the meadow to wait for the Flower Queen's daughter. Towards midnight the beautiful girl appeared, and placing her in front of him on his horse, the Prince and she flew like the wind till they reached the Flower Queen's dwelling. But the dragons had noticed their flight, and woke their brother out of his year's sleep. He flew into a terrible rage when he heard what had happened, and determined to lay siege to the Flower Queen's palace; but the Queen caused a forest of flowers as high as the sky to grow up round her dwelling, through which no one could force a way.

When the Flower Queen heard that her daughter wanted to marry the Prince, she said to him: 'I will give my consent to your marriage gladly, but my daughter can only stay with you in summer. In winter, when everything is dead and the ground covered with snow, she must come and live with me in my palace underground.' The Prince consented to this, and led his beautiful bride home, where the wedding was held with great pomp and magnificence. The young couple lived happily together till winter came, when the Flower Queen's daughter departed and went home to her mother. In summer she returned to her husband, and their life of joy and happiness began again, and lasted till the approach of winter, when the Flower Queen's daughter went back again to her mother. This coming and going continued all her life long, and in spite of it they always lived happily together.

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23. From the Bukowinaer. Von Wliolocki.

THE FLYING SHIP[24]

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Once upon a time there lived an old couple who had three sons; the two elder were clever, but the third was a regular dunce. The clever sons were very fond of their mother, gave her good clothes, and always spoke pleasantly to her; but the youngest was always getting in her way, and she had no patience with him. Now, one day it was announced in the village that the King had issued a decree, offering his daughter, the Princess, in marriage to whoever should build a ship that could fly. Immediately the two elder brothers determined to try their luck, and asked their parents' blessing. So the old mother smartened up their clothes, and gave them a store of provisions for their journey, not forgetting to add a bottle of brandy. When they had gone the poor Simpleton began to tease his mother to smarten him up and let him start off.

'What would become of a dolt like you?' she answered. 'Why, you would be eaten up by wolves.'

But the foolish youth kept repeating, 'I will go, I will go, I will go!'

Seeing that she could do nothing with him, the mother gave him a crust of bread and a bottle of water, and took no further heed of him.

So the Simpleton set off on his way. When he had gone a short distance he met a little old manikin. They greeted one another, and the manikin asked him where he was going.

'I am off to the King's Court,' he answered. 'He has promised to give his daughter to whoever can make a flying ship.'

'And can you make such a ship?'

'Not I.'

'Then why in the world are you going?'

'Can't tell,' replied the Simpleton.

'Well, if that is the case,' said the manikin, 'sit down beside me; we can rest for a little and have something to eat. Give me what you have got in your satchel.'

Now, the poor Simpleton was ashamed to show what was in it. However, he thought it best not to make a fuss, so he opened the satchel, and could scarcely believe his own eyes, for, instead of the hard crust, he saw two beautiful fresh rolls and some cold meat. He shared them with the manikin, who licked his lips and said:

‘Now, go into that wood, and stop in front of the first tree, bow three times, and then strike the tree with your axe, fall on your knees on the ground, with your face on the earth, and remain there till you are raised up. You will then find a ship at your side, step into it and fly to the King’s Palace. If you meet anyone on the way, take him with you.’

The Simpleton thanked the manikin very kindly, bade him farewell, and went into the road. When he got to the first tree he stopped in front of it, did everything just as he had been told, and, kneeling on the ground with his face to the earth, fell asleep. After a little time he was aroused; he awoke and, rubbing his eyes, saw a ready-made ship at his side, and at once got into it.

And the ship rose and rose, and in another minute was flying through the air, when the Simpleton, who was on the look out, cast his eyes down to the earth and saw a man beneath him on the road, who was kneeling with his ear upon the damp ground.

‘Hallo!’ he called out, ‘what are you doing down there?’

‘I am listening to what is going on in the world,’ replied the man.

‘Come with me in my ship,’ said the Simpleton.

So the man was only too glad, and got in beside him; and the ship flew, and flew, and flew through the air, till again from his outlook the Simpleton saw a man on the road below, who was hopping on one leg, while his other leg was tied up behind his ear. So he hailed him, calling out:

‘Hallo! what are you doing, hopping on one leg?’

‘I can’t help it,’ replied the man. ‘I walk so fast that unless I tied up one leg I should be at the end of the earth in a bound.’

‘Come with us on my ship,’ he answered; and the man made no objections, but joined them; and the ship flew on, and on, and on, till suddenly the Simpleton, looking down on the road below, beheld a man aiming with a gun into the distance.

‘Hallo!’ he shouted to him, ‘what are you aiming at? As far as eye can see, there is no bird in sight.’

‘What would be the good of my taking a near shot?’ replied the man; ‘I can hit beast or bird at a hundred miles’ distance. That is the kind of shot I enjoy.’

‘Come into the ship with us,’ answered the Simpleton; and the man was only too glad to join them, and he got in; and the ship flew on, farther and farther, till again the Simpleton from his outlook saw a man on the road below, carrying on his back a basket full of bread. And he waved to him, calling out:

‘Hallo! where are you going?’

‘To fetch bread for my breakfast.’

‘Bread? Why, you have got a whole basket-load of it on your back.’

‘That’s nothing,’ answered the man; ‘I should finish that in one mouthful.’

‘Come along with us in my ship, then.’

And so the glutton joined the party, and the ship mounted again into the air, and flew up and onward, till the Simpleton from his outlook saw a man walking by the shore of a great lake, and evidently looking for something.

‘Hallo!’ he cried to him,’ what are you seeking?

‘I want water to drink, I’m so thirsty,’ replied the man.

‘Well, there’s a whole lake in front of you; why don’t you drink some of that?’

‘Do you call that enough?’ answered the other. ‘Why, I should drink it up in one gulp.’

‘Well, come with us in the ship.’

And so the mighty drinker was added to the company; and the ship flew farther, and even farther, till again the Simpleton looked out, and this time he saw a man dragging a bundle of wood, walking through the forest beneath them.

‘Hallo!’ he shouted to him, ‘why are you carrying wood through a forest?’

‘This is not common wood,’ answered the other.

‘What sort of wood is it, then?’ said the Simpleton.

‘If you throw it upon the ground,’ said the man, ‘it will be changed into an army of soldiers.’

‘Come into the ship with us, then.’

And so he too joined them; and away the ship flew on, and on, and on, and once more the Simpleton looked out, and this time he saw a man carrying straw upon his back.

‘Hallo! Where are you carrying that straw to?’

‘To the village,’ said the man.

‘Do you mean to say there is no straw in the village?’

‘Ah! but this is quite a peculiar straw. If you strew it about even in the hottest summer the air at once becomes cold, and snow falls, and the people freeze.’

Then the Simpleton asked him also to join them.

At last the ship, with its strange crew, arrived at the King’s Court. The King was having his dinner, but he at once despatched one of his courtiers to find out what the huge, strange new bird could be that had come flying through the air. The courtier peeped into the ship, and, seeing what it was, instantly went back to the King and told him that it was a flying ship, and that it was manned by a few peasants.

Then the King remembered his royal oath; but he made up his mind that he would never consent to let the Princess marry a poor peasant. So he thought and thought, and then said to himself:

‘I will give him some impossible tasks to perform; that will be the best way of getting rid of him.’ And he there and then decided to despatch one of his courtiers to the Simpleton, with the command that he was to fetch the King the healing water from the world’s end before he had finished his dinner.

But while the King was still instructing the courtier exactly what he was to say, the first man of the ship’s company, the one with the miraculous power of hearing, had overheard the King’s words, and hastily reported them to the poor Simpleton.

‘Alas, alas!’ he cried; ‘what am I to do now? It would take me quite a year, possibly my whole life, to find the water.’

‘Never fear,’ said his fleet-footed comrade, ‘I will fetch what the King wants.’

Just then the courtier arrived, bearing the King’s command.

‘Tell his Majesty,’ said the Simpleton, ‘that his orders shall be obeyed; ‘and forthwith the swift runner unbound the foot that was strung up behind his ear and started off, and in less than no time had reached the world’s end and drawn the healing water from the well.

‘Dear me,’ he thought to himself, ‘that’s rather tiring! I’ll just rest for a few minutes; it will be some little time yet before the King has got to dessert.’ So he threw himself down on the grass, and, as the sun was very dazzling, he closed his eyes, and in a few seconds had fallen sound asleep.

In the meantime all the ship’s crew were anxiously awaiting him; the King’s dinner would soon be finished, and their comrade had not yet returned. So the man with the marvellous quick hearing lay down and, putting his ear to the ground, listened.

‘That’s a nice sort of fellow!’ he suddenly exclaimed. ‘He’s lying on the ground, snoring hard!’

At this the marksman seized his gun, took aim, and fired in the direction of the world’s end, in order to awaken the sluggard. And a moment later the swift runner reappeared, and, stepping on board the ship, handed the healing water to the Simpleton. So while the King was still sitting at table finishing his dinner news was brought to him that his orders had been obeyed to the letter.

What was to be done now? The King determined to think of a still more impossible task. So he told another courtier to go to the Simpleton with the command that he and his comrades were instantly to eat up twelve oxen and twelve tons of bread. Once more the sharp-eared comrade overheard the King’s words while he was still talking to the courtier, and reported them to the Simpleton.

‘Alas, alas!’ he sighed; ‘what in the world shall I do? Why, it would take us a year, possibly our whole lives, to eat up twelve oxen and twelve tons of bread.’

‘Never fear,’ said the glutton. ‘It will scarcely be enough for me, I’m so hungry.’

So when the courtier arrived with the royal message he was told to take back word to the King that his orders should be obeyed. Then twelve roasted oxen and twelve tons of bread were brought alongside of the ship, and at one sitting the glutton had devoured it all.

‘I call that a small meal,’ he said. ‘I wish they’d brought me some more.’

Next, the King ordered that forty casks of wine, containing forty gallons each, were to be drunk up on the spot by the Simpleton and his party. When these words were overheard by the sharp-eared comrade and repeated to the Simpleton, he was in despair.

‘Alas, alas!’ he exclaimed; ‘what is to be done? It would take us a year, possibly our whole lives, to drink so much.’

‘Never fear,’ said his thirsty comrade. ‘I’ll drink it all up at a gulp, see if I don’t.’ And sure enough, when the forty casks of wine containing forty gallons each were brought alongside of the ship, they disappeared down the thirsty comrade’s throat in no time; and when they were empty he remarked:

‘Why, I’m still thirsty. I should have been glad of two more casks.’

Then the King took counsel with himself and sent an order to the Simpleton that he was to have a bath, in a bath-room at the royal palace, and after that the betrothal should take place. Now the bath-room was built of iron, and the King gave orders that it was to be heated to such a pitch that it would suffocate the Simpleton. And so when the poor silly youth entered the room, he discovered that the iron walls were red hot. But, fortunately, his comrade with the straw on his back had entered behind him, and when the door was shut upon them he scattered the straw about, and suddenly the red-hot walls cooled down, and it became so very cold that the Simpleton could scarcely bear to take a bath, and all the water in the room froze. So the Simpleton climbed up upon the stove, and, wrapping himself up in the bath blankets, lay there the whole night. And in the morning when they opened the door there he lay sound and safe, singing cheerfully to himself.

Now when this strange tale was told to the King he became quite sad, not knowing what he should do to get rid of so undesirable a son-in-law, when suddenly a brilliant idea occurred to him.

‘Tell the rascal to raise me an army, now at this instant!’ he exclaimed to one of his courtiers. ‘Inform him at once of this, my royal will.’ And to himself he added, ‘I think I shall do for him this time.’

As on former occasions, the quick-eared comrade had overheard the King’s command and repeated it to the Simpleton.

‘Alas, alas!’ he groaned; ‘now I am quite done for.’

‘Not at all,’ replied one of his comrades (the one who had dragged the bundle of wood through the forest). ‘Have you quite forgotten me?’

In the meantime the courtier, who had run all the way from the palace, reached the ship panting and breathless, and delivered the King’s message.

‘Good!’ remarked the Simpleton. ‘I will raise an army for the King,’ and he drew himself up. ‘But if, after that, the King refuses to accept me as his son-in-law, I will wage war against him, and carry the Princess off by force.’

During the night the Simpleton and his comrade went, together into a big field, not forgetting to take the bundle of wood with them, which the man spread out in all directions—and in a moment a mighty army stood upon the spot, regiment on regiment of foot and horse soldiers; the bugles sounded and the drums beat, the chargers neighed, and their riders put their lances in rest, and the soldiers presented arms.

In the morning when the King awoke he was startled by these warlike sounds, the bugles and the drums, and the clatter of the horses, and the shouts of the soldiers. And, stepping to the window, he saw the lances gleam in the sunlight and the armour and weapons glitter. And the proud monarch said to himself, ‘I am powerless in comparison with this man.’ So he sent him royal robes and costly jewels, and commanded him to come to the palace to be married to the Princess. And his son-in-law put on the royal robes, and he looked so grand and stately that it was impossible to recognise the poor Simpleton, so changed was he; and the Princess fell in love with him as soon as ever she saw him.

Never before had so grand a wedding been seen, and there was so much food and wine that even the glutton and the thirsty comrade had enough to eat and drink.

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24. From the Russian.

THE SNOW-DAUGHTER AND THE FIRE-SON[25]

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There was once upon a time a man and his wife, and they had no children, which was a great grief to them. One winter's day, when the sun was shining brightly, the couple were standing outside their cottage, and the woman was looking at all the little icicles which hung from the roof. She sighed, and turning to her husband said, 'I wish I had as many children as there are icicles hanging there.' 'Nothing would please me more either,' replied her husband. Then a tiny icicle detached itself from the roof, and dropped into the woman's mouth, who swallowed it with a smile, and said, 'Perhaps I shall give birth to a snow child now!' Her husband laughed at his wife's strange idea, and they went back into the house.

But after a short time the woman gave birth to a little girl, who was as white as snow and as cold as ice. If they brought the child anywhere near the fire, it screamed loudly till they put it back into some cool place. The little maid throve wonderfully, and in a few months she could run about and speak. But she was not altogether easy to bring up, and gave her parents much trouble and anxiety, for all summer she insisted on spending in the cellar, and in the winter she would sleep outside in the snow, and the colder it was the happier she seemed to be. Her father and mother called her simply 'Our Snow-daughter,' and this name stuck to her all her life.

One day her parents sat by the fire, talking over the extraordinary behaviour of their daughter, who was disporting herself in the snowstorm that raged outside. The woman sighed deeply and said, 'I wish I had given birth to a Fire-son!' As she said these words, a spark from the big wood fire flew into the woman's lap, and she said with a laugh, 'Now perhaps I shall give birth to a Fire-son!' The man laughed at his wife's words, and thought it was a good joke. But he ceased to think it a joke when his wife shortly afterwards gave birth to a boy, who screamed lustily till he was put quite close to the fire, and who nearly yelled himself into a fit if the Snow-daughter came anywhere near him. The Snow-daughter herself avoided

him as much as she could, and always crept into a corner as far away from him as possible. The parents called the boy simply ‘Our Fire-son,’ a name which stuck to him all his life. They had a great deal of trouble and worry with him too; but he throve and grew very quickly, and before he was a year old he could run about and talk. He was as red as fire, and as hot to touch, and he always sat on the hearth quite close to the fire, and complained of the cold; if his sister were in the room he almost crept into the flames, while the girl on her part always complained of the great heat if her brother were anywhere near. In summer the boy always lay out in the sun, while the girl hid herself in the cellar: so it happened that the brother and sister came very little into contact with each other—in fact, they carefully avoided it.

Just as the girl grew up into a beautiful woman, her father and mother both died one after the other. Then the Fire-son, who had grown up in the meantime into a fine, strong young man, said to his sister, ‘I am going out into the world, for what is the use of remaining on here?’

‘I shall go with you,’ she answered, ‘for, except you, I have no one in the world, and I have a feeling that if we set out together we shall be lucky.’

The Fire-son said, ‘I love you with all my heart, but at the same time I always freeze if you are near me, and you nearly die of heat if I approach you! How shall we travel about together without being odious the one to the other?’

‘Don’t worry about that,’ replied the girl, ‘for I’ve thought it all over, and have settled on a plan which will make us each able to bear with the other! See, I have had a fur cloak made for each of us, and if we put them on I shall not feel the heat so much nor you the cold.’ So they put on the fur cloaks, and set out cheerfully on their way, and for the first time in their lives quite happy in each other’s company.

For a long time the Fire-son and the Snow-daughter wandered through the world, and when at the beginning of winter they came to a big wood they determined to stay there till spring. The Fire-son built himself a hut where he always kept up a huge fire, while his sister with very few clothes on stayed outside night and day. Now it happened one day that the King of the land held a hunt in this wood, and saw the Snow-daughter wandering about in the open air. He wondered very much who the beautiful girl clad

in such garments could be, and he stopped and spoke to her. He soon learnt that she could not stand heat, and that her brother could not endure cold. The King was so charmed by the Snow-daughter, that he asked her to be his wife. The girl consented, and the wedding was held with much state. The King had a huge house of ice made for his wife underground, so that even in summer it did not melt. But for his brother-in-law he had a house built with huge ovens all round it, that were kept heated all day and night. The Fire-son was delighted, but the perpetual heat in which he lived made his body so hot, that it was dangerous to go too close to him.

One day the King gave a great feast, and asked his brother-in-law among the other guests. The Fire-son did not appear till everyone had assembled, and when he did, everyone fled outside to the open air, so intense was the heat he gave forth. Then the King was very angry and said, ‘If I had known what a lot of trouble you would have been, I would never have taken you into my house.’ Then the Fire-son replied with a laugh, ‘Don’t be angry, dear brother! I love heat and my sister loves cold—come here and let me embrace you, and then I’ll go home at once.’ And before the King had time to reply, the Fire-son seized him in a tight embrace. The King screamed aloud in agony, and when his wife, the Snow-daughter, who had taken refuge from her brother in the next room, hurried to him, the King lay dead on the ground burnt to a cinder. When the Snow-daughter saw this she turned on her brother and flew at him. Then a fight began, the like of which had never been seen on earth. When the people, attracted by the noise, hurried to the spot, they saw the Snow-daughter melting into water and the Fire-son burn to a cinder. And so ended the unhappy brother and sister.

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25. From the Bukowinaer Tales and Legends. Von Wliolocki.

THE STORY OF KING FROST[26]

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There was once upon a time a peasant-woman who had a daughter and a step-daughter. The daughter had her own way in everything, and whatever she did was right in her mother's eyes; but the poor step-daughter had a hard time. Let her do what she would, she was always blamed, and got small thanks for all the trouble she took; nothing was right, everything wrong; and yet, if the truth were known, the girl was worth her weight in gold—she was so unselfish and good-hearted. But her step-mother did not like her, and the poor girl's days were spent in weeping; for it was impossible to live peacefully with the woman. The wicked shrew was determined to get rid of the girl by fair means or foul, and kept saying to her father: 'Send her away, old man; send her away—anywhere so that my eyes sha'n't be plagued any longer by the sight of her, or my ears tormented by the sound of her voice. Send her out into the fields, and let the cutting frost do for her.'

In vain did the poor old father weep and implore her pity; she was firm, and he dared not gainsay her. So he placed his daughter in a sledge, not even daring to give her a horse-cloth to keep herself warm with, and drove her out on to the bare, open fields, where he kissed her and left her, driving home as fast as he could, that he might not witness her miserable death.

Deserted by her father, the poor girl sat down under a fir-tree at the edge of the forest and began to weep silently. Suddenly she heard a faint sound: it was King Frost springing from tree to tree, and cracking his fingers as he went. At length he reached the fir-tree beneath which she was sitting, and with a crisp crackling sound he alighted beside her, and looked at her lovely face.

'Well, maiden,' he snapped out, 'do you know who I am? I am King Frost, king of the red-noses.'

'All hail to you, great King!' answered the girl, in a gentle, trembling voice. 'Have you come to take me?'

‘Are you warm, maiden?’ he replied.

‘Quite warm, King Frost,’ she answered, though she shivered as she spoke.

Then King Frost stooped down, and bent over the girl, and the crackling sound grew louder, and the air seemed to be full of knives and darts; and again he asked:

‘Maiden, are you warm? Are you warm, you beautiful girl?’

And though her breath was almost frozen on her lips, she whispered gently, ‘Quite warm, King Frost.’

Then King Frost gnashed his teeth, and cracked his fingers, and his eyes sparkled, and the crackling, crisp sound was louder than ever, and for the last time he asked her:

‘Maiden, are you still warm? Are you still warm, little love?’

And the poor girl was so stiff and numb that she could just gasp, ‘Still warm, O King!’

Now her gentle, courteous words and her uncomplaining ways touched King Frost, and he had pity on her, and he wrapped her up in furs, and covered her with blankets, and he fetched a great box, in which were beautiful jewels and a rich robe embroidered in gold and silver. And she put it on, and looked more lovely than ever, and King Frost stepped with her into his sledge, with six white horses.

In the meantime the wicked step-mother was waiting at home for news of the girl’s death, and preparing pancakes for the funeral feast. And she said to her husband: ‘Old man, you had better go out into the fields and find your daughter’s body and bury her.’ Just as the old man was leaving the house the little dog under the table began to bark, saying:

‘YOUR daughter shall live to be your delight;
HER daughter shall die this very night.’

‘Hold your tongue, you foolish beast!’ scolded the woman. ‘There’s a pancake for you, but you must say:

“HER daughter shall have much silver and gold;
HIS daughter is frozen quite stiff and cold.” ’

But the doggie ate up the pancake and barked, saying:

‘His daughter shall wear a crown on her head;
Her daughter shall die unwooed, unwed.’

Then the old woman tried to coax the doggie with more pancakes and to terrify it with blows, but he barked on, always repeating the same words. And suddenly the door creaked and flew open, and a great heavy chest was pushed in, and behind it came the step-daughter, radiant and beautiful, in a dress all glittering with silver and gold. For a moment the step-mother’s eyes were dazzled. Then she called to her husband: ‘Old man, yoke the horses at once into the sledge, and take my daughter to the same field and leave her on the same spot exactly; ‘and so the old man took the girl and left her beneath the same tree where he had parted from his daughter. In a few minutes King Frost came past, and, looking at the girl, he said:

‘Are you warm, maiden?’

‘What a blind old fool you must be to ask such a question!’ she answered angrily. ‘Can’t you see that my hands and feet are nearly frozen?’

Then King Frost sprang to and fro in front of her, questioning her, and getting only rude, rough words in reply, till at last he got very angry, and cracked his fingers, and gnashed his teeth, and froze her to death.

But in the hut her mother was waiting for her return, and as she grew impatient she said to her husband: ‘Get out the horses, old man, to go and fetch her home; but see that you are careful not to upset the sledge and lose the chest.’

But the doggie beneath the table began to bark, saying:

‘Your daughter is frozen quite stiff and cold,
And shall never have a chest full of gold.’

‘Don’t tell such wicked lies!’ scolded the woman. ‘There’s a cake for you; now say:

“HER daughter shall marry a mighty King.”

At that moment the door flew open, and she rushed out to meet her daughter, and as she took her frozen body in her arms she too was chilled to death.

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26. From the Russian.

THE DEATH OF THE SUN-HERO[27]

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Many, many thousand years ago there lived a mighty King whom heaven had blessed with a clever and beautiful son. When he was only ten years old the boy was cleverer than all the King's counsellors put together, and when he was twenty he was the greatest hero in the whole kingdom. His father could not make enough of his son, and always had him clothed in golden garments which shone and sparkled like the sun; and his mother gave him a white horse, which never slept, and which flew like the wind. All the people in the land loved him dearly, and called him the Sun-Hero, for they did not think his like existed under the sun. Now it happened one night that both his parents had the same extraordinary dream. They dreamt that a girl all dressed in red had come to them and said: 'If you wish that your son should really become the Sun-Hero in deed and not only in name, let him go out into the world and search for the Tree of the Sun, and when he has found it, let him pluck a golden apple from it and bring it home.'

When the King and Queen had each related their dreams to the other, they were much amazed that they should both have dreamt exactly the same about their son, and the King said to his wife, 'This is clearly a sign from heaven that we should send our son out into the world in order that he may come home the great Sun-Hero, as the Red Girl said, not only in name but in deed.'

The Queen consented with many tears, and the King at once bade his son set forth in search of the Tree of the Sun, from which he was to pluck a golden apple. The Prince was delighted at the prospect, and set out on his travels that very day.

For a long time he wandered all through the world, and it was not till the ninety-ninth day after he started that he found an old man who was able to tell him where the Tree of the Sun grew. He followed his directions, and rode on his way, and after another ninety-nine days he arrived at a golden castle, which stood in the middle of a vast wilderness. He knocked at the door, which was opened noiselessly and by invisible

hands. Finding no one about, the Prince rode on, and came to a great meadow, where the Sun-Tree grew. When he reached the tree he put out his hand to pick a golden apple; but all of a sudden the tree grew higher, so that he could not reach its fruit. Then he heard some one behind him laughing. Turning round, he saw the girl in red walking towards him, who addressed him in these words:

‘Do you really imagine, brave son of the earth, that you can pluck an apple so easily from the Tree of the Sun? Before you can do that, you have a difficult task before you. You must guard the tree for nine days and nine nights from the ravages of two wild black wolves, who will try to harm it. Do you think you can undertake this?’

‘Yes,’ answered the Sun-Hero, ‘I will guard the Tree of the Sun nine days and nine nights.’

Then the girl continued: ‘Remember, though, if you do not succeed the Sun will kill you. Now begin your watch.’

With these words the Red Girl went back into the golden castle. She had hardly left him when the two black wolves appeared: but the Sun-Hero beat them off with his sword, and they retired, only, however, to reappear in a very short time. The Sun-Hero chased them away once more, but he had hardly sat down to rest when the two black wolves were on the scene again. This went on for seven days and nights, when the white horse, who had never done such a thing before, turned to the Sun-Hero and said in a human voice: ‘Listen to what I am going to say. A Fairy gave me to your mother in order that I might be of service to you; so let me tell you, that if you go to sleep and let the wolves harm the tree, the Sun will surely kill you. The Fairy, foreseeing this, put everyone in the world under a spell, which prevents their obeying the Sun’s command to take your life. But all the same, she has forgotten one person, who will certainly kill you if you fall asleep and let the wolves damage the tree. So watch and keep the wolves away.’

Then the Sun-Hero strove with all his might and kept the black wolves at bay, and conquered his desire to sleep; but on the eighth night his strength failed him, and he fell fast asleep. When he awoke a woman in black stood beside him, who said: ‘You have fulfilled your task very badly, for you have let the two black wolves damage the Tree of the Sun. I am the mother of the Sun, and I command you to ride away from here at once, and

I pronounce sentence of death upon you, for you proudly let yourself be called the Sun-Hero without having done anything to deserve the name.’

The youth mounted his horse sadly, and rode home. The people all thronged round him on his return, anxious to hear his adventures, but he told them nothing, and only to his mother did he confide what had befallen him. But the old Queen laughed, and said to her son: ‘Don’t worry, my child; you see, the Fairy has protected you so far, and the Sun has found no one to kill you. So cheer up and be happy.’

After a time the Prince forgot all about his adventure, and married a beautiful Princess, with whom he lived very happily for some time. But one day when he was out hunting he felt very thirsty, and coming to a stream he stooped down to drink from it, and this caused his death, for a crab came swimming up, and with its claws tore out his tongue. He was carried home in a dying condition, and as he lay on his death-bed the black woman appeared and said: ‘So the Sun has, after all, found someone, who was not under the Fairy’s spell, who has caused your death. And a similar fate will overtake everyone under the Sun who wrongfully assumes a title to which he has no right.’

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27. From the Bukowinaer Tales and Legends. Von Wliolocki.

THE WITCH[28]

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Once upon a time there was a peasant whose wife died, leaving him with two children—twins—a boy and a girl. For some years the poor man lived on alone with the children, caring for them as best he could; but everything in the house seemed to go wrong without a woman to look after it, and at last he made up his mind to marry again, feeling that a wife would bring peace and order to his household and take care of his motherless children. So he married, and in the following years several children were born to him; but peace and order did not come to the household. For the step-mother was very cruel to the twins, and beat them, and half-starved them, and constantly drove them out of the house; for her one idea was to get them out of the way. All day she thought of nothing but how she should get rid of them; and at last an evil idea came into her head, and she determined to send them out into the great gloomy wood where a wicked witch lived. And so one morning she spoke to them, saying:

‘You have been such good children that I am going to send you to visit my granny, who lives in a dear little hut in the wood. You will have to wait upon her and serve her, but you will be well rewarded, for she will give you the best of everything.’

So the children left the house together; and the little sister, who was very wise for her years, said to the brother:

‘We will first go and see our own dear grandmother, and tell her where our step-mother is sending us.’

And when the grandmother heard where they were going, she cried and said:

‘You poor motherless children! How I pity you; and yet I can do nothing to help you! Your step-mother is not sending you to her granny, but to a wicked witch who lives in that great gloomy wood. Now listen to me, children. You must be civil and kind to everyone, and never say a cross word to anyone, and never touch a crumb belonging to anyone else. Who knows if, after all, help may not be sent to you?’

And she gave her grandchildren a bottle of milk and a piece of ham and a loaf of bread, and they set out for the great gloomy wood. When they reached it they saw in front of them, in the thickest of the trees, a queer little hut, and when they looked into it, there lay the witch, with her head on the threshold of the door, with one foot in one corner and the other in the other corner, and her knees cocked up, almost touching the ceiling.

‘Who’s there?’ she snarled, in an awful voice, when she saw the children.

And they answered civilly, though they were so terrified that they hid behind one another, and said:

‘Good-morning, granny; our step-mother has sent us to wait upon you, and serve you.’

‘See that you do it well, then,’ growled the witch. ‘If I am pleased with you, I’ll reward you; but if I am not, I’ll put you in a pan and fry you in the oven—that’s what I’ll do with you, my pretty dears! You have been gently reared, but you’ll find my work hard enough. See if you don’t.’

And, so saying, she set the girl down to spin yarn, and she gave the boy a sieve in which to carry water from the well, and she herself went out into the wood. Now, as the girl was sitting at her distaff, weeping bitterly because she could not spin, she heard the sound of hundreds of little feet, and from every hole and corner in the hut mice came pattering along the floor, squeaking and saying:

‘Little girl, why are your eyes so red?
If you want help, then give us some bread.’

And the girl gave them the bread that her grandmother had given her. Then the mice told her that the witch had a cat, and the cat was very fond of ham; if she would give the cat her ham, it would show her the way out of the wood, and in the meantime they would spin the yarn for her. So the girl set out to look for the cat, and, as she was hunting about, she met her brother, in great trouble because he could not carry water from the well in a sieve, as it came pouring out as fast as he put it in. And as she was trying to comfort him they heard a rustling of wings, and a flight of wrens alighted on the ground beside them. And the wrens said:

‘Give us some crumbs, then you need not grieve.
For you’ll find that water will stay in the sieve.’

Then the twins crumbled their bread on the ground, and the wrens pecked it, and chirruped and chirped. And when they had eaten the last crumb they told the boy to fill up the holes of the sieve with clay, and then to draw water from the well. So he did what they said, and carried the sieve full of water into the hut without spilling a drop. When they entered the hut the cat was curled up on the floor. So they stroked her, and fed her with ham, and said to her:

‘Pussy, grey pussy, tell us how we are to get away from the witch?’

Then the cat thanked them for the ham, and gave them a pocket-handkerchief and a comb, and told them that when the witch pursued them, as she certainly would, all they had to do was to throw the handkerchief on the ground and run as fast as they could. As soon as the handkerchief touched the ground a deep, broad river would spring up, which would hinder the witch’s progress. If she managed to get across it, they must throw the comb behind them and run for their lives, for where the comb fell a dense forest would start up, which would delay the witch so long that they would be able to get safely away.

The cat had scarcely finished speaking when the witch returned to see if the children had fulfilled their tasks.

‘Well, you have done well enough for to-day,’ she grumbled; ‘but to-morrow you’ll have something more difficult to do, and if you don’t do it well, you pampered brats, straight into the oven you go.’

Half-dead with fright, and trembling in every limb, the poor children lay down to sleep on a heap of straw in the corner of the hut; but they dared not close their eyes, and scarcely ventured to breathe. In the morning the witch gave the girl two pieces of linen to weave before night, and the boy a pile of wood to cut into chips. Then the witch left them to their tasks, and went out into the wood. As soon as she had gone out of sight the children took the comb and the handkerchief, and, taking one another by the hand, they started and ran, and ran, and ran. And first they met the watch-dog, who was going to leap on them and tear them to pieces; but they threw the remains of their bread to him, and he ate them and wagged his tail. Then they were hindered by the birch-trees, whose

branches almost put their eyes out. But the little sister tied the twigs together with a piece of ribbon, and they got past safely, and, after running through the wood, came out on to the open fields.

In the meantime in the hut the cat was busy weaving the linen and tangling the threads as it wove. And the witch returned to see how the children were getting on; and she crept up to the window, and whispered:

‘Are you weaving, my little dear?’

‘Yes, granny, I am weaving,’ answered the cat.

When the witch saw that the children had escaped her, she was furious, and, hitting the cat with a porringer, she said: ‘Why did you let the children leave the hut? Why did you not scratch their eyes out?’

But the cat curled up its tail and put its back up, and answered: ‘I have served you all these years and you never even threw me a bone, but the dear children gave me their own piece of ham.’

Then the witch was furious with the watch-dog and with the birch-trees, because they had let the children pass. But the dog answered:

‘I have served you all these years and you never gave me so much as a hard crust, but the dear children gave me their own loaf of bread.’

And the birch rustled its leaves, and said: ‘I have served you longer than I can say, and you never tied a bit of twine even round my branches; and the dear children bound them up with their brightest ribbons.’

So the witch saw there was no help to be got from her old servants, and that the best thing she could do was to mount on her broom and set off in pursuit of the children. And as the children ran they heard the sound of the broom sweeping the ground close behind them, so instantly they threw the handkerchief down over their shoulder, and in a moment a deep, broad river flowed behind them.

When the witch came up to it, it took her a long time before she found a place which she could ford over on her broom-stick; but at last she got across, and continued the chase faster than before. And as the children ran they heard a sound, and the little sister put her ear to the ground, and heard the broom sweeping the earth close behind them; so, quick as thought, she threw the comb down on the ground, and in an instant, as the cat had said, a dense forest sprung up, in which the roots and branches were so closely intertwined, that it was impossible to force a way through it. So when the

witch came up to it on her broom she found that there was nothing for it but to turn round and go back to her hut.

But the twins ran straight on till they reached their own home. Then they told their father all that they had suffered, and he was so angry with their step-mother that he drove her out of the house, and never let her return; but he and the children lived happily together; and he took care of them himself, and never let a stranger come near them.

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28. From the Russian.

THE HAZEL-NUT CHILD[29]

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There was once upon a time a couple who had no children, and they prayed Heaven every day to send them a child, though it were no bigger than a hazel-nut. At last Heaven heard their prayer and sent them a child exactly the size of a hazel-nut, and it never grew an inch. The parents were very devoted to the little creature, and nursed and tended it carefully. Their tiny son too was as clever as he could be, and so sharp and sensible that all the neighbours marvelled over the wise things he said and did.

When the Hazel-nut child was fifteen years old, and was sitting one day in an egg-shell on the table beside his mother, she turned to him and said, ‘You are now fifteen years old, and nothing can be done with you. What do you intend to be?’

‘A messenger,’ answered the Hazel-nut child.

Then his mother burst out laughing and said, ‘What an idea! You a messenger! Why, your little feet would take an hour to go the distance an ordinary person could do in a minute!’

But the Hazel-nut child replied, ‘Nevertheless I mean to be a messenger! Just send me a message and you’ll see that I shall be back in next to no time.’

So his mother said, ‘Very well, go to your aunt in the neighbouring village, and fetch me a comb.’ The Hazel-nut child jumped quickly out of the egg-shell and ran out into the street. Here he found a man on horseback who was just setting out for the neighbouring village. He crept up the horse’s leg, sat down under the saddle, and then began to pinch the horse and to prick it with a pin. The horse plunged and reared and then set off at a hard gallop, which it continued in spite of its rider’s efforts to stop it. When they reached the village, the Hazel-nut child left off pricking the horse, and the poor tired creature pursued its way at a snail’s pace. The Hazel-nut child took advantage of this, and crept down the horse’s leg; then he ran to his aunt and asked her for a comb. On the way home he met another rider, and did the return journey in exactly the same way. When he

handed his mother the comb that his aunt had given him, she was much amazed and asked him, ‘But how did you manage to get back so quickly?’

‘Ah! mother,’ he replied, ‘you see I was quite right when I said I knew a messenger was the profession for me.’

His father too possessed a horse which he often used to take out into the fields to graze. One day he took the Hazel-nut child with him. At midday the father turned to his small son and said, ‘Stay here and look after the horse. I must go home and give your mother a message, but I shall be back soon.’

When his father had gone, a robber passed by and saw the horse grazing without any one watching it, for of course he could not see the Hazel-nut child hidden in the grass. So he mounted the horse and rode away. But the Hazel-nut child, who was the most active little creature, climbed up the horse’s tail and began to bite it on the back, enraging the creature to such an extent that it paid no attention to the direction the robber tried to make it go in, but galloped straight home. The father was much astonished when he saw a stranger riding his horse, but the Hazel-nut child climbed down quickly and told him all that had happened, and his father had the robber arrested at once and put into prison.

One autumn when the Hazel-nut child was twenty years old he said to his parents: ‘Farewell, my dear father and mother. I am going to set out into the world, and as soon as I have become rich I will return home to you.’

The parents laughed at the little man’s words, but did not believe him for a moment. In the evening the Hazel-nut child crept on to the roof, where some storks had built their nest. The storks were fast asleep, and he climbed on to the back of the father-stork and bound a silk cord round the joint of one of its wings, then he crept among its soft downy feathers and fell asleep.

The next morning the storks flew towards the south, for winter was approaching. The Hazel-nut child flew through the air on the stork’s back, and when he wanted to rest he bound his silk cord on to the joint of the bird’s other wing, so that it could not fly any farther. In this way he reached the country of the black people, where the storks took up their abode close to the capital. When the people saw the Hazel-nut child they were much astonished, and took him with the stork to the King of the

country. The King was delighted with the little creature and kept him always beside him, and he soon grew so fond of the little man that he gave him a diamond four times as big as himself. The Hazel-nut child fastened the diamond firmly under the stork’s neck with a ribbon, and when he saw that the other storks were getting ready for their northern flight, he untied the silk cord from his stork’s wings, and away they went, getting nearer home every minute. At length the Hazel-nut child came to his native village; then he undid the ribbon from the stork’s neck and the diamond fell to the ground; he covered it first with sand and stones, and then ran to get his parents, so that they might carry the treasure home, for he himself was not able to lift the great diamond.

So the Hazel-nut child and his parents lived in happiness and prosperity after this till they died.

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29. From the Bukowniaer. Van Wliolocki.

THE STORY OF BIG KLAUS AND LITTLE KLAUS

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In a certain village there lived two people who had both the same name. Both were called Klaus, but one owned four horses and the other only one. In order to distinguish the one from the other, the one who had four horses was called Big Klaus, and the one who had only one horse, Little Klaus. Now you shall hear what befell them both, for this is a true story.

The whole week through Little Klaus had to plough for Big Klaus, and lend him his one horse; then Big Klaus lent him his four horses, but only once a week, and that was on Sunday. Hurrah! how loudly Little Klaus cracked his whip over all the five horses! for they were indeed as good as his on this one day. The sun shone brightly, and all the bells in the church-towers were pealing; the people were dressed in their best clothes, and were going to church, with their hymn books under their arms, to hear the minister preach. They saw Little Klaus ploughing with the five horses; but he was so happy that he kept on cracking his whip, and calling out ‘Gee-up, my five horses!’

‘You mustn’t say that,’ said Big Klaus. ‘Only one horse is yours.’

But as soon as someone else was going by Little Klaus forgot that he must not say it, and called out ‘Gee-up, my five horses!’

‘Now you had better stop that,’ said Big Klaus, ‘for if you say it once more I will give your horse such a crack on the head that it will drop down dead on the spot!’

‘I really won’t say it again!’ said Little Klaus. But as soon as more people passed by, and nodded him good-morning, he became so happy in thinking how well it looked to have five horses ploughing his field that, cracking his whip, he called out ‘Gee-up, my five horses!’

‘I’ll see to your horses!’ said Big Klaus; and, seizing an iron bar, he struck Little Klaus’ one horse such a blow on the head that it fell down and died on the spot.

‘Alas! Now I have no horse!’ said Little Klaus, beginning to cry. Then he flayed the skin off his horse, dried it, and put it in a sack, which he threw over his shoulder, and went into the town to sell it. He had a long way to go, and had to pass through a great dark forest. A dreadful storm came on, in which he lost his way, and before he could get on to the right road night came on, and it was impossible to reach the town that evening.

Right in front of him was a large farm-house. The window-shutters were closed, but the light came through the chinks. ‘I should very much like to be allowed to spend the night there,’ thought Little Klaus; and he went and knocked at the door. The farmer’s wife opened it, but when she heard what he wanted she told him to go away; her husband was not at home, and she took in no strangers.

‘Well, I must lie down outside,’ said Little Klaus; and the farmer’s wife shut the door in his face. Close by stood a large haystack, and between it and the house a little out-house, covered with a flat thatched roof.

‘I can lie down there,’ thought Little Klaus, looking at the roof; ‘it will make a splendid bed, if only the stork won’t fly down and bite my legs.’ For a live stork was standing on the roof, where it had its nest. So Little Klaus crept up into the out-house, where he lay down, and made himself comfortable for the night. The wooden shutters over the windows were not shut at the top, and he could just see into the room.

There stood a large table, spread with wine and roast meat and a beautiful fish. The farmer’s wife and the sexton sat at the table, but there was no one else. She was filling up his glass, while he stuck his fork into the fish which was his favourite dish.

‘If one could only get some of that!’ thought Little Klaus, stretching his head towards the window. Ah, what delicious cakes he saw standing there! It WAS a feast!

Then he heard someone riding along the road towards the house. It was the farmer coming home. He was a very worthy man; but he had one great peculiarity—namely, that he could not bear to see a sexton. If he saw one he was made quite mad. That was why the sexton had gone to say good-day to the farmer’s wife when he knew that her husband was not at home, and the good woman therefore put in front of him the best food she had. But when they heard the farmer coming they were frightened, and the

farmer’s wife begged the sexton to creep into a great empty chest. He did so, as he knew the poor man could not bear to see a sexton. The wife hastily hid all the beautiful food and the wine in her oven; for if her husband had seen it, he would have been sure to ask what it all meant.

‘Oh, dear! oh, dear!’ groaned Little Klaus up in the shed, when he saw the good food disappearing.

‘Is anybody up there?’ asked the farmer, catching sight of Little Klaus. ‘Why are you lying there? Come with me into the house.’

Then Little Klaus told him how he had lost his way, and begged to be allowed to spend the night there.

‘Yes, certainly,’ said the farmer; ‘but we must first have something to eat!’

The wife received them both very kindly, spread a long table, and gave them a large plate of porridge. The farmer was hungry, and ate with a good appetite; but Little Klaus could not help thinking of the delicious dishes of fish and roast meats and cakes which he knew were in the oven. Under the table at his feet he had laid the sack with the horse-skin in it, for, as we know, he was going to the town to sell it. The porridge did not taste good to him, so he trod upon his sack, and the dry skin in the sack squeaked loudly.

‘Hush!’ said Little Klaus to his sack, at the same time treading on it again so that it squeaked even louder than before.

‘Hallo! what have you got in your sack?’ asked the farmer.

‘Oh, it is a wizard!’ said Little Klaus. ‘He says we should not eat porridge, for he has conjured the whole oven full of roast meats and fish and cakes.’

‘Goodness me!’ said the farmer; and opening the oven he saw all the delicious, tempting dishes his wife had hidden there, but which he now believed the wizard in the sack had conjured up for them. The wife could say nothing, but she put the food at once on the table, and they ate the fish, the roast meat, and the cakes. Little Klaus now trod again on his sack, so that the skin squeaked.

‘What does he say now?’ asked the farmer.

‘He says,’ replied Little Klans, ‘that he has also conjured up for us three bottles of wine; they are standing in the corner by the oven!’

The wife had to fetch the wine which she had hidden, and the farmer drank and grew very merry. He would very much like to have had such a wizard as Little Klaus had in the sack.

‘Can he conjure up the Devil?’ asked the farmer. ‘I should like to see him very much, for I feel just now in very good spirits!’

‘Yes,’ said Little Klaus; ‘my wizard can do everything that I ask. Isn’t that true?’ he asked, treading on the sack so that it squeaked. ‘Do you hear? He says ‘’Yes;’’ but that the Devil looks so ugly that we should not like to see him.’

‘Oh! I’m not at all afraid. What does he look like?’

‘He will show himself in the shape of a sexton!’

‘I say!’ said the farmer, ‘he must be ugly! You must know that I can’t bear to look at a sexton! But it doesn’t matter. I know that it is the Devil, and I sha’n’t mind! I feel up to it now. But he must not come too near me!’

‘I must ask my wizard,’ said Little Klaus, treading on the sack and putting his ear to it.

‘What does he say?’

‘He says you can open the chest in the corner there, and you will see the Devil squatting inside it; but you must hold the lid so that he shall not escape.’

‘Will you help me to hold him?’ begged the farmer, going towards the chest where his wife had hidden the real sexton, who was sitting inside in a terrible fright. The farmer opened the lid a little way, and saw him inside.

‘Ugh!’ he shrieked, springing back. ‘Yes, now I have seen him; he looked just like our sexton. Oh, it was horrid!’

So he had to drink again, and they drank till far on into the night.

‘You MUST sell me the wizard,’ said the farmer. ‘Ask anything you like! I will pay you down a bushelful of money on the spot.’

‘No, I really can’t,’ said Little Klans. ‘Just think how many things I can get from this wizard!’

‘Ah! I should like to have him so much!’ said the farmer, begging very hard.

‘Well!’ said Little Klaus at last, ‘as you have been so good as to give me shelter to-night, I will sell him. You shall have the wizard for a bushel of money, but I must have full measure.’

‘That you shall,’ said the farmer. ‘But you must take the chest with you. I won’t keep it another hour in the house. Who knows that he isn’t in there still?’

Little Klaus gave the farmer his sack with the dry skin, and got instead a good bushelful of money. The farmer also gave him a wheelbarrow to carry away his money and the chest. ‘Farewell,’ said Little Klaus; and away he went with his money and the big chest, wherein sat the sexton.

On the other side of the wood was a large deep river. The water flowed so rapidly that you could scarcely swim against the stream.

A great new bridge had been built over it, on the middle of which Little Klaus stopped, and said aloud so that the sexton might hear:

‘Now, what am I to do with this stupid chest? It is as heavy as if it were filled with stones! I shall only be tired, dragging it along; I will throw it into the river. If it swims home to me, well and good; and if it doesn’t, it’s no matter.’

Then he took the chest with one hand and lifted it up a little, as if he were going to throw it into the water.

‘No, don’t do that!’ called out the sexton in the chest. ‘Let me get out first!’

‘Oh, oh!’ said Little Klaus, pretending that he was afraid. ‘He is still in there! I must throw him quickly into the water to drown him!’

‘Oh! no, no!’ cried the sexton. ‘I will give you a whole bushelful of money if you will let me go!’

‘Ah, that’s quite another thing!’ said Little Klaus, opening the chest. The sexton crept out very quickly, pushed the empty chest into the water and went to his house, where he gave Little Klaus a bushel of money. One he had had already from the farmer, and now he had his wheelbarrow full of money.

‘Well, I have got a good price for the horse!’ said he to himself when he shook all his money out in a heap in his room. ‘This will put Big Klaus in a rage when he hears how rich I have become through my one horse; but I won’t tell him just yet!’

So he sent a boy to Big Klaus to borrow a bushel measure from him.

‘Now what can he want with it?’ thought Big Klaus; and he smeared some tar at the bottom, so that of whatever was measured a little should

remain in it. And this is just what happened; for when he got his measure back, three new silver five-shilling pieces were sticking to it.

What does this mean?' said Big Klaus, and he ran off at once to Little Klaus.

'Where did you get so much money from?'

'Oh, that was from my horse-skin. I sold it yesterday evening.'

'That's certainly a good price!' said Big Klaus; and running home in great haste, he took an axe, knocked all his four horses on the head, skinned them, and went into the town.

'Skins! skins! Who will buy skins?' he cried through the streets.

All the shoemakers and tanners came running to ask him what he wanted for them. 'A bushel of money for each,' said Big Klaus.

'Are you mad?' they all exclaimed. 'Do you think we have money by the bushel?'

'Skins! skins! Who will buy skins?' he cried again, and to all who asked him what they cost, he answered, 'A bushel of money.'

'He is making game of us,' they said; and the shoemakers seized their yard measures and the tanners their leathern aprons and they gave Big Klaus a good beating. 'Skins! skins!' they cried mockingly; yes, we will tan YOUR skin for you! Out of the town with him!' they shouted; and Big Klaus had to hurry off as quickly as he could, if he wanted to save his life.

'Aha!' said he when he came home, 'Little Klaus shall pay dearly for this. I will kill him!'

Little Klaus' grandmother had just died. Though she had been very unkind to him, he was very much distressed, and he took the dead woman and laid her in his warm bed to try if he could not bring her back to life. There she lay the whole night, while he sat in the corner and slept on a chair, which he had often done before. And in the night as he sat there the door opened, and Big Klaus came in with his axe. He knew quite well where Little Klaus's bed stood, and going up to it he struck the grandmother on the head just where he thought Little Klaus would be. 'There!' said he. 'Now you won't get the best of me again!' And he went home.

'What a very wicked man!' thought Little Klaus. 'He was going to kill me! It was a good thing for my grandmother that she was dead already, or else he would have killed her!'

Then he dressed his grandmother in her Sunday clothes, borrowed a horse from his neighbour, harnessed the cart to it, sat his grandmother on the back seat so that she could not fall out when he drove, and away they went. When the sun rose they were in front of a large inn. Little Klaus got down, and went in to get something to drink. The host was very rich. He was a very worthy but hot-tempered man.

‘Good morning!’ said he to Little Klaus. ‘You are early on the road.’

‘Yes,’ said Little Klaus. ‘I am going to the town with my grandmother. She is sitting outside in the cart; I cannot bring her in. Will you not give her a glass of mead? But you will have to speak loud, for she is very hard of hearing.’

‘Oh yes, certainly I will!’ said the host; and, pouring out a large glass of mead, he took it out to the dead grandmother, who was sitting upright in the cart.

‘Here is a glass of mead from your son,’ said the host. But the dead woman did not answer a word, and sat still. ‘Don’t you hear?’ cried the host as loud as he could. ‘Here is a glass of mead from your son!’

Then he shouted the same thing again, and yet again, but she never moved in her place; and at last he grew angry, threw the glass in her face, so that she fell back into the cart, for she was not tied in her place.

‘Hullo!’ cried Little Klaus, running out of the door, and seizing the host by the throat. ‘You have killed my grandmother! Look! there is a great hole in her forehead!’

‘Oh, what a misfortune!’ cried the host, wringing his hands. ‘It all comes from my hot temper! Dear Little Klaus! I will give you a bushel of money, and will bury your grandmother as if she were my own; only don’t tell about it, or I shall have my head cut off, and that would be very uncomfortable.’

So Little Klaus got a bushel of money, and the host buried his grandmother as if she had been his own.

Now when Little Klaus again reached home with so much money he sent his boy to Big Klaus to borrow his bushel measure.

‘What’s this?’ said Big Klaus. ‘Didn’t I kill him? I must see to this myself!’

So he went himself to Little Klaus with the measure.

‘Well, now, where did you get all this money?’ asked he, opening his eyes at the heap.

‘You killed my grandmother—not me,’ said Little Klaus. ‘I sold her, and got a bushel of money for her.’

‘That is indeed a good price!’ said Big Klaus; and, hurrying home, he took an axe and killed his grandmother, laid her in the cart, and drove off to the apothecary’s, and asked whether he wanted to buy a dead body.

‘Who is it, and how did you get it?’ asked the apothecary.

‘It is my grandmother,’ said Big Klaus. ‘I killed her in order to get a bushel of money.’

‘You are mad!’ said the apothecary. ‘Don’t mention such things, or you will lose your head!’ And he began to tell him what a dreadful thing he had done, and what a wicked man he was, and that he ought to be punished; till Big Klaus was so frightened that he jumped into the cart and drove home as hard as he could. The apothecary and all the people thought he must be mad, so they let him go.

‘You shall pay for this!’ said Big Klaus as he drove home. ‘You shall pay for this dearly, Little Klaus!’

So as soon as he got home he took the largest sack he could find, and went to Little Klaus and said: ‘You have fooled me again! First I killed my horses, then my grandmother! It is all your fault; but you sha’n’t do it again!’ And he seized Little Klaus, pushed him in the sack, threw it over his shoulder, crying out ‘Now I am going to drown you!’

He had to go a long way before he came to the river, and Little Klaus was not very light. The road passed by the church; the organ was sounding, and the people were singing most beautifully.

Big Klaus put down the sack with Little Klaus in it by the church-door, and thought that he might as well go in and hear a psalm before going on farther. Little Klaus could not get out, and everybody was in church; so he went in.

‘Oh, dear! oh, dear!’ groaned Little Klaus in the sack, twisting and turning himself. But he could not undo the string.

There came by an old, old shepherd, with snow-white hair and a long staff in his hand. He was driving a herd of cows and oxen. These pushed against the sack so that it was overturned.

‘Alas!’ moaned Little Klans, ‘I am so young and yet I must die!’

‘And I, poor man,’ said the cattle-driver, ‘I am so old and yet I cannot die!’

‘Open the sack,’ called out Little Klaus; ‘creep in here instead of me, and you will die in a moment!’

‘I will gladly do that,’ said the cattle-driver; and he opened the sack, and Little Klaus struggled out at once.

‘You will take care of the cattle, won’t you?’ asked the old man, creeping into the sack, which Little Klaus fastened up and then went on with the cows and oxen. Soon after Big Klaus came out of the church, and taking up the sack on his shoulders it seemed to him as if it had become lighter; for the old cattle-driver was not half as heavy as Little Klaus.

‘How easy he is to carry now! That must be because I heard part of the service.’

So he went to the river, which was deep and broad, threw in the sack with the old driver, and called after it, for he thought Little Klaus was inside:

‘Down you go! You won’t mock me any more now!’

Then he went home; but when he came to the cross-roads, there he met Little Klaus, who was driving his cattle.

‘What’s this?’ said Big Klaus. ‘Haven’t I drowned you?’

‘Yes,’ replied Little Klaus; ‘you threw me into the river a good half-hour ago!’

‘But how did you get those splendid cattle?’ asked Big Klaus.

‘They are sea-cattle!’ said Little Klaus. ‘I will tell you the whole story, and I thank you for having drowned me, because now I am on dry land and really rich! How frightened I was when I was in the sack! How the wind whistled in my ears as you threw me from the bridge into the cold water! I sank at once to the bottom; but I did not hurt myself for underneath was growing the most beautiful soft grass. I fell on this, and immediately the sack opened; the loveliest maiden in snow-white garments, with a green garland round her wet hair, took me by the hand, and said! ‘’Are you Little Klaus? Here are some cattle for you to begin with, and a mile farther down the road there is another herd, which I will give you as a present!’’ Now I saw that the river was a great high-road for the sea-people. Along it they travel underneath from the sea to the land till the river ends. It was so beautiful, full of flowers and fresh grass; the fishes which were swimming

in the water shot past my ears as the birds do here in the air. What lovely people there were, and what fine cattle were grazing in the ditches and dykes!'

'But why did you come up to us again?' asked Big Klaus. 'I should not have done so, if it is so beautiful down below!'

'Oh!' said Little Klaus, 'that was just so politic of me. You heard what I told you, that the sea-maiden said to me a mile farther along the road—and by the road she meant the river, for she can go by no other way—there was another herd of cattle waiting for me. But I know what windings the river makes, now here, now there, so that it is a long way round. Therefore it makes it much shorter if one comes on the land and drives across the field to the river. Thus I have spared myself quite half a mile, and have come much quicker to my sea-cattle!'

'Oh, you're a lucky fellow!' said Big Klaus. 'Do you think I should also get some cattle if I went to the bottom of the river?'

'Oh, yes! I think so,' said Little Klaus. 'But I can't carry you in a sack to the river; you are too heavy for me! If you like to go there yourself and then creep into the sack, I will throw you in with the greatest of pleasure.'

'Thank you,' said Big Klaus; 'but if I don't get any sea-cattle when I come there, you will have a good hiding, mind!'

'Oh, no! Don't be so hard on me!' Then they went to the river. When the cattle, which were thirsty, caught sight of the water, they ran as quickly as they could to drink.

'Look how they are running!' said Little Klaus. 'They want to go to the bottom again!'

'Yes; but help me first,' said Big Klaus, 'or else you shall have a beating!'

And so he crept into the large sack, which was lying on the back of one of the oxen. 'Put a stone in, for I am afraid I may not reach the bottom,' said Big Klaus.

'It goes all right!' said Little Klaus; but still he laid a big stone in the sack, fastened it up tight, and then pushed it in. Plump! there was Big Klaus in the water, and he sank like lead to the bottom.

'I doubt if he will find any cattle!' said Little Klaus as he drove his own home.

PRINCE RING[30]

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Once upon a time there was a King and his Queen in their kingdom.

They had one daughter, who was called Ingiborg, and one son, whose name was Ring. He was less fond of adventures than men of rank usually were in those days, and was not famous for strength or feats of arms. When he was twelve years old, one fine winter day he rode into the forest along with his men to enjoy himself. They went on a long way, until they caught sight of a hind with a gold ring on its horns. The Prince was eager to catch it, if possible, so they gave chase and rode on without stopping until all the horses began to founder beneath them. At last the Prince's horse gave way too, and then there came over them a darkness so black that they could no longer see the hind. By this time they were far away from any house, and thought it was high time to be making their way home again, but they found they had got lost now. At first they all kept together, but soon each began to think that he knew the right way best; so they separated, and all went in different directions.

The Prince, too, had got lost like the rest, and wandered on for a time until he came to a little clearing in the forest not far from the sea, where he saw a woman sitting on a chair and a big barrel standing beside her. The Prince went up to her and saluted her politely, and she received him very graciously. He looked down into the barrel then, and saw lying at the bottom an unusually beautiful gold ring, which pleased him so much that he could not take his eyes off it. The woman saw this, and said that he might have it if he would take the trouble to get it; for which the Prince thanked her, and said it was at least worth trying. So he leaned over into the barrel, which did not seem very deep, and thought he would easily reach the ring; but the more he stretched down after it the deeper grew the barrel. As he was thus bending down into it the woman suddenly rose up and pushed him in head first, saying that now he could take up his quarters there. Then she fixed the top on the barrel and threw it out into the sea.

The Prince thought himself in a bad plight now, as he felt the barrel floating out from the land and tossing about on the waves.

How many days he spent thus he could not tell, but at last he felt that the barrel was knocking against rocks, at which he was a little cheered, thinking it was probably land and not merely a reef in the sea. Being something of a swimmer, he at last made up his mind to kick the bottom out of the barrel, and having done so he was able to get on shore, for the rocks by the sea were smooth and level; but overhead there were high cliffs. It seemed difficult to get up these, but he went along the foot of them for a little, till at last he tried to climb up, which at last he did.

Having got to the top, he looked round about him and saw that he was on an island, which was covered with forest, with apples growing, and altogether pleasant as far as the land was concerned. After he had been there several days, he one day heard a great noise in the forest, which made him terribly afraid, so that he ran to hide himself among the trees. Then he saw a Giant approaching, dragging a sledge loaded with wood, and making straight for him, so that he could see nothing for it but to lie down just where he was. When the Giant came across him, he stood still and looked at the Prince for a little; then he took him up in his arms and carried him home to his house, and was exceedingly kind to him. He gave him to his wife, saying he had found this child in the wood, and she could have it to help her in the house. The old woman was greatly pleased, and began to fondle the Prince with the utmost delight. He stayed there with them, and was very willing and obedient to them in everything, while they grew kinder to him every day.

One day the Giant took him round and showed him all his rooms except the parlour; this made the Prince curious to have a look into it, thinking there must be some very rare treasure there. So one day, when the Giant had gone into the forest, he tried to get into the parlour, and managed to get the door open half-way. Then he saw that some living creature moved inside and ran along the floor towards him and said something, which made him so frightened that he sprang back from the door and shut it again. As soon as the fright began to pass off he tried it again, for he thought it would be interesting to hear what it said; but things went just as before with him. He then got angry with himself, and, summoning up all his courage, tried it a third time, and opened the door of

the room and stood firm. Then he saw that it was a big Dog, which spoke to him and said:

‘Choose me, Prince Ring.’

The Prince went away rather afraid, thinking with himself that it was no great treasure after all; but all the same what it had said to him stuck in his mind.

It is not said how long the Prince stayed with the Giant, but one day the latter came to him and said he would now take him over to the mainland out of the island, for he himself had no long time to live. He also thanked him for his good service, and told him to choose some-one of his possessions, for he would get whatever he wanted. Ring thanked him heartily, and said there was no need to pay him for his services, they were so little worth; but if he did wish to give him anything he would choose what was in the parlour. The Giant was taken by surprise, and said:

‘There, you chose my old woman’s right hand; but I must not break my word.’

Upon this he went to get the Dog, which came running with signs of great delight; but the Prince was so much afraid of it that it was all he could do to keep from showing his alarm.

After this the Giant accompanied him down to the sea, where he saw a stone boat which was just big enough to hold the two of them and the Dog. On reaching the mainland the Giant took a friendly farewell of Ring, and told him he might take possession of all that was in the island after he and his wife died, which would happen within two weeks from that time. The Prince thanked him for this and for all his other kindnesses, and the Giant returned home, while Ring went up some distance from the sea; but he did not know what land he had come to, and was afraid to speak to the Dog. After he had walked on in silence for a time the Dog spoke to him and said:

‘You don’t seem to have much curiosity, seeing you never ask my name.’

The Prince then forced himself to ask, ‘What is your name?’

‘You had best call me Snati-Snati,’ said the Dog. ‘Now we are coming to a King’s seat, and you must ask the King to keep us all winter, and to give you a little room for both of us.’

The Prince now began to be less afraid of the Dog. They came to the King and asked him to keep them all the winter, to which he agreed. When the King's men saw the Dog they began to laugh at it, and make as if they would tease it; but when the Prince saw this he advised them not to do it, or they might have the worst of it. They replied that they didn't care a bit what he thought.

After Ring had been with the King for some days the latter began to think there was a great deal in him, and esteemed him more than the others. The King, however, had a counsellor called Red, who became very jealous when he saw how much the King esteemed Ring; and one day he talked to him, and said he could not understand why he had so good an opinion of this stranger, who had not yet shown himself superior to other men in anything. The King replied that it was only a short time since he had come there. Red then asked him to send them both to cut down wood next morning, and see which of them could do most work. Snati-Snati heard this and told it to Ring, advising him to ask the King for two axes, so that he might have one in reserve if the first one got broken. Next morning the King asked Ring and Red to go and cut down trees for him, and both agreed. Ring got the two axes, and each went his own way; but when the Prince had got out into the wood Snati took one of the axes and began to hew along with him. In the evening the King came to look over their day's work, as Red had proposed, and found that Ring's wood-heap was more than twice as big.

'I suspected,' said the King, 'that Ring was not quite useless; never have I seen such a day's work.'

Ring was now in far greater esteem with the King than before, and Red was all the more discontented. One day he came to the King and said, 'If Ring is such a mighty man, I think you might ask him to kill the wild oxen in the wood here, and flay them the same day, and bring you the horns and the hides in the evening.'

'Don't you think that a desperate errand?' said the King, 'seeing they are so dangerous, and no one has ever yet ventured to go against them?'

Red answered that he had only one life to lose, and it would be interesting to see how brave he was; besides, the King would have good reason to ennoble him if he overcame them. The King at last allowed himself, though rather unwillingly, to be won over by Red's persistency,

and one day asked Ring to go and kill the oxen that were in the wood for him, and bring their horns and hides to him in the evening. Not knowing how dangerous the oxen were, Ring was quite ready, and went off at once, to the great delight of Red, who was now sure of his death.

As soon as Ring came in sight of the oxen they came bellowing to meet him; one of them was tremendously big, the other rather less. Ring grew terribly afraid.

‘How do you like them?’ asked Snati.

‘Not well at all,’ said the Prince.

‘We can do nothing else,’ said Snati, ‘than attack them, if it is to go well; you will go against the little one, and I shall take the other.’

With this Snati leapt at the big one, and was not long in bringing him down. Meanwhile the Prince went against the other with fear and trembling, and by the time Snati came to help him the ox had nearly got him under, but Snati was not slow in helping his master to kill it.

Each of them then began to flay their own ox, but Ring was only half through by the time Snati had finished his. In the evening, after they had finished this task, the Prince thought himself unfit to carry all the horns and both the hides, so Snati told him to lay them all on his back until they got to the Palace gate.

The Prince agreed, and laid everything on the Dog except the skin of the smaller ox, which he staggered along with himself. At the Palace gate he left everything lying, went before the King, and asked him to come that length with him, and there handed over to him the hides and horns of the oxen. The King was greatly surprised at his valour, and said he knew no one like him, and thanked him heartily for what he had done.

After this the King set Ring next to himself, and all esteemed him highly, and held him to be a great hero; nor could Red any longer say anything against him, though he grew still more determined to destroy him. One day a good idea came into his head. He came to the King and said he had something to say to him.

‘What is that?’ said the King.

Red said that he had just remembered the gold cloak, gold chess-board, and bright gold piece that the King had lost about a year before.

‘Don’t remind me of them!’ said the King.

Red, however, went on to say that, since Ring was such a mighty man that he could do everything, it had occurred to him to advise the King to ask him to search for these treasures, and come back with them before Christmas; in return the King should promise him his daughter.

The King replied that he thought it altogether unbecoming to propose such a thing to Ring, seeing that he could not tell him where the things were; but Red pretended not to hear the King's excuses, and went on talking about it until the King gave in to him. One day, a month or so before Christmas, the King spoke to Ring, saying that he wished to ask a great favour of him.

'What is that?' said Ring.

'It is this,' said the King: 'that you find for me my gold cloak, my gold chess-board, and my bright gold piece, that were stolen from me about a year ago. If you can bring them to me before Christmas I will give you my daughter in marriage.'

'Where am I to look for them, then?' said Ring.

'That you must find out for yourself,' said the King: 'I don't know.'

Ring now left the King, and was very silent, for he saw he was in a great difficulty: but, on the other hand, he thought it was excellent to have such a chance of winning the King's daughter. Snati noticed that his master was at a loss, and said to him that he should not disregard what the King had asked him to do; but he would have to act upon his advice, otherwise he would get into great difficulties. The Prince assented to this, and began to prepare for the journey.

After he had taken leave of the King, and was setting out on the search, Snati said to him, 'Now you must first of all go about the neighbourhood, and gather as much salt as ever you can.' The Prince did so, and gathered so much salt that he could hardly carry it; but Snati said, 'Throw it on my back,' which he accordingly did, and the Dog then ran on before the Prince, until they came to the foot of a steep cliff.

'We must go up here,' said Snati.

'I don't think that will be child's play,' said the Prince.

'Hold fast by my tail,' said Snati; and in this way he pulled Ring up on the lowest shelf of the rock. The Prince began to get giddy, but up went Snati on to the second shelf. Ring was nearly swooning by this time, but Snati made a third effort and reached the top of the cliff, where the Prince

fell down in a faint. After a little, however, he recovered again, and they went a short distance along a level plain, until they came to a cave. This was on Christmas Eve. They went up above the cave, and found a window in it, through which they looked, and saw four trolls lying asleep beside the fire, over which a large porridge-pot was hanging.

‘Now you must empty all the salt into the porridge-pot,’ said Snati.

Ring did so, and soon the trolls wakened up. The old hag, who was the most frightful of them all, went first to taste the porridge.

‘How comes this?’ she said; ‘the porridge is salt! I got the milk by witchcraft yesterday out of four kingdoms, and now it is salt!’

All the others then came to taste the porridge, and thought it nice, but after they had finished it the old hag grew so thirsty that she could stand it no longer, and asked her daughter to go out and bring her some water from the river that ran near by.

‘I won’t go,’ said she, ‘unless you lend me your bright gold piece.’

‘Though I should die you shan’t have that,’ said the hag.

‘Die, then,’ said the girl.

‘Well, then, take it, you brat,’ said the old hag, ‘and be off with you, and make haste with the water.’

The girl took the gold and ran out with it, and it was so bright that it shone all over the plain. As soon as she came to the river she lay down to take a drink of the water, but meanwhile the two of them had got down off the roof and thrust her, head first, into the river.

The old hag began now to long for the water, and said that the girl would be running about with the gold piece all over the plain, so she asked her son to go and get her a drop of water.

‘I won’t go,’ said he, ‘unless I get the gold cloak.’

‘Though I should die you shan’t have that,’ said the hag.

‘Die, then,’ said the son.

‘Well, then, take it,’ said the old hag, ‘and be off with you, but you must make haste with the water.’

He put on the cloak, and when he came outside it shone so bright that he could see to go with it. On reaching the river he went to take a drink like his sister, but at that moment Ring and Snati sprang upon him, took the cloak from him, and threw him into the river.

The old hag could stand the thirst no longer, and asked her husband to go for a drink for her; the brats, she said, were of course running about and playing themselves, just as she had expected they would, little wretches that they were.

‘I won’t go,’ said the old troll, ‘unless you lend me the gold chess-board.’

‘Though I should die you shan’t have that,’ said the hag.

‘I think you may just as well do that,’ said he, ‘since you won’t grant me such a little favour.’

‘Take it, then, you utter disgrace!’ said the old hag, ‘since you are just like these two brats.’

The old troll now went out with the gold chess-board, and down to the river, and was about to take a drink, when Ring and Snati came upon him, took the chess-board from him, and threw him into the river. Before they had got back again, however, and up on top of the cave, they saw the poor old fellow’s ghost come marching up from the river. Snati immediately sprang upon him, and Ring assisted in the attack, and after a hard struggle they mastered him a second time. When they got back again to the window they saw that the old hag was moving towards the door.

‘Now we must go in at once,’ said Snati, ‘and try to master her there, for if she once gets out we shall have no chance with her. She is the worst witch that ever lived, and no iron can cut her. One of us must pour boiling porridge out of the pot on her, and the other punch her with red-hot iron.’

In they went then, and no sooner did the hag see them than she said, ‘So you have come, Prince Ring; you must have seen to my husband and children.’

Snati saw that she was about to attack them, and sprang at her with a red-hot iron from the fire, while Ring kept pouring boiling porridge on her without stopping, and in this way they at last got her killed. Then they burned the old troll and her to ashes, and explored the cave, where they found plenty of gold and treasures. The most valuable of these they carried with them as far as the cliff, and left them there. Then they hastened home to the King with his three treasures, where they arrived late on Christmas night, and Ring handed them over to him.

The King was beside himself with joy, and was astonished at how clever a man Ring was in all kinds of feats, so that he esteemed him still

more highly than before, and betrothed his daughter to him; and the feast for this was to last all through Christmastide. Ring thanked the King courteously for this and all his other kindnesses, and as soon as he had finished eating and drinking in the hall went off to sleep in his own room. Snati, however, asked permission to sleep in the Prince's bed for that night, while the Prince should sleep where the Dog usually lay. Ring said he was welcome to do so, and that he deserved more from him than that came to. So Snati went up into the Prince's bed, but after a time he came back, and told Ring he could go there himself now, but to take care not to meddle with anything that was in the bed.

Now the story comes back to Red, who came into the hall and showed the King his right arm wanting the hand, and said that now he could see what kind of a man his intended son-in-law was, for he had done this to him without any cause whatever. The King became very angry, and said he would soon find out the truth about it, and if Ring had cut off his hand without good cause he should be hanged; but if it was otherwise, then Red should die. So the King sent for Ring and asked him for what reason he had done this. Snati, however, had just told Ring what had happened during the night, and in reply he asked the King to go with him and he would show him something. The King went with him to his sleeping-room, and saw lying on the bed a man's hand holding a sword.

'This hand,' said Ring, 'came over the partition during the night, and was about to run me through in my bed, if I had not defended myself.'

The King answered that in that case he could not blame him for protecting his own life, and that Red was well worthy of death. So Red was hanged, and Ring married the King's daughter.

The first night that they went to bed together Snati asked Ring to allow him to lie at their feet, and this Ring allowed him to do. During the night he heard a howling and outcry beside them, struck a light in a hurry and saw an ugly dog's skin lying near him, and a beautiful Prince in the bed. Ring instantly took the skin and burned it, and then shook the Prince, who was lying unconscious, until he woke up. The bridegroom then asked his name; he replied that he was called Ring, and was a King's son. In his youth he had lost his mother, and in her place his father had married a witch, who had laid a spell on him that he should turn into a dog, and never be released from the spell unless a Prince of the same name as

himself allowed him to sleep at his feet the first night after his marriage. He added further, ‘As soon as she knew that you were my namesake she tried to get you destroyed, so that you might not free me from the spell. She was the hind that you and your companions chased; she was the woman that you found in the clearing with the barrel, and the old hag that we just now killed in the cave.’

After the feasting was over the two namesakes, along with other men, went to the cliff and brought all the treasure home to the Palace. Then they went to the island and removed all that was valuable from it. Ring gave to his namesake, whom he had freed from the spell, his sister Ingiborg and his father’s kingdom to look after, but he himself stayed with his father-in-law the King, and had half the kingdom while he lived and the whole of it after his death.

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30. From the Icelandic.

THE SWINEHERD

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There was once a poor Prince. He possessed a kingdom which, though small, was yet large enough for him to marry on, and married he wished to be.

Now it was certainly a little audacious of him to venture to say to the Emperor's daughter, 'Will you marry me?' But he did venture to say so, for his name was known far and wide. There were hundreds of princesses who would gladly have said 'Yes,' but would she say the same?

Well, we shall see.

On the grave of the Prince's father grew a rose-tree, a very beautiful rose-tree. It only bloomed every five years, and then bore but a single rose, but oh, such a rose! Its scent was so sweet that when you smelt it you forgot all your cares and troubles. And he had also a nightingale which could sing as if all the beautiful melodies in the world were shut up in its little throat. This rose and this nightingale the Princess was to have, and so they were both put into silver caskets and sent to her.

The Emperor had them brought to him in the great hall, where the Princess was playing 'Here comes a duke a-riding' with her ladies-in-waiting. And when she caught sight of the big caskets which contained the presents, she clapped her hands for joy.

'If only it were a little pussy cat!' she said. But the rose-tree with the beautiful rose came out.

'But how prettily it is made!' said all the ladies-in-waiting.

'It is more than pretty,' said the Emperor, 'it is charming!'

But the Princess felt it, and then she almost began to cry.

'Ugh! Papa,' she said, 'it is not artificial, it is REAL!'

'Ugh!' said all the ladies-in-waiting, 'it is real!'

'Let us see first what is in the other casket before we begin to be angry,' thought the Emperor, and there came out the nightingale. It sang so beautifully that one could scarcely utter a cross word against it.

‘Superbe! charmant!’ said the ladies-in-waiting, for they all chattered French, each one worse than the other.

‘How much the bird reminds me of the musical snuff-box of the late Empress!’ said an old courtier. ‘Ah, yes, it is the same tone, the same execution!’

‘Yes,’ said the Emperor; and then he wept like a little child.

‘I hope that this, at least, is not real?’ asked the Princess.

‘Yes, it is a real bird,’ said those who had brought it.

‘Then let the bird fly away,’ said the Princess; and she would not on any account allow the Prince to come.

‘But he was nothing daunted. He painted his face brown and black, drew his cap well over his face, and knocked at the door. ‘Good-day, Emperor,’ he said. ‘Can I get a place here as servant in the castle?’

‘Yes,’ said the Emperor, ‘but there are so many who ask for a place that I don’t know whether there will be one for you; but, still, I will think of you. Stay, it has just occurred to me that I want someone to look after the swine, for I have so very many of them.’

And the Prince got the situation of Imperial Swineherd. He had a wretched little room close to the pigsties; here he had to stay, but the whole day he sat working, and when evening was come he had made a pretty little pot. All round it were little bells, and when the pot boiled they jingled most beautifully and played the old tune—

‘Where is Augustus dear?
Alas! he’s not here, here, here!’

But the most wonderful thing was, that when one held one’s finger in the steam of the pot, then at once one could smell what dinner was ready in any fire-place in the town. That was indeed something quite different from the rose.

Now the Princess came walking past with all her ladies-in-waiting, and when she heard the tune she stood still and her face beamed with joy, for she also could play ‘Where is Augustus dear?’

It was the only tune she knew, but that she could play with one finger.

‘Why, that is what I play!’ she said. ‘He must be a most accomplished Swineherd! Listen! Go down and ask him what the instrument costs.’

And one of the ladies-in-waiting had to go down; but she put on wooden clogs. ‘What will you take for the pot?’ asked the lady-in-waiting.

‘I will have ten kisses from the Princess,’ answered the Swineherd.

‘Heaven forbid!’ said the lady-in-waiting.

‘Yes, I will sell it for nothing less,’ replied the Swineherd.

‘Well, what does he say?’ asked the Princess.

‘I really hardly like to tell you,’ answered the lady-in-waiting.

‘Oh, then you can whisper it to me.’

‘He is disobliging!’ said the Princess, and went away. But she had only gone a few steps when the bells rang out so prettily—

‘Where is Augustus dear?
Alas! he’s not here, here, here.’

‘Listen!’ said the Princess. ‘Ask him whether he will take ten kisses from my ladies-in-waiting.’

‘No, thank you,’ said the Swineherd. ‘Ten kisses from the Princess, or else I keep my pot.’

‘That is very tiresome!’ said the Princess. ‘But you must put yourselves in front of me, so that no one can see.’

And the ladies-in-waiting placed themselves in front and then spread out their dresses; so the Swineherd got his ten kisses, and she got the pot.

What happiness that was! The whole night and the whole day the pot was made to boil; there was not a fire-place in the whole town where they did not know what was being cooked, whether it was at the chancellor’s or at the shoemaker’s.

The ladies-in-waiting danced and clapped their hands.

‘We know who is going to have soup and pancakes; we know who is going to have porridge and sausages—isn’t it interesting?’

‘Yes, very interesting!’ said the first lady-in-waiting.

‘But don’t say anything about it, for I am the Emperor’s daughter.’

‘Oh, no, of course we won’t!’ said everyone.

The Swineherd—that is to say, the Prince (though they did not know he was anything but a true Swineherd)—let no day pass without making something, and one day he made a rattle which, when it was turned round,

played all the waltzes, galops, and polkas which had ever been known since the world began.

‘But that is superbe!’ said the Princess as she passed by. ‘I have never heard a more beautiful composition. Listen! Go down and ask him what this instrument costs; but I won’t kiss him again.’

‘He wants a hundred kisses from the Princess,’ said the lady-in-waiting who had gone down to ask him.

‘I believe he is mad!’ said the Princess, and then she went on; but she had only gone a few steps when she stopped.

‘One ought to encourage art,’ she said. ‘I am the Emperor’s daughter! Tell him he shall have, as before, ten kisses; the rest he can take from my ladies-in-waiting.’

‘But we don’t at all like being kissed by him,’ said the ladies-in-waiting.

‘That’s nonsense,’ said the Princess; ‘and if I can kiss him, you can too. Besides, remember that I give you board and lodging.’

So the ladies-in-waiting had to go down to him again.

‘A hundred kisses from the Princess,’ said he, ‘or each keeps his own.’

‘Put yourselves in front of us,’ she said then; and so all the ladies-in-waiting put themselves in front, and he began to kiss the Princess.

‘What can that commotion be by the pigsties?’ asked the Emperor, who was standing on the balcony. He rubbed his eyes and put on his spectacles. ‘Why those are the ladies-in-waiting playing their games; I must go down to them.’

So he took off his shoes, which were shoes though he had trodden them down into slippers. What a hurry he was in, to be sure!

As soon as he came into the yard he walked very softly, and the ladies-in-waiting were so busy counting the kisses and seeing fair play that they never noticed the Emperor. He stood on tiptoe.

‘What is that?’ he said, when he saw the kissing; and then he threw one of his slippers at their heads just as the Swineherd was taking his eighty-sixth kiss.

‘Be off with you!’ said the Emperor, for he was very angry. And the Princess and the Swineherd were driven out of the empire.

Then she stood still and wept; the Swineherd was scolding, and the rain was streaming down.

‘Alas, what an unhappy creature I am!’ sobbed the Princess.

‘If only I had taken the beautiful Prince! Alas, how unfortunate I am!’

And the Swineherd went behind a tree, washed the black and brown off his face, threw away his old clothes, and then stepped forward in his splendid dress, looking so beautiful that the Princess was obliged to courtesy.

‘I now come to this. I despise you!’ he said. ‘You would have nothing to do with a noble Prince; you did not understand the rose or the nightingale, but you could kiss the Swineherd for the sake of a toy. This is what you get for it!’ And he went into his kingdom and shut the door in her face, and she had to stay outside singing—

‘Where’s my Augustus dear?
Alas! he’s not here, here, here!

HOW TO TELL A TRUE PRINCESS

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There was once upon a time a Prince who wanted to marry a Princess, but she must be a true Princess. So he travelled through the whole world to find one, but there was always something against each. There were plenty of Princesses, but he could not find out if they were true Princesses. In every case there was some little defect, which showed the genuine article was not yet found. So he came home again in very low spirits, for he had wanted very much to have a true Princess. One night there was a dreadful storm; it thundered and lightened and the rain streamed down in torrents. It was fearful! There was a knocking heard at the Palace gate, and the old King went to open it.

There stood a Princess outside the gate; but oh, in what a sad plight she was from the rain and the storm! The water was running down from her hair and her dress into the points of her shoes and out at the heels again. And yet she said she was a true Princess!

‘Well, we shall soon find that!’ thought the old Queen. But she said nothing, and went into the sleeping-room, took off all the bed-clothes, and laid a pea on the bottom of the bed. Then she put twenty mattresses on top of the pea, and twenty eider-down quilts on the top of the mattresses. And this was the bed in which the Princess was to sleep.

The next morning she was asked how she had slept.

‘Oh, very badly!’ said the Princess. ‘I scarcely closed my eyes all night! I am sure I don’t know what was in the bed. I laid on something so hard that my whole body is black and blue. It is dreadful!’

Now they perceived that she was a true Princess, because she had felt the pea through the twenty mattresses and the twenty eider-down quilts.

No one but a true Princess could be so sensitive.

So the Prince married her, for now he knew that at last he had got hold of a true Princess. And the pea was put into the Royal Museum, where it is still to be seen if no one has stolen it. Now this is a true story.

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

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There were once a Scotsman and an Englishman and an Irishman serving in the army together, who took it into their heads to run away on the first opportunity they could get. The chance came and they took it. They went on travelling for two days through a great forest, without food or drink, and without coming across a single house, and every night they had to climb up into the trees through fear of the wild beasts that were in the wood. On the second morning the Scotsman saw from the top of his tree a great castle far away. He said to himself that he would certainly die if he stayed in the forest without anything to eat but the roots of grass, which would not keep him alive very long. As soon, then, as he got down out of the tree he set off towards the castle, without so much as telling his companions that he had seen it at all; perhaps the hunger and want they had suffered had changed their nature so much that the one did not care what became of the other if he could save himself. He travelled on most of the day, so that it was quite late when he reached the castle, and to his great disappointment found nothing but closed doors and no smoke rising from the chimneys. He thought there was nothing for it but to die after all, and had lain down beside the wall, when he heard a window being opened high above him. At this he looked up, and saw the most beautiful woman he had ever set eyes on.

‘Oh, it is Fortune that has sent you to me,’ he said.

‘It is indeed,’ said she. ‘What are you in need of, or what has sent you here?’

‘Necessity,’ said he. ‘I am dying for want of food and drink.’

‘Come inside, then,’ she said; ‘there is plenty of both here.’

Accordingly he went in to where she was, and she opened a large room for him, where he saw a number of men lying asleep. She then set food before him, and after that showed him to the room where the others were. He lay down on one of the beds and fell sound asleep. And now we must go back to the two that he left behind him in the wood.

When nightfall and the time of the wild beasts came upon these, the Englishman happened to climb up into the very same tree on which the Scotsman was when he got a sight of the castle; and as soon as the day began to dawn and the Englishman looked to the four quarters of heaven, what did he see but the castle too! Off he went without saying a word to the Irishman, and everything happened to him just as it had done to the Scotsman.

The poor Irishman was now left all alone, and did not know where the others had gone to, so he just stayed where he was, very sad and miserable. When night came he climbed up into the same tree as the Englishman had been on the night before. As soon as day came he also saw the castle, and set out towards it; but when he reached it he could see no signs of fire or living being about it. Before long, however, he heard the window opened above his head, looked up, and beheld the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. He asked if she would give him food and drink, and she answered kindly and heartily that she would, if he would only come inside. This he did very willingly, and she set before him food and drink that he had never seen the like of before. In the room there was a bed, with diamond rings hanging at every loop of the curtains, and everything that was in the room besides astonished him so much that he actually forgot that he was hungry. When she saw that he was not eating at all, she asked him what he wanted yet, to which he replied that he would neither eat nor drink until he knew who she was, or where she came from, or who had put her there.

‘I shall tell you that,’ said she. ‘I am an enchanted Princess, and my father has promised that the man who releases me from the spell shall have the third of his kingdom while he is alive, and the whole of it after he is dead, and marry me as well. If ever I saw a man who looked likely to do this, you are the one. I have been here for sixteen years now, and no one who ever came to the castle has asked me who I was, except yourself. Every other man that has come, so long as I have been here, lies asleep in the big room down there.’

‘Tell me, then,’ said the Irishman, ‘what is the spell that has been laid on you, and how you can be freed from it.’

‘There is a little room there,’ said the Princess, ‘and if I could get a man to stay in it from ten o’clock till midnight for three nights on end I

should be freed from the spell.’

‘I am the man for you, then,’ said he; ‘I will take on hand to do it.’

Thereupon she brought him a pipe and tobacco, and he went into the room; but before long he heard a hammering and knocking on the outside of the door, and was told to open it.

‘I won’t,’ he said.

The next moment the door came flying in, and those outside along with it. They knocked him down, and kicked him, and knelt on his body till it came to midnight; but as soon as the cock crew they all disappeared. The Irishman was little more than alive by this time. As soon as daylight appeared the Princess came, and found him lying full length on the floor, unable to speak a word. She took a bottle, rubbed him from head to foot with something from it, and thereupon he was as sound as ever; but after what he had got that night he was very unwilling to try it a second time. The Princess, however, entreated him to stay, saying that the next night would not be so bad, and in the end he gave in and stayed.

When it was getting near midnight he heard them ordering him to open the door, and there were three of them for every one that there had been the previous evening. He did not make the slightest movement to go out to them or to open the door, but before long they broke it up, and were in on top of him. They laid hold of him, and kept throwing him between them up to the ceiling, or jumping above him, until the cock crew, when they all disappeared. When day came the Princess went to the room to see if he was still alive, and taking the bottle put it to his nostrils, which soon brought him to himself. The first thing he said then was that he was a fool to go on getting himself killed for anyone he ever saw, and was determined to be off and stay there no longer, When the Princess learned his intention she entreated him to stay, reminding him that another night would free her from the spell. ‘Besides,’ she said, ‘if there is a single spark of life in you when the day comes, the stuff that is in this bottle will make you as sound as ever you were.’

With all this the Irishman decided to stay; but that night there were three at him for every one that was there the two nights before, and it looked very unlikely that he would be alive in the morning after all that he got. When morning dawned, and the Princess came to see if he was still alive, she found him lying on the floor as if dead. She tried to see if there

was breath in him, but could not quite make it out. Then she put her hand on his pulse, and found a faint movement in it. Accordingly she poured what was in the bottle on him, and before long he rose up on his feet, and was as well as ever he was. So that business was finished, and the Princess was freed from the spell.

The Princess then told the Irishman that she must go away for the present, but would return for him in a few days in a carriage drawn by four grey horses. He told her to ‘be aisy,’ and not speak like that to him. ‘I have paid dear for you for the last three nights,’ he said, ‘if I have to part with you now;’ but in the twinkling of an eye she had disappeared. He did not know what to do with himself when he saw that she was gone, but before she went she had given him a little rod, with which he could, when he pleased, waken the men who had been sleeping there, some of them for sixteen years.

After being thus left alone, he went in and stretched himself on three chairs that were in the room, when what does he see coming in at the door but a little fair-haired lad.

‘Where did you come from, my lad?’ said the Irishman.

‘I came to make ready your food for you,’ said he.

‘Who told you to do that?’ said the Irishman.

‘My mistress,’ answered the lad—‘the Princess that was under the spell and is now free.’

By this the Irishman knew that she had sent the lad to wait on him. The lad also told him that his mistress wished him to be ready next morning at nine o’clock, when she would come for him with the carriage, as she had promised. He was greatly pleased at this, and next morning, when the time was drawing near, went out into the garden; but the little fair-haired lad took a big pin out of his pocket, and stuck it into the back of the Irishman’s coat without his noticing it, whereupon he fell sound asleep.

Before long the Princess came with the carriage and four horses, and asked the lad whether his master was awake. He said that he wasn’t. ‘It is bad for him,’ said she, ‘when the night is not long enough for him to sleep. Tell him that if he doesn’t meet me at this time to-morrow it is not likely that he will ever see me again all his life.’

As soon as she was gone the lad took the pin out of his master’s coat, who instantly awoke. The first word he said to the lad was, ‘Have you seen

her?’

‘Yes,’ said he, ‘and she bade me tell you that if you don’t meet her at nine o’clock to-morrow you will never see her again.’

He was very sorry when he heard this, and could not understand why the sleep should have fallen upon him just when she was coming. He decided, however, to go early to bed that night, in order to rise in time nest morning, and so he did. When it was getting near nine o’clock he went out to the garden to wait till she came, and the fair-haired lad along with him; but as soon as the lad got the chance he stuck the pin into his master’s coat again and he fell asleep as before. Precisely at nine o’clock came the Princess in the carriage with four horses, and asked the lad if his master had got up yet; but he said ‘No, he was asleep, just as he was the day before.’ ‘Dear! dear!’ said the Princess, ‘I am sorry for him. Was the sleep he had last night not enough for him? Tell him that he will never see me here again; and here is a sword that you will give him in my name, and my blessing along with it.’

With this she went off, and as soon as she had gone the lad took the pin out of his master’s coat. He awoke instantly, and the first word he said was, ‘Have you seen her?’ The lad said that he had, and there was the sword she had left for him. The Irishman was ready to kill the lad out of sheer vexation, but when he gave a glance over his shoulder not a trace of the fair-haired lad was left.

Being thus left all alone, he thought of going into the room where all the men were lying asleep, and there among the rest he found his two comrades who had deserted along with him. Then he remembered what the Princess had told him—that he had only to touch them with the rod she had given him and they would all awake; and the first he touched were his own comrades. They started to their feet at once, and he gave them as much silver and gold as they could carry when they went away. There was plenty to do before he got all the others wakened, for the two doors of the castle were crowded with them all the day long.

The loss of the Princess, however, kept rankling in his mind day and night, till finally he thought he would go about the world to see if he could find anyone to give him news of her. So he took the best horse in the stable and set out. Three years he spent travelling through forests and wildernesses, but could find no one able to tell him anything of the

Princess. At last he fell into so great despair that he thought he would put an end to his own life, and for this purpose laid hold of the sword that she had given him by the hands of the fair-haired lad; but on drawing it from its sheath he noticed that there was some writing on one side of the blade. He looked at this, and read there, ‘You will find me in the Blue Mountains.’ This made him take heart again, and he gave up the idea of killing himself, thinking that he would go on in hope of meeting some one who could tell him where the Blue Mountains were. After he had gone a long way without thinking where he was going, he saw at last a light far away, and made straight for it. On reaching it he found it came from a little house, and as soon as the man inside heard the noise of the horse’s feet he came out to see who was there. Seeing a stranger on horseback, he asked what brought him there and where he was going.

‘I have lived here,’ said he, ‘for three hundred years, and all that time I have not seen a single human being but yourself.’

‘I have been going about for the last three years,’ said the Irishman, ‘to see if I could find anyone who can tell me where the Blue Mountains are.’

‘Come in,’ said the old man, ‘and stay with me all night. I have a book which contains the history of the world, which I shall go through to-night, and if there is such a place as the Blue Mountains in it we shall find it out.’

The Irishman stayed there all night, and as soon as morning came rose to go. The old man said he had not gone to sleep all night for going through the book, but there was not a word about the Blue Mountains in it. ‘But I’ll tell you what,’ he said, ‘if there is such a place on earth at all, I have a brother who lives nine hundred miles from here, and he is sure to know where they are, if anyone in this world does.’ The Irishman answered that he could never go these nine hundred miles, for his horse was giving in already. ‘That doesn’t matter,’ said the old man; ‘I can do better than that. I have only to blow my whistle and you will be at my brother’s house before nightfall.’

So he blew the whistle, and the Irishman did not know where on earth he was until he found himself at the other old man’s door, who also told him that it was three hundred years since he had seen anyone, and asked him where he was going.

‘I am going to see if I can find anyone that can tell me where the Blue Mountains are,’ he said.

‘If you will stay with me to-night,’ said the old man, ‘I have a book of the history of the world, and I shall know where they are before daylight, if there is such a place in it at all.’

He stayed there all night, but there was not a word in the book about the Blue Mountains. Seeing that he was rather cast down, the old man told him that he had a brother nine hundred miles away, and that if information could be got about them from anyone it would be from him; ‘and I will enable you,’ he said, ‘to reach the place where he lives before night.’ So he blew his whistle, and the Irishman landed at the brother’s house before nightfall. When the old man saw him he said he had not seen a single man for three hundred years, and was very much surprised to see anyone come to him now.

‘Where are you going to?’ he said.

‘I am going about asking for the Blue Mountains,’ said the Irishman.

‘The Blue Mountains?’ said the old man.

‘Yes,’ said the Irishman.

‘I never heard the name before; but if they do exist I shall find them out. I am master of all the birds in the world, and have only to blow my whistle and every one will come to me. I shall then ask each of them to tell where it came from, and if there is any way of finding out the Blue Mountains that is it.’

So he blew his whistle, and when he blew it then all the birds of the world began to gather. The old man questioned each of them as to where they had come from, but there was not one of them that had come from the Blue Mountains. After he had run over them all, however, he missed a big Eagle that was wanting, and wondered that it had not come. Soon afterwards he saw something big coming towards him, darkening the sky. It kept coming nearer and growing bigger, and what was this after all but the Eagle? When she arrived the old man scolded her, and asked what had kept her so long behind.

‘I couldn’t help it,’ she said; ‘I had more than twenty times further to come than any bird that has come here to-day.’

‘Where have you come from, then?’ said the old man.

‘From the Blue Mountains,’ said she.

‘Indeed!’ said the old man; and what are they doing there?’

‘They are making ready this very day,’ said the Eagle, ‘for the marriage of the daughter of the King of the Blue Mountains. For three years now she has refused to marry anyone whatsoever, until she should give up all hope of the coming of the man who released her from the spell. Now she can wait no longer, for three years is the time that she agreed with her father to remain without marrying.’

The Irishman knew that it was for himself she had been waiting so long, but he was unable to make any better of it, for he had no hope of reaching the Blue Mountains all his life. The old man noticed how sad he grew, and asked the Eagle what she would take for carrying this man on her back to the Blue Mountains.

‘I must have threescore cattle killed,’ said she, ‘and cut up into quarters, and every time I look over my shoulder he must throw one of them into my mouth.’

As soon as the Irishman and the old man heard her demand they went out hunting, and before evening they had killed three-score cattle. They made quarters of them, as the Eagle told them, and then the old man asked her to lie down, till they would get it all heaped up on her back. First of all, though, they had to get a ladder of fourteen steps, to enable them to get on to the Eagle’s back, and there they piled up the meat as well as they could. Then the old man told the Irishman to mount, and to remember to throw a quarter of beef to her every time she looked round. He went up, and the old man gave the Eagle the word to be off, which she instantly obeyed; and every time she turned her head the Irishman threw a quarter of beef into her mouth.

As they came near the borders of the kingdom of the Blue Mountains, however, the beef was done, and, when the Eagle looked over her shoulder, what was the Irishman at but throwing the stone between her tail and her neck! At this she turned a complete somersault, and threw the Irishman off into the sea, where he fell into the bay that was right in front of the King’s Palace. Fortunately the points of his toes just touched the bottom, and he managed to get ashore.

When he went up into the town all the streets were gleaming with light, and the wedding of the Princess was just about to begin. He went into the first house he came to, and this happened to be the house of the

King’s hen-wife. He asked the old woman what was causing all the noise and light in the town.

‘The Princess,’ said she, ‘is going to be married to-night against her will, for she has been expecting every day that the man who freed her from the spell would come.’

‘There is a guinea for you,’ said he; ‘go and bring her here.’

The old woman went, and soon returned along with the Princess. She and the Irishman recognised each other, and were married, and had a great wedding that lasted for a year and a day.

THE TINDER-BOX

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A soldier came marching along the high road—left, right! A left, right! He had his knapsack on his back and a sword by his side, for he had been to the wars and was now returning home.

An old Witch met him on the road. She was very ugly to look at: her under-lip hung down to her breast.

‘Good evening, Soldier!’ she said. ‘What a fine sword and knapsack you have! You are something like a soldier! You ought to have as much money as you would like to carry!’

‘Thank you, old Witch,’ said the Soldier.

‘Do you see that great tree there?’ said the Witch, pointing to a tree beside them. ‘It is hollow within. You must climb up to the top, and then you will see a hole through which you can let yourself down into the tree. I will tie a rope round your waist, so that I may be able to pull you up again when you call.’

‘What shall I do down there?’ asked the Soldier.

‘Get money!’ answered the Witch. ‘Listen! When you reach the bottom of the tree you will find yourself in a large hall; it is light there, for there are more than three hundred lamps burning. Then you will see three doors, which you can open—the keys are in the locks. If you go into the first room, you will see a great chest in the middle of the floor with a dog sitting upon it; he has eyes as large as saucers, but you needn’t trouble about him. I will give you my blue-check apron, which you must spread out on the floor, and then go back quickly and fetch the dog and set him upon it; open the chest and take as much money as you like. It is copper there. If you would rather have silver, you must go into the next room, where there is a dog with eyes as large as mill-wheels. But don’t take any notice of him; just set him upon my apron, and help yourself to the money. If you prefer gold, you can get that too, if you go into the third room, and as much as you like to carry. But the dog that guards the chest there has eyes as large as the Round Tower at Copenhagen! He is a savage dog, I can

tell you; but you needn’t be afraid of him either. Only, put him on my apron and he won’t touch you, and you can take out of the chest as much gold as you like!’

‘Come, this is not bad!’ said the Soldier. ‘But what am I to give you, old Witch; for surely you are not going to do this for nothing?’

‘Yes, I am!’ replied the Witch. ‘Not a single farthing will I take! For me you shall bring nothing but an old tinder-box which my grandmother forgot last time she was down there.’

‘Well, tie the rope round my waist! ‘said the Soldier.

‘Here it is,’ said the Witch, ‘and here is my blue-check apron.’

Then the Soldier climbed up the tree, let himself down through the hole, and found himself standing, as the Witch had said, underground in the large hall, where the three hundred lamps were burning.

Well, he opened the first door. Ugh! there sat the dog with eyes as big as saucers glaring at him.

‘You are a fine fellow!’ said the Soldier, and put him on the Witch’s apron, took as much copper as his pockets could hold; then he shut the chest, put the dog on it again, and went into the second room. Sure enough there sat the dog with eyes as large as mill-wheels.

‘You had better not look at me so hard!’ said the Soldier. ‘Your eyes will come out of their sockets!’

And then he set the dog on the apron. When he saw all the silver in the chest, he threw away the copper he had taken, and filled his pockets and knapsack with nothing but silver.

Then he went into the third room. Horrors! the dog there had two eyes, each as large as the Round Tower at Copenhagen, spinning round in his head like wheels.

‘Good evening!’ said the Soldier and saluted, for he had never seen a dog like this before. But when he had examined him more closely, he thought to himself: ‘Now then, I’ve had enough of this!’ and put him down on the floor, and opened the chest. Heavens! what a heap of gold there was! With all that he could buy up the whole town, and all the sugar pigs, all the tin soldiers, whips and rocking-horses in the whole world. Now he threw away all the silver with which he had filled his pockets and knapsack, and filled them with gold instead—yes, all his pockets, his knapsack, cap and boots even, so that he could hardly walk. Now he was

rich indeed. He put the dog back upon the chest, shut the door, and then called up through the tree:

‘Now pull me up again, old Witch!’

‘Have you got the tinder-box also?’ asked the Witch.

‘Botheration!’ said the Soldier, ‘I had clean forgotten it!’ And then he went back and fetched it.

The Witch pulled him up, and there he stood again on the high road, with pockets, knapsack, cap and boots filled with gold.

‘What do you want to do with the tinder-box?’ asked the Soldier.

‘That doesn’t matter to you,’ replied the Witch. ‘You have got your money, give me my tinder-box.’

‘We’ll see!’ said the Soldier. ‘Tell me at once what you want to do with it, or I will draw my sword, and cut off your head!’

‘No!’ screamed the Witch.

The Soldier immediately cut off her head. That was the end of her! But he tied up all his gold in her apron, slung it like a bundle over his shoulder, put the tinder-box in his pocket, and set out towards the town.

It was a splendid town! He turned into the finest inn, ordered the best chamber and his favourite dinner; for now that he had so much money he was really rich.

It certainly occurred to the servant who had to clean his boots that they were astonishingly old boots for such a rich lord. But that was because he had not yet bought new ones; next day he appeared in respectable boots and fine clothes. Now, instead of a common soldier he had become a noble lord, and the people told him about all the grand doings of the town and the King, and what a beautiful Princess his daughter was.

‘How can one get to see her?’ asked the Soldier.

‘She is never to be seen at all!’ they told him; ‘she lives in a great copper castle, surrounded by many walls and towers! No one except the King may go in or out, for it is prophesied that she will marry a common soldier, and the King cannot submit to that.’

‘I should very much like to see her,’ thought the Soldier; but he could not get permission.

Now he lived very gaily, went to the theatre, drove in the King’s garden, and gave the poor a great deal of money, which was very nice of him; he had experienced in former times how hard it is not to have a

farthing in the world. Now he was rich, wore fine clothes, and made many friends, who all said that he was an excellent man, a real nobleman. And the Soldier liked that. But as he was always spending money, and never made any more, at last the day came when he had nothing left but two shillings, and he had to leave the beautiful rooms in which he had been living, and go into a little attic under the roof, and clean his own boots, and mend them with a darning-needle. None of his friends came to visit him there, for there were too many stairs to climb.

It was a dark evening, and he could not even buy a light. But all at once it flashed across him that there was a little end of tinder in the tinder-box, which he had taken from the hollow tree into which the Witch had helped him down. He found the box with the tinder in it; but just as he was kindling a light, and had struck a spark out of the tinder-box, the door burst open, and the dog with eyes as large as saucers, which he had seen down in the tree, stood before him and said:

‘What does my lord command?’

‘What’s the meaning of this?’ exclaimed the Soldier. ‘This is a pretty kind of tinder-box, if I can get whatever I want like this. Get me money!’ he cried to the dog, and hey, presto! he was off and back again, holding a great purse full of money in his mouth.

Now the Soldier knew what a capital tinder-box this was. If he rubbed once, the dog that sat on the chest of copper appeared; if he rubbed twice, there came the dog that watched over the silver chest; and if he rubbed three times, the one that guarded the gold appeared. Now, the Soldier went down again to his beautiful rooms, and appeared once more in splendid clothes. All his friends immediately recognised him again, and paid him great court.

One day he thought to himself: ‘It is very strange that no one can get to see the Princess. They all say she is very pretty, but what’s the use of that if she has to sit for ever in the great copper castle with all the towers? Can I not manage to see her somehow? Where is my tinder-box?’ and so he struck a spark, and, presto! there came the dog with eyes as large as saucers.

‘It is the middle of the night, I know,’ said the Soldier; ‘but I should very much like to see the Princess for a moment.’

The dog was already outside the door, and before the Soldier could look round, in he came with the Princess. She was lying asleep on the dog's back, and was so beautiful that anyone could see she was a real Princess. The Soldier really could not refrain from kissing her—he was such a thorough Soldier. Then the dog ran back with the Princess. But when it was morning, and the King and Queen were drinking tea, the Princess said that the night before she had had such a strange dream about a dog and a Soldier: she had ridden on the dog's back, and the Soldier had kissed her.

'That is certainly a fine story,' said the Queen. But the next night one of the ladies-in-waiting was to watch at the Princess's bed, to see if it was only a dream, or if it had actually happened.

The Soldier had an overpowering longing to see the Princess again, and so the dog came in the middle of the night and fetched her, running as fast as he could. But the lady-in-waiting slipped on india-rubber shoes and followed them. When she saw them disappear into a large house, she thought to herself: 'Now I know where it is; 'and made a great cross on the door with a piece of chalk. Then she went home and lay down, and the dog came back also, with the Princess. But when he saw that a cross had been made on the door of the house where the Soldier lived, he took a piece of chalk also, and made crosses on all the doors in the town; and that was very clever, for now the lady-in-waiting could not find the right house, as there were crosses on all the doors.

Early next morning the King, Queen, ladies-in-waiting, and officers came out to see where the Princess had been.

'There it is!' said the King, when he saw the first door with a cross on it.

'No, there it is, my dear!' said the Queen, when she likewise saw a door with a cross.

'But here is one, and there is another!' they all exclaimed; wherever they looked there was a cross on the door. Then they realised that the sign would not help them at all.

But the Queen was an extremely clever woman, who could do a great deal more than just drive in a coach. She took her great golden scissors, cut up a piece of silk, and made a pretty little bag of it. This she filled with the finest buckwheat grains, and tied it round the Princess' neck; this done,

she cut a little hole in the bag, so that the grains would strew the whole road wherever the Princess went.

In the night the dog came again, took the Princess on his back and ran away with her to the Soldier, who was very much in love with her, and would have liked to have been a Prince, so that he might have had her for his wife.

The dog did not notice how the grains were strewn right from the castle to the Soldier's window, where he ran up the wall with the Princess.

In the morning the King and the Queen saw plainly where their daughter had been, and they took the Soldier and put him into prison.

There he sat. Oh, how dark and dull it was there! And they told him: 'To-morrow you are to be hanged.' Hearing that did not exactly cheer him, and he had left his tinder-box in the inn.

Next morning he could see through the iron grating in front of his little window how the people were hurrying out of the town to see him hanged. He heard the drums and saw the soldiers marching; all the people were running to and fro. Just below his window was a shoemaker's apprentice, with leather apron and shoes; he was skipping along so merrily that one of his shoes flew off and fell against the wall, just where the Soldier was sitting peeping through the iron grating.

'Oh, shoemaker's boy, you needn't be in such a hurry!' said the Soldier to him. 'There's nothing going on till I arrive. But if you will run back to the house where I lived, and fetch me my tinder-box, I will give you four shillings. But you must put your best foot foremost.'

The shoemaker's boy was very willing to earn four shillings, and fetched the tinder-box, gave it to the Soldier, and—yes—now you shall hear.

Outside the town a great scaffold had been erected, and all round were standing the soldiers, and hundreds of thousands of people. The King and Queen were sitting on a magnificent throne opposite the judges and the whole council.

The Soldier was already standing on the top of the ladder; but when they wanted to put the rope round his neck, he said that the fulfilment of one innocent request was always granted to a poor criminal before he underwent his punishment. He would so much like to smoke a small pipe of tobacco; it would be his last pipe in this world.

The King could not refuse him this, and so he took out his tinder-box, and rubbed it once, twice, three times. And lo, and behold I there stood all three dogs—the one with eyes as large as saucers, the second with eyes as large as mill-wheels, and the third with eyes each as large as the Round Tower of Copenhagen.

‘Help me now, so that I may not be hanged!’ cried the Soldier. And thereupon the dogs fell upon the judges and the whole council, seized some by the legs, others by the nose, and threw them so high into the air that they fell and were smashed into pieces.

‘I won’t stand this!’ said the King; but the largest dog seized him too, and the Queen as well, and threw them up after the others. This frightened the soldiers, and all the people cried: ‘Good Soldier, you shall be our King, and marry the beautiful Princess!’

Then they put the Soldier into the King’s coach, and the three dogs danced in front, crying ‘Hurrah!’ And the boys whistled and the soldiers presented arms.

The Princess came out of the copper castle, and became Queen; and that pleased her very much.

The wedding festivities lasted for eight days, and the dogs sat at table and made eyes at everyone.

THE WITCH IN THE STONE BOAT[31]

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There were once a King and a Queen, and they had a son called Sigurd, who was very strong and active, and good-looking. When the King came to be bowed down with the weight of years he spoke to his son, and said that now it was time for him to look out for a fitting match for himself, for he did not know how long he might last now, and he would like to see him married before he died.

Sigurd was not averse to this, and asked his father where he thought it best to look for a wife. The King answered that in a certain country there was a King who had a beautiful daughter, and he thought it would be most desirable if Sigurd could get her. So the two parted, and Sigurd prepared for the journey, and went to where his father had directed him.

He came to the King and asked his daughter's hand, which he readily granted him, but only on the condition that he should remain there as long as he could, for the King himself was not strong and not very able to govern his kingdom. Sigurd accepted this condition, but added that he would have to get leave to go home again to his own country when he heard news of his father's death. After that Sigurd married the Princess, and helped his father-in-law to govern the kingdom. He and the Princess loved each other dearly, and after a year a son came to them, who was two years old when word came to Sigurd that his father was dead. Sigurd now prepared to return home with his wife and child, and went on board ship to go by sea.

They had sailed for several days, when the breeze suddenly fell, and there came a dead calm, at a time when they needed only one day's voyage to reach home. Sigurd and his Queen were one day on deck, when most of the others on the ship had fallen asleep. There they sat and talked for a while, and had their little son along with them. After a time Sigurd became so heavy with sleep that he could no longer keep awake, so he went below and lay down, leaving the Queen alone on the deck, playing with her son.

A good while after Sigurd had gone below the Queen saw something black on the sea, which seemed to be coming nearer. As it approached she could make out that it was a boat, and could see the figure of some one sitting in it and rowing it. At last the boat came alongside the ship, and now the Queen saw that it was a stone boat, out of which there came up on board the ship a fearfully ugly Witch. The Queen was more frightened than words can describe, and could neither speak a word nor move from the place so as to awaken the King or the sailors. The Witch came right up to the Queen, took the child from her and laid it on the deck; then she took the Queen, and stripped her of all her fine clothes, which she proceeded to put on herself, and looked then like a human being. Last of all she took the Queen, put her into the boat, and said—

'This spell I lay upon you, that you slacken not your course until you come to my brother in the Underworld.'

The Queen sat stunned and motionless, but the boat at once shot away from the ship with her, and before long she was out of sight.

When the boat could no longer be seen the child began to cry, and though the Witch tried to quiet it she could not manage it; so she went below to where the King was sleeping with the child on her arm, and awakened him, scolding him for leaving them alone on deck, while he and all the crew were asleep. It was great carelessness of him, she said, to leave no one to watch the ship with her.

Sigurd was greatly surprised to hear his Queen scold him so much, for she had never said an angry word to him before; but he thought it was quite excusable in this case, and tried to quiet the child along with her, but it was no use. Then he went and wakened the sailors, and bade them hoist the sails, for a breeze had sprung up and was blowing straight towards the harbour.

They soon reached the land which Sigurd was to rule over, and found all the people sorrowful for the old King's death, but they became glad when they got Sigurd back to the Court, and made him King over them.

The King's son, however, hardly ever stopped crying from the time he had been taken from his mother on the deck of the ship, although he had always been such a good child before, so that at last the King had to get a nurse for him—one of the maids of the Court. As soon as the child got into her charge he stopped crying, and behaved well as before.

After the sea-voyage it seemed to the King that the Queen had altered very much in many ways, and not for the better. He thought her much more haughty and stubborn and difficult to deal with than she used to be. Before long others began to notice this as well as the King. In the Court there were two young fellows, one of eighteen years old, the other of nineteen, who were very fond of playing chess, and often sat long inside playing at it. Their room was next the Queen's, and often during the day they heard the Queen talking.

One day they paid more attention than usual when they heard her talk, and put their ears close to a crack in the wall between the rooms, and heard the Queen say quite plainly, 'When I yawn a little, then I am a nice little maiden; when I yawn half-way, then I am half a troll; and when I yawn fully, then I am a troll altogether.'

As she said this she yawned tremendously, and in a moment had put on the appearance of a fearfully ugly troll. Then there came up through the floor of the room a three-headed Giant with a trough full of meat, who saluted her as his sister and set down the trough before her. She began to eat out of it, and never stopped till she had finished it. The young fellows saw all this going on, but did not hear the two of them say anything to each other. They were astonished though at how greedily the Queen devoured the meat, and how much she ate of it, and were no longer surprised that she took so little when she sat at table with the King. As soon as she had finished it the Giant disappeared with the trough by the same way as he had come, and the Queen returned to her human shape.

Now we must go back to the King's son after he had been put in charge of the nurse. One evening, after she had lit a candle and was holding the child, several planks sprang up in the floor of the room, and out at the opening came a beautiful woman dressed in white, with an iron belt round her waist, to which was fastened an iron chain that went down into the ground. The woman came up to the nurse, took the child from her, and pressed it to her breast; then she gave it back to the nurse and returned by the same way as she had come, and the floor closed over her again. Although the woman had not spoken a single word to her, the nurse was very much frightened, but told no one about it.

Next evening the same thing happened again, just as before, but as the woman was going away she said in a sad tone, 'Two are gone, and one only

is left,' and then disappeared as before. The nurse was still more frightened when she heard the woman say this, and thought that perhaps some danger was hanging over the child, though she had no ill-opinion of the unknown woman, who, indeed, had behaved towards the child as if it were her own. The most mysterious thing was the woman saying 'and only one is left;' but the nurse guessed that this must mean that only one day was left, since she had come for two days already.

At last the nurse made up her mind to go to the King, and told him the whole story, and asked him to be present in person next day about the time when the woman usually came. The King promised to do so, and came to the nurse's room a little before the time, and sat down on a chair with his drawn sword in his hand. Soon after the planks in the floor sprang up as before, and the woman came up, dressed in white, with the iron belt and chain. The King saw at once that it was his own Queen, and immediately hewed asunder the iron chain that was fastened to the belt. This was followed by such noises and crashings down in the earth that all the King's Palace shook, so that no one expected anything else than to see every bit of it shaken to pieces. At last, however, the noises and shaking stopped, and they began to come to themselves again.

The King and Queen embraced each other, and she told him the whole story—how the Witch came to the ship when they were all asleep and sent her off in the boat. After she had gone so far that she could not see the ship, she sailed on through darkness until she landed beside a three-headed Giant. The Giant wished her to marry him, but she refused; whereupon he shut her up by herself, and told her she would never get free until she consented. After a time she began to plan how to get her freedom, and at last told him that she would consent if he would allow her to visit her son on earth three days on end. This he agreed to, but put on her this iron belt and chain, the other end of which he fastened round his own waist, and the great noises that were heard when the King cut the chain must have been caused by the Giant's falling down the underground passage when the chain gave way so suddenly. The Giant's dwelling, indeed, was right under the Palace, and the terrible shakings must have been caused by him in his death-throes.

The King now understood how the Queen he had had for some time past had been so ill-tempered. He at once had a sack drawn over her head

and made her be stoned to death, and after that torn in pieces by untamed horses. The two young fellows also told now what they had heard and seen in the Queen’s room, for before this they had been afraid to say anything about it, on account of the Queen’s power.

The real Queen was now restored to all her dignity, and was beloved by all. The nurse was married to a nobleman, and the King and Queen gave her splendid presents.

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31. From the Icelandic.

THUMBELINA

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There was once a woman who wanted to have quite a tiny, little child, but she did not know where to get one from. So one day she went to an old Witch and said to her: ‘I should so much like to have a tiny, little child; can you tell me where I can get one?’

‘Oh, we have just got one ready!’ said the Witch. ‘Here is a barley-corn for you, but it’s not the kind the farmer sows in his field, or feeds the cocks and hens with, I can tell you. Put it in a flower-pot, and then you will see something happen.’

‘Oh, thank you!’ said the woman, and gave the Witch a shilling, for that was what it cost. Then she went home and planted the barley-corn; immediately there grew out of it a large and beautiful flower, which looked like a tulip, but the petals were tightly closed as if it were still only a bud.

‘What a beautiful flower!’ exclaimed the woman, and she kissed the red and yellow petals; but as she kissed them the flower burst open. It was a real tulip, such as one can see any day; but in the middle of the blossom, on the green velvety petals, sat a little girl, quite tiny, trim, and pretty. She was scarcely half a thumb in height; so they called her Thumbelina. An elegant polished walnut-shell served Thumbelina as a cradle, the blue petals of a violet were her mattress, and a rose-leaf her coverlid. There she lay at night, but in the day-time she used to play about on the table; here the woman had put a bowl, surrounded by a ring of flowers, with their stalks in water, in the middle of which floated a great tulip pedal, and on this Thumbelina sat, and sailed from one side of the bowl to the other, rowing herself with two white horse-hairs for oars. It was such a pretty sight! She could sing, too, with a voice more soft and sweet than had ever been heard before.

One night, when she was lying in her pretty little bed, an old toad crept in through a broken pane in the window. She was very ugly, clumsy, and

clammy; she hopped on to the table where Thumbelina lay asleep under the red rose-leaf.

‘This would make a beautiful wife for my son,’ said the toad, taking up the walnut-shell, with Thumbelina inside, and hopping with it through the window into the garden.

There flowed a great wide stream, with slippery and marshy banks; here the toad lived with her son. Ugh! how ugly and clammy he was, just like his mother! ‘Croak, croak, croak!’ was all he could say when he saw the pretty little girl in the walnut-shell.

‘Don’t talk so load, or you’ll wake her,’ said the old toad. ‘She might escape us even now; she is as light as a feather. We will put her at once on a broad water-lily leaf in the stream. That will be quite an island for her; she is so small and light. She can’t run away from us there, whilst we are preparing the guest-chamber under the marsh where she shall live.’

Outside in the brook grew many water-lilies, with broad green leaves, which looked as if they were swimming about on the water.

The leaf farthest away was the largest, and to this the old toad swam with Thumbelina in her walnut-shell.

The tiny Thumbelina woke up very early in the morning, and when she saw where she was she began to cry bitterly; for on every side of the great green leaf was water, and she could not get to the land.

The old toad was down under the marsh, decorating her room with rushes and yellow marigold leaves, to make it very grand for her new daughter-in-law; then she swam out with her ugly son to the leaf where Thumbelina lay. She wanted to fetch the pretty cradle to put it into her room before Thumbelina herself came there. The old toad bowed low in the water before her, and said: ‘Here is my son; you shall marry him, and live in great magnificence down under the marsh.’

‘Croak, croak, croak!’ was all that the son could say. Then they took the neat little cradle and swam away with it; but Thumbelina sat alone on the great green leaf and wept, for she did not want to live with the clammy toad, or marry her ugly son. The little fishes swimming about under the water had seen the toad quite plainly, and heard what she had said; so they put up their heads to see the little girl. When they saw her, they thought her so pretty that they were very sorry she should go down with the ugly toad to live. No; that must not happen. They assembled in the water round

the green stalk which supported the leaf on which she was sitting, and nibbled the stem in two. Away floated the leaf down the stream, bearing Thumbelina far beyond the reach of the toad.

On she sailed past several towns, and the little birds sitting in the bushes saw her, and sang, ‘What a pretty little girl!’ The leaf floated farther and farther away; thus Thumbelina left her native land.

A beautiful little white butterfly fluttered above her, and at last settled on the leaf. Thumbelina pleased him, and she, too, was delighted, for now the toads could not reach her, and it was so beautiful where she was travelling; the sun shone on the water and made it sparkle like the brightest silver. She took off her sash, and tied one end round the butterfly; the other end she fastened to the leaf, so that now it glided along with her faster than ever.

A great cockchafer came flying past; he caught sight of Thumbelina, and in a moment had put his arms round her slender waist, and had flown off with her to a tree. The green leaf floated away down the stream, and the butterfly with it, for he was fastened to the leaf and could not get loose from it. Oh, dear! how terrified poor little Thumbelina was when the cockchafer flew off with her to the tree! But she was especially distressed on the beautiful white butterfly’s account, as she had tied him fast, so that if he could not get away he must starve to death. But the cockchafer did not trouble himself about that; he sat down with her on a large green leaf, gave her the honey out of the flowers to eat, and told her that she was very pretty, although she wasn’t in the least like a cockchafer. Later on, all the other cockchafers who lived in the same tree came to pay calls; they examined Thumbelina closely, and remarked, ‘Why, she has only two legs! How very miserable!’

‘She has no feelers!’ cried another.

‘How ugly she is!’ said all the lady chafers—and yet Thumbelina was really very pretty.

The cockchafer who had stolen her knew this very well; but when he heard all the ladies saying she was ugly, he began to think so too, and would not keep her; she might go wherever she liked. So he flew down from the tree with her and put her on a daisy. There she sat and wept, because she was so ugly that the cockchafer would have nothing to do with

her; and yet she was the most beautiful creature imaginable, so soft and delicate, like the loveliest rose-leaf.

The whole summer poor little Thumbelina lived alone in the great wood. She plaited a bed for herself of blades of grass, and hung it up under a clover-leaf, so that she was protected from the rain; she gathered honey from the flowers for food, and drank the dew on the leaves every morning. Thus the summer and autumn passed, but then came winter—the long, cold winter. All the birds who had sung so sweetly about her had flown away; the trees shed their leaves, the flowers died; the great clover-leaf under which she had lived curled up, and nothing remained of it but the withered stalk. She was terribly cold, for her clothes were ragged, and she herself was so small and thin. Poor little Thumbelina! she would surely be frozen to death. It began to snow, and every snow-flake that fell on her was to her as a whole shovelful thrown on one of us, for we are so big, and she was only an inch high. She wrapt herself round in a dead leaf, but it was torn in the middle and gave her no warmth; she was trembling with cold.

Just outside the wood where she was now living lay a great corn-field. But the corn had been gone a long time; only the dry, bare stubble was left standing in the frozen ground. This made a forest for her to wander about in. All at once she came across the door of a field-mouse, who had a little hole under a corn-stalk. There the mouse lived warm and snug, with a store-room full of corn, a splendid kitchen and dining-room. Poor little Thumbelina went up to the door and begged for a little piece of barley, for she had not had anything to eat for the last two days.

‘Poor little creature!’ said the field-mouse, for she was a kind-hearted old thing at the bottom. ‘Come into my warm room and have some dinner with me.’

As Thumbelina pleased her, she said: ‘As far as I am concerned you may spend the winter with me; but you must keep my room clean and tidy, and tell me stories, for I like that very much.’

And Thumbelina did all that the kind old field-mouse asked, and did it remarkably well too.

‘Now I am expecting a visitor,’ said the field-mouse; ‘my neighbour comes to call on me once a week. He is in better circumstances than I am, has great, big rooms, and wears a fine black-velvet coat. If you could only

marry him, you would be well provided for. But he is blind. You must tell him all the prettiest stories you know.'

But Thumbelina did not trouble her head about him, for he was only a mole. He came and paid them a visit in his black-velvet coat.

'He is so rich and so accomplished,' the field-mouse told her.

'His house is twenty times larger than mine; he possesses great knowledge, but he cannot bear the sun and the beautiful flowers, and speaks slightingly of them, for he has never seen them.'

Thumbelina had to sing to him, so she sang 'Lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home!' and other songs so prettily that the mole fell in love with her; but he did not say anything, he was a very cautious man. A short time before he had dug a long passage through the ground from his own house to that of his neighbour; in this he gave the field-mouse and Thumbelina permission to walk as often as they liked. But he begged them not to be afraid of the dead bird that lay in the passage: it was a real bird with beak and feathers, and must have died a little time ago, and now laid buried just where he had made his tunnel. The mole took a piece of rotten wood in his mouth, for that glows like fire in the dark, and went in front, lighting them through the long dark passage. When they came to the place where the dead bird lay, the mole put his broad nose against the ceiling and pushed a hole through, so that the daylight could shine down. In the middle of the path lay a dead swallow, his pretty wings pressed close to his sides, his claws and head drawn under his feathers; the poor bird had evidently died of cold. Thumbelina was very sorry, for she was very fond of all little birds; they had sung and twittered so beautifully to her all through the summer. But the mole kicked him with his bandy legs and said:

'Now he can't sing any more! It must be very miserable to be a little bird! I'm thankful that none of my little children are; birds always starve in winter.'

'Yes, you speak like a sensible man,' said the field-mouse. 'What has a bird, in spite of all his singing, in the winter-time? He must starve and freeze, and that must be very pleasant for him, I must say!'

Thumbelina did not say anything; but when the other two had passed on she bent down to the bird, brushed aside the feathers from his head, and kissed his closed eyes gently. 'Perhaps it was he that sang to me so prettily

in the summer,’ she thought. ‘How much pleasure he did give me, dear little bird!’

The mole closed up the hole again which let in the light, and then escorted the ladies home. But Thumbelina could not sleep that night; so she got out of bed, and plaited a great big blanket of straw, and carried it off, and spread it over the dead bird, and piled upon it thistle-down as soft as cotton-wool, which she had found in the field-mouse’s room, so that the poor little thing should lie warmly buried.

‘Farewell, pretty little bird!’ she said. ‘Farewell, and thank you for your beautiful songs in the summer, when the trees were green, and the sun shone down warmly on us!’ Then she laid her head against the bird’s heart. But the bird was not dead: he had been frozen, but now that she had warmed him, he was coming to life again.

In autumn the swallows fly away to foreign lands; but there are some who are late in starting, and then they get so cold that they drop down as if dead, and the snow comes and covers them over.

Thumbelina trembled, she was so frightened; for the bird was very large in comparison with herself—only an inch high. But she took courage, piled up the down more closely over the poor swallow, fetched her own coverlid and laid it over his head.

Next night she crept out again to him. There he was alive, but very weak; he could only open his eyes for a moment and look at Thumbelina, who was standing in front of him with a piece of rotten wood in her hand, for she had no other lantern.

‘Thank you, pretty little child!’ said the swallow to her. ‘I am so beautifully warm! Soon I shall regain my strength, and then I shall be able to fly out again into the warm sunshine.’

‘Oh!’ she said, ‘it is very cold outside; it is snowing and freezing! stay in your warm bed; I will take care of you!’

Then she brought him water in a petal, which he drank, after which he related to her how he had torn one of his wings on a bramble, so that he could not fly as fast as the other swallows, who had flown far away to warmer lands. So at last he had dropped down exhausted, and then he could remember no more. The whole winter he remained down there, and Thumbelina looked after him and nursed him tenderly. Neither the mole

nor the field-mouse learnt anything of this, for they could not bear the poor swallow.

When the spring came, and the sun warmed the earth again, the swallow said farewell to Thumbelina, who opened the hole in the roof for him which the mole had made. The sun shone brightly down upon her, and the swallow asked her if she would go with him; she could sit upon his back. Thumbelina wanted very much to fly far away into the green wood, but she knew that the old field-mouse would be sad if she ran away. ‘No, I mustn’t come!’ she said.

‘Farewell, dear good little girl!’ said the swallow, and flew off into the sunshine. Thumbelina gazed after him with the tears standing in her eyes, for she was very fond of the swallow.

‘Tweet, tweet!’ sang the bird, and flew into the green wood. Thumbelina was very unhappy. She was not allowed to go out into the warm sunshine. The corn which had been sowed in the field over the field-mouse’s home grew up high into the air, and made a thick forest for the poor little girl, who was only an inch high.

‘Now you are to be a bride, Thumbelina!’ said the field-mouse, ‘for our neighbour has proposed for you! What a piece of fortune for a poor child like you! Now you must set to work at your linen for your dowry, for nothing must be lacking if you are to become the wife of our neighbour, the mole!’

Thumbelina had to spin all day long, and every evening the mole visited her, and told her that when the summer was over the sun would not shine so hot; now it was burning the earth as hard as a stone. Yes, when the summer had passed, they would keep the wedding.

But she was not at all pleased about it, for she did not like the stupid mole. Every morning when the sun was rising, and every evening when it was setting, she would steal out of the house-door, and when the breeze parted the ears of corn so that she could see the blue sky through them, she thought how bright and beautiful it must be outside, and longed to see her dear swallow again. But he never came; no doubt he had flown away far into the great green wood.

By the autumn Thumbelina had finished the dowry.

‘In four weeks you will be married!’ said the field-mouse; ‘don’t be obstinate, or I shall bite you with my sharp white teeth! You will get a fine

husband! The King himself has not such a velvet coat. His store-room and cellar are full, and you should be thankful for that.’

Well, the wedding-day arrived. The mole had come to fetch Thumbelina to live with him deep down under the ground, never to come out into the warm sun again, for that was what he didn’t like. The poor little girl was very sad; for now she must say good-bye to the beautiful sun.

‘Farewell, bright sun!’ she cried, stretching out her arms towards it, and taking another step outside the house; for now the corn had been reaped, and only the dry stubble was left standing. ‘Farewell, farewell!’ she said, and put her arms round a little red flower that grew there. ‘Give my love to the dear swallow when you see him!’

‘Tweet, tweet!’ sounded in her ear all at once. She looked up. There was the swallow flying past! As soon as he saw Thumbelina, he was very glad. She told him how unwilling she was to marry the ugly mole, as then she had to live underground where the sun never shone, and she could not help bursting into tears.

‘The cold winter is coming now,’ said the swallow. ‘I must fly away to warmer lands: will you come with me? You can sit on my back, and we will fly far away from the ugly mole and his dark house, over the mountains, to the warm countries where the sun shines more brightly than here, where it is always summer, and there are always beautiful flowers. Do come with me, dear little Thumbelina, who saved my life when I lay frozen in the dark tunnel!’

‘Yes, I will go with you,’ said Thumbelina, and got on the swallow’s back, with her feet on one of his outstretched wings. Up he flew into the air, over woods and seas, over the great mountains where the snow is always lying. And if she was cold she crept under his warm feathers, only keeping her little head out to admire all the beautiful things in the world beneath. At last they came to warm lands; there the sun was brighter, the sky seemed twice as high, and in the hedges hung the finest green and purple grapes; in the woods grew oranges and lemons: the air was scented with myrtle and mint, and on the roads were pretty little children running about and playing with great gorgeous butterflies. But the swallow flew on farther, and it became more and more beautiful. Under the most splendid green trees besides a blue lake stood a glittering white-marble castle.

Vines hung about the high pillars; there were many swallows' nests, and in one of these lived the swallow who was carrying Thumbelina.

'Here is my house!' said he. 'But it won't do for you to live with me; I am not tidy enough to please you. Find a home for yourself in one of the lovely flowers that grow down there; now I will set you down, and you can do whatever you like.'

'That will be splendid!' said she, clapping her little hands.

There lay a great white marble column which had fallen to the ground and broken into three pieces, but between these grew the most beautiful white flowers. The swallow flew down with Thumbelina, and set her upon one of the broad leaves. But there, to her astonishment, she found a tiny little man sitting in the middle of the flower, as white and transparent as if he were made of glass; he had the prettiest golden crown on his head, and the most beautiful wings on his shoulders; he himself was no bigger than Thumbelina. He was the spirit of the flower. In each blossom there dwelt a tiny man or woman; but this one was the King over the others.

'How handsome he is!' whispered Thumbelina to the swallow.

The little Prince was very much frightened at the swallow, for in comparison with one so tiny as himself he seemed a giant. But when he saw Thumbelina, he was delighted, for she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. So he took his golden crown from off his head and put it on hers, asking her her name, and if she would be his wife, and then she would be Queen of all the flowers. Yes! he was a different kind of husband to the son of the toad and the mole with the black-velvet coat. So she said 'Yes' to the noble Prince. And out of each flower came a lady and gentleman, each so tiny and pretty that it was a pleasure to see them. Each brought Thumbelina a present, but the best of all was a beautiful pair of wings which were fastened on to her back, and now she too could fly from flower to flower. They all wished her joy, and the swallow sat above in his nest and sang the wedding march, and that he did as well as he could; but he was sad, because he was very fond of Thumbelina and did not want to be separated from her.

'You shall not be called Thumbelina!' said the spirit of the flower to her; 'that is an ugly name, and you are much too pretty for that. We will call you May Blossom.'

‘Farewell, farewell!’ said the little swallow with a heavy heart, and flew away to farther lands, far, far away, right back to Denmark. There he had a little nest above a window, where his wife lived, who can tell fairy-stories. ‘Tweet, tweet!’ he sang to her. And that is the way we learnt the whole story.

THE NIGHTINGALE

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In China, as I daresay you know, the Emperor is a Chinaman, and all his courtiers are also Chinamen. The story I am going to tell you happened many years ago, but it is worth while for you to listen to it, before it is forgotten.

The Emperor's Palace was the most splendid in the world, all made of priceless porcelain, but so brittle and delicate that you had to take great care how you touched it. In the garden were the most beautiful flowers, and on the loveliest of them were tied silver bells which tinkled, so that if you passed you could not help looking at the flowers. Everything in the Emperor's garden was admirably arranged with a view to effect; and the garden was so large that even the gardener himself did not know where it ended. If you ever got beyond it, you came to a stately forest with great trees and deep lakes in it. The forest sloped down to the sea, which was a clear blue. Large ships could sail under the boughs of the trees, and in these trees there lived a Nightingale. She sang so beautifully that even the poor fisherman who had so much to do stood and listened when he came at night to cast his nets. 'How beautiful it is!' he said; but he had to attend to his work, and forgot about the bird. But when she sang the next night and the fisherman came there again, he said the same thing, 'How beautiful it is!'

From all the countries round came travellers to the Emperor's town, who were astonished at the Palace and the garden. But when they heard the Nightingale they all said, 'This is the finest thing after all!'

The travellers told all about it when they went home, and learned scholars wrote many books upon the town, the Palace, and the garden. But they did not forget the Nightingale; she was praised the most, and all the poets composed splendid verses on the Nightingale in the forest by the deep sea.

The books were circulated throughout the world, and some of them reached the Emperor. He sat in his golden chair, and read and read. He

nodded his head every moment, for he liked reading the brilliant accounts of the town, the Palace, and the garden. ‘But the Nightingale is better than all,’ he saw written.

‘What is that?’ said the Emperor. ‘I don’t know anything about the Nightingale! Is there such a bird in my empire, and so near as in my garden? I have never heard it! Fancy reading for the first time about it in a book!’

And he called his First Lord to him. He was so proud that if anyone of lower rank than his own ventured to speak to him or ask him anything, he would say nothing but ‘P!’ and that does not mean anything.

‘Here is a most remarkable bird which is called a Nightingale!’ said the Emperor. ‘They say it is the most glorious thing in my kingdom. Why has no one ever said anything to me about it?’

‘I have never before heard it mentioned!’ said the First Lord. ‘I will look for it and find it!’

But where was it to be found? The First Lord ran up and down stairs, through the halls and corridors; but none of those he met had ever heard of the Nightingale. And the First Lord ran again to the Emperor, and told him that it must be an invention on the part of those who had written the books.

‘Your Imperial Majesty cannot really believe all that is written! There are some inventions called the Black Art!’

‘But the book in which I read this,’ said the Emperor, ‘is sent me by His Great Majesty the Emperor of Japan; so it cannot be untrue, and I will hear the Nightingale! She must be here this evening! She has my gracious permission to appear, and if she does not, the whole Court shall be trampled under foot after supper!’

‘Tsing pe!’ said the First Lord; and he ran up and down stairs, through the halls and corridors, and half the Court ran with him, for they did not want to be trampled under foot. Everyone was asking after the wonderful Nightingale which all the world knew of, except those at Court.

At last they met a poor little girl in the kitchen, who said, ‘Oh! I know the Nightingale well. How she sings! I have permission to carry the scraps over from the Court meals to my poor sick mother, and when I am going home at night, tired and weary, and rest for a little in the wood, then I hear the Nightingale singing! It brings tears to my eyes, and I feel as if my mother were kissing me!’

‘Little kitchenmaid!’ said the First Lord, ‘I will give you a place in the kitchen, and you shall have leave to see the Emperor at dinner, if you can lead us to the Nightingale, for she is invited to come to Court this evening.’

And so they all went into the wood where the Nightingale was wont to sing, and half the Court went too.

When they were on the way there they heard a cow mooing.

‘Oh!’ said the Courtiers, ‘now we have found her! What a wonderful power for such a small beast to have! I am sure we have heard her before!’

‘No; that is a cow mooing!’ said the little kitchenmaid. ‘We are still a long way off!’

Then the frogs began to croak in the marsh. ‘Splendid!’ said the Chinese chaplain. ‘Now we hear her; it sounds like a little church-bell!’

‘No, no; those are frogs!’ said the little kitchenmaid. ‘But I think we shall soon hear her now!’

Then the Nightingale began to sing.

‘There she is!’ cried the little girl. ‘Listen! She is sitting there!’ And she pointed to a little dark-grey bird up in the branches.

‘Is it possible!’ said the First Lord. ‘I should never have thought it! How ordinary she looks! She must surely have lost her feathers because she sees so many distinguished men round her!’

‘Little Nightingale,’ called out the little kitchenmaid, ‘our Gracious Emperor wants you to sing before him!’

‘With the greatest of pleasure!’ said the Nightingale; and she sang so gloriously that it was a pleasure to listen.

‘It sounds like glass bells!’ said the First Lord. ‘And look how her little throat works! It is wonderful that we have never heard her before! She will be a great success at Court.’

‘Shall I sing once more for the Emperor?’ asked the Nightingale, thinking that the Emperor was there.

‘My esteemed little Nightingale,’ said the First Lord, ‘I have the great pleasure to invite you to Court this evening, where His Gracious Imperial Highness will be enchanted with your charming song!’

‘It sounds best in the green wood,’ said the Nightingale; but still, she came gladly when she heard that the Emperor wished it.

At the Palace everything was splendidly prepared. The porcelain walls and floors glittered in the light of many thousand gold lamps; the most gorgeous flowers which tinkled out well were placed in the corridors. There was such a hurrying and draught that all the bells jingled so much that one could not hear oneself speak. In the centre of the great hall where the Emperor sat was a golden perch, on which the Nightingale sat. The whole Court was there, and the little kitchenmaid was allowed to stand behind the door, now that she was a Court-cook. Everyone was dressed in his best, and everyone was looking towards the little grey bird to whom the Emperor nodded.

The Nightingale sang so gloriously that the tears came into the Emperor's eyes and ran down his cheeks. Then the Nightingale sang even more beautifully; it went straight to all hearts. The Emperor was so delighted that he said she should wear his gold slipper round her neck. But the Nightingale thanked him, and said she had had enough reward already. 'I have seen tears in the Emperor's eyes—that is a great reward. An Emperor's tears have such power!' Then she sang again with her gloriously sweet voice.

'That is the most charming coquetry I have ever seen!' said all the ladies round. And they all took to holding water in their mouths that they might gurgle whenever anyone spoke to them. Then they thought themselves nightingales. Yes, the lackeys and chambermaids announced that they were pleased; which means a great deal, for they are the most difficult people of all to satisfy. In short, the Nightingale was a real success.

She had to stay at Court now; she had her own cage, and permission to walk out twice in the day and once at night.

She was given twelve servants, who each held a silken string which was fastened round her leg. There was little pleasure in flying about like this.

The whole town was talking about the wonderful bird, and when two people met each other one would say 'Nightin,' and the other 'Gale,' and then they would both sigh and understand one another.

Yes, and eleven grocer's children were called after her, but not one of them could sing a note.

One day the Emperor received a large parcel on which was written ‘The Nightingale.’

‘Here is another new book about our famous bird!’ said the Emperor.

But it was not a book, but a little mechanical toy, which lay in a box—an artificial nightingale which was like the real one, only that it was set all over with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. When it was wound up, it could sing the piece the real bird sang, and moved its tail up and down, and glittered with silver and gold. Round its neck was a little collar on which was written, ‘The Nightingale of the Emperor of Japan is nothing compared to that of the Emperor of China.’

‘This is magnificent!’ they all said, and the man who had brought the clockwork bird received on the spot the title of ‘Bringer of the Imperial First Nightingale.’

‘Now they must sing together; what a duet we shall have!’

And so they sang together, but their voices did not blend, for the real Nightingale sang in her way and the clockwork bird sang waltzes.

‘It is not its fault!’ said the bandmaster; ‘it keeps very good time and is quite after my style!’

Then the artificial bird had to sing alone. It gave just as much pleasure as the real one, and then it was so much prettier to look at; it sparkled like bracelets and necklaces. Three-and-thirty times it sang the same piece without being tired. People would like to have heard it again, but the Emperor thought that the living Nightingale should sing now—but where was she? No one had noticed that she had flown out of the open window away to her green woods.

‘What SHALL we do!’ said the Emperor.

And all the Court scolded, and said that the Nightingale was very ungrateful. ‘But we have still the best bird!’ they said and the artificial bird had to sing again, and that was the thirty-fourth time they had heard the same piece. But they did not yet know it by heart; it was much too difficult. And the bandmaster praised the bird tremendously; yes, he assured them it was better than a real nightingale, not only because of its beautiful plumage and diamonds, but inside as well. ‘For see, my Lords and Ladies and your Imperial Majesty, with the real Nightingale one can never tell what will come out, but all is known about the artificial bird!

You can explain it, you can open it and show people where the waltzes lie, how they go, and how one follows the other!'

'That's just what we think!' said everyone; and the bandmaster received permission to show the bird to the people the next Sunday. They should hear it sing, commanded the Emperor. And they heard it, and they were as pleased as if they had been intoxicated with tea, after the Chinese fashion, and they all said 'Oh!' and held up their forefingers and nodded time. But the poor fishermen who had heard the real Nightingale said: 'This one sings well enough, the tunes glide out; but there is something wanting—I don't know what!'

The real Nightingale was banished from the kingdom.

The artificial bird was put on silken cushions by the Emperor's bed, all the presents which it received, gold and precious stones, lay round it, and it was given the title of Imperial Night-singer, First from the left. For the Emperor counted that side as the more distinguished, being the side on which the heart is; the Emperor's heart is also on the left.

And the bandmaster wrote a work of twenty-five volumes about the artificial bird. It was so learned, long, and so full of the hardest Chinese words that everyone said they had read it and understood it; for once they had been very stupid about a book, and had been trampled under foot in consequence. So a whole year passed. The Emperor, the Court, and all the Chinese knew every note of the artificial bird's song by heart. But they liked it all the better for this; they could even sing with it, and they did. The street boys sang 'Tra-la-la-la-la, and the Emperor sang too sometimes. It was indeed delightful.

But one evening, when the artificial bird was singing its best, and the Emperor lay in bed listening to it, something in the bird went crack. Something snapped! Whir-r-r! all the wheels ran down and then the music ceased. The Emperor sprang up, and had his physician summoned, but what could HE do! Then the clockmaker came, and, after a great deal of talking and examining, he put the bird somewhat in order, but he said that it must be very seldom used as the works were nearly worn out, and it was impossible to put in new ones. Here was a calamity! Only once a year was the artificial bird allowed to sing, and even that was almost too much for it. But then the bandmaster made a little speech full of hard words, saying that it was just as good as before. And so, of course, it WAS just as good as

before. So five years passed, and then a great sorrow came to the nation. The Chinese look upon their Emperor as everything, and now he was ill, and not likely to live it was said.

Already a new Emperor had been chosen, and the people stood outside in the street and asked the First Lord how the old Emperor was. ‘P!’ said he, and shook his head.

Cold and pale lay the Emperor in his splendid great bed; the whole Court believed him dead, and one after the other left him to pay their respects to the new Emperor. Everywhere in the halls and corridors cloth was laid down so that no footstep could be heard, and everything was still —very, very still. And nothing came to break the silence.

The Emperor longed for something to come and relieve the monotony of this deathlike stillness. If only someone would speak to him! If only someone would sing to him. Music would carry his thoughts away, and would break the spell lying on him. The moon was streaming in at the open window; but that, too, was silent, quite silent.

‘Music! music!’ cried the Emperor. ‘You little bright golden bird, sing! do sing! I gave you gold and jewels; I have hung my gold slipper round your neck with my own hand—sing! do sing!’ But the bird was silent. There was no one to wind it up, and so it could not sing. And all was silent, so terribly silent!

All at once there came in at the window the most glorious burst of song. It was the little living Nightingale, who, sitting outside on a bough, had heard the need of her Emperor and had come to sing to him of comfort and hope. And as she sang the blood flowed quicker and quicker in the Emperor’s weak limbs, and life began to return.

‘Thank you, thank you!’ said the Emperor. ‘You divine little bird! I know you. I chased you from my kingdom, and you have given me life again! How can I reward you?’

‘You have done that already!’ said the Nightingale. ‘I brought tears to your eyes the first time I sang. I shall never forget that. They are jewels that rejoice a singer’s heart. But now sleep and get strong again; I will sing you a lullaby.’ And the Emperor fell into a deep, calm sleep as she sang.

The sun was shining through the window when he awoke, strong and well. None of his servants had come back yet, for they thought he was dead. But the Nightingale sat and sang to him.

‘You must always stay with me!’ said the Emperor. ‘You shall sing whenever you like, and I will break the artificial bird into a thousand pieces.’

‘Don’t do that!’ said the Nightingale. ‘He did his work as long as he could. Keep him as you have done! I cannot build my nest in the Palace and live here; but let me come whenever I like. I will sit in the evening on the bough outside the window, and I will sing you something that will make you feel happy and grateful. I will sing of joy, and of sorrow; I will sing of the evil and the good which lies hidden from you. The little singing-bird flies all around, to the poor fisherman’s hut, to the farmer’s cottage, to all those who are far away from you and your Court. I love your heart more than your crown, though that has about it a brightness as of something holy. Now I will sing to you again; but you must promise me one thing——’

‘Anything!’ said the Emperor, standing up in his Imperial robes, which he had himself put on, and fastening on his sword richly embossed with gold.

‘One thing I beg of you! Don’t tell anyone that you have a little bird who tells you everything. It will be much better not to!’ Then the Nightingale flew away.

The servants came in to look at their dead Emperor.

The Emperor said, ‘Good-morning!’

HERMOD AND HADVOR[32]

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Once upon a time there were a King and a Queen who had an only daughter, called Hadvor, who was fair and beautiful, and being an only child, was heir to the kingdom. The King and Queen had also a foster son, named Hermod, who was just about the same age as Hadvor, and was good-looking, as well as clever at most things. Hermod and Hadvor often played together while they were children, and liked each other so much that while they were still young they secretly plighted their troth to each other.

As time went on the Queen fell sick, and suspecting that it was her last illness, sent for the King to come to her. When he came she told him that she had no long time to live, and therefore wished to ask one thing of him, which was, that if he married another wife he should promise to take no other one than the Queen of Hetland the Good. The King gave the promise, and thereafter the Queen died.

Time went past, and the King, growing tired of living alone, fitted out his ship and sailed out to sea. As he sailed there came upon him so thick a mist that he altogether lost his bearings, but after long trouble he found land. There he laid his ship to, and went on shore all alone. After walking for some time he came to a forest, into which he went a little way and stopped. Then he heard sweet music from a harp, and went in the direction of the sound until he came to a clearing, and there he saw three women, one of whom sat on a golden chair, and was beautifully and grandly dressed; she held a harp in her hands, and was very sorrowful. The second was also finely dressed, but younger in appearance, and also sat on a chair, but it was not so grand as the first one’s. The third stood beside them, and was very pretty to look at; she had a green cloak over her other clothes, and it was easy to see that she was maid to the other two.

After the King had looked at them for a little he went forward and saluted them. The one that sat on the golden chair asked him who he was and where he was going; and he told her all the story—how he was a king,

and had lost his queen, and was now on his way to Hetland the Good, to ask the Queen of that country in marriage. She answered that fortune had contrived this wonderfully, for pirates had plundered Hetland and killed the King, and she had fled from the land in terror, and had come hither after great trouble, and she was the very person he was looking for, and the others were her daughter and maid. The King immediately asked her hand; she gladly received his proposal and accepted him at once. Thereafter they all set out, and made their way to the ship; and after that nothing is told of their voyage until the King reached his own country. There he made a great feast, and celebrated his marriage with this woman; and after that things are quiet for a time.

Hermod and Hadvor took but little notice of the Queen and her daughter, but, on the other hand, Hadvor and the Queen's maid, whose name was Olof, were very friendly, and Olof came often to visit Hadvor in her castle. Before long the King went out to war, and no sooner was he away than the Queen came to talk with Hermod, and said that she wanted him to marry her daughter. Hermod told her straight and plain that he would not do so, at which the Queen grew terribly angry, and said that in that case neither should he have Hadvor, for she would now lay this spell on him, that he should go to a desert island and there be a lion by day and a man by night. He should also think always of Hadvor, which would cause him all the more sorrow, and from this spell he should never be freed until Hadvor burned the lion's skin, and that would not happen very soon.

As soon as the Queen had finished her speech Hermod replied that he also laid a spell on her, and that was, that as soon as he was freed from her enchantments she should become a rat and her daughter a mouse, and fight with each other in the hall until he killed them with his sword.

After this Hermod disappeared, and no one knew what had become of him; the Queen caused search to be made for him, but he could nowhere be found. One time, when Olof was in the castle beside Hadvor, she asked the Princess if she knew where Hermod had gone to. At this Hadvor became very sad, and said that she did not.

'I shall tell you then,' said Olof, 'for I know all about it. Hermod has disappeared through the wicked devices of the Queen, for she is a witch, and so is her daughter, though they have put on these beautiful forms. Because Hermod would not fall in with the Queen's plans, and marry her

daughter, she has laid a spell on him, to go on an island and be a lion by day and a man by night, and never be freed from this until you burn the lion's skin. Besides,' said Olof, 'she has looked out a match for you; she has a brother in the Underworld, a three-headed Giant, whom she means to turn into a beautiful prince and get him married to you. This is no new thing for the Queen; she took me away from my parents' house and compelled me to serve her; but she has never done me any harm, for the green cloak I wear protects me against all mischief.

Hadvor now became still sadder than before at the thought of the marriage destined for her, and entreated Olof to think of some plan to save her.

'I think,' said Olof, 'that your wooer will come up through the floor of the castle to you, and so you must be prepared when you hear the noise of his coming and the floor begins to open, and have at hand blazing pitch, and pour plenty of it into the opening. That will prove too much for him.'

About this time the King came home from his expedition, and thought it a great blow that no one knew what had become of Hermod; but the Queen consoled him as best she could, and after a time the King thought less about his disappearance.

Hadvor remained in her castle, and had made preparations to receive her wooer when he came. One night, not long after, a loud noise and rumbling was heard under the castle. Hadvor at once guessed what it was, and told her maids to be ready to help her. The noise and thundering grew louder and louder, until the floor began to open, whereupon Hadvor made them take the caldron of pitch and pour plenty of it into the opening. With that the noises grew fainter and fainter, till at last they ceased altogether.

Next morning the Queen rose early, and went out to the Palace gate, and there she found her brother the Giant lying dead. She went up to him and said, 'I pronounce this spell, that you become a beautiful prince, and that Hadvor shall be unable to say anything against the charges that I shall bring against her.'

The body of the dead Giant now became that of a beautiful prince, and the Queen went in again.

'I don't think,' said she to the King, 'that your daughter is as good as she is said to be. My brother came and asked her hand, and she has had him put to death. I have just found his dead body lying at the Palace gate.'

The King went along with the Queen to see the body, and thought it all very strange; so beautiful a youth, he said, would have been a worthy match for Hadvor, and he would readily have agreed to their marriage. The Queen asked leave to decide what Hadvor's punishment should be, which the King was very willing to allow, so as to escape from punishing his own daughter. The Queen's decision was that the King should make a big grave-mound for her brother, and put Hadvor into it beside him.

Olof knew all the plans of the Queen, and went to tell the Princess what had been done, whereupon Hadvor earnestly entreated her to tell her what to do.

'First and foremost,' said Olof, 'you must get a wide cloak to wear over your other clothes, when you are put into the mound. The Giant's ghost will walk after you are both left together in there, and he will have two dogs along with him. He will ask you to cut pieces out of his legs to give to the dogs, but that you must not promise to do unless he tells you where Hermod has gone to, and tells you how to find him. He will then let you stand on his shoulders, so as to get out of the mound; but he means to cheat you all the same, and will catch you by the cloak to pull you back again; but you must take care to have the cloak loose on your shoulders, so that he will only get hold of that.'

The mound was all ready now, and the Giant laid in it, and into it Hadvor also had to go without being allowed to make any defence. After they were both left there everything happened just as Olof had said. The prince became a Giant again, and asked Hadvor to cut the pieces out of his legs for the dogs; but she refused until he told her that Hermod was in a desert island, which she could not reach unless she took the skin off the soles of his feet and made shoes out of that; with these shoes she could travel both on land and sea. This Hadvor now did, and the Giant then let her get up on his shoulders to get out of the mound. As she sprang out he caught hold of her cloak; but she had taken care to let it lie loose on her shoulders, and so escaped.

She now made her way down to the sea, to where she knew there was the shortest distance over to the island in which Hermod was. This strait she easily crossed, for the shoes kept her up. On reaching the island she found a sandy beach all along by the sea, and high cliffs above. Nor could she see any way to get up these, and so, being both sad at heart and tired

with the long journey, she lay down and fell asleep. As she slept she dreamed that a tall woman came to her and said, ‘I know that you are Princess Hadvor, and are searching for Hermod. He is on this island; but it will be hard for you to get to him if you have no one to help you, for you cannot climb the cliffs by your own strength. I have therefore let down a rope, by which you will be able to climb up; and as the island is so large that you might not find Hermod’s dwelling-place so easily, I lay down this clew beside you. You need only hold the end of the thread, and the clew will run on before and show you the way. I also lay this belt beside you, to put on when you awaken; it will keep you from growing faint with hunger.’

The woman now disappeared, and Hadvor woke, and saw that all her dream had been true. The rope hung down from the cliff, and the clew and belt lay beside her. The belt she put on, the rope enabled her to climb up the cliff, and the clew led her on till she came to the mouth of a cave, which was not very big. She went into the cave, and saw there a low couch, under which she crept and lay down.

When evening came she heard the noise of footsteps outside, and became aware that the lion had come to the mouth of the cave, and shook itself there, after which she heard a man coming towards the couch. She was sure this was Hermod, because she heard him speaking to himself about his own condition, and calling to mind Hadvor and other things in the old days. Hadvor made no sign, but waited till he had fallen asleep, and then crept out and burned the lion’s skin, which he had left outside. Then she went back into the cave and wakened Hermod, and they had a most joyful meeting.

In the morning they talked over their plans, and were most at a loss to know how to get out of the island. Hadvor told Hermod her dream, and said she suspected there was some one in the island who would be able to help them. Hermod said he knew of a Witch there, who was very ready to help anyone, and that the only plan was to go to her. So they went to the Witch’s cave, and found her there with her fifteen young sons, and asked her to help them to get to the mainland.

‘There are other things easier than that,’ said she, ‘for the Giant that was buried will be waiting for you, and will attack you on the way, as he has turned himself into a big whale. I shall lend you a boat, however, and

if you meet the whale and think your lives are in danger, then you can name me by name.’

They thanked her greatly for her help and advice, and set out from the island, but on the way they saw a huge fish coming towards them, with great splashing and dashing of waves. They were sure of what it was, and thought they had as good reason as ever they would have to call on the Witch, and so they did. The next minute they saw coming after them another huge whale, followed by fifteen smaller ones. All of these swam past the boat and went on to meet the whale. There was a fierce battle then, and the sea became so stormy that it was not very easy to keep the boat from being filled by the waves. After this fight had gone on for some time, they saw that the sea was dyed with blood; the big whale and the fifteen smaller ones disappeared, and they got to land safe and sound.

Now the story goes back to the King’s hall, where strange things had happened in the meantime. The Queen and her daughter had disappeared, but a rat and a mouse were always fighting with each other there. Ever so many people had tried to drive them away, but no one could manage it. Thus some time went on, while the King was almost beside himself with sorrow and care for the loss of his Queen, and because these monsters destroyed all mirth in the hall.

One evening, however, while they all sat dull and down-hearted, in came Hermod with a sword by his side, and saluted the King, who received him with the greatest joy, as if he had come back from the dead. Before Hermod sat down, however, he went to where the rat and the mouse were fighting, and cut them in two with his sword. All were astonished then by seeing two witches lying dead on the floor of the hall.

Hermod now told the whole story to the King, who was very glad to be rid of such vile creatures. Next he asked for the hand of Hadvor, which the King readily gave him, and being now an old man, gave the kingdom to him as well; and so Hermod became King.

Olof married a good-looking nobleman, and that is the end of the story.

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32. From the Icelandic.

THE STEADFAST TIN-SOLDIER

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There were once upon a time five-and twenty tin-soldiers—all brothers, as they were made out of the same old tin spoon. Their uniform was red and blue, and they shouldered their guns and looked straight in front of them. The first words that they heard in this world, when the lid of the box in which they lay was taken off, were: ‘Hurrah, tin-soldiers!’ This was exclaimed by a little boy, clapping his hands; they had been given to him because it was his birthday, and now he began setting them out on the table. Each soldier was exactly like the other in shape, except just one, who had been made last when the tin had run short; but there he stood as firmly on his one leg as the others did on two, and he is the one that became famous.

There were many other playthings on the table on which they were being set out, but the nicest of all was a pretty little castle made of cardboard, with windows through which you could see into the rooms. In front of the castle stood some little trees surrounding a tiny mirror which looked like a lake. Wax swans were floating about and reflecting themselves in it. That was all very pretty; but the most beautiful thing was a little lady, who stood in the open doorway. She was cut out of paper, but she had on a dress of the finest muslin, with a scarf of narrow blue ribbon round her shoulders, fastened in the middle with a glittering rose made of gold paper, which was as large as her head. The little lady was stretching out both her arms, for she was a Dancer, and was lifting up one leg so high in the air that the Tin-soldier couldn’t find it anywhere, and thought that she, too, had only one leg.

‘That’s the wife for me!’ he thought; ‘but she is so grand, and lives in a castle, whilst I have only a box with four-and-twenty others. This is no place for her! But I must make her acquaintance.’ Then he stretched himself out behind a snuff-box that lay on the table; from thence he could watch the dainty little lady, who continued to stand on one leg without losing her balance.

When the night came all the other tin-soldiers went into their box, and the people of the house went to bed. Then the toys began to play at visiting, dancing, and fighting. The tin-soldiers rattled in their box, for they wanted to be out too, but they could not raise the lid. The nut-crackers played at leap-frog, and the slate-pencil ran about the slate; there was such a noise that the canary woke up and began to talk to them, in poetry too! The only two who did not stir from their places were the Tin-soldier and the little Dancer. She remained on tip-toe, with both arms outstretched; he stood steadfastly on his one leg, never moving his eyes from her face.

The clock struck twelve, and crack! off flew the lid of the snuff-box; but there was no snuff inside, only a little black imp—that was the beauty of it.

‘Hullo, Tin-soldier!’ said the imp. ‘Don’t look at things that aren’t intended for the likes of you!’

But the Tin-soldier took no notice, and seemed not to hear.

‘Very well, wait till to-morrow!’ said the imp.

When it was morning, and the children had got up, the Tin-soldier was put in the window; and whether it was the wind or the little black imp, I don’t know, but all at once the window flew open and out fell the little Tin-soldier, head over heels, from the third-storey window! That was a terrible fall, I can tell you! He landed on his head with his leg in the air, his gun being wedged between two paving-stones.

The nursery-maid and the little boy came down at once to look for him, but, though they were so near him that they almost trod on him, they did not notice him. If the Tin-soldier had only called out ‘Here I am!’ they must have found him; but he did not think it fitting for him to cry out, because he had on his uniform.

Soon it began to drizzle; then the drops came faster, and there was a regular down-pour. When it was over, two little street boys came along.

‘Just look!’ cried one. ‘Here is a Tin-soldier! He shall sail up and down in a boat!’

So they made a little boat out of newspaper, put the Tin-soldier in it, and made him sail up and down the gutter; both the boys ran along beside him, clapping their hands. What great waves there were in the gutter, and what a swift current! The paper-boat tossed up and down, and in the middle of the stream it went so quick that the Tin-soldier trembled; but he

remained steadfast, showed no emotion, looked straight in front of him, shouldering his gun. All at once the boat passed under a long tunnel that was as dark as his box had been.

‘Where can I be coming now?’ he wondered. ‘Oh, dear! This is the black imp’s fault! Ah, if only the little lady were sitting beside me in the boat, it might be twice as dark for all I should care!’

Suddenly there came along a great water-rat that lived in the tunnel.

‘Have you a passport?’ asked the rat. ‘Out with your passport!’

But the Tin-soldier was silent, and grasped his gun more firmly.

The boat sped on, and the rat behind it. Ugh! how he showed his teeth, as he cried to the chips of wood and straw: ‘Hold him, hold him! he has not paid the toll! He has not shown his passport!’

But the current became swifter and stronger. The Tin-soldier could already see daylight where the tunnel ended; but in his ears there sounded a roaring enough to frighten any brave man. Only think! at the end of the tunnel the gutter discharged itself into a great canal; that would be just as dangerous for him as it would be for us to go down a waterfall.

Now he was so near to it that he could not hold on any longer. On went the boat, the poor Tin-soldier keeping himself as stiff as he could: no one should say of him afterwards that he had flinched. The boat whirled three, four times round, and became filled to the brim with water: it began to sink! The Tin-soldier was standing up to his neck in water, and deeper and deeper sank the boat, and softer and softer grew the paper; now the water was over his head. He was thinking of the pretty little Dancer, whose face he should never see again, and there sounded in his ears, over and over again:

‘Forward, forward, soldier bold!
Death’s before thee, grim and cold!’

The paper came in two, and the soldier fell—but at that moment he was swallowed by a great fish.

Oh! how dark it was inside, even darker than in the tunnel, and it was really very close quarters! But there the steadfast little Tin-soldier lay full length, shouldering his gun.

Up and down swam the fish, then he made the most dreadful contortions, and became suddenly quite still. Then it was as if a flash of lightning had passed through him; the daylight streamed in, and a voice exclaimed, ‘Why, here is the little Tin-soldier!’ The fish had been caught, taken to market, sold, and brought into the kitchen, where the cook had cut it open with a great knife. She took up the soldier between her finger and thumb, and carried him into the room, where everyone wanted to see the hero who had been found inside a fish; but the Tin-soldier was not at all proud. They put him on the table, and—no, but what strange things do happen in this world!—the Tin-soldier was in the same room in which he had been before! He saw the same children, and the same toys on the table; and there was the same grand castle with the pretty little Dancer. She was still standing on one leg with the other high in the air; she too was steadfast. That touched the Tin-soldier, he was nearly going to shed tin-tears; but that would not have been fitting for a soldier. He looked at her, but she said nothing.

All at once one of the little boys took up the Tin-soldier, and threw him into the stove, giving no reasons; but doubtless the little black imp in the snuff-box was at the bottom of this too.

There the Tin-soldier lay, and felt a heat that was truly terrible; but whether he was suffering from actual fire, or from the ardour of his passion, he did not know. All his colour had disappeared; whether this had happened on his travels or whether it was the result of trouble, who can say? He looked at the little lady, she looked at him, and he felt that he was melting; but he remained steadfast, with his gun at his shoulder. Suddenly a door opened, the draught caught up the little Dancer, and off she flew like a sylph to the Tin-soldier in the stove, burst into flames—and that was the end of her! Then the Tin-soldier melted down into a little lump, and when next morning the maid was taking out the ashes, she found him in the shape of a heart. There was nothing left of the little Dancer but her gilt rose, burnt as black as a cinder.

BLOCKHEAD-HANS

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Far away in the country lay an old manor-house where lived an old squire who had two sons. They thought themselves so clever, that if they had known only half of what they did know, it would have been quite enough. They both wanted to marry the King's daughter, for she had proclaimed that she would have for her husband the man who knew best how to choose his words.

Both prepared for the wooing a whole week, which was the longest time allowed them; but, after all, it was quite long enough, for they both had preparatory knowledge, and everyone knows how useful that is. One knew the whole Latin dictionary and also three years' issue of the daily paper of the town off by heart, so that he could repeat it all backwards or forwards as you pleased. The other had worked at the laws of corporation, and knew by heart what every member of the corporation ought to know, so that he thought he could quite well speak on State matters and give his opinion. He understood, besides this, how to embroider braces with roses and other flowers, and scrolls, for he was very ready with his fingers.

'I shall win the king's daughter!' they both cried.

Their old father gave each of them a fine horse; the one who knew the dictionary and the daily paper by heart had a black horse, while the other who was so clever at corporation law had a milk-white one. Then they oiled the corners of their mouths so that they might be able to speak more fluently. All the servants stood in the courtyard and saw them mount their steeds, and here by chance came the third brother; for the squire had three sons, but nobody counted him with his brothers, for he was not so learned as they were, and he was generally called 'Blockhead-Hans.'

'Oh, oh!' said Blockhead-Hans. 'Where are you off to? You are in your Sunday-best clothes!'

'We are going to Court, to woo the Princess! Don't you know what is known throughout all the country side?' And they told him all about it.

‘Hurrah! I’ll go to!’ cried Blockhead-Hans; and the brothers laughed at him and rode off.

‘Dear father!’ cried Blockhead-Hans, ‘I must have a horse too. What a desire for marriage has seized me! If she will have me, she WILL have me, and if she won’t have me, I will have her.’

‘Stop that nonsense!’ said the old man. ‘I will not give you a horse. YOU can’t speak; YOU don’t know how to choose your words. Your brothers! Ah! they are very different lads!’

‘Well,’ said Blockhead-Hans, ‘if I can’t have a horse, I will take the goat which is mine; he can carry me!’

And he did so. He sat astride on the goat, struck his heels into its side, and went rattling down the high-road like a hurricane.

‘Hoppetty hop! what a ride!’ Here I come!’ shouted Blockhead-Hans, singing so that the echoes were roused far and near. But his brothers were riding slowly in front. They were not speaking, but they were thinking over all the good things they were going to say, for everything had to be thought out.

‘Hullo!’ bawled Blockhead-Hans, ‘here I am! Just look what I found on the road!’—and he showed them a dead crow which he had picked up.

‘Blockhead!’ said his brothers, ‘what are you going to do with it?’

‘With the crow? I shall give it to the Princess!’

‘Do so, certainly!’ they said, laughing loudly and riding on.

‘Slap! bang! here I am again! Look what I have just found! You don’t find such things every day on the road!’ And the brothers turned round to see what in the world he could have found.

‘Blockhead!’ said they, ‘that is an old wooden shoe without the top! Are you going to send that, too, to the Princess?’

‘Of course I shall!’ returned Blockhead-Hans; and the brothers laughed and rode on a good way.

‘Slap! bang! here I am!’ cried Blockhead-Hans; ‘better and better—it is really famous!’

‘What have you found now?’ asked the brothers.

‘Oh,’ said Blockhead-Hans, ‘it is really too good! How pleased the Princess will be!’

‘Why!’ said the brothers, ‘this is pure mud, straight from the ditch.’

‘Of course it is!’ said Blockhead-Hans, ‘and it is the best kind! Look how it runs through one’s fingers!’ and, so saying, he filled his pocket with the mud.

But the brothers rode on so fast that dust and sparks flew all around, and they reached the gate of the town a good hour before Blockhead-Hans. Here came the suitors numbered according to their arrival, and they were ranged in rows, six in each row, and they were so tightly packed that they could not move their arms. This was a very good thing, for otherwise they would have torn each other in pieces, merely because the one was in front of the other.

All the country people were standing round the King’s throne, and were crowded together in thick masses almost out of the windows to see the Princess receive the suitors; and as each one came into the room all his fine phrases went out like a candle!

‘It doesn’t matter!’ said the Princess. ‘Away! out with him!’

At last she came to the row in which the brother who knew the dictionary by heart was, but he did not know it any longer; he had quite forgotten it in the rank and file. And the floor creaked, and the ceiling was all made of glass mirrors, so that he saw himself standing on his head, and by each window were standing three reporters and an editor; and each of them was writing down what was said, to publish it in the paper that came out and was sold at the street corners for a penny. It was fearful, and they had made up the fire so hot that it was grilling.

‘It is hot in here, isn’t it!’ said the suitor.

‘Of course it is! My father is roasting young chickens to-day!’ said the Princess.

‘Ahem!’ There he stood like an idiot. He was not prepared for such a speech; he did not know what to say, although he wanted to say something witty. ‘Ahem!’

‘It doesn’t matter!’ said the Princess. ‘Take him out!’ and out he had to go.

Now the other brother entered.

‘How hot it is!’ he said.

‘Of course! We are roasting young chickens to-day!’ remarked the Princess.

‘How do you—um!’ he said, and the reporters wrote down. ‘How do you—um.’

‘It doesn’t matter!’ said the Princess. ‘Take him out!’

Now Blockhead-Hans came in; he rode his goat right into the hall.

‘I say! How roasting hot it is here!’ said he.

‘Of course! I am roasting young chickens to-day!’ said the Princess.

‘That’s good!’ replied Blockhead-Hans; ‘then can I roast a crow with them?’

‘With the greatest of pleasure!’ said the Princess; ‘but have you anything you can roast them in? for I have neither pot nor saucepan.’

‘Oh, rather!’ said Blockhead-Hans. ‘Here is a cooking implement with tin rings,’ and he drew out the old wooden shoe, and laid the crow in it.

‘That is quite a meal!’ said the Princess; ‘but where shall we get the soup from?’

‘I’ve got that in my pocket!’ said Blockhead-Hans. ‘I have so much that I can quite well throw some away!’ and he poured some mud out of his pocket.

‘I like you!’ said the Princess. ‘You can answer, and you can speak, and I will marry you; but do you know that every word which we are saying and have said has been taken down and will be in the paper to-morrow? By each window do you see there are standing three reporters and an old editor, and this old editor is the worst, for he doesn’t understand anything!’ but she only said this to tease Blockhead-Hans. And the reporters giggled, and each dropped a blot of ink on the floor.

‘Ah! are those the great people?’ said Blockhead-Hans. ‘Then I will give the editor the best!’ So saying, he turned his pockets inside out, and threw the mud right in his face.

‘That was neatly done!’ said the Princess. ‘I couldn’t have done it; but I will soon learn how to!’

Blockhead-Hans became King, got a wife and a crown, and sat on the throne; and this we have still damp from the newspaper of the editor and the reporters—and they are not to be believed for a moment.

A STORY ABOUT A DARNING-NEEDLE

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There was once a Darning-needle who thought herself so fine that she believed she was an embroidery-needle. ‘Take great care to hold me tight!’ said the Darning-needle to the Fingers who were holding her. ‘Don’t let me fall! If I once fall on the ground I shall never be found again, I am so fine!’

‘It is all right!’ said the Fingers, seizing her round the waist.

‘Look, I am coming with my train!’ said the Darning-needle as she drew a long thread after her; but there was no knot at the end of the thread.

The Fingers were using the needle on the cook’s shoe. The upper leather was unstitched and had to be sewn together.

‘This is common work!’ said the Darning-needle. ‘I shall never get through it. I am breaking! I am breaking!’ And in fact she did break. ‘Didn’t I tell you so!’ said the Darning-needle. ‘I am too fine!’

‘Now she is good for nothing!’ said the Fingers; but they had to hold her tight while the cook dropped some sealing-wax on the needle and stuck it in the front of her dress.

‘Now I am a breast-pin!’ said the Darning-needle. ‘I always knew I should be promoted. When one is something, one will become something!’ And she laughed to herself; you can never see when a Darning-needle is laughing. Then she sat up as proudly as if she were in a State coach, and looked all round her.

‘May I be allowed to ask if you are gold?’ she said to her neighbour, the Pin. ‘You have a very nice appearance, and a peculiar head; but it is too small! You must take pains to make it grow, for it is not everyone who has a head of sealing-wax.’ And so saying the Darning-needle raised herself up so proudly that she fell out of the dress, right into the sink which the cook was rinsing out.

‘Now I am off on my travels!’ said the Darning-needle. ‘I do hope I sha’n’t get lost!’ She did indeed get lost.

‘I am too fine for this world!’ said she as she lay in the gutter; ‘but I know who I am, and that is always a little satisfaction!’

And the Darning-needle kept her proud bearing and did not lose her good-temper.

All kinds of things swam over her—shavings, bits of straw, and scraps of old newspapers.

‘Just look how they sail along!’ said the Darning-needle. ‘They don’t know what is underneath them! Here I am sticking fast! There goes a shaving thinking of nothing in the world but of itself, a mere chip! There goes a straw—well, how it does twist and twirl, to be sure! Don’t think so much about yourself, or you will be knocked against a stone. There floats a bit of newspaper. What is written on it is long ago forgotten, and yet how proud it is! I am sitting patient and quiet. I know who I am, and that is enough for me!’

One day something thick lay near her which glittered so brightly that the Darning-needle thought it must be a diamond. But it was a bit of bottle-glass, and because it sparkled the Darning-needle spoke to it, and gave herself out as a breast-pin.

‘No doubt you are a diamond?’

‘Yes, something of that kind!’ And each believed that the other was something very costly; and they both said how very proud the world must be of them.

‘I have come from a lady’s work-box,’ said Darning-needle, ‘and this lady was a cook; she had five fingers on each hand; anything so proud as these fingers I have never seen! And yet they were only there to take me out of the work-box and to put me back again!’

‘Were they of noble birth, then?’ asked the bit of bottle-glass.

‘Of noble birth!’ said the Darning-needle; ‘no indeed, but proud! They were five brothers, all called ‘’Fingers.‘’ They held themselves proudly one against the other, although they were of different sizes. The outside one, the Thumb, was short and fat; he was outside the rank, and had only one bend in his back, and could only make one bow; but he said that if he were cut off from a man that he was no longer any use as a soldier. Dip-into-everything, the second finger, dipped into sweet things as well as sour things, pointed to the sun and the moon, and guided the pen when they wrote. Longman, the third, looked at the others over his shoulder.

Goldband, the fourth, had a gold sash round his waist; and little Playman did nothing at all, and was the more proud. There was too much ostentation, and so I came away.'

'And now we are sitting and shining here!' said the bit of bottle-glass.

At that moment more water came into the gutter; it streamed over the edges and washed the bit of bottle-glass away.

'Ah! now he has been promoted!' said the Darning-needle. 'I remain here; I am too fine. But that is my pride, which is a sign of respectability!' And she sat there very proudly, thinking lofty thoughts.

'I really believe I must have been born a sunbeam, I am so fine! It seems to me as if the sunbeams were always looking under the water for me. Ah, I am so fine that my own mother cannot find me! If I had my old eye which broke off, I believe I could weep; but I can't—it is not fine to weep!'

One day two street-urchins were playing and wading in the gutter, picking up old nails, pennies, and such things. It was rather dirty work, but it was a great delight to them.

'Oh, oh!' cried out one, as he pricked himself with the Darning-needle; 'he is a fine fellow though!'

'I am not a fellow; I am a young lady!' said the Darning-needle; but no one heard. The sealing-wax had gone, and she had become quite black; but black makes one look very slim, and so she thought she was even finer than before.

'Here comes an egg-shell sailing along!' said the boys, and they stuck the Darning-needle into the egg-shell.

'The walls white and I black—what a pretty contrast it makes!' said the Darning-needle. 'Now I can be seen to advantage! If only I am not sea-sick! I should give myself up for lost!'

But she was not sea-sick, and did not give herself up.

'It is a good thing to be steeled against sea-sickness; here one has indeed an advantage over man! Now my qualms are over. The finer one is the more one can beat.'

'Crack!' said the egg-shell as a wagon-wheel went over it.

'Oh! how it presses!' said the Darning-needle. 'I shall indeed be sea-sick now. I am breaking!' But she did not break, although the wagon-wheel went over her; she lay there at full length, and there she may lie.

THE PINK FAIRY BOOK

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All people in the world tell nursery tales to their children. The Japanese tell them, the Chinese, the Red Indians by their camp fires, the Eskimo in their dark dirty winter huts. The Kaffirs of South Africa tell them, and the modern Greeks, just as the old Egyptians did, when Moses had not been many years rescued out of the bulrushes. The Germans, French, Spanish, Italians, Danes, Highlanders tell them also, and the stories are apt to be like each other everywhere. A child who has read the Blue and Red and Yellow Fairy Books will find some old friends with new faces in the Pink Fairy Book, if he examines and compares. But the Japanese tales will probably be new to the young student; the Tanuki is a creature whose acquaintance he may not have made before. He may remark that Andersen wants to ‘point a moral,’ as well as to ‘adorn a tale; ‘ that he is trying to make fun of the follies of mankind, as they exist in civilised countries. The Danish story of ‘The Princess in the Chest’ need not be read to a very nervous child, as it rather borders on a ghost story. It has been altered, and is really much more horrid in the language of the Danes, who, as history tells us, were not a nervous or timid people. I am quite sure that this story is not true. The other Danish and Swedish stories are not alarming. They are translated by Mr. W. A. Craigie. Those from the Sicilian (through the German) are translated, like the African tales (through the French) and the Catalan tales, and the Japanese stories (the latter through the German), and an old French story, by Mrs. Lang. Miss Alma Alleyne did the stories from Andersen, out of the German. Mr. Ford, as usual, has drawn the monsters and mermaids, the princes and giants, and the beautiful princesses, who, the Editor thinks, are, if possible, prettier than ever. Here, then, are fancies brought from all quarters: we see that black, white, and yellow peoples are fond of just the same kinds of adventures. Courage, youth, beauty, kindness, have many trials, but they always win the battle; while witches, giants, unfriendly cruel people, are on the losing hand. So it ought to be, and so, on the whole, it is and will be; and that is all the moral of fairy

tales. We cannot all be young, alas! and pretty, and strong; but nothing prevents us from being kind, and no kind man, woman, or beast or bird, ever comes to anything but good in these oldest fables of the world. So far all the tales are true, and no further.

THE CAT’S ELOPEMENT

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[From the Japanische Marchen und Sagen, von David Brauns (Leipzig: Wilhelm Friedrich).]

Once upon a time there lived a cat of marvellous beauty, with a skin as soft and shining as silk, and wise green eyes, that could see even in the dark. His name was Gon, and he belonged to a music teacher, who was so fond and proud of him that he would not have parted with him for anything in the world.

Now not far from the music master’s house there dwelt a lady who possessed a most lovely little pussy cat called Koma. She was such a little dear altogether, and blinked her eyes so daintily, and ate her supper so tidily, and when she had finished she licked her pink nose so delicately with her little tongue, that her mistress was never tired of saying, ‘Koma, Koma, what should I do without you?’

Well, it happened one day that these two, when out for an evening stroll, met under a cherry tree, and in one moment fell madly in love with each other. Gon had long felt that it was time for him to find a wife, for all the ladies in the neighbourhood paid him so much attention that it made him quite shy; but he was not easy to please, and did not care about any of them. Now, before he had time to think, Cupid had entangled him in his net, and he was filled with love towards Koma. She fully returned his passion, but, like a woman, she saw the difficulties in the way, and consulted sadly with Gon as to the means of overcoming them. Gon entreated his master to set matters right by buying Koma, but her mistress would not part from her. Then the music master was asked to sell Gon to the lady, but he declined to listen to any such suggestion, so everything remained as before.

At length the love of the couple grew to such a pitch that they determined to please themselves, and to seek their fortunes together. So one moonlight night they stole away, and ventured out into an unknown

world. All day long they marched bravely on through the sunshine, till they had left their homes far behind them, and towards evening they found themselves in a large park. The wanderers by this time were very hot and tired, and the grass looked very soft and inviting, and the trees cast cool deep shadows, when suddenly an ogre appeared in this Paradise, in the shape of a big, big dog! He came springing towards them showing all his teeth, and Koma shrieked, and rushed up a cherry tree. Gon, however, stood his ground boldly, and prepared to give battle, for he felt that Koma's eyes were upon him, and that he must not run away. But, alas! his courage would have availed him nothing had his enemy once touched him, for he was large and powerful, and very fierce. From her perch in the tree Koma saw it all, and screamed with all her might, hoping that some one would hear, and come to help. Luckily a servant of the princess to whom the park belonged was walking by, and he drove off the dog, and picking up the trembling Gon in his arms, carried him to his mistress.

So poor little Koma was left alone, while Gon was borne away full of trouble, not in the least knowing what to do. Even the attention paid him by the princess, who was delighted with his beauty and pretty ways, did not console him, but there was no use in fighting against fate, and he could only wait and see what would turn up.

The princess, Gon's new mistress, was so good and kind that everybody loved her, and she would have led a happy life, had it not been for a serpent who had fallen in love with her, and was constantly annoying her by his presence. Her servants had orders to drive him away as often as he appeared; but as they were careless, and the serpent very sly, it sometimes happened that he was able to slip past them, and to frighten the princess by appearing before her. One day she was seated in her room, playing on her favourite musical instrument, when she felt something gliding up her sash, and saw her enemy making his way to kiss her cheek. She shrieked and threw herself backwards, and Gon, who had been curled up on a stool at her feet, understood her terror, and with one bound seized the snake by his neck. He gave him one bite and one shake, and flung him on the ground, where he lay, never to worry the princess any more. Then she took Gon in her arms, and praised and caressed him, and saw that he had the nicest bits to eat, and the softest mats to lie on; and he would have

had nothing in the world to wish for if only he could have seen Koma again.

Time passed on, and one morning Gon lay before the house door, basking in the sun. He looked lazily at the world stretched out before him, and saw in the distance a big ruffian of a cat teasing and ill-treating quite a little one. He jumped up, full of rage, and chased away the big cat, and then he turned to comfort the little one, when his heart nearly burst with joy to find that it was Koma. At first Koma did not know him again, he had grown so large and stately; but when it dawned upon her who it was, her happiness knew no bounds. And they rubbed their heads and their noses again and again, while their purring might have been heard a mile off.

Paw in paw they appeared before the princess, and told her the story of their life and its sorrows. The princess wept for sympathy, and promised that they should never more be parted, but should live with her to the end of their days. By-and-bye the princess herself got married, and brought a prince to dwell in the palace in the park. And she told him all about her two cats, and how brave Gon had been, and how he had delivered her from her enemy the serpent.

And when the prince heard, he swore they should never leave them, but should go with the princess wherever she went. So it all fell out as the princess wished; and Gon and Koma had many children, and so had the princess, and they all played together, and were friends to the end of their lives.

HOW THE DRAGON WAS TRICKED

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From Griechtsche und Albanesische Marchen, von J. G. von Hahn.
(Leipzig: Engelmann. 1864.)

Once upon a time there lived a man who had two sons but they did not get on at all well together, for the younger was much handsomer than his elder brother who was very jealous of him. When they grew older, things became worse and worse, and at last one day as they were walking through a wood the elder youth seized hold of the other, tied him to a tree, and went on his way hoping that the boy might starve to death.

However, it happened that an old and humpbacked shepherd passed the tree with his flock, and seeing the prisoner, he stopped and said to him, ‘Tell me, my son why are you tied to that tree?’

‘Because I was so crooked,’ answered the young man; ‘but it has quite cured me, and now my back is as straight as can be.’

‘I wish you would bind me to a tree,’ exclaimed the shepherd, ‘so that my back would get straight.’

‘With all the pleasure in life,’ replied the youth. ‘If you will loosen these cords I will tie you up with them as firmly as I can.’

This was soon done, and then the young man drove off the sheep, leaving their real shepherd to repent of his folly; and before he had gone very far he met with a horse boy and a driver of oxen, and he persuaded them to turn with him and to seek for adventures.

By these and many other tricks he soon became so celebrated that his fame reached the king’s ears, and his majesty was filled with curiosity to see the man who had managed to outwit everybody. So he commanded his guards to capture the young man and bring him before him.

And when the young man stood before the king, the king spoke to him and said, ‘By your tricks and the pranks that you have played on other people, you have, in the eye of the law, forfeited your life. But on one

condition I will spare you, and that is, if you will bring me the flying horse that belongs to the great dragon. Fail in this, and you shall be hewn in a thousand pieces.'

'If that is all,' said the youth, 'you shall soon have it.'

So he went out and made his way straight to the stable where the flying horse was tethered. He stretched his hand cautiously out to seize the bridle, when the horse suddenly began to neigh as loud as he could. Now the room in which the dragon slept was just above the stable, and at the sound of the neighing he woke and cried to the horse, 'What is the matter, my treasure? is anything hurting you?' After waiting a little while the young man tried again to loose the horse, but a second time it neighed so loudly that the dragon woke up in a hurry and called out to know why the horse was making such a noise. But when the same thing happened the third time, the dragon lost his temper, and went down into the stable and took a whip and gave the horse a good beating. This offended the horse and made him angry, and when the young man stretched out his hand to untie his head, he made no further fuss, but suffered himself to be led quietly away. Once clear of the stable the young man sprang on his back and galloped off, calling over his shoulder, 'Hi! dragon! dragon! if anyone asks you what has become of your horse, you can say that I have got him!'

But the king said, 'The flying horse is all very well, but I want something more. You must bring me the covering with the little bells that lies on the bed of the dragon, or I will have you hewn into a thousand pieces.'

'Is that all?' answered the youth. 'That is easily done.'

And when night came he went away to the dragon's house and climbed up on to the roof. Then he opened a little window in the roof and let down the chain from which the kettle usually hung, and tried to hook the bed covering and to draw it up. But the little bells all began to ring, and the dragon woke and said to his wife, 'Wife, you have pulled off all the bed-clothes!' and drew the covering towards him, pulling, as he did so, the young man into the room. Then the dragon flung himself on the youth and bound him fast with cords saying as he tied the last knot, 'To-morrow when I go to church you must stay at home and kill him and cook him, and when I get back we will eat him together.'

So the following morning the dragoness took hold of the young man and reached down from the shelf a sharp knife with which to kill him. But as she untied the cords the better to get hold of him, the prisoner caught her by the legs, threw her to the ground, seized her and speedily cut her throat, just as she had been about to do for him, and put her body in the oven. Then he snatched up the covering and carried it to the king.

The king was seated on his throne when the youth appeared before him and spread out the covering with a deep bow. ‘That is not enough,’ said his majesty; ‘you must bring me the dragon himself, or I will have you hewn into a thousand pieces.’

‘It shall be done,’ answered the youth; ‘but you must give me two years to manage it, for my beard must grow so that he may not know me.’

‘So be it,’ said the king.

And the first thing the young man did when his beard was grown was to take the road to the dragon’s house and on the way he met a beggar, whom he persuaded to change clothes with him, and in the beggar’s garments he went fearlessly forth to the dragon.

He found his enemy before his house, very busy making a box, and addressed him politely, ‘Good morning, your worship. Have you a morsel of bread?’

‘You must wait,’ replied the dragon, ‘till I have finished my box, and then I will see if I can find one.’

‘What will you do with the box when it is made?’ inquired the beggar.

‘It is for the young man who killed my wife, and stole my flying horse and my bed covering,’ said the dragon.

‘He deserves nothing better,’ answered the beggar, ‘for it was an ill deed. Still that box is too small for him, for he is a big man.’

‘You are wrong,’ said the dragon. ‘The box is large enough even for me.’

‘Well, the rogue is nearly as tall as you,’ replied the beggar, ‘and, of course, if you can get in, he can. But I am sure you would find it a tight fit.’

‘No, there is plenty of room,’ said the dragon, tucking himself carefully inside.

But no sooner was he well in, than the young man clapped on the lid and called out, ‘Now press hard, just to see if he will be able to get out.’

The dragon pressed as hard as he could, but the lid never moved.

‘It is all right,’ he cried; ‘now you can open it.’

But instead of opening it, the young man drove in long nails to make it tighter still; then he took the box on his back and brought it to the king. And when the king heard that the dragon was inside, he was so excited that he would not wait one moment, but broke the lock and lifted the lid just a little way to make sure he was really there. He was very careful not to leave enough space for the dragon to jump out, but unluckily there was just room for his great mouth, and with one snap the king vanished down his wide red jaws. Then the young man married the king’s daughter and ruled over the land, but what he did with the dragon nobody knows.

THE GOBLIN AND THE GROCER

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Translated from the German of Hans Andersen.

There was once a hard-working student who lived in an attic, and he had nothing in the world of his own. There was also a hard-working grocer who lived on the first floor, and he had the whole house for his own.

The Goblin belonged to him, for every Christmas Eve there was waiting for him at the grocer's a dish of jam with a large lump of butter in the middle.

The grocer could afford this, so the Goblin stayed in the grocer's shop; and this teaches us a good deal. One evening the student came in by the back door to buy a candle and some cheese; he had no one to send, so he came himself.

He got what he wanted, paid for it, and nodded a good evening to the grocer and his wife (she was a woman who could do more than nod; she could talk).

When the student had said good night he suddenly stood still, reading the sheet of paper in which the cheese had been wrapped.

It was a leaf torn out of an old book—a book of poetry

'There's more of that over there!' said the grocer 'I gave an old woman some coffee for the book. If you like to give me twopence you can have the rest.'

'Yes,' said the student, 'give me the book instead of the cheese. I can eat my bread without cheese. It would be a shame to leave the book to be torn up. You are a clever and practical man, but about poetry you understand as much as that old tub over there!'

And that sounded rude as far as the tub was concerned, but the grocer laughed, and so did the student. It was only said in fun.

But the Goblin was angry that anyone should dare to say such a thing to a grocer who owned the house and sold the best butter.

When it was night and the shop was shut, and everyone was in bed except the student, the Goblin went upstairs and took the grocer's wife's tongue. She did not use it when she was asleep, and on whatever object in the room he put it that thing began to speak, and spoke out its thoughts and feelings just as well as the lady to whom it belonged. But only one thing at a time could use it, and that was a good thing, or they would have all spoken together.

The Goblin laid the tongue on the tub in which were the old newspapers.

'Is it true,' he asked, ' that you know nothing about poetry?'

'Certainly not!' answered the tub. 'Poetry is something that is in the papers, and that is frequently cut out. I have a great deal more in me than the student has, and yet I am only a small tub in the grocer's shop.'

And the Goblin put the tongue on the coffee-mill, and how it began to grind! He put it on the butter-cask, and on the till, and all were of the same opinion as the waste-paper tub. and one must believe the majority.

'Now I will tell the student!' and with these words he crept softly up the stairs to the attic where the student lived.

There was a light burning, and the Goblin peeped through the key-hole and saw that he was reading the torn book that he had bought in the shop.

But how bright it was! Out of the book shot a streak of light which grew into a large tree and spread its branches far above the student. Every leaf was alive, and every flower was a beautiful girl's head, some with dark and shining eyes, others with wonderful blue ones. Every fruit was a glittering star, and there was a marvellous music in the student's room. The little Goblin had never even dreamt of such a splendid sight, much less seen it.

He stood on tiptoe gazing and gazing, till the candle in the attic was put out; the student had blown it out and had gone to bed, but the Goblin remained standing outside listening to the music, which very softly and sweetly was now singing the student a lullaby.

'I have never seen anything like this!' said the Goblin. 'I never expected this! I must stay with the student.'

The little fellow thought it over, for he was a sensible Goblin. Then he sighed, 'The student has no jam!'

And on that he went down to the grocer again. And it was a good thing that he did go back, for the tub had nearly worn out the tongue. It had read everything that was inside it, on the one side, and was just going to turn itself round and read from the other side when the Goblin came in and returned the tongue to its owner.

But the whole shop, from the till down to the shavings, from that night changed their opinion of the tub, and they looked up to it, and had such faith in it that they were under the impression that when the grocer read the art and drama critiques out of the paper in the evenings, it all came from the tub.

But the Goblin could no longer sit quietly listening to the wisdom and intellect downstairs. No, as soon as the light shone in the evening from the attic it seemed to him as though its beams were strong ropes dragging him up, and he had to go and peep through the key-hole. There he felt the sort of feeling we have looking at the great rolling sea in a storm, and he burst into tears. He could not himself say why he wept, but in spite of his tears he felt quite happy. How beautiful it must be to sit under that tree with the student, but that he could not do; he had to content himself with the key-hole and be happy there!

There he stood out on the cold landing, the autumn wind blowing through the cracks of the floor. It was cold—very cold, but he first found it out when the light in the attic was put out and the music in the wood died away. Ah! then it froze him, and he crept down again into his warm corner; there it was comfortable and cosy.

When Christmas came, and with it the jam with the large lump of butter, ah! then the grocer was first with him.

But in the middle of the night the Goblin awoke, hearing a great noise and knocking against the shutters—people hammering from outside. The watchman was blowing his horn: a great fire had broken out; the whole town was in flames.

Was it in the house? or was it at a neighbour’s? Where was it?

The alarm increased. The grocer’s wife was so terrified that she took her gold earrings out of her ears and put them in her pocket in order to save something. The grocer seized his account books. and the maid her black silk dress.

Everyone wanted to save his most valuable possession; so did the Goblin, and in a few leaps he was up the stairs and in the student's room. He was standing quietly by the open window looking at the fire that was burning in the neighbour's house just opposite. The Goblin seized the book lying on the table, put it in his red cap, and clasped it with both hands. The best treasure in the house was saved, and he climbed out on to the roof with it—on to the chimney. There he sat, lighted up by the flames from the burning house opposite, both hands holding tightly on his red cap, in which lay the treasure; and now he knew what his heart really valued most—to whom he really belonged. But when the fire was put out, and the Goblin thought it over—then—

'I will divide myself between the two,' he said. 'I cannot quite give up the grocer, because of the jam!'

And it is just the same with us. We also cannot quite give up the grocer—because of the jam.

THE HOUSE IN THE WOOD

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From the German of Grimm.

A poor woodcutter lived with his wife and three daughters in a little hut on the borders of a great forest.

One morning as he was going to his work, he said to his wife, ‘Let our eldest daughter bring me my lunch into the wood; and so that she shall not lose her way, I will take a bag of millet with me, and sprinkle the seed on the path.’

When the sun had risen high over the forest, the girl set out with a basin of soup. But the field and wood sparrows, the larks and finches, blackbirds and green finches had picked up the millet long ago, and the girl could not find her way.

She went on and on, till the sun set and night came on. The trees rustled in the darkness, the owls hooted, and she began to be very much frightened. Then she saw in tile distance a light that twinkled between the trees. ‘There must be people living yonder,’ she thought, ‘who will take me in for the night,’ and she began walking towards it.

Not long afterwards she came to a house with lights in the windows.

She knocked at the door, and a gruff voice called, ‘Come in!’

The girl stepped into the dark entrance, and tapped at the door of the room.

‘Just walk in,’ cried the voice, and when she opened the door there sat an old gray-haired man at the table. His face was resting on his hands, and his white beard flowed over the table almost down to the ground.

By the stove lay three beasts, a hen, a cock, and a brindled cow. The girl told the old man her story, and asked for a night’s lodging.

The man said:

Pretty cock,
Pretty hen,

And you, pretty brindled cow,
What do you say now?

‘Duks,’ answered the beasts; and that must have meant, ‘We are quite willing,’ for the old man went on, ‘Here is abundance; go into the back kitchen and cook us a supper.’

The girl found plenty of everything in the kitchen, and cooked a good meal, but she did not think of the beasts.

She placed the full dishes on the table, sat down opposite the gray-haired man, and ate till her hunger was appeased.

When she was satisfied, she said, ‘But now I am so tired, where is a bed in which I can sleep? ‘

The beasts answered:

You have eaten with him,
You have drunk with him,
Of us you have not thought,
Sleep then as you ought!

Then the old man said, ‘Go upstairs, and there you will find a bedroom; shake the bed, and put clean sheets on, and go to sleep.’

The maiden went upstairs, and when she had made the bed, she lay down.

After some time the gray-haired man came, looked at her by the light of his candle, and shook his head. And when he saw that she was sound asleep, he opened a trapdoor and let her fall into the cellar.

The woodcutter came home late in the evening, and reproached his wife for leaving him all day without food.

‘No, I did not,’ she answered; ‘the girl went off with your dinner. She must have lost her way, but will no doubt come back to-morrow.’

But at daybreak the woodcutter started off into the wood, and this time asked his second daughter to bring his food.

‘I will take a bag of lentils,’ said he; ‘they are larger than millet, and the girl will see them better and be sure to find her way.’

At midday the maiden took the food, but the lentils had all gone; as on the previous day, the wood birds had eaten them all.

The maiden wandered about the wood till nightfall, when she came in the same way to the old man’s house, and asked for food and a night’s lodging.

The man with the white hair again asked the beasts:

Pretty cock,
Pretty hen,
And you, pretty brindled cow,
What do you say now?

The beasts answered, ‘Duks,’ and everything happened as on the former day.

The girl cooked a good meal, ate and drank with the old man, and did not trouble herself about the animals.

And when she asked for a bed, they replied:

You have eaten with him
You have drunk with him,
Of us you have not thought,

Now sleep as you ought!

And when she was asleep, the old man shook his head over her, and let her fall into the cellar.

On the third morning the woodcutter said to his wife, ‘Send our youngest child to-day with my dinner. She is always good and obedient, and will keep to the right path, and not wander away like her sisters, idle drones!’

But the mother said, ‘Must I lose my dearest child too?’

‘Do not fear,’ he answered; ‘she is too clever and intelligent to lose her way. I will take plenty of peas with me and strew them along; they are even larger than lentils, and will show her the way.’

But when the maiden started off with the basket on her arm, the wood pigeons had eaten up the peas, and she did not know which way to go. She was much distressed, and thought constantly of her poor hungry father and her anxious mother. At last, when it grew dark, she saw the little light, and

came to the house in the wood. She asked prettily if she might stay there for the night, and the man with the white beard asked his beasts again:

Pretty cock,
Pretty hen,
And you, pretty brindled cow,
What do you say now?

‘Duks,’ they said. Then the maiden stepped up to the stove where the animals were lying, and stroked the cock and the hen, and scratched the brindled cow between its horns.

And when at the bidding of the old man she had prepared a good supper, and the dishes were standing on the table, she said, ‘Shall I have plenty while the good beasts have nothing? There is food to spare outside; I will attend to them first.’

Then she went out and fetched barley and strewed it before the cock and hen, and brought the cow an armful of sweet-smelling hay.

‘Eat that, dear beasts,’ she said,’ and when you are thirsty you shall have a good drink.’

Then she fetched a bowl of water, and the cock and hen flew on to the edge, put their beaks in, and then held up their heads as birds do when they drink, and the brindled cow also drank her fill. When the beasts were satisfied, the maiden sat down beside the old man at the table and ate what was left for her. Soon the cock and hen began to tuck their heads under their wings, and the brindled cow blinked its eyes, so the maiden said, ‘Shall we not go to rest now?’

Pretty cock,
Pretty hen,
And you, pretty brindled cow,
What do you say now?

The animals said, ‘Duks:

You have eaten with us,
You have drunk with us,

You have tended us right,
So we wish you good night.’

The maiden therefore went upstairs, made the bed and put on clean sheets and fell asleep. She slept peacefully till midnight, when there was such a noise in the house that she awoke. Everything trembled and shook; the animals sprang up and dashed themselves in terror against the wall; the beams swayed as if they would be torn from their foundations, it seemed as if the stairs were tumbling down, and then the roof fell in with a crash. Then all became still, and as no harm came to the maiden she lay down again and fell asleep. But when she awoke again in broad daylight, what a sight met her eyes! She was lying in a splendid room furnished with royal splendour; the walls were covered with golden flowers on a green ground; the bed was of ivory and the counterpane of velvet, and on a stool near by lay a pair of slippers studded with pearls. The maiden thought she must be dreaming, but in came three servants richly dressed, who asked what were her commands. ‘Go,’ said the maiden, ‘I will get up at once and cook the old man’s supper for him, and then I will feed the pretty cock and hen and the brindled cow.’

But the door opened and in came a handsome young man, who said, ‘I am a king’s son, and was condemned by a wicked witch to live as an old man in this wood with no company but that of my three servants, who were transformed into a cock, a hen, and a brindled cow. The spell could only be broken by the arrival of a maiden who should show herself kind not only to men but to beasts. You are that maiden, and last night at midnight we were freed, and this poor house was again transformed into my royal palace.

As they stood there the king’s son told his three servants to go and fetch the maiden’s parents to be present at the wedding feast.

‘But where are my two sisters?’ asked the maid.

‘I shut them up in the cellar, but in the morning they shall be led forth into the forest and shall serve a charcoal burner until they have improved, and will never again suffer poor animals to go hungry.’

URASCHIMATARO AND THE TURTLE

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From the Japanische Marchen und Sagen, von David Brauns
(Leipzig: Wilhelm Friedrich).

There was once a worthy old couple who lived on the coast, and supported themselves by fishing. They had only one child, a son, who was their pride and joy, and for his sake they were ready to work hard all day long, and never felt tired or discontented with their lot. This son's name was Uraschimataro, which means in Japanese, 'Son of the island,' and he was a fine well-grown youth and a good fisherman, minding neither wind nor weather. Not the bravest sailor in the whole village dared venture so far out to sea as Uraschimataro, and many a time the neighbours used to shake their heads and say to his parents, 'If your son goes on being so rash, one day he will try his luck once too often, and the waves will end by swallowing him up.' But Uraschimataro paid no heed to these remarks, and as he was really very clever in managing a boat, the old people were very seldom anxious about him.

One beautiful bright morning, as he was hauling his well-filled nets into the boat, he saw lying among the fishes a tiny little turtle. He was delighted with his prize, and threw it into a wooden vessel to keep till he got home, when suddenly the turtle found its voice, and tremblingly begged for its life. 'After all,' it said, 'what good can I do you? I am so young and small, and I would so gladly live a little longer. Be merciful and set me free, and I shall know how to prove my gratitude.'

Now Uraschimataro was very good-natured, and besides, he could never bear to say no, so he picked up the turtle, and put it back into the sea.

Years flew by, and every morning Uraschimataro sailed his boat into the deep sea. But one day as he was making for a little bay between some rocks, there arose a fierce whirlwind, which shattered his boat to pieces, and she was sucked under by the waves. Uraschimataro himself very

nearly shared the same fate. But he was a powerful swimmer, and struggled hard to reach the shore. Then he saw a large turtle coming towards him, and above the howling of the storm he heard what it said: ‘I am the turtle whose life you once saved. I will now pay my debt and show my gratitude. The land is still far distant, and without my help you would never get there. Climb on my back, and I will take you where you will.’ Uraschimataro did not wait to be asked twice, and thankfully accepted his friend’s help. But scarcely was he seated firmly on the shell, when the turtle proposed that they should not return to the shore at once, but go under the sea, and look at some of the wonders that lay hidden there.

Uraschimataro agreed willingly, and in another moment they were deep, deep down, with fathoms of blue water above their heads. Oh, how quickly they darted through the still, warm sea! The young man held tight, and marvelled where they were going and how long they were to travel, but for three days they rushed on, till at last the turtle stopped before a splendid palace, shining with gold and silver, crystal and precious stones, and decked here and there with branches of pale pink coral and glittering pearls. But if Uraschimataro was astonished at the beauty of the outside, he was struck dumb at the sight of the hall within, which was lighted by the blaze of fish scales.

‘Where have you brought me?’ he asked his guide in a low voice.

‘To the palace of Ringu, the house of the sea god, whose subjects we all are,’ answered the turtle. ‘I am the first waiting maid of his daughter, the lovely princess Otohime, whom you will shortly see.’

Uraschimataro was still so puzzled with the adventures that had befallen him, that he waited in a dazed condition for what would happen next. But the turtle, who had talked so much of him to the princess that she had expressed a wish to see him, went at once to make known his arrival. And directly the princess beheld him her heart was set on him, and she begged him to stay with her, and in return promised that he should never grow old, neither should his beauty fade. ‘Is not that reward enough?’ she asked, smiling, looking all the while as fair as the sun itself. And Uraschimataro said ‘Yes,’ and so he stayed there. For how long? That he only knew later.

His life passed by, and each hour seemed happier than the last, when one day there rushed over him a terrible longing to see his parents. He

fought against it hard, knowing how it would grieve the princess, but it grew on him stronger and stronger, till at length he became so sad that the princess inquired what was wrong. Then he told her of the longing he had to visit his old home, and that he must see his parents once more. The princess was almost frozen with horror, and implored him to stay with her, or something dreadful would be sure to happen. ‘You will never come back, and we shall meet again no more,’ she moaned bitterly. But Uraschimataro stood firm and repeated, ‘Only this once will I leave you, and then will I return to your side for ever.’ Sadly the princess shook her head, but she answered slowly, ‘One way there is to bring you safely back, but I fear you will never agree to the conditions of the bargain.’

‘I will do anything that will bring me back to you,’ exclaimed Uraschimataro, looking at her tenderly, but the princess was silent: she knew too well that when he left her she would see his face no more. Then she took from a shelf a tiny golden box, and gave it to Uraschimataro, praying him to keep it carefully, and above all things never to open it. ‘If you can do this,’ she said as she bade him farewell, ‘your friend the turtle will meet you at the shore, and will carry you back to me.’

Uraschimataro thanked her from his heart, and swore solemnly to do her bidding. He hid the box safely in his garments, seated himself on the back of the turtle, and vanished in the ocean path, waving his hand to the princess. Three days and three nights they swam through the sea, and at length Uraschimataro arrived at the beach which lay before his old home. The turtle bade him farewell, and was gone in a moment.

Uraschimataro drew near to the village with quick and joyful steps. He saw the smoke curling through the roof, and the thatch where green plants had thickly sprouted. He heard the children shouting and calling, and from a window that he passed came the twang of the koto, and everything seemed to cry a welcome for his return. Yet suddenly he felt a pang at his heart as he wandered down the street. After all, everything was changed. Neither men nor houses were those he once knew. Quickly he saw his old home; yes, it was still there, but it had a strange look. Anxiously he knocked at the door, and asked the woman who opened it after his parents. But she did not know their names, and could give him no news of them.

Still more disturbed, he rushed to the burying ground, the only place that could tell him what he wished to know. Here at any rate he would find

out what it all meant. And he was right. In a moment he stood before the grave of his parents, and the date written on the stone was almost exactly the date when they had lost their son, and he had forsaken them for the Daughter of the Sea. And so he found that since he had deft his home, three hundred years had passed by.

Shuddering with horror at his discovery he turned back into the village street, hoping to meet some one who could tell him of the days of old. But when the man spoke, he knew he was not dreaming, though he felt as if he had lost his senses.

In despair he bethought him of the box which was the gift of the princess. Perhaps after all this dreadful thing was not true. He might be the victim of some enchanter’s spell, and in his hand lay the counter-charm. Almost unconsciously he opened it, and a purple vapour came pouring out. He held the empty box in his hand, and as he looked he saw that the fresh hand of youth had grown suddenly shrivelled, like the hand of an old, old man. He ran to the brook, which flowed in a clear stream down from the mountain. and saw himself reflected as in a mirror. It was the face of a mummy which looked back at him. Wounded to death, he crept back through the village, and no man knew the old, old man to be the strong handsome youth who had run down the street an hour before. So he toiled wearily back, till he reached the shore, and here he sat sadly on a rock, and called loudly on the turtle. But she never came back any more, but instead, death came soon, and set him free. But before that happened, the people who saw him sitting lonely on the shore had heard his story, and when their children were restless they used to tell them of the good son who from love to his parents had given up for their sakes the splendour and wonders of the palace in the sea, and the most beautiful woman in the world besides.

THE SLAYING OF THE TANUKI

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From the Japanische Murchen und Sagen.

Near a big river, and between two high mountains, a man and his wife lived in a cottage a long, long time ago. A dense forest lay all round the cottage, and there was hardly a path or a tree in the whole wood that was not familiar to the peasant from his boyhood. In one of his wanderings he had made friends with a hare, and many an hour the two passed together, when the man was resting by the roadside, eating his dinner.

Now this strange friendship was observed by the Tanuki, a wicked, quarrelsome beast, who hated the peasant, and was never tired of doing him an ill turn. Again and again he had crept to the hut, and finding some choice morsel put away for the little hare, had either eaten it if he thought it nice, or trampled it to pieces so that no one else should get it, and at last the peasant lost patience, and made up his mind he would have the Tanuki's blood.

So for many days the man lay hidden, waiting for the Tanuki to come by, and when one morning he marched up the road thinking of nothing but the dinner he was going to steal, the peasant threw himself upon him and bound his four legs tightly, so that he could not move. Then he dragged his enemy joyfully to the house, feeling that at length he had got the better of the mischievous beast which had done him so many ill turns. 'He shall pay for them with his skin,' he said to his wife. 'We will first kill him, and then cook him.' So saying, he hanged the Tanuki, head downwards, to a beam, and went out to gather wood for a fire.

Meanwhile the old woman was standing at the mortar pounding the rise that was to serve them for the week with a pestle that made her arms ache with its weight. Suddenly she heard something whining and weeping in the corner, and, stopping her work, she looked round to see what it was. That was all that the rascal wanted, and he put on directly his most humble air, and begged the woman in his softest voice to loosen his bonds, which

her hurting him sorely. She was filled with pity for him, but did not dare to set him free, as she knew that her husband would be very angry. The Tanuki, however, did not despair, and seeing that her heart was softened, began his prayers anew. ‘He only asked to have his bonds taken from him,’ he said. ‘He would give his word not to attempt to escape, and if he was once set free he could soon pound her rice for her.’ ‘Then you can have a little rest,’ he went on, ‘for rice pounding is very tiring work, and not at all fit for weak women.’ These last words melted the good woman completely, and she unfastened the bonds that held him. Poor foolish creature! In one moment the Tanuki had seized her, stripped off all her clothes, and popped her in the mortar. In a few minutes more she was pounded as fine as the rice; and not content with that, the Tanuki placed a pot on the hearth and made ready to cook the peasant a dinner from the flesh of his own wife!

When everything was complete he looked out of the door, and saw the old man coming from the forest carrying a large bundle of wood. Quick as lightning the Tanuki not only put on the woman’s clothes, but, as he was a magician, assumed her form as well. Then he took the wood, kindled the fire, and very soon set a large dinner before the old man, who was very hungry, and had forgotten for the moment all about his enemy. But when the Tanuki saw that he had eaten his fill and would be thinking about his prisoner, he hastily shook off the clothes behind a door and took his own shape. Then he said to the peasant, ‘You are a nice sort of person to seize animals and to talk of killing them! You are caught in your own net. It is your own wife that you have eaten, and if you want to find her bones you have only to look under the floor.’ With these words he turned and made for the forest.

The old peasant grew cold with horror as he listened, and seemed frozen to the place where he stood. When he had recovered himself a little, he collected the bones of his dead wife, buried them in the garden, and swore over the grave to be avenged on the Tanuki. After everything was done he sat himself down in his lonely cottage and wept bitterly, and the bitterest thought of all was that he would never be able to forget that he had eaten his own wife.

While he was thus weeping and wailing his friend the hare passed by, and, hearing the noise, pricked up his ears and soon recognised the old

man’s voice. He wondered what had happened, and put his head in at the door and asked if anything was the matter. With tears and groans the peasant told him the whole dreadful story, and the hare, filled with anger and compassion, comforted him as best he could, and promised to help him in his revenge. ‘The false knave shall not go unpunished,’ said he.

So the first thing he did was to search the house for materials to make an ointment, which he sprinkled plentifully with pepper and then put in his pocket. Next he took a hatchet, bade farewell to the old man, and departed to the forest. He bent his steps to the dwelling of the Tanuki and knocked at the door. The Tanuki, who had no cause to suspect the hare, was greatly pleased to see him, for he noticed the hatchet at once, and began to lay plots how to get hold of it.

To do this he thought he had better offer to accompany the hare, which was exactly what the hare wished and expected, for he knew all the Tanuki’s cunning, and understood his little ways. So he accepted the rascal’s company with joy, and made himself very pleasant as they strolled along. When they were wandering in this manner through the forest the hare carelessly raised his hatchet in passing, and cut down some thick boughs that were hanging over the path, but at length, after cutting down a good big tree, which cost him many hard blows, he declared that it was too heavy for him to carry home, and he must just leave it where it was. This delighted the greedy Tanuki, who said that they would be no weight for him, so they collected the large branches, which the hare bound tightly on his back. Then he trotted gaily to the house, the hare following after with his lighter bundle.

By this time the hare had decided what he would do, and as soon as they arrived, he quietly set on fire the wood on the back of the Tanuki. The Tanuki, who was busy with something else, observed nothing, and only called out to ask what was the meaning of the crackling that he heard. ‘It is just the rattle of the stones which are rolling down the side of the mountain,’ the hare said; and the Tanuki was content, and made no further remarks, never noticing that the noise really sprang from the burning boughs on his back, until his fur was in flames, and it was almost too late to put it out. Shrieking with pain, he let fall the burning wood from his back, and stamped and howled with agony. But the hare comforted him, and told him that he always carried with him an excellent plaster in case of

need, which would bring him instant relief, and taking out his ointment he spread it on a leaf of bamboo, and laid it on the wound. No sooner did it touch him than the Tanuki leapt yelling into the air, and the hare laughed, and ran to tell his friend the peasant what a trick he had played on their enemy. But the old man shook his head sadly, for he knew that the villain was only crushed for the moment, and that he would shortly be revenging himself upon them. No, the only way every to get any peace and quiet was to render the Tanuki harmless for ever. Long did the old man and the hare puzzle together how this was to be done, and at last they decided that they would make two boats, a small one of wood and a large one of clay. Then they fell to work at once, and when the boats were ready and properly painted, the hare went to the Tanuki, who was still very ill, and invited him to a great fish-catching. The Tanuki was still feeling angry with the hare about the trick he had played him, but he was weak and very hungry, so he gladly accepted the proposal, and accompanied the hare to the bank of the river, where the two boats were moored, rocked by the waves. They both looked exactly alike, and the Tanuki only saw that one was bigger than the other, and would hold more fish, so he sprang into the large one, while the hare climbed into the one which was made of wood. They loosened their moorings, and made for the middle of the stream, and when they were at some distance from the bank, the hare took his oar, and struck such a heavy blow at the other boat, that it broke in two. The Tanuki fell straight into the water, and was held there by the hare till he was quite dead. Then he put the body in his boat and rowed to land, and told the old man that his enemy was dead at last. And the old man rejoiced that his wife was avenged, and he took the hare into his house, and they lived together all their days in peace and quietness upon the mountain.

THE FLYING TRUNK

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Translated from the German of Hans Andersen.

There was once a merchant who was so rich that he could have paved the whole street, and perhaps even a little side-street besides, with silver. But he did not do that; he knew another way of spending his money. If he spent a shilling he got back a florin-such an excellent merchant he was till he died.

Now his son inherited all this money. He lived very merrily; he went every night to the theatre, made paper kites out of five-pound notes, and played ducks and drakes with sovereigns instead of stones. In this way the money was likely to come soon to an end, and so it did.

At last he had nothing left but four shillings, and he had no clothes except a pair of slippers and an old dressing-gown.

His friends did not trouble themselves any more about him; they would not even walk down the street with him.

But one of them who was rather good-natured sent him an old trunk with the message, ‘Pack up!” That was all very well, but he had nothing to pack up, so he got into the trunk himself.

It was an enchanted trunk, for as soon as the lock was pressed it could fly. He pressed it, and away he flew in it up the chimney, high into the clouds, further and further away. But whenever the bottom gave a little creak he was in terror lest the trunk should go to pieces, for then he would have turned a dreadful somersault-just think of it!

In this way he arrived at the land of the Turks. He hid the trunk in a wood under some dry leaves, and then walked into the town. He could do that quite well, for all the Turks were dressed just as he was-in a dressing-gown and slippers.

He met a nurse with a little child.

‘Halloa! you Turkish nurse,’ said he, ‘what is that great castle there close to the town? The one with the windows so high up?’

‘The sultan’s daughter lives there,’ she replied. ‘It is prophesied that she will be very unlucky in her husband, and so no one is allowed to see her except when the sultan and sultana are by.’

‘Thank you,’ said the merchant’s son, and he went into the wood, sat himself in his trunk, flew on to the roof, and crept through the window into the princess’s room.

She was lying on the sofa asleep, and was so beautiful that the young merchant had to kiss her. Then she woke up and was very much frightened, but he said he was a Turkish god who had come through the air to see her, and that pleased her very much.

They sat close to each other, and he told her a story about her eyes. They were beautiful dark lakes in which her thoughts swam about like mermaids. And her forehead was a snowy mountain, grand and shining. These were lovely stories.

Then he asked the princess to marry him, and she said yes at once.

‘But you must come here on Saturday,’ she said, ‘for then the sultan and the sultana are coming to tea with me. They will be indeed proud that I receive the god of the Turks. But mind you have a really good story ready, for my parents like them immensely. My mother likes something rather moral and high-flown, and my father likes something merry to make him laugh.’

‘Yes, I shall only bring a fairy story for my dowry,’ said he, and so they parted. But the princess gave him a sabre set with gold pieces which he could use.

Then he flew away, bought himself a new dressing-gown, and sat down in the wood and began to make up a story, for it had to be ready by Saturday, and that was no easy matter.

When he had it ready it was Saturday.

The sultan, the sultana, and the whole court were at tea with the princess.

He was most graciously received.

‘Will you tell us a story?’ said the sultana; ‘one that is thoughtful and instructive?’

‘But something that we can laugh at,’ said the sultan.

‘Oh, certainly,’ he replied, and began: ‘Now, listen attentively. There was once a box of matches which lay between a tinder-box and an old iron

pot, and they told the story of their youth.

‘“We used to be on the green fir-boughs. Every morning and evening we had diamond-tea, which was the dew, and the whole day long we had sunshine, and the little birds used to tell us stories. We were very rich, because the other trees only dressed in summer, but we had green dresses in summer and in winter. Then the woodcutter came, and our family was split up. We have now the task of making light for the lowest people. That is why we grand people are in the kitchen.”

‘“My fate was quite different,” said the iron pot, near which the matches lay.

‘“Since I came into the world I have been many times scoured, and have cooked much. My only pleasure is to have a good chat with my companions when I am lying nice and clean in my place after dinner.”

‘“Now you are talking too fast,” spluttered the fire.

‘“Yes, let us decide who is the grandest!” said the matches.

‘“No, I don’t like talking about myself,” said the pot.

‘“Let us arrange an evening’s entertainment. I will tell the story of my life.

‘“On the Baltic by the Danish shore-”

‘What a beautiful beginning!” said all the plates. “That’s a story that will please us all.”

‘And the end was just as good as the beginning. All the plates clattered for joy.

‘“Now I will dance,” said the tongs, and she danced. Oh! how high she could kick!

‘The old chair-cover in the corner split when he saw her.

‘The urn would have sung but she said she had a cold; she could not sing unless she boiled.

‘In the window was an old quill pen. There was nothing remarkable about her except that she had been dipped too deeply into the ink. But she was very proud of that.

‘“If the urn will not sing,” said she, “outside the door hangs a nightingale in a cage who will sing.”

‘“I don’t think it’s proper,” said the kettle, “that such a foreign bird should be heard.”

‘“Oh, let us have some acting,” said everyone. “Do let us!”

‘Suddenly the door opened and the maid came in. Everyone was quite quiet. There was not a sound. But each pot knew what he might have done, and how grand he was.

‘The maid took the matches and lit the fire with them. How they spluttered and flamed, to be sure! “Now everyone can see,” they thought, “that we are the grandest! How we sparkle! What a light-”

‘But here they were burnt out.’

‘That was a delightful story!’ said the sultana. ‘I quite feel myself in the kitchen with the matches. Yes, now you shall marry our daughter.’

‘Yes, indeed,’ said the sultan, ‘you shall marry our daughter on Monday.’ And they treated the young man as one of the family.

The wedding was arranged, and the night before the whole town was illuminated.

Biscuits and gingerbreads were thrown among the people, the street boys stood on tiptoe crying hurrahs and whistling through their fingers. It was all splendid.

‘Now I must also give them a treat,’ thought the merchant’s son. And so he bought rockets, crackers, and all the kinds of fireworks you can think of, put them in his trunk, and flew up with them into the air.

Whirr-r-r, how they fizzed and blazed!

All the Turks jumped so high that their slippers flew above their heads; such a splendid glitter they had never seen before.

Now they could quite well understand that it was the god of the Turks himself who was to marry the princess.

As soon as the young merchant came down again into the wood with his trunk he thought, ‘Now I will just go into the town to see how the show has taken.’

And it was quite natural that he should want to do this.

Oh! what stories the people had to tell!

Each one whom he asked had seen it differently, but they had all found it beautiful.

‘I saw the Turkish god himself,’ said one. ‘He had eyes like glittering stars, and a beard like foaming water.’

‘He flew away in a cloak of fire,’ said another. They were splendid things that he heard, and the next day was to be his wedding day.

Then he went back into the wood to sit in his trunk; but what had become of it? The trunk had been burnt. A spark of the fireworks had set it alight, and the trunk was in ashes. He could no longer fly, and could never reach his bride.

She stood the whole day long on the roof and waited; perhaps she is waiting there still.

But he wandered through the world and told stories; though they are not so merry as the one he told about the matches.

THE SNOW-MAN

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Translated from the German of Hans Andersen.

‘How astonishingly cold it is! My body is cracking all over!’ said the Snow-man. ‘The wind is really cutting one’s very life out! And how that fiery thing up there glares!’ He meant the sun, which was just setting. ‘It sha’n’t make me blink, though, and I shall keep quite cool and collected.’

Instead of eyes he had two large three-cornered pieces of slate in his head; his mouth consisted of an old rake, so that he had teeth as well.

He was born amidst the shouts and laughter of the boys, and greeted by the jingling bells and cracking whips of the sledges.

The sun went down, the full moon rose, large, round, clear and beautiful, in the dark blue sky.

‘There it is again on the other side!’ said the Snow-man, by which he meant the sun was appearing again. ‘I have become quite accustomed to its glaring. I hope it will hang there and shine, so that I may be able to see myself. I wish I knew, though, how one ought to see about changing one’s position. I should very much like to move about. If I only could, I would glide up and down the ice there, as I saw the boys doing; but somehow or other, I don’t know how to run.’

‘Bow-wow!’ barked the old yard-dog; he was rather hoarse and couldn’t bark very well. His hoarseness came on when he was a house-dog and used to lie in front of the stove. ‘The sun will soon teach you to run! I saw that last winter with your predecessor, and farther back still with his predecessors! They have all run away!’

‘I don’t understand you, my friend,’ said the Snow-man. ‘That thing up there is to teach me to run?’ He meant the moon. ‘Well, it certainly did run just now, for I saw it quite plainly over there, and now here it is on this side.’

‘You know nothing at all about it,’ said the yard-dog. ‘Why, you have only just been made. The thing you see there is the moon; the other thing

you saw going down the other side was the sun. He will come up again tomorrow morning, and will soon teach you how to run away down the gutter. The weather is going to change; I feel it already by the pain in my left hind-leg; the weather is certainly going to change.'

'I can't understand him,' said the Snow-man; 'but I have an idea that he is speaking of something unpleasant. That thing that glares so, and then disappears, the sun, as he calls it, is not my friend. I know that by instinct.'

'Bow-wow!' barked the yard-dog, and walked three times round himself, and then crept into his kennel to sleep. The weather really did change. Towards morning a dense damp fog lay over the whole neighbourhood; later on came an icy wind, which sent the frost packing. But when the sun rose, it was a glorious sight. The trees and shrubs were covered with rime, and looked like a wood of coral, and every branch was thick with long white blossoms. The most delicate twigs, which are lost among the foliage in summer-time, came now into prominence, and it was like a spider's web of glistening white. The lady-birches waved in the wind; and when the sun shone, everything glittered and sparkled as if it were sprinkled with diamond dust, and great diamonds were lying on the snowy carpet.

'Isn't it wonderful?' exclaimed a girl who was walking with a young man in the garden. They stopped near the Snow-man, and looked at the glistening trees. 'Summer cannot show a more beautiful sight,' she said, with her eyes shining.

'And one can't get a fellow like this in summer either,' said the young man, pointing to the Snow-man. 'He's a beauty!'

The girl laughed, and nodded to the Snow-man, and then they both danced away over the snow.

'Who were those two?' asked the Snow-man of the yard-dog. 'You have been in this yard longer than I have. Do you know who they are?'

'Do I know them indeed?' answered the yard-dog. 'She has often stroked me, and he has given me bones. I don't bite either of them!'

'But what are they?' asked the Snow-man.

'Lovers!' replied the yard-dog. 'They will go into one kennel and gnaw the same bone!'

'Are they the same kind of beings that we are?' asked the Snow-man.

‘They are our masters,’ answered the yard-dog. ‘Really people who have only been in the world one day know very little.’ That’s the conclusion I have come to. Now I have age and wisdom; I know everyone in the house, and I can remember a time when I was not lying here in a cold kennel. Bow-wow!’

‘The cold is splendid,’ said the Snow-man. ‘Tell me some more. But don’t rattle your chain so, it makes me crack!’

‘Bow-wow!’ barked the yard-dog. ‘They used to say I was a pretty little fellow; then I lay in a velvet-covered chair in my master’s house. My mistress used to nurse me, and kiss and fondle me, and call me her dear, sweet little Alice! But by-and-by I grew too big, and I was given to the housekeeper, and I went into the kitchen. You can see into it from where you are standing; you can look at the room in which I was master, for so I was when I was with the housekeeper. Of course it was a smaller place than upstairs, but it was more comfortable, for I wasn’t chased about and teased by the children as I had been before. My food was just as good, or even better. I had my own pillow, and there was a stove there, which at this time of year is the most beautiful thing in the world. I used to creep right under that stove. Ah me! I often dream of that stove still! Bow-wow!’

‘Is a stove so beautiful?’ asked the Snow-man. ‘Is it anything like me?’

‘It is just the opposite of you! It is coal-black, and has a long neck with a brass pipe. It eats firewood, so that fire spouts out of its mouth. One has to keep close beside it-quite underneath is the nicest of all. You can see it through the window from where you are standing.’

And the Snow-man looked in that direction, and saw a smooth polished object with a brass pipe. The flicker from the fire reached him across the snow. The Snow-man felt wonderfully happy, and a feeling came over him which he could not express; but all those who are not snow-men know about it.

‘Why did you leave her?’ asked the Snow-man. He had a feeling that such a being must be a lady. ‘How could you leave such a place?’

‘I had to!’ said the yard-dog. ‘They turned me out of doors, and chained me up here. I had bitten the youngest boy in the leg, because he took away the bone I was gnawing; a bone for a bone, I thought! But they were very angry, and from that time I have been chained here, and I have

lost my voice. Don’t you hear how hoarse I am? Bow-wow! I can’t speak like other dogs. Bow-wow! That was the end of happiness!’

The Snow-man, however, was not listening to him any more; he was looking into the room where the housekeeper lived, where the stove stood on its four iron legs, and seemed to be just the same size as the Snow-man.

‘How something is cracking inside me!’ he said. ‘Shall I never be able to get in there? It is certainly a very innocent wish, and our innocent wishes ought to be fulfilled. I must get there, and lean against the stove, if I have to break the window first!’

‘You will never get inside there!’ said the yard-dog; ‘and if you were to reach the stove you would disappear. Bow-wow!’

‘I’m as good as gone already!’ answered the Snow-man. ‘I believe I’m breaking up!’

The whole day the Snow-man looked through the window; towards dusk the room grew still more inviting; the stove gave out a mild light, not at all like the moon or even the sun; no, as only a stove can shine, when it has something to feed upon. When the door of the room was open, it flared up-this was one of its peculiarities; it flickered quite red upon the Snow-man’s white face.

‘I can’t stand it any longer!’ he said. ‘How beautiful it looks with its tongue stretched out like that!’

It was a long night, but the Snow-man did not find it so; there he stood, wrapt in his pleasant thoughts, and they froze, so that he cracked.

Next morning the panes of the kitchen window were covered with ice, and the most beautiful ice-flowers that even a snow-man could desire, only they blotted out the stove. The window would not open; he couldn’t see the stove which he thought was such a lovely lady. There was a cracking and cracking inside him and all around; there was just such a frost as a snow-man would delight in. But this Snow-man was different: how could he feel happy?

‘Yours is a bad illness for a Snow-man!’ said the yard-dog. ‘I also suffered from it, but I have got over it. Bow-wow!’ he barked. ‘The weather is going to change!’ he added.

The weather did change. There came a thaw.

When this set in the Snow-man set off. He did not say anything, and he did not complain, and those are bad signs.

One morning he broke up altogether. And lo! where he had stood there remained a broomstick standing upright, round which the boys had built him!

‘Ah! now I understand why he loved the stove,’ said the yard-dog. ‘That is the raker they use to clean out the stove! The Snow-man had a stove-raker in his body! That’s what was the matter with him! And now it’s all over with him! Bow-wow!’

And before long it was all over with the winter too! ‘Bow-wow!’ barked the hoarse yard-dog.

But the young girl sang:

Woods, your bright green garments don!
Willows, your woolly gloves put on!
Lark and cuckoo, daily sing—February has brought the spring!
My heart joins in your song so sweet;
Come out, dear sun, the world to greet!

And no one thought of the Snow-man.

THE SHIRT-COLLAR

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Translated from the German of Hans Andersen.

There was once a fine gentleman whose entire worldly possessions consisted of a boot-jack and a hair-brush; but he had the most beautiful shirt-collar in the world, and it is about this that we are going to hear a story.

The shirt-collar was so old that he began to think about marrying; and it happened one day that he and a garter came into the wash-tub together.

‘Hulloa!’ said the shirt-collar, ‘never before have I seen anything so slim and delicate, so elegant and pretty! May I be permitted to ask your name?’

‘I shan’t tell you,’ said the garter.

‘Where is the place of your abode?’ asked the shirt-collar.

But the garter was of a bashful disposition, and did not think it proper to answer.

‘Perhaps you are a girdle?’ said the shirt-collar, ‘an under girdle? for I see that you are for use as well as for ornament, my pretty miss!’

‘You ought not to speak to me!’ said the garter’ ‘I’m sure I haven’t given you any encouragement!’

‘When anyone is as beautiful as you,’ said the shirt-collar, ‘is not that encouragement enough?’

‘Go away, don’t come so close!’ said the garter. ‘You seem to be a gentleman!’

‘So I am, and a very fine one too!’ said the shirt-collar; ‘I possess a boot-jack and a hair-brush!’

That was not true; it was his master who owned these things; but he was a terrible boaster.

‘Don’t come so close,’ said the garter. ‘I’m not accustomed to such treatment!’

‘What affectation!’ said the shirt-collar. And then they were taken out of the wash-tub, starched, and hung on a chair in the sun to dry, and then laid on the ironing-board. Then came the glowing iron.

‘Mistress widow!’ said the shirt-collar, ‘dear mistress widow! I am becoming another man, all my creases are coming out; you are burning a hole in me! Ugh! Stop, I implore you!’

‘You rag!’ said the iron, travelling proudly over the shirt-collar, for it thought it was a steam engine and ought to be at the station drawing trucks.

‘Rag!’ it said.

The shirt-collar was rather frayed out at the edge, so the scissors came to cut off the threads.

‘Oh!’ said the shirt-collar, ‘you must be a dancer! How high you can kick! That is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen! No man can imitate you!’

‘I know that!’ said the scissors.

‘You ought to be a duchess!’ said the shirt-collar. ‘My worldly possessions consist of a fine gentleman, a boot-jack, and a hair-brush. If only I had a duchy!’

‘What! He wants to marry me?’ said the scissors, and she was so angry that she gave the collar a sharp snip, so that it had to be cast aside as good for nothing.

‘Well, I shall have to propose to the hair-brush!’ thought the shirt-collar. ‘It is really wonderful what fine hair you have, madam! Have you never thought of marrying?’

‘Yes, that I have!’ answered the hair-brush; ‘I’m engaged to the boot-jack!’

‘Engaged!’ exclaimed the shirt-collar. And now there was no one he could marry, so he took to despising matrimony.

Time passed, and the shirt-collar came in a rag-bag to the paper-mill. There was a large assortment of rags, the fine ones in one heap, and the coarse ones in another, as they should be. They had all much to tell, but no one more than the shirt-collar, for he was a hopeless braggart.

‘I have had a terrible number of love affairs!’ he said. ‘They give me no peace. I was such a fine gentleman, so stiff with starch! I had a boot-jack and a hair-brush, which I never used! You should just have seen me

then! Never shall I forget my first love! She was a girdle, so delicate and soft and pretty! She threw herself into a wash-tub for my sake! Then there was a widow, who glowed with love for me. But I left her alone, till she became black. Then there was the dancer, who inflicted the wound which has caused me to be here now; she was very violent! My own hair-brush was in love with me, and lost all her hair in consequence. Yes, I have experienced much in that line; but I grieve most of all for the garter,-I mean, the girdle, who threw herself into a wash-tub. I have much on my conscience; it is high time for me to become white paper!'

And so he did! he became white paper, the very paper on which this story is printed. And that was because he had boasted so terribly about things which were not true. We should take this to heart, so that it may not happen to us, for we cannot indeed tell if we may not some day come to the rag-bag, and be made into white paper, on which will be printed our whole history, even the most secret parts, so that we too go about the world relating it, like the shirt-collar.

THE PRINCESS IN THE CHEST

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Translated from the Danish.

There were once a king and a queen who lived in a beautiful castle, and had a large, and fair, and rich, and happy land to rule over. From the very first they loved each other greatly, and lived very happily together, but they had no heir.

They had been married for seven years, but had neither son nor daughter, and that was a great grief to both of them. More than once it happened that when the king was in a bad temper, he let it out on the poor queen, and said that here they were now, getting old, and neither they nor the kingdom had an heir, and it was all her fault. This was hard to listen to, and she went and cried and vexed herself.

Finally, the king said to her one day, ‘This can’t be borne any longer. I go about childless, and it’s your fault. I am going on a journey and shall be away for a year. If you have a child when I come back again, all will be well, and I shall love you beyond all measure, and never more say an angry word to you. But if the nest is just as empty when I come home, then I must part with you.’

After the king had set out on his journey, the queen went about in her loneliness, and sorrowed and vexed herself more than ever. At last her maid said to her one day, ‘I think that some help could be found, if your majesty would seek it.’ Then she told about a wise old woman in that country, who had helped many in troubles of the same kind, and could no doubt help the queen as well, if she would send for her. The queen did so, and the wise woman came, and to her she confided her sorrow, that she, was childless, and the king and his kingdom had no heir.

The wise woman knew help for this. ‘Out in the king’s garden,’ said she, ‘under the great oak that stands on the left hand, just as one goes out from the castle, is a little bush, rather brown than green, with hairy leaves and long spikes. On that bush there are just at this moment three buds. If

your majesty goes out there alone, fasting, before sunrise, and takes the middle one of the three buds, and eats it, then in six months you will bring a princess into the world. As soon as she is born, she must have a nurse, whom I shall provide, and this nurse must live with the child in a secluded part of the palace; no other person must visit the child; neither the king nor the queen must see it until it is fourteen years old, for that would cause great sorrow and misfortune.'

The queen rewarded the old woman richly, and next morning, before the sun rose, she was down in the garden, found at once the little bush with the three buds, plucked the middle one and ate it. It was sweet to taste, but afterwards was as bitter as gall. Six months after this, she brought into the world a little girl. There was a nurse in readiness, whom the wise woman had provided, and preparations were made for her living with the child, quite alone, in a secluded wing of the castle, looking out on the pleasure-park. The queen did as the wise woman had told her; she gave up the child immediately, and the nurse took it and lived with it there.

When the king came home and heard that a daughter had been born to him, he was of course very pleased and happy, and wanted to see her at once.

The queen had then to tell him this much of the story, that it had been foretold that it would cause great sorrow and misfortune if either he or she got a sight of the child until it had completed its fourteenth year.

This was a long time to wait. The king longed so much to get a sight of his daughter, and the queen no less than he, but she knew that it was not like other children, for it could speak immediately after it was born, and was as wise as older folk. This the nurse had told her, for with her the queen had a talk now and again, but there was no one who had ever seen the princess. The queen had also seen what the wise woman could do, so she insisted strongly that her warning should be obeyed. The king often lost his patience, and was determined to see his daughter, but the queen always put him off the idea, and so things went on, until the very day before the princess completed her fourteenth year.

The king and the queen were out in the garden then, and the king said, 'Now I can't and I won't wait any longer. I must see my daughter at once. A few hours, more or less, can't make any difference.'

The queen begged him to have patience till the morning. When they had waited so long, they could surely wait a single day more. But the king was quite unreasonable. ‘No nonsense,’ said he; ‘she is just as much mine as yours, and I will see her,’ and with that he went straight up to her room.

He burst the door open, and pushed aside the nurse, who tried to stop him, and there he saw his daughter. She was the loveliest young princess, red and white, like milk and blood, with clear blue eyes and golden hair, but right in the middle of her forehead there was a little tuft of brown hair.

The princess went to meet her father, fell on his neck and kissed him, but with that she said, ‘O father, father! what have you done now? to-morrow I must die, and you must choose one of three things: either the land must be smitten with the black pestilence, or you must have a long and bloody war, or you must as soon as I am dead, lay me in a plain wooden chest, and set it in the church, and for a whole year place a sentinel beside it every night.’

The king was frightened indeed, and thought she was raving, but in order to please her, he said, ‘Well, of these three things I shall choose the last; if you die, I shall lay you at once in a plain wooden chest, and have it set in the church, and every night I shall place a sentinel beside it. But you shall not die, even if you are ill now.’

He immediately summoned all the best doctors in the country, and they came with all their prescriptions and their medicine bottles, but next day the princess was stiff and cold in death. All the doctors could certify to that and they all put their names to this and appended their seals, and then they had done all they could.

The king kept his promise. The princess’s body was lain the same day in a plain wooden chest, and set in the chapel of the castle, and on that night and every night after it, a sentinel was posted in the church, to keep watch over the chest.

The first morning when they came to let the sentinel out, there was no sentinel there. They thought he had just got frightened and run away, and next evening a new one was posted in the church. In the morning he was also gone. So it went every night. When they came in the morning to let the sentinel out, there was no one there, and it was impossible to discover which way he had gone if he had run away. And what should they run away for, every one of them, so that nothing more was over heard or seen of

them, from the hour that they were set on guard beside the princess's chest?

It became now a general belief that the princess's ghost walked, and ate up all those who were to guard her chest, and very soon there was no one left who would be placed on this duty, and the king's soldiers deserted the service, before their turn came to be her bodyguard. The king then promised a large reward to the soldier who would volunteer for the post. This did for some time, as there were found a few reckless fellows, who wished to earn this good payment. But they never got it, for in the morning, they too had disappeared like the rest.

So it had gone on for something like a whole year; every night a sentinel had been placed beside the chest, either by compulsion or of his own free will, but not a single one of the sentinels was to be seen, either on the following day or any time thereafter. And so it had also gone with one, on the night before a certain day, when a merry young smith came wandering to the town where the king's castle stood. It was the capital of the country, and people of every king came to it to get work. This smith, whose name was Christian, had come for that same purpose. There was no work for him in the place he belonged to, and he wanted now to seek a place in the capital.

There he entered an inn where he sat down in the public room, and got something to eat. Some under-officers were sitting there, who were out to try to get some one enlisted to stand sentry. They had to go in this way, day after day, and hitherto they had always succeeded in finding one or other reckless fellow. But on this day they had, as yet, found no one. It was too well known how all the sentinels disappeared, who were set on that post, and all that they had got hold of had refused with thanks. These sat down beside Christian, and ordered drinks, and drank along with him. Now Christian was a merry fellow who liked good company; he could both drink and sing, and talk and boast as well, when he got a little drop in his head. He told these under-officers that he was one of that kind of folk who never are afraid of anything. Then he was just the kind of man they liked, said they, and he might easily earn a good penny, before he was a day older, for the king paid a hundred dollars to anyone who would stand as sentinel in the church all night, beside his daughter's chest.

Christian was not afraid of that he wasn’t afraid of anything, so they drank another bottle of wine on this, and Christian went with them up to the colonel, where he was put into uniform with musket, and all the rest, and was then shut up in the church, to stand as sentinel that night.

It was eight o’clock when he took up his post, and for the first hour he was quite proud of his courage; during the second hour he was well pleased with the large reward that he would get, but in the third hour, when it was getting near eleven, the effects of the wine passed off, and he began to get uncomfortable, for he had heard about this post; that no one had ever escapeed alive from it, so far as was known. But neither did anyone know what had become of all the sentinels. The thought of this ran in his head so much, after the wine was out of it, that he searched about everywhere for a way of escape, and finally, at eleven o’clock, he found a little postern in the steeple which was not locked, and out at this he crept, intending to run away.

At the same moment as he put his foot outside the church door, he saw standing before him a little man, who said, ‘Good evening, Christian, where are you going?’

With that he felt as if he were rooted to the spot and could not move.

‘Nowhere,’ said he.

‘Oh, yes,’ said the little man, ‘You were just about to run away, but you have taken upon you to stand sentinel in the church to-night, and there you must stay.’

Christian said, very humbly, that he dared not, and therefore wanted to get away, and begged to be let go.

‘No,’ said the little one, ‘you must remain at your post, but I shall give you a piece of good advice; you shall go up into the pulpit, and remain standing there. You need never mind what you see or hear, it will not be able to do you any harm, if you remain in your place until you hear the lid of the chest slam down again behind the dead; then all danger is past, and you can go about the church, wherever you please.’

The little man then pushed him in at the door again, and locked it after him. Christian made haste to get up into the pulpit, and stood there, without noticing anything, until the clock struck twelve. Then the lid of the princess’s chest sprang up, and out of it there came something like the princess, dressed as you see in the picture. It shrieked and howled, ‘Sentry,

where are you? Sentry, where are you? If you don't come, you shall get the most cruel death anyone had ever got.'

It went all round the church, and when it finally caught sight of the smith, up in the pulpit, it came rushing thither and mounted the steps. But it could not get up the whole way, and for all that it stretched and strained, it could not touch Christian, who meanwhile stood and trembled up in the pulpit. When the clock struck one, the appearance had to go back into the chest again, and Christian heard the lid slam after it. After this there was dead silence in the church. He lay down where he was and fell asleep, and did not awake before it was bright daylight, and he heard steps outside, and the noise of the key being put into the lock. Then he came down from the pulpit, and stood with his musket in front of the princess's chest.

It was the colonel himself who came with the patrol, and he was not a little surprised when he found the recruit safe and sound. He wanted to have a report, but Christian would give him none, so he took him straight up to the king, and announced for the first time that here was the sentinel who had stood guard in the church over-night. The king immediately got out of bed, and laid the hundred dollars for him on the table, and then wanted to question him. 'Have you seen anything?' said he. 'Have you seen my daughter?' 'I have stood at my post,' said the young smith, 'and that is quite enough; I undertook nothing more.' He was not sure whether he dared tell what he had seen and heard, and besides he was also a little conceited because he had done what no other man had been able to do, or had had courage for. The king professed to be quite satisfied, and asked him whether he would engage himself to stand on guard again the following night. 'No, thank you,' said Christian, 'I will have no more of that!'

'As you please,' said the king, 'you have behaved like a brave fellow, and now you shall have your breakfast. You must be needing something to strengthen you after that turn.'

The king had breakfast laid for him, and sat down at the table with him in person; he kept constantly filling his glass for him and praising him, and drinking his health. Christian needed no pressing, but did full justice both to the food and drink, and not least to the latter. Finally he grew bold, and said that if the king would give him two hundred dollars for it, he was his man to stand sentry next night as well.

When this was arranged, Christian bade him ‘Good-day,’ and went down among the guards, and then out into the town along with other soldiers and under-officers. He had his pocket full of money, and treated them, and drank with them and boasted and made game of the good-for-nothings who were afraid to stand on guard, because they were frightened that the dead princess would eat them. See whether she had eaten him! So the day passed in mirth and glee, but when eight o’clock came, Christian was again shut up in the church, all alone.

Before he had been there two hours, he got tired of it, and thought only of getting away. He found a little door behind the altar which was not locked, and at ten o’clock he slipped out at it, and took to his heels and made for the beach. He had got half-way thither, when all at once the same little man stood in front of him and said, ‘Good evening, Christian, where are you going?’ ‘I’ve leave to go where I please,’ said the smith, but at the same time he noticed that he could not move a foot. ‘No, you have undertaken to keep guard to-night as well,’ said the little man, ‘and you must attend to that.’ He then took hold of him, and however unwilling he was, Christian had to go with him right back to the same little door that he had crept out at. When they got there, the little man said to him, ‘Go in front of the altar now, and take in your hand the book that is lying there. There you shall stay till you hear the lid of the chest slam down over the dead. In that way you will come to no harm.’

With that the little man shoved him in at the door, and locked it. Christian then immediately went in front of the altar, and took the book in his hand, and stood thus until the clock struck twelve, and the appearance sprang out of the chest. ‘Sentry, where are you? Sentry, where are you?’ it shrieked, and then rushed to the pulpit, and right up into it. But there was no one there that night. Then it howled and shrieked again,

My father has set no sentry in,
War and Pest this night begin.

At the same moment, it noticed the smith standing in front of the altar, and came rushing towards him. ‘Are you there?’ it screamed; ‘now I’ll catch you.’ But it could not come up over the step in front of the altar, and there it continued to howl, and scream, and threaten, until the clock struck

one, when it had to go into the chest again, and Christian heard the lid slam above it. That night, however, it had not the same appearance as on the previous one; it was less ugly.

When all was quiet in the church, the smith lay down before the altar and slept calmly till the following morning, when the colonel came to fetch him. He was taken up to the king again, and things went on as the day before. He got his money, but would give no explanation whether he had seen the king's daughter, and he would not take the post again, he said. But after he had got a good breakfast, and tasted well of the king's wines, he undertook to go on guard again the third night, but he would not do it for less than the half of the kingdom, he said, for it was a dangerous post, and the king had to agree, and promise him this.

The remainder of the day went like the previous one. He played the boastful soldier, and the merry smith, and he had comrades and boon-companions in plenty. At eight o'clock he had to put on his uniform again, and was shut up in the church. He had not been there for an hour before he had come to his senses, and thought, 'It's best to stop now, while the game is going well.' The third night, he was sure, would be the worst; he had been drunk when he promised it, and the half of the kingdom, the king could never have been in earnest about that! So he decided to leave, without waiting so long as on the previous nights. In that way he would escape the little man who had watched him before. All the doors and posterns were locked, but he finally though of creeping up to a window, and opening that, and as the clock struck nine, he crept out there. It was fairly high in the wall, but he got to the ground with no bones broken, and started to run. He got down to the shore without meeting anyone, and there he got into a boat, and pushed off from land. He laughed immensely to himself at the thought of how cleverly he had managed and how he had cheated the little man. Just then he heard a voice from the shore, 'Good evening, Christian, where are you going?' He gave no answer. 'To-night your legs will be too short,' he thought, and pulled at the oars. But he then felt something lay hold of the boat, and drag it straight in to shore, for all that he sat and struggled with the oars.

The man then laid hold of him, and said, 'You must remain at your post, as you have promised,' and whether he liked it or not, Christian had just to go back with him the whole way to the church.

He could never get in at that window again, Christian said; it was far too high up.

‘You must go in there, and you shall go in there,’ said the little man, and with that he lifted him up on to the window-sill. Then he said to him: ‘Notice well now what you have to do. This evening you must stretch yourself out on the left-hand side of her chest. The lid opens to the right, and she comes out to the left. When she has got out of the chest and passed over you, you must get into it and lie there, and that in a hurry, without her seeing you. There you must remain lying until day dawns, and whether she threatens you or entreats you, you must not come out of it, or give her any answer. Then she has no power over you, and both you and she are freed.’

The smith then had to go in at the window, just as he came out, and went and laid himself all his length on the left side of the princess’s chest, close up to it, and there he lay stiff as a rock until the clock struck twelve. Then the lid sprang up to the right, and the princess came out, straight over him, and rushed round the church, howling and shrieking ‘Sentry, where are you? Sentry, where are you?’ She went towards the altar, and right up to it, but there was no one there; then she screamed again,

My father has set no sentry in,
War and Pest will now begin.

Then she went round the whole church, both up and down, sighing and weeping,

My father has set no sentry in,
War and Pest will now begin.

Then she went away again, and at the same moment the clock in the tower struck one.

Then the smith heard in the church a soft music, which grew louder and louder, and soon filled the whole building. He heard also a multitude of footsteps, as if the church was being filled with people. He heard the priest go through the service in front of the altar, and there was singing more beautiful than he had ever heard before. Then he also heard the priest offer up a prayer of thanksgiving because the land had been freed from war

and pestilence, and from all misfortune, and the king's daughter delivered from the evil one. Many voices joined in, and a hymn of praise was sung; then he heard the priest again, and heard his own name and that of the princess, and thought that he was being wedded to her. The church was packed full, but he could see nothing. Then he heard again the many footsteps as ol' folk leaving the church, while the music sounded fainter and fainter, until it altogether died away. When it was silent, the light of day began to break in through the windows.

The smith sprang up out of the chest and fell on his knees and thanked God. The church was empty, but up in front of the altar lay the princess, white and red, like a human being, but sobbing and crying, and shaking with cold in her white shroud. The smith took his sentry coat and wrapped it round her; then she dried her tears, and took his hand and thanked him, and said that he had now freed her from all the sorcery that had been in her from her birth, and which had come over her again when her father broke the command against seeing her until she had completed her fourteenth year.

She said further, that if he who had delivered her would take her in marriage, she would be his. If not, she would go into a nunnery, and he could marry no other as long as she lived, for he was wedded to her with the service of the dead, which he had heard.

She was now the most beautiful young princess that anyone could wish to see, and he was now lord of half the kingdom, which had been promised him for standing on guard the third nigh. So they agreed that they would have each other, and love each other all their days.

With the first sunbeam the watch came and opened the church, and not only was the colonel there, but the king in person, come to see what had happened to the sentinel. He found them both sitting hand in hand on the step in front of the altar, and immediately knew his daughter again, and took her in his arms, thanking God and her deliverer. He made no objections to what they had arranged, and so Christian the smith held his wedding with the princess, and got half the kingdom at once, and the whole of it when the king died.

As for the other sentries, with so many doors and windows open, no doubt they had run away, and gone into the Prussian service. And as for

what Christian said he saw, he had been drinking more wine than was good for him.

THE THREE BROTHERS

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Translated from the German of the Brothers Grimm.

There was once a man who had three sons, and no other possessions beyond the house in which he lived. Now the father loved his three sons equally, so that he could not make up his mind which of them should have the house after his death, because he did not wish to favour any one more than the others. And he did not want to sell the house, because it had belonged to his family for generations; otherwise he could have divided the money equally amongst them. At last an idea struck him, and he said to his sons: ‘You must all go out into the world, and look about you, and each learn a trade, and then, when you return, whoever can produce the best masterpiece shall have the house.’

The sons were quite satisfied. The eldest wished to be a blacksmith, the second a barber, and the third a fencing-master. They appointed a time when they were to return home, and then they all set out.

It so happened that each found a good master, where he learnt all that was necessary for his trade in the best possible way. The blacksmith had to shoe the king’s horses, and thought to himself, ‘Without doubt the house will be yours!’ The barber shaved the best men in the kingdom, and he, too, made sure that the house would be his. The fencing-master received many a blow, but he set his teeth, and would not allow himself to be troubled by them, for he thought to himself, ‘If you are afraid of a blow you will never get the house.’

When the appointed time had come the three brothers met once more, and they sat down and discussed the best opportunity of showing off their skill. Just then a hare came running across the field towards them. ‘Look!’ said the barber, ‘here comes something in the nick of time!’ seized basin and soap, made a lather whilst the hare was approaching, and then, as it ran at full tilt, shaved its moustaches, without cutting it or injuring a single hair on its body.

‘I like that very much indeed,’ said the father. ‘Unless the others exert themselves to the utmost, the house will be yours.’

Soon after they saw a man driving a carriage furiously towards them. ‘Now, father, you shall see what I can do!’ said the blacksmith, and he sprang after the carriage, tore off the four shoes of the horse as it was going at the top of its speed, and shod it with four new ones without checking its pace.

‘You are a clever fellow!’ said the father, ‘and know your trade as well as your brother. I really don’t know to which of you I shall give the house.’

Then the third son said, ‘Father, let me also show you something;’ and, as it was beginning to rain, he drew his sword and swung it in cross cuts above his head, so that not a drop fell on him, and the rain fell heavier and heavier, till at last it was coming down like a waterspout, but he swung his sword faster and faster, and kept as dry as if he were under cover.

When the father saw this he was astonished, and said, ‘You have produced the greatest masterpiece: the house is yours.’

Both the other brothers were quite satisfied, and praised him too, and as they were so fond of each other they all three remained at home and plied their trades: and as they were so experienced and skilful they earned a great deal of money. So they lived happily together till they were quite old, and when one was taken ill and died the two others were so deeply grieved that they were also taken ill and died too. And so, because they had all been so clever, and so fond of each other, they were all laid in one grave.

THE SNOW-QUEEN

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Translated from the German of Hans Andersen by Miss Alma Alleyne.

There was once a dreadfully wicked hobgoblin. One day he was in capital spirits because he had made a looking-glass which reflected everything that was good and beautiful in such a way that it dwindled almost to nothing, but anything that was bad and ugly stood out very clearly and looked much worse. The most beautiful landscapes looked like boiled spinach, and the best people looked repulsive or seemed to stand on their heads with no bodies; their faces were so changed that they could not be recognised, and if anyone had a freckle you might be sure it would be spread over the nose and mouth.

That was the best part of it, said the hobgoblin.

But one day the looking-glass was dropped, and it broke into a million-billion and more pieces.

And now came the greatest misfortune of all, for each of the pieces was hardly as large as a grain of sand and they flew about all over the world, and if anyone had a bit in his eye there it stayed, and then he would see everything awry, or else could only see the bad sides of a case. For every tiny splinter of the glass possessed the same power that the whole glass had.

Some people got a splinter in their hearts, and that was dreadful, for then it began to turn into a lump of ice.

The hobgoblin laughed till his sides ached, but still the tiny bits of glass flew about.

And now we will hear all about it.

In a large town, where there were so many people and houses that there was not room enough for everybody to have gardens, lived two poor children. They were not brother and sister, but they loved each other just as much as if they were. Their parents lived opposite one another in two

attics, and out on the leads they had put two boxes filled with flowers. There were sweet peas in it, and two rose trees, which grow beautifully, and in summer the two children were allowed to take their little chairs and sit out under the roses. Then they had splendid games.

In the winter they could not do this, but then they put hot pennies against the frozen window-panes, and made round holes to look at each other through.

His name was Kay, and hers was Gerda.

Outside it was snowing fast.

‘Those are the white bees swarming,’ said the old grandmother.

‘Have they also a queen bee?’ asked the little boy, for he knew that the real bees have one.

‘To be sure,’ said the grandmother. ‘She flies wherever they swarm the thickest. She is larger than any of them, and never stays upon the earth, but flies again up into the black clouds. Often at midnight she flies through the streets, and peeps in at all the windows, and then they freeze in such pretty patterns and look like flowers.’

‘Yes, we have seen that,’ said both children; they knew that it was true.

‘Can the Snow-queen come in here?’ asked the little girl.

‘Just let her!’ cried the boy, ‘I would put her on the stove, and melt her!’

But the grandmother stroked his hair, and told some more stories.

In the evening, when little Kay was going to bed, he jumped on the chair by the window, and looked through the little hole. A few snow-flakes were falling outside, and one of the, the largest, lay on the edge of one of the window-boxes. The snow-flake grew larger and larger till it took the form of a maiden, dressed in finest white gauze.

She was so beautiful and dainty, but all of ice, hard bright ice.

Still she was alive; her eyes glittered like two clear stars, but there was no rest or peace in them. She nodded at the window, and beckoned with her hand. The little boy was frightened, and sprang down from the chair. It seemed as if a great white bird had flown past the window.

The next day there was a harder frost than before.

Then came the spring, then the summer, when the roses grew and smelt more beautifully than ever.

Kay and Gerda were looking at one of their picture-books—the clock in the great church-tower had just struck five, when Kay exclaimed, ‘Oh! something has stung my heart, and I’ve got something in my eye!’

The little girl threw her arms round his neck; he winked hard with both his eyes; no, she could see nothing in them.

‘I think it is gone now,’ said he; but it had not gone. It was one of the tiny splinters of the glass of the magic mirror which we have heard about, that turned everything great and good reflected in it small and ugly. And poor Kay had also a splinter in his heart, and it began to change into a lump of ice. It did not hurt him at all, but the splinter was there all the same.

‘Why are you crying?’ he asked; ‘it makes you look so ugly! There’s nothing the matter with me. Just look! that rose is all slug-eaten, and this one is stunted! What ugly roses they are!’

And he began to pull them to pieces.

‘Kay, what are you doing?’ cried the little girl.

And when he saw how frightened she was, he pulled off another rose, and ran in at his window away from dear little Gerda.

When she came later on with the picture book, he said that it was only fit for babies, and when his grandmother told them stories, he was always interrupting with, ‘But—’ and then he would get behind her and put on her spectacles, and speak just as she did. This he did very well, and everybody laughed. Very soon he could imitate the way all the people in the street walked and talked.

His games were now quite different. On a winter’s day he would take a burning glass and hold it out on his blue coat and let the snow-flakes fall on it.

‘Look in the glass, Gerda! Just see how regular they are! They are much more interesting than real flowers. Each is perfect; they are all made according to rule. If only they did not melt!’

One morning Kay came out with his warm gloves on, and his little sledge hung over his shoulder. He shouted to Gerda, ‘I am going to the market-place to play with the other boys,’ and away he went.

In the market-place the boldest boys used often to fasten their sledges to the carts of the farmers, and then they got a good ride.

When they were in the middle of their games there drove into the square a large sledge, all white, and in it sat a figure dressed in a rough white fur pelisse with a white fur cap on.

The sledge drove twice round the square, and Kay fastened his little sledge behind it and drove off. It went quicker and quicker into the next street. The driver turned round, and nodded to Kay ina friendly way as if they had known each other before. Every time that Kay tried to unfasten his sledge the driver nodded again, and Kay sat still once more. Then they drove out of the town, and the snow began to fall so thickly that the little boy could not see his hand before him, and on and on they went. He quickly unfastened the cord to get loose from the big sledge, but it was of no use; his little sledge hung on fast, and it went on like the wind.

Then he cried out, but nobody heard him. He was dreadfully frightened.

The snowflakes grew larger and larger till they looked like great white birds. All at once they flew aside, the large sledge stood still, and the figure who was driving stood up. The fur cloak and cap were all of snow. It was a lady, tall and slim, and glittering. It was the Snow-queen.

‘We have come at a good rate,’ she said; ‘but you are almost frozen. Creep in under my cloak.’

And she set him close to her in the sledge and drew the cloak over him. He felt as though he were sinking into a snow-drift.

‘Are you cold now?’ she asked, and kissed his forehead. The kiss was cold as ice and reached down to his heart, which was already half a lump of ice.

‘My sledge! Don’t forget my sledge!’ He thought of that first, and it was fastened to one of the great white birds who flew behind with the sledge on its back.

The Snow-queen kissed Kay again, and then he forgot all about little Gerda, his grandmother, and everybody at home.

‘Now I must not kiss you any more,’ she said, ‘or else I should kiss you to death.’

Then away they flew over forests and lakes, over sea and land. Round them whistled the cold wind, the wolves howled, and the snow hissed; over them flew the black shrieking crows. But high up the moon shone large

and bright, and thus Kay passed the long winter night. In the day he slept at the Snow-queen's feet.

But what happened to little Gerda when Kay did not come back?

What had become of him? Nobody knew. The other boys told how they had seen him fasten his sledge on to a large one which had driven out of the town gate.

Gerda cried a great deal. The winter was long and dark to her.

Then the spring came with warm sunshine. 'I will go and look for Kay,' said Gerda.

So she went down to the river and got into a little boat that was there. Presently the stream began to carry it away.

'Perhaps the river will take me to Kay,' thought Gerda. She glided down, past trees and fields, till she came to a large cherry garden, in which stood a little house with strange red and blue windows and a straw roof. Before the door stood two wooden soldiers, who were shouldering arms.

Gerda called to them, but they naturally did not answer. The river carried the boat on to the land.

Gerda called out still louder, and there came out of the house a very old woman. She leant upon a crutch, and she wore a large sun-hat which was painted with the most beautiful flowers.

'You poor little girl!' said the old woman.

And then she stepped into the water, brought the boat in close with her crutch, and lifted little Gerda out.

'And now come and tell me who you are, and how you came here,' she said.

Then Gerda told her everything, and asked her if she had seen Kay. But she said he had not passed that way yet, but he would soon come.

She told Gerda not to be sad, and that she should stay with her and take of the cherry trees and flowers, which were better than any picture-bok, as they could each tell a story.

She then took Gerda's hand and led her into the little house and shut the door.

The windows were very high, and the panes were red, blue, and yellow, so that the light came through in curious colours. On the table were the most delicious cherries, and the old woman let Gerda eat as many as she liked, while she combed her hair with a gold comb as she ate.

The beautiful sunny hair rippled and shone round the dear little face, which was so soft and sweet. ‘I have always longed to have a dear little girl just like you, and you shall see how happy we will be together.’

And as she combed Gerda’s hair, Gerda thought less and less about Kay, for the old woman was a witch, but not a wicked witch, for she only enchanted now and then to amuse herself, and she did want to keep little Gerda very much.

So she went into the garden and waved her stick over all the rose bushes and blossoms and all; they sank down into the black earth, and no one could see where they had been.

The old woman was afraid that if Gerda saw the roses she would begin to think about her own, and then would remember Kay and run away.

Then she led Gerda out into the garden. How glorious it was, and what lovely scents filled the air! All the flowers you can think of blossomed there all the year round.

Gerda jumped for joy and played there till the sun set behind the tall cherry trees, and then she slept in a beautiful bed with red silk pillows filled with violets, and she slept soundly and dreamed as a queen does on her wedding day.

The next day she played again with the flowers in the warm sunshine, and so many days passed by. Gerda knew every flower, but although there were so many, it seemed to her as if one were not there, though she could not remember which.

She was looking one day at the old woman’s sun-hat which had hte painted flowers on it, and there she saw a rose.

The witch had forgotten to make that vanish when she had made the other roses disappear under the earth. it was so difficult to think of everything.

‘Why, there are no roses here!’ cried Gerda,, and she hunted amongst all the flowers, but not one was to be found. Then she sat down and cried, but her tears fell just on the spot where a rose bush had sunk, and when her warm tears watered the earth, the bush came up in full bloom just as it had been before. Gerda kissed the roses and thought of the lovely roses at home, and with them came the thought of little Kay.

‘Oh, what have I been doing!’ said the little girl. ‘I wanted to look for Kay.’

She ran to the end of the garden. The gate was shut, but she pushed against the rusty lock so that it came open.

She ran out with her little bare feet. No one came after her. At last she could not run any longer, and she sat down on a large stone. When she looked round she saw that the summer was over; it was late autumn. It had not changed in the beautiful garden, where were sunshine and flowers all the year round.

‘Oh, dear, how late I have made myself!’ said Gerda. ‘It’s autumn already! I cannot rest!’ And she sprang up to run on.

Oh, how tired and sore her little feet grew, and it became colder and colder.

She had to rest again, and there on the snow in front of her was a large crow.

It had been looking at her for some time, and it nodded its head and said, ‘Caw! caw! good day.’ Then it asked the little girl why she was alone in the world. She told the crow her story, and asked if he had seen Kay.

The crow nodded very thoughtfully and said, ‘It might be! It might be!’

‘What! Do you think you have?’ cried the little girl, and she almost squeezed the crow to death as she kissed him.

‘Gently, gently!’ said the crow. ‘I think—I know I think—it might be little Kay, but now he has forgotten you for the princess!’

‘Does he live with a princess?’ asked Gerda.

‘Yes, listen,’ said the crow.

Then he told her all he knew.

‘In the kingdom in which we are now sitting lives a princess who is dreadfully clever. She has read all the newspapers in the world and has forgotten them again. She is as clever as that. The other day she came to the throne, and that is not so pleasant as people think. Then she began to say, “Why should I not marry?” But she wanted a husband who could answer when he was spoken to, not one who would stand up stiffly and look respectable—that would be too dull.

‘When she told all the Court ladies, they were delighted. You can believe every word I say,’ said the crow, ‘I have a tame sweetheart in the palace, and she tells me everything.’

Of course his sweetheart was a crow.

‘The newspapers came out next morning with a border of hearts round it, and the princess’s monogram on it, and inside you could read that every good-looking young man might come into the palace and speak to the princess, and whoever should speak loud enough to be heard would be well fed and looked after, and the one who spoke best should become the princess’s husband. Indeed,’ said the crow, ‘you can quite believe me. It is as true as that I am sitting here.

‘Young men came in streams, and there was such a crowding and a mixing together! But nothing came of it on the first nor on the second day. They could all speak quite well when they were in the street, but as soon as they came inside the palace door, and saw the guards in silver, and upstairs the footmen in gold, and the great hall all lighted up, then their wits left them! And when they stood in front of the throne where the princess was sitting, then they could not think of anything to say except to repeat the last word she had spoken, and she did not much care to hear that again. It seemed as if they were walking in their sleep until they came out into the street again, when they could speak once more. There was a row stretching from the gate of the town up to the castle.

‘They were hungry and thirsty, but in the palace they did not even get a glass of water.

‘A few of the cleverest had brought some slices of bread and butter with them, but they did not share them with their neighbour, for they thought, “If he looks hungry, the princess will not take him!” ’

‘But what about Kay?’ asked Gerda. ‘When did he come? Was he in the crowd?’

‘Wait a bit; we are coming to him! On the third day a little figure came without horse or carriage and walked jauntily up to the palace. His eyes shone as yours do; he had lovely curling hair, but quite poor clothes.’

‘That was Kay!’ cried Gerda with delight. ‘Oh, then I have found him!’ and she clapped her hands.

‘He had a little bundle on his back,’ said the crow.

‘No, it must have been his skates, for he went away with his skates!’

‘Very likely,’ said the crow, ‘I did not see for certain. But I know this from my sweetheart, that when he came to the palace door and saw the royal guards in silver, and on the stairs the footmen in gold, he was not the

least bit put out. He nodded to them, saying, “It must be rather dull standing on the stairs; I would rather go inside!”

‘The halls blazed with lights; councillors and ambassadors were walking about in noiseless shoes carrying gold dishes. It was enough to make one nervous! His boots creaked dreadfully loud, but he was not frightened.’

‘That must be Kay!’ said Gerda. ‘I know he had new boots on; I have heard them creaking in his grandmother’s room!’

‘They did creak, certainly!’ said the crow. ‘And, not one bit afraid, up he went to the princess, who was sitting on a large pearl as round as a spinning wheel. All the ladies-in-waiting were standing round, each with their attendants, and the lords-in-waiting with their attendants. The nearer they stood to the door the prouder they were.’

‘It must have been dreadful!’ said little Gerda. ‘And Kay did win the princess?’

‘I heard from my tame sweetheart that he was merry and quick-witted; he had not come to woo, he said, but to listen to the princess’s wisdom. And the end of it was that they fell in love with each other.’

‘Oh, yes; that was Kay!’ said Gerda. ‘He was so clever; he could do sums with fractions. Oh, do lead me to the palace!’

‘That’s easily said!’ answered the crow, ‘but how are we to manage that? I must talk it over with my tame sweetheart. She may be able to advise us, for I must tell you that a little girl like you could never get permission to enter it.’

‘Yes, I will get it!’ said Gerda. ‘When Kay hears that I am there he will come out at once and fetch me!’

‘Wait for me by the railings,’ said the crow, and he nodded his head and flew away.

It was late in the evening when he came back.

‘Caw, caw!’ he said, ‘I am to give you her love, and here is a little roll for you. She took it out of the kitchen; there’s plenty there, and you must be hungry. You cannot come into the palace. The guards in silver and the footmen in gold would not allow it. But don’t cry! You shall get in all right. My sweetheart knows a little back-stairs which leads to the sleeping-room, and she knows where to find the key.’

They went into the garden, and when the lights in the palace were put out one after the other, the crow led Gerda to a back-door.

Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with anxiety and longing! It seemed as if she were going to do something wrong, but she only wanted to know if it were little Kay. Yes, it must be he! She remembered so well his clever eyes, his curly hair. She could see him smiling as he did when they were at home under the rose trees! He would be so pleased to see her, and to hear how they all were at home.

Now they were on the stairs; a little lamp was burning, and on the landing stood the tame crow. She put her head on one side and looked at Gerda, who bowed as her grandmother had taught her.

'My betrothed has told me many nice things about you, my dear young lady,' she said. 'Will you take the lamp while I go in front? We go this way so as to meet no one.'

Through beautiful rooms they came to the sleeping-room. In the middle of it, hung on a thick rod of gold, were two beds, shaped like lilies, one all white, in which lay the princess, and the other red, in which Gerda hoped to find Kay. She pushed aside the curtain, and saw a brown neck. Oh, it was Kay! She called his name out loud, holding the lamp towards him.

He woke up, turned his head and—it was not Kay!

It was only his neck that was like Kay's, but he was young and handsome. The princess sat up in her lily-bed and asked who was there.

Then Gerda cried, and told her story and all that the crows had done.

'You poor child!' said the prince and princess, and they praised the crows, and said that they were not angry with them, but that they must not do it again. Now they should have a reward.

'Would you like to fly away free?' said the princess, 'or will you have a permanent place as court crows with what you can get in the kitchen?'

And both crows bowed and asked for a permanent appointment, for they thought of their old age.

And they put Gerda to bed, and she folded her hands, thinking, as she fell asleep, 'How good people and animals are to me!'

The next day she was dressed from head to foot in silk and satin. They wanted her to stay on in the palace, but she begged for a little carriage and

a horse, and a pair of shoes so that she might go out again into the world to look for Kay.

They gave her a muff as well as some shoes; she was warmly dressed, and when she was ready, there in front of the door stood a coach of pure gold, with a coachman, footmen and postilions with gold crowns on.

The prince and princess helped her into the carriage and wished her good luck.

The wild crow who was now married drove with her for the first three miles; the other crow could not come because she had a bad headache.

‘Good-bye, good-bye!’ called the prince and princess; and little Gerda cried, and the crow cried.

When he said good-bye, he flew on to a tree and waved with his black wings as long as the carriage, which shone like the sun, was in sight.

They came at last to a dark wood, but the coach lit it up like a torch. When the robbers saw it, they rushed out, exclaiming, ‘Gold! gold!’

They seized the horses, killed the coachman, footmen and postilions, and dragged Gerda out of the carriage.

‘She is plump and tender! I will eat her!’ said the old robber-queen, and she drew her long knife, which glittered horribly.

‘You shall not kill her!’ cried her little daughter. ‘She shall play with me. She shall give me her muff and her beautiful dress, and she shall sleep in my bed.’

The little robber-girl was as big as Gerda, but was stronger, broader, with dark hair and black eyes. She threw her arms round Gerda and said, ‘They shall not kill you, so long as you are not naughty. Aren’t you a princess?’

‘No,’ said Gerda, and she told all that had happened to her, and how dearly she loved little Kay.

The robber-girl looked at her very seriously, and nodded her head, saying, ‘They shall not kill you, even if you are naughty, for then I will kill you myself!’

And she dried Gerda’s eyes, and stuck both her hands in the beautiful warm muff.

The little robber-girl took Gerda to a corner of the robbers’ camp where she slept.

All round were more than a hundred wood-pigeons which seemed to be asleep, but they moved a little when the two girls came up.

There was also, near by, a reindeer which the robber-girl teased by tickling it with her long sharp knife.

Gerda lay awake for some time.

‘Coo, coo!’ said the wood-pigeons. ‘We have seen little Kay. A white bird carried his sledge; he was sitting in the Snow-queen’s carriage which drove over the forest when our little ones were in the nest. She breathed on them, and all except we two died. Coo, coo!’

‘What are you saying over there?’ cried Gerda. ‘Where was the Snow-queen going to? Do you know at all?’

‘She was probably travelling to Lapland, where there is always ice and snow. Ask the reindeer.’

‘There is capital ice and snow there!’ said the reindeer. ‘One can jump about there in the great sparkling valleys. There the Snow-queen has her summer palace, but her best palace is up by the North Pole, on the island called Spitzbergen.’

‘O Kay, my little Kay!’ sobbed Gerda.

‘You must lie still,’ said the little robber-girl, ‘or else I shall stick my knife into you!’

In the morning Gerda told her all that the wood-pigeons had said. She nodded. ‘Do you know where Lapland is?’ she asked the reindeer.

‘Who should know better than I?’ said the beast, and his eyes sparkled. ‘I was born and bred there on the snow-fields.’

‘Listen!’ said the robber-girl to Gerda; ‘you see that all the robbers have gone; only my mother is left, and she will fall asleep in the afternoon —then I will do something for you!’

When her mother had fallen asleep, the robber-girl went up to the reindeer and said, ‘I am going to set you free so that you can run to Lapland. But you must go quickly and carry this little girl to the Snow-queen’s palace, where her playfellow is. You must have heard all that she told about it, for she spoke loud enough!’

The reindeer sprang high for joy. The robber-girl lifted little Gerda up, and had the foresight to tie her on firmly, and even gave her a little pillow for a saddle. ‘You must have your fur boots,’ she said, ‘for it will be cold; but I shall keep your muff, for it is so cosy! But, so that you may not

freeze, here are my mother’s great fur gloves; they will come up to your elbows. Creep into them!’

And Gerda cried for joy.

‘Don’t make such faces!’ said the little robber-girl. ‘You must look very happy. And here are two loaves and a sausage; now you won’t be hungry!’

They were tied to the reindeer, the little robber-girl opened the door, made all the big dogs come away, cut through the halter with her sharp knife, and said to the reindeer, ‘Run now! But take great care of the little girl.’

And Gerda stretched out her hands with the large fur gloves towards the little robber-girl and said, ‘Good-bye!’

Then the reindeer flew over the ground, through the great forest, as fast as he could.

The wolves howled, the ravens screamed, the sky seemed on fire.

‘Those are my dear old northern lights,’ said the reindeer; ‘see how they shine!’

And then he ran faster still, day and night.

The loaves were eaten, and the sausage also, and then they came to Lapland.

They stopped by a wretched little house; the roof almost touched the ground, and the door was so low that you had to creep in and out.

There was no one in the house except an old Lapland woman who was cooking fish over an oil-lamp. The reindeer told Gerda’s whole history, but first he told his own, for that seemed to him much more important, and Gerda was so cold that she could not speak.

‘Ah, you poor creatures!’ said the Lapland woman; ‘you have still further to go! You must go over a hundred miles into Finland, for there the Snow-queen lives, and every night she burns Bengal lights. I will write some words on a dried stock-fish, for I have no paper, and you must give it to the Finland woman, for she can give you better advice than I can.’

And when Gerda was warmed and had had something to eat and drink, the Lapland woman wrote on a dried stock-fish, and begged Gerda to take care of it, tied Gerda securely on the reindeer’s back, and away they went again.

The whole night was ablaze with northern lights, and then they came to Finland and knocked at the Finland woman's chimney, for door she had none.

Inside it was so hot that the Finland woman wore very few clothes; she loosened Gerda's clothes and drew off her fur gloves and boots. She laid a piece of ice on the reindeer's head, and then read what was written on the stock-fish. She read it over three times till she knew it by heart, and then put the fish in the saucepan, for she never wasted anything.

Then the reindeer told his story, and afterwards little Gerda's and the Finland woman blinked her eyes but said nothing.

'You are very clever,' said the reindeer. 'I know. Cannot you give the little girl a drink so that she may have the strength of twelve men and overcome the Snow-queen?'

'The strength of twelve men!' said the Finland woman; 'that would not help much. Little Kay is with the Snow-queen and he likes everything there very much and thinks it the best place in the world. But that is because he has a splinter of glass in his heart and a bit in his eye. If these do not come out, he will never be free, and the Snow-queen will keep her power over him.'

'But cannot you give little Gerda something so that she can have power over her?'

'I can give her no greater power than she has already; don't you see how great it is? Don't you see how men and beasts must help her when she wanders into the wide world with her bare feet? She is powerful already, because she is a dear little innocent child. If she cannot by herself conquer the Snow-queen and take away the glass splinters from little Kay, we cannot help her! The Snow-queen's garden begins two miles from here. You can carry the little maiden so far; put her down by the large bush with red berries growing in the snow. Then you must come back here as fast as you can.'

Then the Finland woman lifted little Gerda on the reindeer and away he sped.

'Oh, I have left my gloves and boots behind!' cried Gerda. She missed them in the piercing cold, but the reindeer did not dare to stop. On he ran till he came to the bush with red berries. Then he set Gerda down and kissed her mouth, and great big tears ran down his cheeks, and then he ran

back. There stood poor Gerda, without shoes or gloves in the middle of the bitter cold of Finland.

She ran on as fast as she could. A regiment of gigantic snowflakes came against her, but they melted when they touched her, and she went on with fresh courage.

And now we must see what Kay was doing. He was not thinking of Gerda, and never dreamt that she was standing outside the palace.

The walls of the palace were built of driven snow, and the doors and windows of piercing winds. There were more than a hundred halls in it all of frozen snow. The largest was several miles long; the bright Northern lights lit them up, and very large and empty and cold and glittering they were! In the middle of the great hall was a frozen lake which had cracked in a thousand pieces; each piece was exactly like the other. Here the Snow-queen used to sit when she was at home.

Little Kay was almost blue and black with cold, but he did not feel it, for she had kissed away his feelings and his heart was a lump of ice.

He was pulling about some sharp, flat pieces of ice, and trying to fit one into the other. He thought each was most beautiful, but that was because of the splinter of glass in his eye. He fitted them into a great many shapes, but he wanted to make them spell the word ‘Love.’ The Snow-queen had said, ‘If you can spell out that word you shalt be your own master. I will give you the whole world and a new pair of skates.’

But he could not do it.

‘Now I must fly to warmer countries,’ said the Snow-queen. ‘I must go and powder my black kettles!’ (This was what she called Mount Etna and Mount Vesuvius.) ‘It does the lemons and grapes good.’

And off she flew, and Kay sat alone in the great hall trying to do his puzzle.

He sat so still that you would have thought he was frozen.

Then it happened that little Gerda stepped into the hall. The biting cold winds became quiet as if they had fallen asleep when she appeared in the great, empty, freezing hall.

She caught sight of Kay; she recognised him, and ran and put her arms round his neck, crying, ‘Kay! dear little Kay! I have found you at last!’

But he sat quite still and cold. Then Gerda wept hot tears which fell on his neck and thawed his heart and swept away the bit of the looking-glass.

He looked at her and then he burst into tears. He cried so much that the glass splinter swam out of his eye; then he knew her, and cried out, ‘Gerda! dear little Gerda! Where have you been so long? and where have I been?’

And he looked round him.

‘How cold it is here! How wide and empty!’ and he threw himself on Gerda, and she laughed and wept for joy. It was such a happy time that the pieces of ice even danced round them for joy, and when they were tired and lay down again they formed themselves into the letters that the Snow-queen had said he must spell in order to become his own master and have the whole world and a new pair of skates.

And Gerda kissed his cheeks and they grew rosy; she kissed his eyes and they sparkled like hers; she kissed his hands and feet and he became warm and glowing. The Snow-queen might come home now; his release—the word ‘Love’—stood written in sparkling ice.

They took each other’s hands and wandered out of the great palace; they talked about the grandmother and the roses on the leads, wherever they came the winds hushed and the sun came out. When they reached the bush with red berries there stood the reindeer waiting for them.

He carried Kay and Gerda first to the Finland woman, who warmed them in her hot room and gave them advice for their journey home.

Then they went to the Lapland woman, who gave them new clothes and mended their sleigh. The reindeer ran with them until they came to the green fields fresh with the spring green. Here he said good-bye.

They came to the forest, which was bursting into bud, and out of it came a splendid horse which Gerda knew; it was the one which had drawn the gold coach ridden by a young girl with a red cap on and pistols in her belt. It was the little robber girl who was tired of being at home and wanted to go out into the world. She and Gerda knew each other at once.

‘You are a nice fellow!’ she said to Kay. ‘I should like to know if you deserve to be run all over the world!’

But Gerda patted her cheeks and asked after the prince and princess.

‘They are travelling about,’ said the robber girl.

‘And the crow?’ asked Gerda.

‘Oh, the crow is dead!’ answered the robber-girl. ‘His tame sweetheart is a widow and hops about with a bit of black crape round her leg. She

makes a great fuss, but that's all nonsense. But tell me what happened to you, and how you caught him.'

And Kay and Gerda told her all.

'Dear, dear!' said the robber-girl, shook both their hands, and promised that if she came to their town she would come and see them. Then she rode on.

But Gerda and Kay went home hand in hand. There they found the grandmother and everything just as it had been, but when they went through the doorway they found they were grown-up.

There were the roses on the leads; it was summer, warm, glorious summer.

THE FIR-TREE

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Translated from the German of Hans Christian Andersen.

There was once a pretty little fir-tree in a wood. It was in a capital position, for it could get sun, and there was enough air, and all around grew many tall companions, both pines and firs. It did not heed the warm sun and the fresh air, or notice the little peasant children who ran about chattering when they came out to gather wild strawberries and raspberries. Often they found a whole basketful and strung strawberries on a straw; they would sit down by the little fir-tree and say, ‘What a pretty little one this is!’ The tree did not like that at all.

By the next year it had grown a whole ring taller, and the year after that another ring more, for you can always tell a fir-tree’s age from its rings.

‘Oh! if I were only a great tree like the others!’ sighed the little fir-tree, ‘then I could stretch out my branches far and wide and look out into the great world! The birds would build their nests in my branches, and when the wind blew I would bow to it politely just like the others!’ It took no pleasure in the sunshine, nor in the birds, nor in the rose-coloured clouds that sailed over it at dawn and at sunset. Then the winter came, and the snow lay white and sparkling all around, and a hare would come and spring right over the little fir-tree, which annoyed it very much. But when two more winters had passed the fir-tree was so tall that the hare had to run round it. ‘Ah! to grow and grow, and become great and old! that is the only pleasure in life,’ thought the tree. In the autumn the woodcutters used to come and hew some of the tallest trees; this happened every year, and the young fir-tree would shiver as the magnificent trees fell crashing and crackling to the ground, their branches hewn off, and the great trunks left bare, so that they were almost unrecognisable. But then they were laid on waggons and dragged out of the wood by horses. ‘Where are they going? What will happen to them?’

In spring, when the swallows and storks came, the fir-tree asked them, ‘Do you know where they were taken? Have you met them?’

The swallows knew nothing of them, but the stork nodded his head thoughtfully, saying, ‘I think I know. I met many new ships as I flew from Egypt; there were splendid masts on the ships. I’ll wager those were they! They had the scent of fir-trees. Ah! those are grand, grand!’

‘Oh! if I were only big enough to sail away over the sea too! What sort of thing is the sea? what does it look like?’

‘Oh! it would take much too long to tell you all that,’ said the stork, and off he went.

‘Rejoice in your youth,’ said the sunbeams, ‘rejoice in the sweet growing time, in the young life within you.’

And the wind kissed it and the dew wept tears over it, but the fir-tree did not understand.

Towards Christmas-time quite little trees were cut down, some not as big as the young fir-tree, or just the same age, and now it had no peace or rest for longing to be away. These little trees, which were chosen for their beauty, kept all their branches; they were put in carts and drawn out of the wood by horses.

‘Whither are those going?’ asked the fir-tree; ‘they are no bigger than I, and one there was much smaller even! Why do they keep their branches? Where are they taken to?’

‘We know! we know!’ twittered the sparrows. ‘Down there in the city we have peeped in at the windows, we know where they go! They attain to the greatest splendour and magnificence you can imagine! We have looked in at the windows and seen them planted in the middle of the warm room and adorned with the most beautiful things-golden apples, sweet-meats, toys and hundreds of candles.’

‘And then?’ asked the fir-tree, trembling in every limb with eagerness, ‘and then? what happens then?’

‘Oh, we haven’t seen anything more than that. That was simply matchless!’

‘Am I too destined to the same brilliant career?’ wondered the fir-tree excitedly. ‘That is even better than sailing over the sea! I am sick with longing. If it were only Christmas! Now I am tall and grown-up like those which were taken away last year. Ah, if I were only in the cart! If I were

only in the warm room with all the splendour and magnificence! And then? Then comes something better, something still more beautiful, else why should they dress us up? There must be something greater, something grander to come—but what? Oh! I am pining away! I really don't know what's the matter with me!'

'Rejoice in us,' said the air and sunshine, 'rejoice in your fresh youth in the free air!'

But it took no notice, and just grew and grew; there it stood fresh and green in winter and summer, and all who saw it said, 'What a beautiful tree!' And at Christmas-time it was the first to be cut down. The axe went deep into the pith; the tree fell to the ground with a groan; it felt bruised and faint. It could not think of happiness, it was sad at leaving its home, the spot where it had sprung up; it knew, too, that it would never see again its dear old companions, or the little shrubs and flowers, perhaps not even the birds. Altogether the parting was not pleasant.

When the tree came to itself again it was packed in a yard with other trees, and a man was saying, 'This is a splendid one, we shall only want this.'

Then came two footmen in livery and carried the fir-tree to a large and beautiful room. There were pictures hanging on the walls, and near the Dutch stove stood great Chinese vases with lions on their lids; there were armchairs, silk-covered sofas, big tables laden with picture-books and toys, worth hundreds of pounds-at least, so the children said. The fir-tree was placed in a great tub filled with sand, but no one could see that it was a tub, for it was all hung with greenery and stood on a gay carpet. How the tree trembled! What was coming now? On its branches they hung little nets cut out of coloured paper, each full of sugarplums; gilt apples and nuts hung down as if they were growing, over a hundred red, blue, and white tapers were fastened among the branches. Dolls as life-like as human beings—the fir-tree had never seen any before were suspended among the green, and right up at the top was fixed a gold tinsel star; it was gorgeous, quite unusually gorgeous!

'To-night,' they all said, 'to-night it will be lighted!'

'Ah!' thought the tree, 'if it were only evening! Then the tapers would soon be lighted. What will happen then? I wonder whether the trees will come from the wood to see me, or if the sparrows will fly against the

window panes? Am I to stand here decked out thus through winter and summer?'

It was not a bad guess, but the fir-tree had real bark-ache from sheer longing, and bark-ache in trees is just as bad as head-ache in human beings.

Now the tapers were lighted. What a glitter! What splendour! The tree quivered in all its branches so much, that one of the candles caught the green, and singed it. 'Take care!' cried the young ladies, and they extinguished it.

Now the tree did not even dare to quiver. It was really terrible! It was so afraid of losing any of its ornaments, and it was quite bewildered by all the radiance.

And then the folding doors were opened, and a crowd of children rushed in, as though they wanted to knock down the whole tree, whilst the older people followed soberly. The children stood quite silent, but only for a moment, and then they shouted again, and danced round the tree, and snatched off one present after another.

'What are they doing?' thought the tree. 'What is going to happen?' And the tapers burnt low on the branches, and were put out one by one, and then the children were given permission to plunder the tree. They rushed at it so that all its boughs creaked; if it had not been fastened by the gold star at the top to the ceiling, it would have been overthrown.

The children danced about with their splendid toys, and no one looked at the tree, except the old nurse, who came and peeped amongst the boughs, just to see if a fig or an apple had been forgotten.

'A story! a story!' cried the children, and dragged a little stout man to the tree; he sat down beneath it, saying, 'Here we are in the greenwood, and the tree will be delighted to listen! But I am only going to tell one story. Shall it be Henny Penny or Humpty Dumpty who fell downstairs, and yet gained great honour and married a princess?'

'Henny Penny!' cried some; 'Humpty Dumpty!' cried others; there was a perfect babel of voices! Only the fir-tree kept silent, and thought, 'Am I not to be in it? Am I to have nothing to do with it?'

But it had already been in it, and played out its part. And the man told them about Humpty Dumpty who fell downstairs and married a princess. The children clapped their hands and cried, 'Another! another!' They

wanted the story of Henny Penny also, but they only got Humpty Dumpty. The fir-tree stood quite astonished and thoughtful; the birds in the wood had never related anything like that. ‘Humpty Dumpty fell downstairs and yet married a princess! yes, that is the way of the world!’ thought the tree, and was sure it must be true, because such a nice man had told the story. ‘Well, who knows? Perhaps I shall fall downstairs and marry a princess.’ And it rejoiced to think that next day it would be decked out again with candles, toys, glittering ornaments, and fruits. ‘To-morrow I shall quiver again with excitement. I shall enjoy to the full all my splendour. To-morrow I shall hear Humpty Dumpty again, and perhaps Henny Penny too.’ And the tree stood silent and lost in thought all through the night.

Next morning the servants came in. ‘Now the dressing up will begin again,’ thought the tree. But they dragged it out of the room, and up the stairs to the lumber-room, and put it in a dark corner, where no ray of light could penetrate. ‘What does this mean?’ thought the tree. ‘What am I to do here? What is there for me to hear?’ And it leant against the wall, and thought and thought. And there was time enough for that, for days and nights went by, and no one came; at last when some one did come, it was only to put some great boxes into the corner. Now the tree was quite covered; it seemed as if it had been quite forgotten.

‘Now it is winter out-doors,’ thought the fir-tree. ‘The ground is hard and covered with snow, they can’t plant me yet, and that is why I am staying here under cover till the spring comes. How thoughtful they are! Only I wish it were not so terribly dark and lonely here; not even a little hare! It was so nice out in the wood, when the snow lay all around, and the hare leapt past me; yes, even when he leapt over me: but I didn’t like it then. It’s so dreadfully lonely up here.’

‘Squeak, squeak!’ said a little mouse, stealing out, followed by a second. They sniffed at the fir-tree, and then crept between its boughs. ‘It’s frightfully cold,’ said the little mice. ‘How nice it is to be here! Don’t you think so too, you old fir-tree?’

‘I’m not at all old,’ said the tree; ‘there are many much older than I am.’

‘Where do you come from?’ asked the mice, ‘and what do you know?’ They were extremely inquisitive. ‘Do tell us about the most beautiful place in the world. Is that where you come from? Have you been in the

storeroom, where cheeses lie on the shelves, and hams hang from the ceiling, where one dances on tallow candles, and where one goes in thin and comes out fat?'

'I know nothing about that,' said the tree. 'But I know the wood, where the sun shines, and the birds sing.' And then it told them all about its young days, and the little mice had never heard anything like that before, and they listened with all their ears, and said: 'Oh, how much you have seen! How lucky you have been!'

'I?' said the fir-tree, and then it thought over what it had told them. 'Yes, on the whole those were very happy times.' But then it went on to tell them about Christmas Eve, when it had been adorned with sweet-meats and tapers.

'Oh!' said the little mice, 'how lucky you have been, you old fir-tree!'

'I'm not at all old' said the tree. 'I only came from the wood this winter. I am only a little backward, perhaps, in my growth.'

'How beautifully you tell stories!' said the little mice. And next evening they came with four others, who wanted to hear the tree's story, and it told still more, for it remembered everything so clearly and thought: 'Those were happy times! But they may come again. Humpty dumpty fell downstairs, and yet he married a princess; perhaps I shall also marry a princess!' And then it thought of a pretty little birch-tree that grew out in the wood, and seemed to the fir-tree a real princess, and a very beautiful one too.

'Who is Humpty Dumpty?' asked the little mice.

And then the tree told the whole story; it could remember every single word, and the little mice were ready to leap on to the topmost branch out of sheer joy! Next night many more mice came, and on Sunday even two rats; but they did not care about the story, and that troubled the little mice, for now they thought less of it too.

'Is that the only story you know?' asked the rats.

'The only one,' answered the tree. 'I heard that on my happiest evening, but I did not realise then how happy I was.'

'That's a very poor story. Don't you know one about bacon or tallow candles? a storeroom story?'

'No,' said the tree.

‘Then we are much obliged to you,’ said the rats, and they went back to their friends.

At last the little mice went off also, and the tree said, sighing: ‘Really it was very pleasant when the lively little mice sat round and listened whilst I told them stories. But now that’s over too. But now I will think of the time when I shall be brought out again, to keep up my spirits.’

But when did that happen? Well, it was one morning when they came to tidy up the lumber-room; they threw it really rather roughly on the floor, but a servant dragged it off at once downstairs, where there was daylight once more.

‘Now life begins again!’ thought the tree. It felt the fresh air, the first rays of the sun, and there it was out in the yard! Everything passed so quickly; the tree quite forgot to notice itself, there was so much to look at all around. The yard opened on a garden full of flowers; the roses were so fresh and sweet, hanging over a little trellis, the lime-trees were in blossom, and the swallows flew about, saying: ‘Quirre-virre-vil, my husband has come home;’ but it was not the fir-tree they meant.

‘Now I shall live,’ thought the tree joyfully, stretching out its branches wide; but, alas! they were all withered and yellow; and it was lying in a corner among weeds and nettles. The golden star was still on its highest bough, and it glittered in the bright sunlight. In the yard some of the merry children were playing, who had danced so gaily round the tree at Christmas. One of the little ones ran up, and tore off the gold star.

‘Look what was left on the ugly old fir-tree!’ he cried, and stamped on the boughs so that they cracked under his feet.

And the tree looked at all the splendour and freshness of the flowers in the garden, and then looked at itself, and wished that it had been left lying in the dark corner of the lumber-room; it thought of its fresh youth in the wood, of the merry Christmas Eve, and of the little mice who had listened so happily to the story of Humpty Dumpty.

‘Too late! Too late!’ thought the old tree. ‘If only I had enjoyed myself whilst I could. Now all is over and gone.’

And a servant came and cut the tree into small pieces, there was quite a bundle of them; they flickered brightly under the great copper in the brew-house; the tree sighed deeply, and each sigh was like a pistol-shot; so the children who were playing there ran up, and sat in front of the fire, gazing

at it, and crying, ‘Piff! puff! bang!’ But for each report, which was really a sigh, the tree was thinking of a summer’s day in the wood, or of a winter’s night out there, when the stars were shining; it thought of Christmas Eve, and of Humpty Dumpty, which was the only story it had heard, or could tell, and then the tree had burnt away.

The children played on in the garden, and the youngest had the golden star on his breast, which the tree had worn on the happiest evening of its life; and now that was past—and the tree had passed away—and the story too, all ended and done with.

And that’s the way with all stories!

Here our Danish author ends. This is what people call sentiment, and I hope you enjoy it!

HANS, THE MERMAID'S SON

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Translated from the Danish.

In a village there once lived a smith called Basmus, who was in a very poor way. He was still a young man, and a strong handsome fellow to boot, but he had many little children and there was little to be earned by his trade. He was, however, a diligent and hard-working man, and when he had no work in the smithy he was out at sea fishing, or gathering wreckage on the shore.

It happened one time that he had gone out to fish in good weather, all alone in a little boat, but he did not come home that day, nor the following one, so that all believed he had perished out at sea. On the third day, however, Basmus came to shore again and had his boat full of fish, so big and fat that no one had ever seen their like. There was nothing the matter with him, and he complained neither of hunger or thirst. He had got into a fog, he said, and could not find land again. What he did not tell, however, was where he had been all the time; that only came out six years later, when people got to know that he had been caught by a mermaid out on the deep sea, and had been her guest during the three days that he was missing. From that time forth he went out no more to fish; nor, indeed, did he require to do so, for whenever he went down to the shore it never failed that some wreckage was washed up, and in it all kinds of valuable things. In those days everyone took what they found and got leave to keep it, so that the smith grew more prosperous day by day.

When seven years had passed since the smith went out to sea, it happened one morning, as he stood in the smithy, mending a plough, that a handsome young lad came in to him and said, 'Good-day, father; my mother the mermaid sends her greetings, and says that she has had me for six years now, and you can keep me for as long.'

He was a strange enough boy to be six years old, for he looked as if he were eighteen, and was even bigger and stronger than lads commonly are

at that age.

‘Will you have a bite of bread?’ said the smith.

‘Oh, yes,’ said Hans, for that was his name.

The smith then told his wife to cut a piece of bread for him. She did so, and the boy swallowed it at one mouthful and went out again to the smithy to his father.

‘Have you got all you can eat?’ said the smith.

‘No,’ said Hans, ‘that was just a little bit.’

The smith went into the house and took a whole loaf, which he cut into two slices and put butter and cheese between them, and this he gave to Hans. In a while the boy came out to the smithy again.

‘Well, have you got as much as you can eat?’ said the smith.

‘No, not nearly,’ said Hans; ‘I must try to find a better place than this, for I can see that I shall never get my fill here.’

Hans wished to set off at once, as soon as his father would make a staff for him of such a kind as he wanted.

‘It must be of iron,’ said he, ‘and one that can hold out.’

The smith brought him an iron rod as thick as an ordinary staff, but Hans took it and twisted it round his finger, so that wouldn’t do. Then the smith came dragging one as thick as a waggon-pole, but Hans bent it over his knee and broke it like a straw. The smith then had to collect all the iron he had, and Hans held it while his father forged for him a staff, which was heavier than the anvil. When Hans had got this he said, ‘Many thanks, father; now I have got my inheritance.’ With this he set off into the country, and the smith was very pleased to be rid of that son, before he ate him out of house and home.

Hans first arrived at a large estate, and it so happened that the squire himself was standing outside the farmyard.

‘Where are you going?’ said the squire.

‘I am looking for a place,’ said Hans, ‘where they have need of strong fellows, and can give them plenty to eat.’

‘Well,’ said the squire, ‘I generally have twenty-four men at this time of the year, but I have only twelve just now, so I can easily take you on.’

‘Very well,’ said Hans, ‘I shall easily do twelve men’s work, but then I must also have as much to eat as the twelve would.’

All this was agreed to, and the squire took Hans into the kitchen, and told the servant girls that the new man was to have as much food as the other twelve. It was arranged that he should have a pot to himself, and he could then use the ladle to take his food with.

It was in the evening that Hans arrived there, so he did nothing more that day than eat his supper—a big pot of buck-wheat porridge, which he cleaned to the bottom and was then so far satisfied that he said he could sleep on that, so he went off to bed. He slept both well and long, and all the rest were up and at their work while he was still sleeping soundly. The squire was also on foot, for he was curious to see how the new man would behave who was both to eat and work for twelve.

But as yet there was no Hans to be seen, and the sun was already high in the heavens, so the squire himself went and called on him.

‘Get up, Hans,’ he cried; ‘you are sleeping too long.’

Hans woke up and rubbed his eyes. ‘Yes, that’s true,’ he said, ‘I must get up and have my breakfast.’

So he rose and dressed himself, and went into the kitchen, where he got his pot of porridge; he swallowed all of this, and then asked what work he was to have.

He was to thresh that day, said the squire; the other twelve men were already busy at it. There were twelve threshing-floors, and the twelve men were at work on six of them—two on each. Hans must thresh by himself all that was lying upon the other six floors. He went out to the barn and got hold of a flail. Then he looked to see how the others did it and did the same, but at hte first stroke he smashed the flail in pieces. There were several flails hanging there, and Hans took the one after the other, but they all went the same way, every one flying in splinters at the first stroke. He then looked round for something else to work with, and found a pair of strong beams lying near. Next he caught sight of a horse-hide nailed up on the barn-door. With the beams he made a flail, using the skin to tie them together. The one beam he used as a handle, and the other to strike with, and now that was all right. But the barn was too low, there was no room to swing the flail, and the floors were too small. Hans, however, found a remedy for this—he simply lifted the whole roof off the barn, and set it down in the field beside. He then emptied down all the corn that he could lay his hands on and threshed away. He went through one lot after another,

and it was ll the same to him what he got hold of, so before midday he had threshed all the squire's grain, his rye and wheat and barley and oats, all mixed through each other. When he was finished with this, he lifted the roof up on the barn again, like setting a lid on a box, and went in and told the squire that the job was done.

The squire opened his eyes at this announcement; and came out to see if it was really true. It was true, sure enough, but he was scarcely delighted with the mixed grain that he got from all his crops. However, when he saw the flail that Hans had used, and learned how he had made room for himself to swing it, he was so afraid of the strong fellow, that he dared not say anything, except that it was a good thing he had got it threshed; but it had still to be cleaned.

'What does that mean?' asked Hans.

It was explained to him that the corn and the chaff had to be separated; as yet both were lying in one heap, right up to the roof. Hans began to take up a little and sift it in his hands, but he soon saw that this would never do. He soon thought of a plan, however; he opened both barn-doors, and then lay down at one end and blew, so that all the chaff flew out and lay like a sand-bank at the other end of the barn, and the grain was as clean as it could be. Then he reported to the squire that that job also was done. The squire said that that was well; there was nothing more for him to do that day. Off went Hans to the kitchen, and got as much as he could eat; then he went and took a midday nap which lasted till supper-time.

Meanwhile the squire was quite miserable, and made his moan to his wife, saying that she must help him to find some means to getting rid of this strong fellow, for he durst not give him his leave. She sent for the steward, and it was arranged that next day all the men should go to the forest for fire-wood, and that they should make a bargain among them, that the one who came home last with his load should be hanged. They thought they could easily manage that it would be Hans who would lose his life, for the others would be early on the road, while Hans would certainly oversleep himself. In the evening, therefore, the men sat and talked together, saying that next morning they must set out early to the forest, and as they had a hard day's work and a long journey before them, they would, for their amusement, make a compact, that whichever of them

came home last with his load should lose his life on the gallows. So Hans had no objections to make.

Long before the sun was up next morning, all the twelve men were on foot. They took all the best horses and carts, and drove off to the forest. Hans, however, lay and slept on, and the squire said, ‘Just let him lie.’

At last, Hans thought it was time to have his breakfast, so he got up and put on his clothes. He took plenty of time to his breakfast, and then went out to get his horse and cart ready. The others had taken everything that was any good, so that he had a difficulty in scraping together four wheels of different sizes and fixing them to an old cart, and he could find no other horses than a pair of old hacks. He did not know where it lay, but he followed the track of the other carts, and in that way came to it all right. On coming to the gate leading into the forest, he was unfortunate enough to break it in pieces, so he took a huge stone that was lying on the field, seven ells long, and seven ells broad, and set this in the gap, then he went on and joined the others. These laughed at him heartily, for they had laboured as hard as they could since daybreak, and had helped each other to fell trees and put them on the carts, so that all of these were now loaded except one.

Hans got hold of a woodman’s axe and proceeded to fell a tree, but he destroyed the edge and broke the shaft at the first blow. He therefore laid down the axe, put his arms round the tree, and pulled it up by the roots. This he threw upon his cart, and then another and another, and thus he went on while all the others forgot their work, and stood with open mouths, gazing at this strange woodcraft. All at once they began to hurry; the last cart was loaded, and they whipped up their horses, so as to be the first to arrive home.

When Hans had finished his work, he again put his old hacks into the cart, but they could not move it from the spot. He was annoyed at this, and took them out again, twisted a rope round the cart, and all the trees, lifted the whole affair on his back, and set off home, leading the horses behind him by the rein. When he reached the gate, he found the whole row of carts standing there, unable to get any further for the stone which lay in the gap.

‘What!’ said Hans, ‘can twelve men not move that stone?’ With that he lifted it and threw it out of hte way, and went on with his burden on his back, and the horses behind him, and arrived at the farm long before any

of the others. The squire was walking about there, looking and looking, for he was very curious to know what had happened. Finally, he caught sight of Hans coming along in this fashion, and was so frightened that he did not know what to do, but he shut the gate and put on the bar. When Hans reached the gate of the courtyard, he laid down the trees and hammered at it, but no one came to open it. He then took the trees and tossed them over the barn into the yard, and the cart after them, so that every wheel flew off in a different direction.

When the squire saw this, he thought to himself, ‘The horses will come the same way if I don’t open the door,’ so he did this.

‘Good day, master,’ said Hans, and put the horses into the stable, and went into the kitchen, to get something to eat. At length the other men came home with their loads. When they came in, Hans said to them, ‘Do you remember the bargain we made last night? Which of you is it that’s going to be hanged?’ ‘Oh,’ said they, ‘that was only a joke; it didn’t mean anything.’ ‘Oh well, it doesn’t matter, ‘said Hans, and there was no more about it.

The squire, however, and his wife and the steward, had much to say to each other about the terrible man they had got, and all were agreed that they must get rid of him in some way or other. The steward said that he would manage this all right. Next morning they were to clean the well, and they would use of that opportunity. They would get him down into the well, and then have a big mill-stone ready to throw down on top of him—that would settle him. After that they could just fill in the well, and then escape being at any expense for his funeral. Both the squire and his wife thought this a splendid idea, and went about rejoicing at the thought that now they would get rid of Hans.

But Hans was hard to kill, as we shall see. He slept long next morning, as he always did, and finally, as he would not waken by himself, the squire had to go and call him. ‘Get up, Hans, you are sleeping too long,’ he cried. Hans woke up and rubbed his eyes. ‘That’s so,’ said he, ‘I shall rise and have my breakfast.’ He got up then and dressed himself, while the breakfast stood waiting for him. When he had finished the whole of this, he asked what he was to do that day. He was told to help the other men to clean out the well. That was all right, and he went out and found the other men waiting for him. To these he said that they could choose whichever

task they liked—either to go down into the well and fill the buckets while he pulled them up, or pull them up, and he alone would go down to the bottom of the well. They answered that they would rather stay above-ground, as there would be no room for so many of them down in the well.

Hans therefore went down alone, and began to clean out the well, but the men had arranged how they were to act, and immediately each of them seized a stone from a heap of huge blocks, and threw them down above him, thinking to kill him with these. Hans, however, gave no more heed to this than to shout up to them, to keep the hens away from the well, for they were scraping gravel down on the top of him.

They then saw that they could not kill him with little stones, but they had still the big one left. The whole twelve of them set to work with poles and rollers and rolled the big mill-stone to the brink of the well. It was with the greatest difficulty that they got it thrown down there, and now they had no doubt that he had got all that he wanted. But the stone happened to fall so luckily that his head went right through the hole in the middle of the mill-stone, so that it sat round his neck like a priest's collar. At this, Hans would stay down no longer. He came out of the well, with the mill-stone round his neck, ad went straight to the squire and complained that the other men were trying to make a fool of him. He would not be their priest, he said; he had too little learning for that. Saying this, he bent down his head and shook the stone off, so that it crushed one of the squire's big toes.

The squire went limping in to his wife, and the steward was sent for. He was told that he must devise some plan for getting rid of this terrible person. The scheme he had devised before had been of no use, and now good counsel was scarce.

'Oh, no' said the steward, 'there are good enough ways yet. The squire can send him this evening to fish in Devilmoss Lake: he will never escape alive from there, for no one can go there by night for Old Eric.'

That was a grand idea, both the squire and his wife thought, and so he limped out again to Hans, and said that he would punish his men for having tried to make a fool of him. Meanwhile, Hans could do a little job where he would be free from these rascals. He should go out on the lake and fish there that night, and would then be free from all work on the following day.

‘All right,’ said Hans; ‘I am well content with that, but I must have something with me to eat—a baking of bread, a cask of butter, a barrel of ale, and a keg of brandy. I can’t do with less than that.’

The squire said that he could easily get all that, so Hans got all of these tied up together, hung them over his shoulder on his good staff, and tramped away to Devilmoss Lake.

There he got into the boat, rowed out upon the lake, and got everything ready to fish. As he now lay out there in the middle of the lake, and it was pretty late in the evening, he thought he would have something to eat first, before starting to work. Just as he was at his busiest with this, Old Eric rose out of the lake, caught him by the cuff of the neck, whipped him out of the boat, and dragged him down to the bottom. It was a lucky thing that Hans had his walking-stick with him that day, and had just time to catch hold of it when he felt Old Eric’s claws in his neck, so when they got down to the bottom he said, ‘Stop now, just wait a little; here is solid ground.’ With that he caught Old Eric by the back of the neck with one hand, and hammered away on his back with the staff, till he beat him out as flat as a pancake. Old Eric then began to lament and howl, begging him just to let him go, and he would never come back to the lake again.

‘No, my good fellow,’ said Hans, ‘you won’t get off until you promise to bring all the fish in the lake up to the squire’s courtyard, before to-morrow morning.’

Old Eric eagerly promised this, if Hans would only let him go; so Hans rowed ashore, ate up the rest of his provisions, and went home to bed.

Next morning, when the squire rose and opened his front door, the fish came tumbling into the porch, and the whole yard was crammed full of them. He ran in again to his wife, for he could never devise anything himself, and said to her, ‘What shall we do with him now? Old Eric hasn’t taken him. I am certain that all the fish are out of the lake, for the yard is just filled with them.’

‘Yes, that’s a bad business,’ said she; ‘you must see if you can’t get him sent to Purgatory, to demand tribute.’ The squire therefore made his way to the men’s quarters, to speak to Hans, and it took him all his time to push his way along the walls, under the eaves, on account of the fish that filled the yard. He thanked Hans for having fished so well, and said that now he had an errand for him, which he could only give to a trusty servant,

and that was to journey to Purgatory, and demand three years tribute, which, he said, was owing to him from that quarter.

‘Willingly,’ said Hans; ‘but what road do I go, to get there?’

The squire stood, and did not know what to say, and had first to go in to his wife to ask her.

‘Oh, what a fool you are!’ said she, ‘can’t you direct him straight forward, south through the wood? Whether he gets there or not, we shall be quit of him.’

Out goes the squire again to Hans.

‘The way lies straight forward, south through the wood,’ said he.

Hans then must have his provisions for the journey; two bakings of bread, two casks of butter, two barrels of ale, and two kegs of brandy. He tied all these up together, and got them on his shoulder hanging on his good walking-stick, and off he tramped southward.

After he had got through the wood, there was more than one road, and he was in doubt which of them was the right one, so he sat down and opened up his bundle of provisions. He found he had left his knife at home, but by good chance, there was a plough lying close at hand, so he took the coulter of this to cut the bread with. As he sat there and took his bite, a man came riding past him.

‘Where are you from?’ said Hans.

‘From Purgatory,’ said the man.

‘Then stop and wait a little,’ said Hans; but the man was in a hurry, and would not stop, so Hans ran after him and caught the horse by the tail. This brought it down on its hind legs, and the man went flying over its head into a ditch. ‘Just wait a little,’ said Hans; ‘I am going the same way.’ He got his provisions tied up again, and laid them on the horse’s back; then he took hold of the reins and said to the man, ‘We two can go along together on foot.’

As they went on their way Hans told the stranger both about the errand he had on hand and the fun he had had with Old Eric. The other said but little but he was well acquainted with the way, and it was no long time before they arrived at the gate. There both horse and rider disappeared, and Hans was left alone outside. ‘They will come and let me in presently,’ he thought to himself; but no one came. He hammered at the gate; still no one appeared. Then he got tired of waiting, and smashed at the gate with his

staff until he knocked it in pieces and got inside. A whole troop of little demons came down upon him and asked what he wanted. His master's compliments, said Hans, and he wanted three years' tribute. At this they howled at him, and were about to lay hold of him and drag him off; but when they had got some raps from his walking-stick they let go again, howled still louder than before, and ran in to Old Eric, who was still in bed, after his adventure in the lake. They told him that a messenger had come from the squire at Devilmoss to demand three years' tribute. He had knocked the gate to pieces and bruised their arms and legs with his iron staff.

'Give him three years'! give him ten!' shouted Old Eric, 'only don't let him come near me.'

So all the little demons came dragging so much silver and gold that it was something awful. Hans filled his bundle with gold and silver coins, put it on his neck, and tramped back to his master, who was scared beyond all measure at seeing him again.

But Hans was also tired of service now. Of all the gold and silver he brought with him he let the squire keep one half, and he was glad enough, both for the money and at getting rid of Hans. The other half he took home to his father the smith in Furreby. To him also he said, 'Farewell;' he was now tired of living on shore among mortal men, and preferred to go home again to his mother. Since that time no one has ever seen Hans, the Mermaid's son.

PETER BULL

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From the Danish.

There once lived in Denmark a peasant and his wife who owned a very good farm, but had no children. They often lamented to each other that they had no one of their own to inherit all the wealth that they possessed. They continued to prosper, and became rich people, but there was no heir to it all.

One year it happened that they owned a pretty little bull-calf, which they called Peter. It was the prettiest little creature they had ever seen—so beautiful and so wise that it understood everything that was said to it, and so gentle and so full of play that both the man and his wife came to be as fond of it as if it had been their own child.

One day the man said to his wife, ‘I wonder, now, whether our parish clerk could teach Peter to talk; in that case we could not do better than adopt him as our son, and let him inherit all that we possess.’

‘Well, I don’t know,’ said his wife, ‘our clerk is tremendously learned, and knows much more than his Paternoster, and I could almost believe that he might be able to teach Peter to talk, for Peter has a wonderfully good head too. You might at least ask him about it.’

Off went the man to the clerk, and asked him whether he thought he could teach a bull-calf that they had to speak, for they wished so much to have it as their heir.

The clerk was no fool; he looked round about to see that no one could overhear them, and said, ‘Oh, yes, I can easily do that, but you must not speak to anyone about it. It must be done in all secrecy, and the priest must not know of it, otherwise I shall get into trouble, as it is forbidden. It will also cost you something, as some very expensive books are required.’

That did not matter at all, the man said; they would not care so very much what it cost. The clerk could have a hundred dollars to begin with to

buy the books. He also promised to tell no one about it, and to bring the calf round in the evening.

He gave the clerk the hundred dollars on the spot, and in the evening took the calf round to him, and the clerk promised to do his best with it. In a week's time he came back to the clerk to hear about the calf and see how it was thriving. The clerk, however, said that he could not get a sight of it, for then Peter would long after him and forget all that he had already learned. He was getting on well with his learning, but another hundred dollars were needed, as they must have more books. The peasant had the money with him, so he gave it to the clerk, and went home again with high hopes.

In another week the man came again to learn what progress Peter had made now.

'He is getting on very well,' said the clerk.

'I suppose he can't say anything yet?' said the man.

'Oh, yes,' said the clerk, 'he can say "Moo" now.'

'Do you think he will get on with his learning?' asked the peasant.

'Oh, yes,' said the clerk, 'but I shall want another hundred dollars for books. Peter can't learn well out of the ones that he has got.'

'Well, well,' said the man, 'what must be spent shall be spent.'

So he gave the clerk the third hundred dollars for books, and a cask of good old ale for Peter. The clerk drank the ale himself, and gave the calf milk, which he thought would be better for it.

Some weeks passed, during which the peasant did not come round to ask after the calf, being frightened lest it should cost him another hundred dollars, for he had begun to squirm a bit at having to part with so much money. Meanwhile the clerk decided that the calf was as fat as it could be, so he killed it. After he had got all the beef out of the way he went inside, put on his black clothes, and made his way to the peasant's house.

As soon as he had said 'Good-day' he asked, 'Has Peter come home here?'

'No, indeed, he hasn't,' said the man; 'surely he hasn't run away?'

'I hope,' said the clerk, 'that he would not behave so contemptibly after all the trouble I have had to teach him, and all that I have spent upon him. I have had to spend at least a hundred dollars of my own money to buy books for him before I got him so far on. He could say anything he

liked now, so he said to-day that he longed to see his parents again. I was willing to give him that pleasure, but I was afraid that he wouldn't be able to find the way here by himself, so I made myself ready to go with him. When we had got outside the house I remembered that I had left my stick inside, and went in again to get it. When I came out again Peter had gone off on his own account. I thought he would be here, and if he isn't I don't know where he is.'

The peasant and his wife began to lament bitterly that Peter had run away in this fashion just when they were to have so much joy of him, and after they had spent so much on his education. The worst of it was that now they had no heir after all. The clerk comforted them as best he could; he also was greatly distressed that Peter should have behaved in such a way just when he should have gained honour from his pupil. Perhaps he had only gone astray, and he would advertise him at church next Sunday, and find out where anyone had seen him. Then he bade them 'Good-bye,' and went home nad dined on a good fat veal roast.

Now it so happened that the clerk took in a newspaper, and one day he chanced to read in its columns of a new merchant who had settled in a town at some distance, and whose name was 'Peter Bull.' He put the newspaper in his pocket, and went round to the sorrowing couple who had lost their heir. He read the paragraph to them, and added, 'I wonder, now, whether that could be your bull-calf Peter?'

'Yes, of course it is,' said the man; 'who else would it be?'

His wife then spoke up and said, 'You must set out, good man, and see about him, for it is him, I am perfectly certain. Take a good sum of money with you, too; for who knows but what he may want some cash now that he has turned a merchant!'

Next day the man got a bag of money on his back and a sandwich in his pocket, and his pipe in his mouth, and set out for the town where the new merchant lived. It was no short way, and he travelled for many days before he finally arrived there. He reached it one morning, just at daybreak, found out the right place, and asked if the merchant was at home. Yes, he was, said the people, but he was not up yet.

'That doesn't matter,' said the peasant, 'for I am his father. Just show me up to his bedroom.'

He was shown up to the room, and as soon as he entered it, ad caught sight of the merchant, he recognised him at once. He had the same broad forehead, the same thick neck, and same red hair, but in other respects he was now like a human being. The peasant rushed straight up to him and took a firm hold of him. ‘O Peter,’ said he, ‘what a sorrow you have caused us, both myself and your mother, by running off like this just as we had got you well educated! Get up, now, so that I can see you properly, and have a talk with you.’

The merchant thought that it was a lunatic who had made his way in to him, and thought it best to take things quietly.

‘All right,’ said he, ‘I shall do so at once.’ He got out of bed and made haste to dress himself.

‘Ay,’ said the peasant, ‘now I can see how clever our clerk is. He has done well by you, for now you look just like a human being. If one didn’t know it, one would never think that it was you we got from the red cow; will you come home with me now?’

‘No,’ said the merchant, ‘I can’t find time just now. I have a big business to look after.’

‘You could have the farm at once, you know,’ said the peasant, ‘and we old people would retire. But if you would rather stay in business, of course you may do so. Are you in want of anything?’

‘Oh, yes,’ said the merchant; ‘I want nothing so much as money. A merchant has always a use for that.’

‘I can well believe that,’ said the peasant, ‘for you had nothing at all to start with. I have brought some with me for that very end.’ With that he emptied his bag of money out upon the table, so that it was all covered with bright dollars.

When the merchant saw what kind of man he had before him he began to speak him fair, and invited him to stay with him for some days, so that they might have some more talk together.

‘Very well,’ said the peasant, ‘but you must call me “Father.” ’

‘I have neither father nor mother alive,’ said Peter Bull.

‘I know that,’ said the man; ‘your real father was sold at Hamburg last Michaelmas, and your real mother died while calving in spring; but my wife and I have adopted you as our own, and you are our only heir, so you must call me “Father.” ’

Peter Bull was quite willing to do so, and it was settled that he should keep the money, while the peasant made his will and left to him all that he had, before he went home to his wife, and told her the whole story.

She was delighted to hear that it was true enough about Peter Bull—that he was no other than their own bull-calf.

‘You must go at once and tell the clerk,’ said she, ‘and pay him the hundred dollars of his own money that he spent upon our son. He has earned them well, and more besides, for all the joy he has given us in having such a son and heir.’

The man agreed with this, and thanked the clerk for all he had done, and gave him two hundred dollars. Then he sold the farm, and removed with his wife to the town where their dear son and heir was living. To him they gave all their wealth, and lived with him till their dying day.

THE BIRD ‘GRIP’

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Translated from the Swedish.

It happened once that a king, who had a great kingdom and three sons, became blind, and no human skill or art could restore to him his sight. At last there came to the palace an old woman, who told him that in the whole world there was only one thing that could give him back his sight, and that was to get the bird Grip; his song would open the King’s eyes.

When the king’s eldest son heard this he offered to bring the bird Grip, which was kept in a cage by a king in another country, and carefully guarded as his greatest treasure. The blind king was greatly rejoiced at his son’s resolve, fitted him out in the best way he could, and let him go. When the prince had ridden some distance he came to an inn, in which there were many guests, all of whom were merry, and drank and sang and played at dice. This joyous life pleased the prince so well that he stayed in the inn, took part in the playing and drinking, and forgot both his blind father and the bird Grip.

Meanwhile the king waited with both hope and anxiety for his son’s return, but as time went on and nothing was heard of him, the second prince asked leave to go in search of his brother, as well as to bring the bird Grip. The king granted his request, and fitted him out in the finest fashion. But when the prince came to the inn and found his brother among his merry companions, he also remained there and forgot both the bird Grip and his blind father.

When the king noticed that neither of his sons returned, although a long time had passed since the second one set out, he was greatly distressed, for not only had he lost all hope of getting back his sight, but he had also lost his two eldest sons. The youngest now came to him, and offered to go in search of his brothers and to bring the bird Grip; he was quite certain that he would succeed in this. The king was unwilling to risk his third son on such an errand, but he begged so long that his father had at

last to consent. This prince also was fitted out in the finest manner, like his brothers, and so rode away.

He also turned into the same inn as his brothers, and when these saw him they assailed him with many entreaties to remain with them and share their merry life. But he answered that now, when he had found them, his next task was to get the bird Grip, for which his blind father was longing, and so he had not a single hour to spare with them in the inn. He then said farewell to his brothers, and rode on to find another inn in which to pass the night. When he had ridden a long way, and it began to grow dark, he came to a house which lay deep in the forest. Here he was received in a very friendly manner by the host, who put his horse into the stable, and led the prince himself into the guest-chamber, where he ordered a maid-servant to lay the cloth and set down the supper. It was now dark, and while the girl was laying the cloth and setting down the dishes, and the prince had begun to appease his hunger, he heard the most piteous shrieks and cries from the next room. He sprang up from the table and asked the girl what those cries were, and whether he had fallen into a den of robbers. The girl answered that these shrieks were heard every night, but it was no living being who uttered them; it was a dead man, who life the host had taken because he could not pay for the meals he had had in the inn. The host further refused to bury the dead man, as he had left nothing to pay the expenses of the funeral, and every night he went and scourged the dead body of his victim.

When she had said this she lifted the cover off one of the dishes, and the prince saw that there lay on it a knife and an axe. He understood then that the host meant to ask him by this what kind of death he preferred to die, unless he was willing to ransom his life with his money. He then summoned the host, gave him a large sum for his own life, and paid the dead man’s debt as well, besides paying him for burying the body, which the murderer now promised to attend to.

The prince, however, felt that his life was not safe in this murderer’s den, and asked the maid to help him to escape that night. She replied that the attempt to do so might cost her her own life, as the key of the stable in which the prince’s horse stood lay under the host’s pillow; but, as she herself was a prisoner there, she would help him to escape if he would take her along with him. He promised to do so, and they succeeded in getting

away from the inn, and rode on until they came to another far away from it, where the prince got a good place for the girl before proceeding on his journey.

As he now rode all alone through a forest there met him a fox, who greeted him in a friendly fashion, and asked him where he was going, and on what errand he was bent. The prince answered that his errand was too important to be confided to everyone that he met.

‘You are right in that,’ said the fox, ‘for it relates to the bird Grip, which you want to take and bring home to your blind father; I could help you in this, but in that case you must follow my counsel.’

The prince thought that this was a good offer, especially as the fox was ready to go with him and show him the way to the castle, where the bird Grip sat in his cage, and so he promised to obey the fox’s instructions. When they had traversed the forest together they saw the castle at some distance. Then the fox gave the prince three grains of gold, one of which he was to throw into the guard-room, another into the room where the bird Grip sat, and the third into its cage. He could then take the bird, but he must beware of stroking it; otherwise it would go ill with him.

The prince took the grains of gold, and promised to follow the fox’s directions faithfully. When he came to the guard-room of the castle he threw one of the grains in there, and the guards at once fell asleep. The same thing happened with those who kept watch in the room beside the bird Grip, and when he threw the third grain into its cage the bird also fell asleep. When the prince got the beautiful bird into his hand he could not resist the temptation to stroke it, whereupon it awoke and began to scream. At this the whole castle woke up, and the prince was taken prisoner.

As he now sat in his prison, and bitterly lamented that his own disobedience had brought himself into trouble, and deprived his father of the chance of recovering his sight, the fox suddenly stood in front of him. The prince was very pleased to see it again, and received with great meekness all its reproaches, as well as promised to be more obedient in the future, if the fox would only help him out of his fix. The fox said that he had come to assist him, but he could do no more than advise the prince, when he was brought up for trial, to answer ‘yes’ to all the judge’s questions, and everything would go well. The prince faithfully followed his instructions, so that when the judge asked him whether he had meant to

steal the bird Grip he said ‘Yes,’ and when the judge asked him if he was a master-thief he again answered ‘Yes.’

When the king heard that he admitted being a master-thief, he said that he would forgive him the attempt to steal the bird if he would go to the next kingdom and carry off the world’s most beautiful princess, and bring her to him. To this also the prince said ‘Yes.’

When he left the castle he met the fox, who went along with him to the next kingdom, and when they came near the castle there, gave him three grains of gold—one to throw into the guard-room, another into the princess’s chamber, and the third into her bed. At the same time he strictly warned him not to kiss the princess. The prince went into the castle, and did with the grains of gold as the fox had told him, so that sleep fell upon everyone there; but when he had taken the princess into his arms he forgot the fox’s warning, at the sight of her beauty, and kissed her. Then both she and all the others in the castle woke; the prince was taken prisoner, and put into a strong dungeon.

Here the fox again came to him and reproached him with his disobedience, but promised to help him out of this trouble also if he would answer ‘yes’ to everything they asked him at his trial. The prince willingly agreed to this, and admitted to the judge that he had meant to steal the princess, and that he was a master-thief.

When the king learned this he said he would forgive his offence if he would go to the next kingdom and steal the horse with the four golden shoes. To this also the prince said ‘Yes.’

When he had gone a little way from the castle he met the fox, and they continued on their journey together. When they reached the end of it the prince for the third time received three grains of gold from the fox, with directions to throw one into the guard-chamber, another into the stable, and the third into the horse’s stall. But the fox told him that above the horse’s stall hung a beautiful golden saddle, which he must not touch, if he did not want to bring himself into new troubles worse than those he had escaped from, for then the fox could help him no longer.

The prince promised to be firm this time. He threw the grains of gold in the proper places, and untied the horse, but with that he caught sight of the golden saddle, and thought that none but it could suit so beautiful a horse, especially as it had golden shoes. But just as he stretched out his

hand to take it he received from some invisible being so hard a blow on the arm that it was made quite numb. This recalled to him his promise and his danger, so he led out the horse without looking at the golden saddle again.

The fox was waiting for him outside the castle, and the prince confessed to him that he had very nearly given way to temptation this time as well. ‘I know that,’ said the fox, ‘for it was I who struck you over the arm.’

As they now went on together the prince said that he could not forget the beautiful princess, and asked the fox whether he did not think that she ought to ride home to his father’s palace on this horse with the golden shoes. The fox agreed that this would be excellent; if the prince would now go and carry her off he would give him three grains of gold for that purpose. The prince was quite ready, and promised to keep better command of himself this time, and not kiss her.

He got the grains of gold and entered the castle, where he carried off the princess, set her on the beautiful horse, and held on his way. When they came near to the castle where the bird Grip sat in his cage he again asked the fox for three grains of gold. These he got, and with them he was successful in carrying off the bird.

He was now full of joy, for his blind father would now recover his sight, while he himself owned the world’s most beautiful princess and the horse with the golden shoes.

The prince and princess travelled on together with mirth and happiness, and the fox followed them until they came to the forest where the prince first met with him.

‘Here our ways part,’ said the fox. ‘You have now got all that your heart desired, and you will have a prosperous journey to your father’s palace if only you do not ransom anyone’s life with money.’

The prince thanked the fox for all his help, promised to give heed to his warning, said farewell to him, and rode on, with the princess by his side and the bird Grip on his wrist.

They soon arrived at the inn where the two eldest brothers had stayed, forgetting their errand. But now no merry song or noise of mirth was heard from it. When the prince came nearer he saw two gallows erected, and when he entered the inn along with the princess he saw that all the rooms

were hung with black, and that everything inside foreboded sorrow and death. He asked the reason of this, and was told that two princes were to be hanged that day for debt; they had spent all their money in feasting and playing, and were now deeply in debt to the host, and as no one could be found to ransom their lives they were about to be hanged according to the law.

The prince knew that it was his two brothers who had thus forfeited their lives and it cut him to the heart to think that two princes should suffer such a shameful death; and, as he had sufficient money with him, he paid their debts, and so ransomed their lives.

At first the brothers were grateful for their liberty, but when they saw the youngest brother's treasures they became jealous of his good fortune, and planned how to bring him to destruction, and then take the bird Grip, the princess, and the horse with the golden shoes, and convey them to their blind father. After they had agreed on how to carry out their treachery they enticed the prince to a den of lions and threw him down among them. Then they set the princess on horseback, took the bird Grip, and rode homeward. The princess wept bitterly, but they told her that it would cost her her life if she did not say that the two brothers had won all the treasures.

When they arrived at their father's palace there was great rejoicing, and everyone praised the two princes for their courage and bravery.

When the king inquired after the youngest brother they answered that he had led such a life in the inn that he had been hanged for debt. The king sorrowed bitterly over this, because the youngest prince was his dearest son, and the joy over the treasures soon died away, for the bird Grip would not sing so that the king might recover his sight, the princess wept night and day, and no one dared to venture so close to the horse as to have a look at his golden shoes.

Now when the youngest prince was thrown down into the lions' den he found the fox sitting there, and the lions, instead of tearing him to pieces, showed him the greatest friendliness. Nor was the fox angry with him for having forgot his last warning. He only said that sons who could so forget their old father and disgrace their royal birth as those had done would not hesitate to betray their brother either. Then he took the prince up out of the lion's den and gave him directions what to do now so as to come by his rights again.

The prince thanked the fox with all his heart for his true friendship, but the fox answered that if he had been of any use to him he would now for his own part ask a service of him. The prince replied that he would do him any service that was in his power.

‘I have only one thing to ask of you,’ said the fox, ‘and that is, that you should cut off my head with your sword.’

The prince was astonished, and said that he could not bring himself to cut the had off his truest friend, and to this he stuck in spite of all the fox’s declarations that it was the greatest service he could do him. At this the fox became very sorrowful, and declared that the prince’s refusal to grant his request now compelled him to do a deed which he was very unwilling to do—if the prince would not cut off his head, then he must kill the prince himself. Then at last the prince drew his good sword and cut off the fox’s head, and the next moment a youth stood before him.

‘Thanks,’ said he, ‘for this service, which has freed me from a spell that not even death itself could loosen. I am the dead man who lay unburied in the robber’s inn, where you ransomed me and gave me honourable burial, and therefore I have helped you in your journey.’

With this they parted and the prince, disguising himself as a horse-shoer, went up to his father’s palace and offered his services there.

The king’s men told him that a horse-shoer was indeed wanted at the palace, but he must be one who could lift up the feet of the horse with the golden shoes, and such a one they had not yet been able to find. The prince asked to see the horse, and as soon as he entered the stable the steed began to neigh in a friendly fashion, and stood as quiet and still as a lamb while the prince lifted up his hoofs, one after the other, and showed the king’s men the famous golden shoes.

After this the king’s men began to talk about the bird Grip, and how strange it was that he would not sing, however well he was attended to. The horse-shoer then said that he knew the bird very well; he had seen it when it sat in its cage in another king’s palace, and if it did not sing now it must be because it did not have all that it wanted. He himself knew so much about the bird’s ways that if he only got to see it he could tell at once what it lacked.

The king’s men now took counsel whether they ought to take the stranger in before the king, for in his chamber sat the bird Grip along with

the weeping princess. It was decided to risk doing so, and the horse-shoer was led into the king's chamber, where he had no sooner called the bird by its name than it began to sing and the princess to smile. Then the darkness cleared away from the king's eyes, and the more the bird sang the more clearly did he see, till at last in the strange horse-shoer he recognised his youngest son. Then the princess told the king how treacherously his eldest sons had acted, and he had them banished from his kingdom; but the youngest prince married the princess, and got the horse with the golden shoes and half the kingdom from his father, who kept for himself so long as he lived the bird Grip, which now sang with all its heart to the king and all his court.

SNOWFLAKE

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Slavonic story.
Contes Populaires Slaves, traduits par Louis Leger.
Paris: Leroux, Editeur.

Once upon a time there lived a peasant called Ivan, and he had a wife whose name was Marie. They would have been quite happy except for one thing: they had no children to play with, and as they were now old people they did not find that watching the children of their neighbours at all made up to them for having one of their own.

One winter, which nobody living will ever forget, the snow lay so deep that it came up to the knees of even the tallest man. When it had all fallen, and the sun was shining again, the children ran out into the street to play, and the old man and his wife sat at their window and gazed at them. The children first made a sort of little terrace, and stamped it hard and firm, and then they began to make a snow woman. Ivan and Marie watched them, the while thinking about many things.

Suddenly Ivan's face brightened, and, looking at his wife, he said, 'Wife, why shouldn't we make a snow woman too?'

'Why not?' replied Marie, who happened to be in a very good temper; 'it might amuse us a little. But there is no use making a woman. Let us make a little snow child, and pretend it is a living one.'

'Yes, let us do that,' said Ivan, and he took down his cap and went into the garden with his old wife.

Then the two set to work with all their might to make a doll out of the snow. They shaped a little body and two little hands and two little feet. On top of all they placed a ball of snow, out of which the head was to be.

'What in the world are you doing?' asked a passer-by.

'Can't you guess?' returned Ivan.

'Making a snow-child,' replied Marie.

They had finished the nose and the chin. Two holes were left for the eyes, and Ivan carefully shaped out the mouth. No sooner had he done so than he felt a warm breath upon his cheek. He started back in surprise and looked—and behold! the eyes of the child met his, and its lips, which were as red as raspberries, smiled at him!

‘What is it?’ cried Ivan, crossing himself. ‘Am I mad, or is the thing bewitched?’

The snow-child bent its head as if it had been really alive. It moved its little arms and its little legs in the snow that lay about it just as the living children did theirs.

‘Ah! Ivan, Ivan,’ exclaimed Marie, trembling with joy, ‘heaven has sent us a child at last!’ And she threw herself upon Snowflake (for that was the snow-child’s name) and covered her with kisses. And the loose snow fell away from Snowflake as an egg shell does from an egg, and it was a little girl whom Marie held in her arms.

‘Oh! my darling Snowflake!’ cried the old woman, and led her into the cottage.

And Snowflake grew fast; each hour as well as each day made a difference, and every day she became more and more beautiful. The old couple hardly knew how to contain themselves for joy, and thought of nothing else. The cottage was always full of village children, for they amused Snowflake, and there was nothing in the world they would not have done to amuse her. She was their doll, and they were continually inventing new dresses for her, and teaching her songs or playing with her. Nobody knew how clever she was! She noticed everything, and could learn a lesson in a moment. Anyone would have taken her for thirteen at least! And, besides all that, she was so good and obedient; and so pretty, too! Her skin was as white as snow, her eyes as blue as forget-me-nots, and her hair was long and golden. Only her cheeks had no colour in them, but were as fair as her forehead.

So the winter went on, till at last the spring sun mounted higher in the heavens and began to warm the earth. The grass grew green in the fields, and high in the air the larks were heard singing. The village girls met and danced in a ring, singing, ‘Beautiful spring, how came you here? How came you here? Did you come on a plough, or was it a harrow?’ Only Snowflake sat quite still by the window of the cottage.

‘What is the matter, dear child?’ asked Marie. ‘Why are you so sad? Are you ill? or have they treated you unkindly?’

‘No,’ replied Snowflake, ‘it is nothing, mother; no one has hurt me; I am well.’

The spring sun had chased away the last snow from its hiding place under the hedges; the fields were full of flowers; nightingales sang in the trees, and all the world was gay. But the gayer grew the birds and the flowers the sadder became Snowflake. She hid herself from her playmates, and curled herself up where the shadows were deepest, like a lily amongst its leaves. Her only pleasure was to lie amid the green willows near some sparkling stream. At the dawn and at twilight only she seemed happy. When a great storm broke, and the earth was white with hail, she became bright and joyous as the Snowflake of old; but when the clouds passed, and the hail melted beneath the sun, Snowflake would burst into tears and weep as a sister would weep over her brother.

The spring passed, and it was the eve of St. John, or Midsummer Day. This was the greatest holiday of the year, when the young girls met in the woods to dance and play. They went to fetch Snowflake, and said to Marie: ‘Let her come and dance with us.’

But Marie was afraid; she could not tell why, only she could not bear the child to go. Snowflake did not wish to go either, but they had no excuse ready. So Marie kissed the girl and said: ‘Go, my Snowflake, and be happy with your friends, and you, dear children, be careful of her. You know she is the light of my eyes to me.’

‘Oh, we will take care of her,’ cried the girls gaily, and they ran off to the woods. There they wore wreaths, gathered nosegays, and sang songs some sad, some merry. And whatever they did Snowflake did too.

When the sun set they lit a fire of dry grass, and placed themselves in a row, Snowflake being the last of all. ‘Now, watch us,’ they said, ‘and run just as we do.’

And they all began to sing and to jump one after another across the fire.

Suddenly, close behind them, they heard a sigh, then a groan. ‘Ah!’ They turned hastily and looked at each other. There was nothing. They looked again. Where was Snowflake? She has hidden herself for fun, they thought, and searched for her everywhere. ‘Snowflake! Snowflake!’ But

there was no answer. ‘Where can she be? Oh, she must have gone home.’ They returned to the village, but there was no Snowflake.

For days after that they sought her high and low. They examined every bush and every hedge, but there was no Snowflake. And long after everyone else had given up hope Ivan and Marie would wander through the woods crying ‘Snowflake, my dove, come back, come back!’ And sometimes they thought they heard a call, but it was never the voice of Snowflake.

And what had become of her? Had a fierce wild beast seized her and dragged her into his lair in the forest? Had some bird carried her off across the wide blue sea?

No, no beast had touched her, no bird had borne her away. With the first breath of flame that swept over her when she ran with her friends Snowflake had melted away, and a little soft haze floating upwards was all that remained of her.

I KNOW WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

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From the Danish.

There was once a man who had three daughters, and they were all married to trolls, who lived underground. One day the man thought that he would pay them a visit, and his wife gave him some dry bread to eat by the way. After he had walked some distance he grew both tired and hungry, so he sat down on the east side of a mound and began to eat his dry bread. The mound then opened, and his youngest daughter came out of it, and said, ‘Why, father! why are you not coming in to see me?’

‘Oh,’ said he, ‘if I had known that you lived here, and had seen any entrance, I would have come in.’

Then he entered the mound along with her.

The troll came home soon after this, and his wife told him that her father was come, and asked him to go and buy some beef to make broth with.

‘We can get it easier than that!’ said the troll.

He fixed an iron spike into one of the beams of the roof, and ran his head against this till he had knocked several large pieces off his head. He was just as well as ever after doing this, and they got their broth without further trouble.

The troll then gave the old man a sackful of money, and laden with this he betook himself homewards. When he came near his home he remembered that he had a cow about to calve, so he laid down the money on the ground, ran home as fast as he could, and asked his wife whether the cow had calved yet.

‘What kind of a hurry is this to come home in?’ said she. ‘No, the cow has not calved yet.’

‘Then you must come out and help me in with a sackful of money,’ said the man.

‘A sackful of money?’ cried his wife.

‘Yes, a sackful of money,’ said he. ‘Is that so very wonderful?’

His wife did not believe very much what he told her, but she humoured him, and went out with him.

When they came to the spot where he had left it there was no money there; a thief had come along and stolen it. His wife then grew angry and scolded him heartily.

‘Well, well!’ said he, ‘hang the money! I know what I have learned.’

‘What have you learned?’ said she.

‘Ah! I know that,’ said the man.

After some time had passed the man had a mind to visit his second eldest daughter. His wife again gave him some dry bread to eat, and when he grew tired and hungry he sat down on the east side of a mound and began to eat it. As he sat there his daughter came up out of the mound, and invited him to come inside, which he did very willingly.

Soon after this the troll came home. It was dark by that time, and his wife bade him go and buy some candles.

‘Oh, we shall soon get a light,’ said the troll. With that he dipped his fingers into the fire, and they then gave light without being burned in the least.

The old man got two sacks of money here, and plodded away homewards with these. When he was very nearly home he again thought of the cow that was with calf, so he laid down the money, ran home, and asked his wife whether the cow had calved yet.

‘Whatever is the matter with you?’ said she. ‘You come hurrying as if the whole house was about to fall. You may set your mind at rest: the cow has not calved yet.’

The man now asked her to come and help him home with the two sacks of money. She did not believe him very much, but he continued to assure her that it was quite true, till at last she gave in and went with him. When they came to the spot there had again been a thief there and taken the money. It was no wonder that the woman was angry about this, but the man only said, ‘Ah, if you only knew what I have learned.’

A third time the man set out—to visit his eldest daughter. When he came to a mound he sat down on the east side of it and ate the dry bread which his wife had given him to take with him. The daughter then came out of the mound and invited her father to come inside.

In a little the troll came home, and his wife asked him to go and buy some fish.

‘We can get them much more easily than that,’ said the troll. ‘Give me your dough trough and your ladle.’

They seated themselves in the trough, and rowed out on the lake which was beside the mound. When they had got out a little way the troll said to his wife, ‘Are my eyes green?’

‘No, not yet,’ said she.

He rowed on a little further and asked again, ‘Are my eyes not green yet?’

‘Yes,’ said his wife, ‘they are green now.’

Then the troll sprang into the water and ladled up so many fish that in a short time the trough could hold no more. They then rowed home again, and had a good meal off the fish.

The old man now got three sacks full of money, and set off home with them. When he was almost home the cow again came into his head, and he laid down the money. This time, however, he took his wooden shoes and laid them above the money, thinking that no one would take it after that. Then he ran home and asked his wife whether the cow had calved. It had not, and she scolded him again for behaving in this way, but in the end he persuaded her to go with him to help him with the three sacks of money.

When they came to the spot they found only the wooden shoes, for a thief had come along in the meantime and taken all the money. The woman was very angry, and broke out upon her husband; but he took it all very quietly, and only said, ‘Hang the money! I know what I have learned.’

‘What have you learned I should like to know?’ said his wife.

‘You will see that yet,’ said the man.

One day his wife took a fancy for broth, and said to him, ‘Oh, go to the village, and buy a piece of beef to make broth.’

‘There’s no need of that,’ said he; ‘we can get it an easier way.’ With that he drove a spike into a beam, and ran his head against it, and in consequence had to lie in bed for a long time afterwards.

After he had recovered from this his wife asked him one day to go and buy candles, as they had none.

‘No,’ he said, ‘there’s no need for that;’ and he stuck his hand into the fire. This also made him take to bed for a good while.

When he had got better again his wife one day wanted fish, and asked him to go and buy some. The man, however, wished again to show what he had learned, so he asked her to come along with him and bring her dough trough and a ladle. They both seated themselves in this, and rowed upon the lake. When they had got out a little way the man said, ‘Are my eyes green?’

‘No,’ said his wife; ‘why should they be?’

They rowed a little further out, and he asked again, ‘Are my eyes not green yet?’

‘What nonsense is this?’ said she; ‘why should they be green?’

‘Oh, my dear,’ said he, ‘can’t you just say that they are green?’

‘Very well,’ said she, ‘they are green.’

As soon as he heard this he sprang out into the water with the ladle for the fishes, but he just got leave to stay there with them!

THE CUNNING SHOEMAKER

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Sicilianische Mahrchen.

Once upon a time there lived a shoemaker who could get no work to do, and was so poor that he and his wife nearly died of hunger. At last he said to her, ‘It is no use waiting on here—I can find nothing; so I shall go down to Mascalucia, and perhaps there I shall be more lucky.’

So down he went to Mascalucia, and walked through the streets crying, ‘Who wants some shoes?’ And very soon a window was pushed up, and a woman’s head was thrust out of it.

‘Here are a pair for you to patch,’ she said. And he sat down on her doorstep and set about patching them.

‘How much do I owe you?’ she asked when they were done.

‘A shilling.’

‘Here is eighteen pence, and good luck to you.’ And he went his way. He turned into the next street and set up his cry again, and it was not long before another window was pushed up and another head appeared.

‘Here are some shoes for you to patch.’

And the shoemaker sat down on the doorstep and patched them.

‘How much do I owe you?’ asked the woman when the shoes were finished.

‘A florin.’

‘Here is a crown piece, and good luck to you.’ And she shut the window.

‘Well,’ thought the shoemaker, ‘I have done finely. But I will not go back to my wife just yet, as, if I only go on at this rate, I shall soon have enough money to buy a donkey.’

Having made up his mind what was best to do, he stayed in the town a few days longer till he had four gold pieces safe in his purse. Then he went to the market and for two of them he bought a good strong donkey, and, mounting on its back, he rode home to Catania. But as he entered a thick

wood he saw in the distance a band of robbers who were coming quickly towards him.

‘I am lost,’ thought he; ‘they are sure to take from me all the money that I have earned, and I shall be as poor as ever I was. What can I do?’ However, being a clever little man and full of spirit, he did not lose heart, but, taking five florins, he fastened them out of sight under the donkey’s thick mane. Then he rode on.

Directly the robber came up to him they seized him exactly as he had foretold and took away all his money.

‘Oh, dear friends!’ he cried, wringing his hands, ‘I am only a poor shoemaker, and have nothing but this donkey left in the world.’

As he spoke the donkey gave himself a shake, and down fell the five florins.

‘Where did that come from?’ asked the robbers.

‘Ah,’ replied the shoemaker, ‘you have guessed my secret. The donkey is a golden donkey, and supplies me with all my money.’

‘Sell him to us,’ said the robbers. ‘We will give you any price you like.’

The shoemaker at first declared that nothing would induce him to sell him, but at last he agreed to hand him over to the robbers for fifty gold pieces. ‘But listen to what I tell you,’ said he. ‘You must each take it in turn to own him for a night and a day, or else you will all be fighting over the money.’

With these words they parted, the robbers driving the donkey to their cave in the forest and the shoemaker returning home, very pleased with the success of his trick. He just stopped on the way to pick up a good dinner, and the next day spent most of his gains in buying a small vineyard.

Meanwhile the robbers had arrived at the cave where they lived, and the captain, calling them all round him, announced that it as his right to have the donkey for the first night. His companions agreed, and then he told his wife to put a mattress in the stable. She asked if he had gone out of his mind, but he answered crossly, ‘What is that to you? Do as you are bid, and to-morrow I will bring you some treasures.’

Very early the captain awoke and searched the stable, but could find nothing, and guessed that Master Joseph had been making fun of them.

‘Well,’ he said to himself, ‘if I have been taken in, the others shall not come off any better.’

So, when one of his men arrived and asked him eagerly how much money he had got, he answered gaily, ‘Oh, comrade, if you only knew! But I shall say nothing about it till everyone has had his turn!’

One after another they all took the donkey, but no money was forthcoming for anybody. At length, when all the band had been tricked, they held a council, and resolved to march to the shoemaker’s house and punish him well for his cunning. Just as before, the shoemaker saw them a long way off, and began to think how he could outwit them again. When he had hit upon a plan he called his wife, and said to her, ‘Take a bladder and fill it with blood, and bind it round your neck. When the robbers come and demand the money they gave me for the donkey I shall shout to you and tell you to get it quickly. You must argue with me, and decline to obey me, and then I shall plunge my knife into the bladder, and you must fall to the ground as if you were dead. There you must lie till I play on my guitar; then get up and begin to dance.’

The wife made haste to do as she was bid, and there was no time to lose, for the robbers were drawing very near the house. They entered with a great noise, and overwhelmed the shoemaker with reproaches for having deceived them about the donkey.

‘The poor beast must have lost its power owing to the change of masters,’ said he; ‘but we will not quarrel about it. You shall have back the fifty gold pieces that you gave for him. ‘Aite,’ he cried to his wife, ‘go quickly to the chest upstairs, and bring down the money for these gentlemen.’

‘Wait a little,’ answered she; ‘I must first bake this fish. It will be spoilt if I leave it now.’

‘Go this instant, as you are bid,’ shouted the shoemaker, stamping as if he was in a great passion; but, as she did not stir, he drew his knife, and stabbed her in the neck. The blood spurted out freely, and she fell to the ground as if she was dead.

‘What have you done?’ asked the robbers, looking at him in dismay. ‘The poor woman was doing nothing.’

‘Perhaps I was hasty, but it is easily set right,’ replied the shoemaker, taking down his guitar and beginning to play. Hardly had he struck the first

notes than his wife sat up; then got on her feet and danced.

The robbers stared with open mouths, and at last they said, ‘Master Joseph, you may keep the fifty gold pieces. But tell us what you will take for your guitar, for you must sell it to us?’

‘Oh, that is impossible!’ replied the shoemaker, ‘for every time I have a quarrel with my wife I just strike her dead, and so give vent to my anger. This has become such a habit with me that I don’t think I could break myself of it; and, of course, if I got rid of the guitar I could never bring her back to life again.’

However, the robbers would not listen to him, and at last he consented to take forty gold pieces for the guitar.

Then they all returned to their cave in the forest, delighted with their new purchase, and longing for a chance of trying its powers. But the captain declared that the first trial belonged to him, and after that the others might have their turn.

That evening he called to his wife and said, ‘What have you got for supper?’

‘Macaroni,’ answered she.

‘Why have you not boiled a fish?’ he cried, and stabber in the neck so that she fell dead. The captain, who was not in the least angry, seized the guitar and began to play; but, let him play as loud as he would, the dead woman never stirred. ‘Oh, lying shoemaker! Oh, abominable knave! Twice has he got the better of me. But I will pay him out!’

So he raged and swore, but it did him no good. The fact remained that he had killed his wife and could not bring her back again.

The next morning came one of the robbers to fetch the guitar, and to hear what had happened.

‘Well, how have you got on?’

‘Oh, splendidly! I stabbed my wife, and then began to play, and now she is as well as ever.’

‘Did you really? Then this evening I will try for myself.’

Of course the same thing happened over again, till all the wives had been killed secretly, and when there were no more left they whispered to each other the dreadful tale, and swore to be avenged on the shoemaker.

The band lost no time in setting out for his house, and, as before, the shoemaker saw them coming from afar. He called to his wife, who was

washing in the kitchen: ‘Listen, Aita: when the robbers come and ask for me say I have gone to the vineyard. Then tell the dog to call me, and chase him from the house.’

When he had given these directions he ran out of the back door and hid behind a barrel. A few minutes later the robbers arrived, and called loudly for the shoemaker.

‘Alas! good gentlemen, he is up in the vineyard, but I will send the dog after him at once. Here! now quickly to the vineyard, and tell your master some gentlemen are here who wish to speak to him. Go as fast as you can.’ And she opened the door and let the dog out.

‘You can really trust the dog to call your husband?’ asked the robbers.

‘Dear me, yes! He understands everything, and will always carry any message I give him.’

By-and-bye the shoemaker came in and said, ‘Good morning, gentlemen; the dog tells me you wish to speak to me.’

‘Yes, we do,’ replied the robber; ‘we have come to speak to you about that guitar. It is your fault that we have murdered all our wives; and, though we played as you told us, none of them ever came back to life.’

‘You could not have played properly,’ said the shoemaker. ‘It was your own fault.’

‘Well, we will forget all about it,’ answered the robbers, ‘if you will only sell us your dog.’

‘Oh, that is impossible! I should never get on without him.’

But the robbers offered him forty gold pieces, and at last he agreed to let them have the dog.

So they departed, taking the dog with them, and when they got back to their cave the captain declared that it was his right to have the first trial.

He then called his daughter, and said to her, ‘I am going to the inn; if anybody wants me, loose the dog, and send him to call me.’

About an hour after some one arrived on business, and the girl untied the dog and said, ‘Go to the inn and call my father!’ The dog bounded off, but ran straight to the shoemaker.

When the robber got home and found no dog he thought ‘He must have gone back to his old master,’ and, though night had already fallen, he went off after him.

‘Master Joseph, is the dog here?’ asked he.

‘Ah! yes, the poor beast is so fond of me! You must give him time to get accustomed to new ways.’

So the captain brought the dog back, and the following morning handed him over to another of the band, just saying that the animal really could do what the shoemaker had said.

The second robber carefully kept his own counsel, and fetched the dog secretly back from the shoemaker, and so on through the whole band. At length, when everybody had suffered, they met and told the whole story, and next day they all marched off in fury to the man who had made game of them. After reproaching him with having deceived them, they tied him up in a sack, and told him they were going to throw him into the sea. The shoemaker lay quite still, and let them do as they would.

They went on till they came to a church, and the robbers said, ‘The sun is hot and the sack is heavy; let us leave it here and go in and rest.’ So they put the sack down by the roadside, and went into the church.

Now, on a hill near by there was a swineherd looking after a great herd of pigs and whistling merrily.

When Master Joseph heard him he cried out as loud as he could, ‘I won’t; I won’t, I say.’

‘What won’t you do?’ asked the swineherd.

‘Oh,’ replied the shoemaker. ‘They want me to marry the king’s daughter, and I won’t do it.’

‘How lucky you are!’ sighed the swineherd. ‘Now, if it were only me!’

‘Oh, if that’s all!’ replied the cunning shoemaker, ‘get you into this sack, and let me out.’

Then the swineherd opened the sack and took the place of the shoemaker, who went gaily off, driving the pigs before him.

When the robbers were rested they came out of the church, took up the sack, and carried it to the sea, where they threw it in, and it sank directly. As they came back they met the shoemaker, and stared at him with open mouths.

‘Oh, if you only knew how many pigs live in the sea,’ he cried. ‘And the deeper you go the more there are. I have just brought up these, and mean to return for some more.’

‘There are still some left there?’

‘Oh, more than I could count,’ replied the shoemaker. ‘I will show you what you must do.’ Then he led the robbers back to the shore. ‘Now,’ said he, ‘you must each of you tie a stone to your necks, so that you may be sure to go deep enough, for I found the pigs that you saw very deep down indeed.’

Then the robbers all tied stones round their necks, and jumped in, and were drowned, and Master Joseph drove his pigs home, and was a rich man to the end of his days.

THE KING WHO WOULD HAVE A BEAUTIFUL WIFE

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Sicilianische Mahrchen.

Fifty years ago there lived a king who was very anxious to get married; but, as he was quite determined that his wife should be as beautiful as the sun, the thing was not so easy as it seemed, for no maiden came up to his standard. Then he commanded a trusty servant to search through the length and breadth of the land till he found a girl fair enough to be queen, and if he had the good luck to discover one he was to bring her back with him.

The servant set out at once on his journey, and sought high and low-in castles and cottages; but though pretty maidens were plentiful as blackberries, he felt sure that none of them would please the king.

One day he had wandered far and wide, and was feeling very tired and thirsty. By the roadside stood a tiny little house, and here he knocked and asked for a cup of water. Now in this house dwelt two sisters, and one was eighty and the other ninety years old. They were very poor, and earned their living by spinning. This had kept their hands very soft and white, like the hands of a girl, and when the water was passed through the lattice, and the servant saw the small, delicate fingers, he said to himself: ‘A maiden must indeed be lovely if she has a hand like that.’ And he made haste back, and told the king.

‘Go back at once,’ said his majesty, ‘and try to get a sight of her.’

The faithful servant departed on his errand without losing any time, and again he knocked at the door of the little house and begged for some water. As before, the old woman did not open the door, but passed the water through the lattice.

‘Do you live here alone?’ asked the man.

‘No,’ replied she, ‘my sister lives with me. We are poor girls, and have to work for our bread.’

‘How old are you?’

‘I am fifteen, and she is twenty.’

Then the servant went back to the king, and told him all he knew. And his majesty answered: ‘I will have the fifteen-year-old one. Go and bring her here.’

The servant returned a third time to the little house and knocked at the door. In reply to his knock the lattice window was pushed open, and a voice inquired what it was he wanted.

‘The king has desired me to bring back the youngest of you to become his queen,’ he replied.

‘Tell his majesty I am ready to do his bidding, but since my birth no ray of light has fallen upon my face. If it should ever do so I shall instantly grow black. Therefore beg, I pray you, his most gracious majesty to send this evening a shut carriage, and I will return in it to the castle.

When the king heard this he ordered his great golden carriage to be prepared, and in it to be placed some magnificent robes; and the old woman wrapped herself in a thick veil, and was driven to the castle.

The king was eagerly awaiting her, and when she arrived he begged her politely to raise her veil and let him see her face.

But she answered: ‘Here the tapers are too bright and the light too strong. Would you have me turn black under your very eyes?’

And the king believed her words, and the marriage took place without the veil being once lifted. Afterwards, when they were alone, he raised the corner, and knew for the first time that he had wedded a wrinkled old woman. And, in a furious burst of anger, he dashed open the window and flung her out. But, luckily for her, her clothes caught on a nail in the wall, and kept her hanging between heaven and earth.

While she was thus suspended, expecting every moment to be dashed to the ground, four fairies happened to pass by.

‘Look, sisters,’ cried one, ‘surely that is the old woman that the king sent for. Shall we wish that her clothes may give way, and that she should be dashed to the ground?’

‘Oh no! no!’ exclaimed another. ‘Let us wish her something good. I myself will wish her youth.’

‘And I beauty.’

‘And I wisdom.’

‘And I a tender heart.’

So spake the fairies, and went their way, leaving the most beautiful maiden in the world behind them.

The next morning when the king looked from his window he saw this lovely creature hanging on the nail. ‘Ah! what have I done? Surely I must have been blind last night!’

And he ordered long ladders to be brought and the maiden to be rescued. Then he fell on his knees before her, and prayed her to forgive him, and a great feast was made in her honour.

Some days after came the ninety-year-old sister to the palace and asked for the queen.

‘Who is that hideous old witch?’ said the king.

‘Oh, an old neighbour of mine, who is half silly,’ she replied.

But the old woman looked at her steadily, and knew her again, and said: ‘How have you managed to grow so young and beautiful? I should like to be young and beautiful too.’

This question she repeated the whole day long, till at length the queen lost patience and said: ‘I had my old head cut off, and this new head grew in its place.’

Then the old woman went to a barber, and spoke to him, saying, ‘I will give you all you ask if you will only cut off my head, so that I may become young and lovely.’

‘But, my good woman, if I do that you will die!’

But the old woman would listen to nothing; and at last the barber took out his knife and struck the first blow at her neck.

‘Ah!’ she shrieked as she felt the pain.

‘Il faut souffrir pour etre belle,’ said the barber, who had been in France.

And at the second blow her head rolled off, and the old woman was dead for good and all.

CATHERINE AND HER DESTINY

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Sicilianische Mahrchen von Laura Gonzenbach.
Leipzig, Engelmann, 1870.

Long ago there lived a rich merchant who, besides possessing more treasures than any king in the world, had in his great hall three chairs, one of silver, one of gold, and one of diamonds. But his greatest treasure of all was his only daughter, who was called Catherine.

One day Catherine was sitting in her own room when suddenly the door flew open, and in came a tall and beautiful woman holding in her hands a little wheel.

‘Catherine,’ she said, going up to the girl, ‘which would you rather have-a happy youth or a happy old age?’

Catherine was so taken by surprise that she did not know what to answer, and the lady repeated again, ‘Which would you rather have-a happy youth or a happy old age?’

Then Catherine thought to herself, ‘If I say a happy youth, then I shall have to suffer all the rest of my life. No, I would bear trouble now, and have something better to look forward to.’ So she looked up and replied, ‘Give me a happy old age.’

‘So be it,’ said the lady, and turned her wheel as she spoke, vanishing the next moment as suddenly as she had come.

Now this beautiful lady was the Destiny of poor Catherine.

Only a few days after this the merchant heard the news that all his finest ships, laden with the richest merchandise, had been sunk in a storm, and he was left a beggar. The shock was too much for him. He took to his bed, and in a short time he was dead of his disappointment.

So poor Catherine was left alone in the world without a penny or a creature to help her. But she was a brave girl and full of spirit, and soon made up her mind that the best thing she could do was to go to the nearest town and become a servant. She lost no time in getting herself ready, and

did not take long over her journey; and as she was passing down the chief street of the town a noble lady saw her out of the window, and, struck by her sad face, said to her: ‘Where are you going all alone, my pretty girl?’

‘Ah, my lady, I am very poor, and must go to service to earn my bread.’

‘I will take you into my service,’ said she; and Catherine served her well.

Some time after her mistress said to Catherine, ‘I am obliged to go out for a long while, and must lock the house door, so that no thieves shall get in.’

So she went away, and Catherine took her work and sat down at the window. Suddenly the door burst open, and in came her Destiny.

‘Oh! so here you are, Catherine! Did you really think I was going to leave you in peace?’ And as she spoke she walked to the linen press where Catherine’s mistress kept all her finest sheets and underclothes, tore everything in pieces, and flung them on the floor. Poor Catherine wrung her hands and wept, for she thought to herself, ‘When my lady comes back and sees all this ruin she will think it is my fault,’ and starting up, she fled through the open door. Then Destiny took all the pieces and made them whole again, and put them back in the press, and when everything was tidy she too left the house.

When the mistress reached home she called Catherine, but no Catherine was there. ‘Can she have robbed me?’ thought the old lady, and looked hastily round the house; but nothing was missing. She wondered why Catherine should have disappeared like this, but she heard no more of her, and in a few days she filled her place.

Meanwhile Catherine wandered on and on, without knowing very well where she was going, till at last she came to another town. Just as before, a noble lady happened to see her passing her window, and called out to her, ‘Where are you going all alone, my pretty girl?’

And Catherine answered, ‘Ah, my lady, I am very poor, and must go to service to earn my bread.’

‘I will take you into my service,’ said the lady; and Catherine served her well, and hoped she might now be left in peace. But, exactly as before, one day that Catherine was left in the house alone her Destiny came again and spoke to her with hard words: ‘What! are you here now?’ And in a

passion she tore up everything she saw, till in sheer misery poor Catherine rushed out of the house. And so it befell for seven years, and directly Catherine found a fresh place her Destiny came and forced her to leave it.

After seven years, however, Destiny seemed to get tired of persecuting her, and a time of peace set in for Catherine. When she had been chased away from her last house by Destiny's wicked pranks she had taken service with another lady, who told her that it would be part of her daily work to walk to a mountain that overshadowed the town, and, climbing up to the top, she was to lay on the ground some loaves of freshly baked bread, and cry with a loud voice, 'O Destiny, my mistress,' three times. Then her lady's Destiny would come and take away the offering. 'That will I gladly do,' said Catherine.

So the years went by, and Catherine was still there, and every day she climbed the mountain with her basket of bread on her arm. She was happier than she had been, but sometimes, when no one saw her, she would weep as she thought over her old life, and how different it was to the one she was now leading. One day her lady saw her, and said, 'Catherine, what is it? Why are you always weeping?' And then Catherine told her story.

'I have got an idea,' exclaimed the lady. 'To-morrow, when you take the bread to the mountain, you shall pray my Destiny to speak to yours, and entreat her to leave you in peace. Perhaps something may come of it!'

At these words Catherine dried her eyes, and next morning, when she climbed the mountain, she told all she had suffered, and cried, 'O Destiny, my mistress, pray, I entreat you, of my Destiny that she may leave me in peace.'

And Destiny answered, 'Oh, my poor girl, know you not your Destiny lies buried under seven coverlids, and can hear nothing? But if you will come to-morrow I will bring her with me.'

And after Catherine had gone her way her lady's Destiny went to find her sister, and said to her, 'Dear sister, has not Catherine suffered enough? It is surely time for her good days to begin?'

And the sister answered, 'To-morrow you shall bring her to me, and I will give her something that may help her out of her need.'

The next morning Catherine set out earlier than usual for the mountain, and her lady's Destiny took the girl by the hand and led her to her sister, who lay under the seven coverlids. And her Destiny held out to Catherine a

ball of silk, saying, ‘Keep this—it may be useful some day;’ then pulled the coverings over her head again.

But Catherine walked sadly down the hill, and went straight to her lady and showed her the silken ball, which was the end of all her high hopes.

‘What shall I do with it?’ she asked. ‘It is not worth sixpence, and it is no good to me!’

‘Take care of it,’ replied her mistress. ‘Who can tell how useful it may be?’

A little while after this grand preparations were made for the king’s marriage, and all the tailors in the town were busy embroidering fine clothes. The wedding garment was so beautiful nothing like it had ever been seen before, but when it was almost finished the tailor found that he had no more silk. The colour was very rare, and none could be found like it, and the king made a proclamation that if anyone happened to possess any they should bring it to the court, and he would give them a large sum.

‘Catherine!’ exclaimed the lady, who had been to the tailors and seen the wedding garment, ‘your ball of silk is exactly the right colour. Bring it to the king, and you can ask what you like for it.’

Then Catherine put on her best clothes and went to the court, and looked more beautiful than any woman there.

‘May it please your majesty,’ she said, ‘I have brought you a ball of silk of the colour you asked for, as no one else has any in the town.’

‘Your majesty,’ asked one of the courtiers, ‘shall I give the maiden its weight in gold?’

The king agreed, and a pair of scales were brought; and a handful of gold was placed in one scale and the silken ball in the other. But lo! let the king lay in the scales as many gold pieces as he would, the silk was always heavier still. Then the king took some larger scales, and heaped up all his treasures on one side, but the silk on the other outweighed them all. At last there was only one thing left that had not been put in, and that was his golden crown. And he took it from his head and set it on top of all, and at last the scale moved and the ball had founds its balance.

‘Where got you this silk?’ asked the king.

‘It was given me, royal majesty, by my mistress,’ replied Catherine.

‘That is not true,’ said the king, ‘and if you do not tell me the truth I will have your head cut off this instant.’

So Catherine told him the whole story, and how she had once been as rich as he.

Now there lived at the court a wise woman, and she said to Catherine, ‘You have suffered much, my poor girl, but at length your luck has turned, and I know by the weighing of the scales through the crown that you will die a queen.’

‘So she shall,’ cried the king, who overheard these words; ‘she shall die my queen, for she is more beautiful than all the ladies of the court, and I will marry no one else.’

And so it fell out. The king sent back the bride he had promised to wed to her own country, and the same Catherine was queen at the marriage feast instead, and lived happy and contented to the end of her life.

HOW THE HERMIT HELPED TO WIN THE KING'S DAUGHTER

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Sicilianische Mahrchen

Long ago there lived a very rich man who had three sons. When he felt himself to be dying he divided his property between them, making them share alike, both in money and lands. Soon after he died the king set forth a proclamation through the whole country that whoever could build a ship that should float both on land and sea should have his daughter to wife.

The eldest brother, when he heard it, said to the other, 'I think I will spend some of my money in trying to build that ship, as I should like to have the king for my father-in-law.' So he called together all the shipbuilders in the land, and gave them orders to begin the ship without delay. And trees were cut down, and great preparations made, and in a few days everybody knew what it was all for; and there was a crowd of old people pressing round the gates of the yard, where the young man spent the most of his day.

'Ah, master, give us work,' they said, 'so that we may earn our bread.'

But he only gave them hard words, and spoke roughly to them. 'You are old, and have lost your strength; of what use are you?' And he drove them away. Then came some boys and prayed him, "master, give us work,' but he answered them, 'Of what use can you be, weaklings as you are! Get you gone!' And if any presented themselves that were not skilled workmen he would have none of them.

At last there knocked at the gate a little old man with a long white beard, and said, 'Will you give me work, so that I may earn my bread?' But he was only driven away like the rest.

The ship took a long while to build, and cost a great deal of money, and when it was launched a sudden squall rose, and it fell to pieces, and with it all the young man's hopes of winning the princess. By this time he had not a penny left, so he went back to his two brothers and told his tale. And the

second brother said to himself as he listened, ‘Certainly he has managed very badly, but I should like to see if I can’t do better, and win the princess for my own self.’ So he called together all the shipbuilders throughout the country, and gave them orders to build a ship which should float on the land as well as on the sea. But his heart was no softer than his brother’s, and every man that was not a skilled workman was chased away with hard words. Last came the white-bearded man, but he fared no better than the rest.

When the ship was finished the launch took place, and everything seemed going smoothly when a gale sprang up, and the vessel was dashed to pieces on the rocks. The young man had spent his whole fortune on it, and now it was all swallowed up, was forced to beg shelter from his youngest brother. When he told his story the youngest said to himself, ‘I am not rich enough to support us all three. I had better take my turn, and if I manage to win the princess there will be her fortune as well as my own for us to live on.’ So he called together all the shipbuilders in the kingdom, and gave orders that a new ship should be built. Then all the old people came and asked for work, and he answered cheerfully, ‘Oh, yes, there is plenty for everybody;’ and when the boys begged to be allowed to help he found something that they could do. And when the old man with the long white beard stood before him, praying that he might earn his bread, he replied, ‘Oh, father, I could not suffer you to work, but you shall be overseer, and look after the rest.’

Now the old man was a holy hermit, and when he saw how kind-hearted the youth was he determined to do all he could for him to gain the wish of his heart.

By-and-bye, when the ship was finished, the hermit said to his young friend, ‘Now you can go and claim the king’s daughter, for hte ship will float both by land and sea.’

‘Oh, good father,’ cried the young man, ‘you will not forsake me? Stay with me, I pray you, and lead me to the king!’

‘If you wish it, I will,’ said the hermit, ‘on condition that you will give me half of anything you get.’

‘Oh, if that is all,’ answered he, ‘it is easily promised!’ And they set out together on the ship.

After they had gone some distance they saw a man standing in a thick fog, which he was trying to put into a sack.

‘Oh, good father,’ exclaimed the youth, ‘what can he be doing?’

‘Ask him,’ said the old man.

‘What are you doing, my fine fellow?’

‘I am putting the fog into my sack. That is my business.’

‘Ask him if he will come with us,’ whispered the hermit.

And the man answered: ‘If you will give me enough to eat and drink I will gladly stay with you.’

So they took him on their ship, and the youth said, as they started off again, ‘Good father, before we were two, and now we are three!’

After they had travelled a little further they met a man who had torn up half the forest, and was carrying all the trees on his shoulders.

‘Good father,’ exclaimed the youth, ‘only look! What can he have done that for?’

‘Ask him why he has torn up all those trees.’

And the man replied, ‘Why, I’ve merely been gathering a handful of brushwood.’

‘Beg him to come with us,’ whispered the hermit.

And the strong man answered: ‘Willingly, as long as you give me enough to eat and drink.’ And he came on the ship.

And the youth said to the hermit, ‘Good father, before we were three, and now we are four.’

The ship travelled on again, and some miles further on they saw a man drinking out of a stream till he had nearly drunk it dry.

‘Good father,’ said the youth, ‘just look at that man! Did you ever see anybody drink like that?’

‘Ask him why he does it,’ answered the hermit.

‘Why, there is nothing very odd in taking a mouthful of water!’ replied the man, standing up.

‘Beg him to come with us.’ And the youth did so.

‘With pleasure, as long as you give me enough to eat and drink.’

And the youth whispered to the hermit, ‘Good father, before we were four, and now we are five.’

A little way along they noticed another man in the middle of a stream, who was shooting into the water.

‘Good father,’ said the youth, ‘what can he be shooting at?’

‘Ask him,’ answered the hermit.

‘Hush, hush!’ cried the man; ‘now you have frightened it away. In the Underworld sits a quail on a tree, and I wanted to shoot it. That is my business. I hit everything I aim at.’

‘Ask him if he will come with us.’

And the man replied, ‘With all my heart, as long as I get enough to eat and drink.’

So they took him into the ship, and the young man whispered, ‘Good father, before we were five, and now we are six.’

Off they went again, and before they had gone far they met a man striding towards them whose steps were so long that while one foot was on the north of the island the other was right down in the south.

‘Good father, look at him! What long steps he takes!’

‘Ask him why he does it,’ replied the hermit.

‘Oh, I am only going out for a little walk,’ answered he.

‘Ask him if he will come with us.’

‘Gladly, if you will give me as much as I want to eat and drink,’ said he, climbing up into the ship.

And the young man whispered, ‘Good father, before we were six, and now we are seven.’ But the hermit knew what he was about, and why he gathered these strange people into the ship.

After many days, at last they reached the town where lived the king and his daughter. They stopped the vessel right in front of the palace, and the young man went in and bowed low before the king.

‘O Majesty, I have done your bidding, and now is the ship built that can travel over land and sea. Give me my reward, and let me have your daughter to wife.’

But the king said to himself, ‘What! am I to wed my daughter to a man of whom I know nothing. Not even whether he be rich or poor—a knight or a beggar.’

And aloud he spake: It is not enough that you have managed to build the ship. You must find a runner who shall take this letter to the ruler of the Underworld, and bring me the answer back in an hour.’

‘That is not in the bond,’ answered the young man.

‘Well, do as you like,’ replied the king, ‘only you will not get my daughter.’

The young man went out, sorely troubled, to tell his old friend what had happened.

‘Silly boy!’ cried the hermit, ‘Accept his terms at once. And send off the long-legged man with the letter. He will take it in no time at all.’

So the youth’s heard leapt for joy, and he returned to the king. ‘Majesty, I accept your terms. HEre is the messenger who will do what you wish.’

The king had no choice but to give the man the letter, and he strode off, making short work of the distance that lay between the palace and the Underworld. He soon found the ruler, who looked at the letter, and said to him, ‘Wait a little while i write the answer;’ but the man was soo tired with his quick walk that he went sound asleep and forgot all about his errand.

All this time the youth was anxiously counting the minutes till he could get back, and stood with his eyes fixed on the road down which his messenger must come.

‘What can be keeping him,’ he said to the hermit when the hour was nearly up. Then the hermit sent for the man who could hit everything he aimed at, and said to him, ‘Just see why the messenger stays so long.’

‘Oh, he is sound asleep in the palace of the Underworld. However, I can wake him.’

Then he drew his bow, and shot an arrow straight into the man’s knee. The messenger awoke with such a start, and when he saw that the hour had almost run out he snatched up the answer and rushed back with such speed that the clock had not yet struck when he entered the palace.

Now the young man thought he was sure of his bride, but the king said, “Still you have not done enough. Before I give you my daughter you must find a man who can drink half the contents of my cellar in one day.’

‘That is not in the bond,’ complained the poor youth.

‘Well, do as you like, only you will not get my daughter.’

The young man went sadly out, and asked the hermit what he was to do.

‘Silly boy!’ said he. ‘Why, tell the man to do it who drinks up everything.’

So they sent for the man and said, ‘Do you think you are able to drink half the royal cellar in one day?’

‘Dear me, yes, and as much more as you want,’ answered he. ‘I am never satisfied.’

The king was not pleased at the young man agreeing so readily, but he had no choice, and ordered the servant to be taken downstairs. Oh, how he enjoyed himself! All day long he drank, and drank, and drank, till instead of half the cellar, he had drunk the whole, and there was not a cask but what stood empty. And when the king saw this he said to the youth, ‘You have conquered, and I can no longer withhold my daughter. But, as her dowry, I shall only give so much as one man can carry away.’

‘But,’ answered he, ‘let a man be ever so strong, he cannot carry more than a hundredweight, and what is that for a king’s daughter?’

‘Well, do as you like; I have said my say. It is your affair—not mine.’

The young man was puzzled, and did not know what to reply, for, though he would gladly have married the princess without a sixpence, he had spent all his money in building the ship, and knew he could not give her all she wanted. So he went to the hermit and said to him, ‘The king will only give for her dowry as much as a man can carry. I have no money of my own left, and my brothers have none either.’

‘Silly boy! Why, you have only got to fetch the man who carried half the forest on his shoulders.’

And the youth was glad, and called the strong man, and told him what he must do. ‘Take everything you can, till you are bent double. Never mind if you leave the palace bare.’

The strong man promised, and nobly kept his word. He piled all he could see on his back—chairs, tables, wardrobes, chests of gold and silver—till there was nothing left to pile. At last he took the king’s crown, and put it on the top. He carried his burden to the ship and stowed his treasures away, and the youth followed, leading the king’s daughter. But the king was left raging in his empty palace, and he called together his army, and got ready his ships of war, in order that he might go after the vessel and bring back what had been taken away.

And the king’s ships sailed very fast, and soon caught up the little vessel, and the sailors all shouted for joy. Then the hermit looked out and saw how near they were, and he said to the youth, ‘Do you see that?’

The youth shrieked and cried, ‘Ah, good father, it is a fleet of ships, and they are chasing us, and in a few moments they will be upon us.’

But the hermit bade him call the man who had the fog in his sack, and the sack was opened and the fog flew out, and hung right round the king’s ships, so that they could see nothing. So they sailed back to the palace, and told the king what strange things had happened. Meanwhile the young man’s vessel reached home in safety.

‘Well, here you are once more’ said the hermit; ‘and now you can fulfil the promise you made me to give me the half of all you had.’

‘That will I do with all my heart,’ answered the youth, and began to divide all his treasures, putting part on one side for himself and setting aside the other for his friend. ‘Good father, it is finished,’ said he at length; ‘there is nothing more left to divide.’

‘Nothing more left!’ cried the hermit. ‘Why, you have forgotten the best thing of all!’

‘What can that be?’ asked he. ‘We have divided everything.’

‘And the king’s daughter?’ said the hermit.

Then the young man’s heart stood still, for he loved her dearly. But he answered, ‘It is well; I have sworn, and I will keep my word,’ and drew his sword to cut her in pieces. When the hermit saw that he held his honour dearer than his wife he lifted his hand and cried, ‘Hold! she is yours, and all the treasures too. I gave you my help because you had pity on those that were in need. And when you are in need yourself, call upon me, and I will come to you.’

As he spoke he softly touched their heads and vanished.

The next day the wedding took place, and the two brothers came to the house, and they all lived happily together, but they never forgot the holy man who had been such a good friend.

THE WATER OF LIFE

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Cuentos Populars Catalans, per lo Dr. D. Francisco de S.
Maspous y Labros.
Barcelona, 1885.

Three brothers and one sister lived together in a small cottage, and they loved one another dearly. One day the eldest brother, who had never done anything but amuse himself from sunrise to sunset, said to the rest, ‘Let us all work hard, and perhaps we shall grow rich, and be able to build ourselves a palace.’

And his brothers and sister answered joyfully, ‘Yes, we will all work!’

So they fell to working with all their might, till at last they became rich, and were able to build themselves a beautiful palace; and everyone came from miles round to see its wonders, and to say how splendid it was. No one thought of finding any faults, till at length an old woman, who had been walking through the rooms with a crowd of people, suddenly exclaimed, ‘Yes, it is a splendid palace, but there is still something it needs!’

‘And what may that be?’

‘A church.’

When they heard this the brothers set to work again to earn some more money, and when they had got enough they set about building a church, which should be as large and beautiful as the palace itself.

And after the church was finished greater numbers of people than ever flocked to see the palace and the church and vast gardens and magnificent halls.

But one day, as the brothers were as usual doing the honours to their guests, an old man turned to them and said, ‘Yes, it is all most beautiful, but there is still something it needs!’

‘And what may that be?’

‘A pitcher of the water of life, a branch of the tree the smell of whose flowers gives eternal beauty, and the talking bird.’

‘And where am I to find all those?’

‘Go to the mountain that is far off yonder, and you will find what you seek.’

After the old man had bowed politely and taken farewell of them the eldest brother said to the rest, ‘I will go in search of the water of life, and the talking bird, and the tree of beauty.’

‘But suppose some evil thing befalls you?’ asked his sister. ‘How shall we know?’

‘You are right,’ he replied; ‘ I had not thought of that!’

Then they followed the old man, and said to him, ‘My eldest brother wishes to seek for the water of life, and the tree of beauty, and the talking bird, that you tell him are needful to make our palace perfect. But how shall we know if any evil thing befall him?’

So the old man took them a knife, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Keep this carefully, and as long as the blade is bright all is well; but if the blade is bloody, then know that evil has befallen him.’

The brothers thanked him, and departed, and went straight to the palace, where they found the young man making ready to set out for the mountain where the treasures he longed for lay hid.

And he walked, and he walked, and he walked, till he had gone a great way, and there he met a giant.

‘Can you tell me how much further I have still to go before I reach that mountain yonder?’

‘And why do you wish to go there?’

‘I am seeking the water of life, the talking bird, and a branch of the tree of beauty.’

‘Many have passed by seeking those treasures, but none have ever come back; and you will never come back either, unless you mark my words. Follow this path, and when you reach the mountain you will find it covered with stones. Do not stop to look at them, but keep on your way. As you go you will hear scoffs and laughs behind you; it will be the stones that mock. Do not heed them; above all, do not turn round. If you do you will become as one of them. Walk straight on till you get to the top, and then take all you wish for.’

The young man thanked him for his counsel, and walked, and walked, and walked, till he reached the mountain. And as he climbed he heard behind him scoffs and jeers, but he kept his ears steadily closed to them. At last the noise grew so loud that he lost patience, and he stooped to pick up a stone to hurl into the midst of the clamour, when suddenly his arm seemed to stiffen, and the next moment he was a stone himself!

That day his sister, who thought her brother's steps were long in returning, took out the knife and found the blade was red as blood. Then she cried out to her brothers that something terrible had come to pass.

'I will go and find him,' said the second. And he went.

And he walked, and he walked, and he walked, till he met the giant, and asked him if he had seen a young man travelling towards the mountain.

And the giant answered, 'Yes, I have seen him pass, but I have not seen him come back. The spell must have worked upon him.'

'Then what can I do to disenchant him, and find the water of life, the talking bird, and a branch of the tree of beauty?'

'Follow this path, and when you reach the mountain you will find it covered with stones. Do not stop to look at them, but climb steadily on. Above all, heed not the laughs and scoffs that will arise on all sides, and never turn round. And when you reach the top you can then take all you desire.'

The young man thanked him for his counsel, and set out for the mountain. But no sooner did he reach it than loud jests and gibes broke out on every side, and almost deafened him. For some time he let them rail, and pushed boldly on, till he had passed the place which his brother had gained; then suddenly he thought that among the scoffing sounds he heard his brother's voice. He stopped and looked back; and another stone was added to the number.

Meanwhile the sister left at home was counting the days when her two brothers should return to her. The time seemed long, and it would be hard to say how often she took out the knife and looked at its polished blade to make sure that this one at least was still safe. The blade was always bright and clear; each time she looked she had the happiness of knowing that all was well, till one evening, tired and anxious, as she frequently was at the end of the day, she took it from its drawer, and behold! the blade was red

with blood. Her cry of horror brought her youngest brother to her, and, unable to speak, she held out the knife!

‘I will go,’ he said.

So he walked, and he walked, and he walked, until he met the giant, and he asked, ‘Have two young men, making for yonder mountain, passed this way?’

And the giant answered, ‘Yes, they have passed by, but they never came back, and by this I know that the spell has fallen upon them.’

‘Then what must I do to free them, and to get the water of life, and the talking bird, and the branch of the tree of beauty?’

‘Go to the mountain, which you will find so thickly covered with stones that you will hardly be able to place your feet, and walk straight forward, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, and paying no heed to the laughs and scoffs which will follow you, till you reach the top, and then you may take all that you desire.’

The young man thanked the giant for his counsel, and set forth to the mountain. And when he began to climb there burst forth all around him a storm of scoffs and jeers; but he thought of the giant’s words, and looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, till the mountain top lay straight before him. A moment now and he would have gained it, when, through the groans and yells, he heard his brothers’ voices. He turned, and there was one stone the more.

And all this while his sister was pacing up and down the palace, hardly letting the knife out of her hand, and dreading what she knew she would see, and what she did see. The blade grew red before her eyes, and she said, ‘Now it is my turn.’

So she walked, and she walked, and she walked till she came to the giant, and prayed him to tell her if he had seen three young men pass that way seeking the distant mountain.

‘I have seen them pass, but they have never returned, and by this I know that the spell has fallen upon them.’

‘And what must I do to set them free, and to find the water of life, and the talking bird, and a branch of the tree of beauty?’

‘You must go to that mountain, which is so full of stones that your feet will hardly find a place to tread, and as you climb you will hear a noise as if all the stones in the world were mocking you; but pay no heed to

anything you may hear, and, once you gain the top, you have gained everything.’

The girl thanked him for his counsel, and set out for the mountain; and scarcely had she gone a few steps upwards when cries and screams broke forth around her, and she felt as if each stone she trod on was a living thing. But she remembered the words of the giant, and knew not what had befallen her brothers, and kept her face steadily towards the mountain top, which grew nearer and nearer every moment. But as she mounted the clamour increased sevenfold: high above them all rang the voices of her three brothers. But the girl took no heed, and at last her feet stood upon the top.

Then she looked round, and saw, lying in a hollow, the pool of the water of life. And she took the brazen pitcher that she had brought with her, and filled it to the brim. By the side of the pool stood the tree of beauty, with the talking bird on one of its boughs; and she caught the bird, and placed it in a cage, and broke off one of the branches.

After that she turned, and went joyfully down the hill again, carrying her treasures, but her long climb had tired her out, and the brazen pitcher was very heavy, and as she walked a few drops of the water spilt on the stones, and as it touched them they changed into young men and maidens, crowding about her to give thanks for their deliverance.

So she learnt by this how the evil spell might be broken, and she carefully sprinkled every stone till there was not one left—only a great company of youths and girls who followed her down the mountain.

When they arrived at the palace she did not lose a moment in planting the branch of the tree of beauty and watering it with the water of life. And the branch shot up into a tree, and was heavy with flowers, and the talking bird nestled in its branches.

Now the fame of these wonders was noised abroad, and the people flocked in great numbers to see the three marvels, and the maiden who had won them; and among the sightseers came the king’s son, who would not go till everything was shown him, and till he had heard how it had all happened. And the prince admired the strangeness and beauty of the treasures in the palace, but more than all he admired the beauty and courage of the maiden who had brought them there. So he went home and told his parents, and gained their consent to wed her for his wife.

Then the marriage was celebrated in the church adjoining the palace. Then the bridegroom took her to his own home, where they lived happy for ever after.

THE WOUNDED LION

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Cuentos Populars Catalans.

There was once a girl so poor that she had nothing to live on, and wandered about the world asking for charity. One day she arrived at a thatched cottage, and inquired if they could give her any work. The farmer said he wanted a cowherd, as his own had left him, and if the girl liked the place she might take it. So she became a cowherd.

One morning she was driving her cows through the meadows when she heard near by a loud groan that almost sounded human. She hastened to the spot from which the noise came, and found it proceeded from a lion who lay stretched upon the ground.

You can guess how frightened she was! But the lion seemed in such pain that she was sorry for him, and drew nearer and nearer till she saw he had a large thorn in one foot. She pulled out the thorn and bound up the place, and the lion was grateful, and licked her hand by way of thanks with his big rough tongue.

When the girl had finished she went back to find the cows, but they had gone, and though she hunted everywhere she never found them; and she had to return home and confess to her master, who scolded her bitterly, and afterwards beat her. Then he said, ‘Now you will have to look after the asses.’

So every day she had to take the asses to the woods to feed, until one morning, exactly a year after she had found the lion, she heard a groan which sounded quite human. She went straight to the place from which the noise came, and, to her great surprise, beheld the same lion stretched on the ground with a deep wound across his face.

This time she was not afraid at all, and ran towards him, washing the wound and laying soothing herbs upon it; and when she had bound it up the lion thanked her in the same manner as before.

After that she returned to her flock, but they were nowhere to be seen. She searched here and she searched there, but they had vanished completely!

Then she had to go home and confess to her master, who first scolded her and afterwards beat her. ‘Now go,’ he ended, ‘and look after the pigs!’

So the next day she took out the pigs, and found them such good feeding grounds that they grew fatter every day.

Another year passed by, and one morning when the maiden was out with her pigs she heard a groan which sounded quite human. She ran to see what it was, and found her old friend the lion, wounded through and through, fast dying under a tree.

She fell on her knees before him and washed his wounds one by one, and laid healing herbs upon them. And the lion licked her hands and thanked her, and asked if she would not stay and sit by him. But the girl said she had her pigs to watch, and she must go and see after them.

So she ran to the place where she had left them, but they had vanished as if the earth had swallowed them up. She whistled and called, but only the birds answered her.

Then she sank down on the ground and wept bitterly, not daring to return home until some hours had passed away.

And when she had had her cry out she got up and searched all up and down the wood. But it was no use; there was not a sign of the pigs.

At last she thought that perhaps if she climbed a tree she might see further. But no sooner was she seated on the highest branch than something happened which put the pigs quite out of her head. This was a handsome young man who was coming down the path; and when he had almost reached the tree he pulled aside a rock and disappeared behind it.

The maiden rubbed her eyes and wondered if she had been dreaming. Next she thought, ‘I will not stir from here till I see him come out, and discover who he is.’ Accordingly she waited, and at dawn the next morning the rock moved to one side and a lion came out.

When he had gone quite out of sight the girl climbed down from the tree and went to the rock, which she pushed aside, and entered the opening before her. The path led to a beautiful house. She went in, swept and dusted the furniture, and put everything tidy. Then she ate a very good

dinner, which was on a shelf in the corner, and once more clambered up to the top of her tree.

As the sun set she saw the same young man walking gaily down the path, and, as before, he pushed aside the rock and disappeared behind it.

Next morning out came the lion. He looked sharply about him on all sides, but saw no one, and then vanished into the forest.

The maiden then came down from the tree and did exactly as she had done the day before. Thus three days went by, and every day she went and tidied up the palace. At length, when the girl found she was no nearer to discovering the secret, she resolved to ask him, and in the evening when she caught sight of him coming through the wood she came down from the tree and begged him to tell her his name.

The young man looked very pleased to see her, and said he thought it must be she who had secretly kept his house for so many days. And he added that he was a prince enchanted by a powerful giant, but was only allowed to take his own shape at night, for all day he was forced to appear as the lion whom she had so often helped; and, more than this, it was the giant who had stolen the oxen and the asses and the pigs in revenge for her kindness.

And the girl asked him, ‘What can I do to disenchant you?’

But he said he was afraid it was very difficult, because the only way was to get a lock of hair from the head of a king’s daughter, to spin it, and to make from it a cloak for the giant, who lived up on the top of a high mountain.

‘Very well,’ answered the girl, ‘I will go to the city, and knock at the door of the king’s palace, and ask the princess to take me as a servant.’

So they parted, and when she arrived at the city she walked about the streets crying, ‘Who will hire me for a servant? Who will hire me for a servant?’ But, though many people liked her looks, for she was clean and neat, the maiden would listen to none, and still continued crying, ‘Who will hire me for a servant? Who will hire me for a servant?’

At last there came the waiting-maid of the princess.

‘What can you do?’ she said; and the girl was forced to confess that she could do very little.

‘Then you will have to do scullion’s work, and wash up dishes,’ said she; and they went straight back to the palace.

Then the maiden dressed her hair afresh, and made herself look very neat and smart, and everyone admired and praised her, till by-and-bye it came to the ears of the princess. And she sent for the girl, and when she saw her, and how beautifully she had dressed her hair, the princess told her she was to come and comb out hers.

Now the hair of the princess was very thick and long, and shone like the sun. And the girl combed it and combed it till it was brighter than ever. And the princess was pleased, and bade her come every day and comb her hair, till at length the girl took courage, and begged leave to cut off one of the long, thick locks.

The princess, who was very proud of her hair, did not like the idea of parting with any of it, so she said no. But the girl could not give up hope, and each day she entreated to be allowed to cut off just one tress. At length the princess lost patience, and exclaimed, ‘You may have it, then, on condition that you shall find the handsomest prince in the world to be my bridegroom!’

And the girl answered that she would, and cut off the lock, and wove it into a coat that glittered like silk, and brought it to the young man, who told her to carry it straight to the giant. But that she must be careful to cry out a long way off what she had with her, or else he would spring upon her and run her through with his sword.

So the maiden departed and climbed up the mountain, but before she reached the top the giant heard her footsteps, and rushed out breathing fire and flame, having a sword in one hand and a club in the other. But she cried loudly that she had brought him the coat, and then he grew quiet, and invited her to come into his house.

He tried on the coat, but it was too short, and he threw it off, and declared it was no use. And the girl picked it up sadly, and returned quite in despair to the king’s palace.

The next morning, when she was combing the princess’s hair, she begged leave to cut off another lock. At first the princess said no, but the girl begged so hard that at length she gave in on condition that she should find her a prince as bridegroom.

The maiden told her that she had already found him, and spun the lock into shining stuff, and fastened it on to the end of the coat. And when it was finished she carried it to the giant.

This time it fitted him, and he was quite pleased, and asked her what he could give her in return. And she said that the only reward he could give her was to take the spell off the lion and bring him back to his own shape.

For a long time the giant would not hear of it, but in the end he gave in, and told her exactly how it must all be done. She was to kill the lion herself and cut him up very small; then she must burn him, and cast his ashes into the water, and out of the water the prince would come free from enchantment for ever.

But the maiden went away weeping, lest the giant should have deceived her, and that after she had killed the lion she would find she had also slain the prince.

Weeping she came down the mountain, and weeping she joined the prince, who was awaiting her at the bottom; and when he had heard her story he comforted her, and bade her be of good courage, and to do the bidding of the giant.

And the maiden believed what the prince told her; and in the morning when he put on his lion's form she took a knife and slew him, and cut him up very small, and burnt him, and cast his ashes into the water, and out of the water came the prince, beautiful as the day, and as glad to look upon as the sun himself.

Then the young man thanked the maiden for all she had done for him, and said she should be his wife and none other. But the maiden only wept sore, and answered that that she could never be, for she had given her promise to the princess when she cut off her hair that the prince should wed her and her only.

But the prince replied, 'If it is the princess, we must go quickly. Come with me.'

So they went together to the king's palace. And when the king and queen and princess saw the young man a great joy filled their hearts, for they knew him for the eldest son, who had long ago been enchanted by a giant and lost to them.

And he asked his parents' consent that he might marry the girl who had saved him, and a great feast was made, and the maiden became a princess, and in due time a queen, and she richly deserved all the honours showered upon her.

THE MAN WITHOUT A HEART

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Once upon a time there were seven brothers, who were orphans, and had no sister. Therefore they were obliged to do all their own housework. This they did not like at all; so after much deliberation they decided to get married. There were, unfortunately, no young girls to be found in the place where they lived; but the elder brothers agreed to go out into the world and seek for brides, promising to bring back a very pretty wife for the youngest also if he would meanwhile stay at home and take care of the house. He consented willingly, and the six young men set off in good spirits.

On their way they came to a small cottage standing quite by itself in a wood; and before the door stood an old, old man, who accosted the brothers saying, ‘Hullo, you young fellows! Whither away so fast and cheerily?’

‘We are going to find bonny brides for ourselves, and one for our youngest brother at home,’ they replied.

‘Oh! dear youths,’ said the old man, ‘I am terribly lonely here; pray bring a bride for me also; only remember, she must be young and pretty.’

‘What does a shrivelled old grey thing like that want with a pretty young bride?’ thought the brothers, and went on their way.

Presently they came to a town where were seven sisters, as young and as lovely as anyone could wish. Each brother chose one, and the youngest they kept for their brother at home. Then the whole party set out on the return journey, and again their path led through the wood and past the old man’s cottage.

There he stood before the door, and cried: ‘Oh! you fine fellows, what a charming bride you have brought me!’

‘She is not for you, said the young men. ‘She is for our youngest brother, as we promised.’

‘What!’ said the old man, ‘promised! I’ll make you eat your promises!’ And with that he took his magic wand, and, murmuring a

charm, he touched both brothers and brides, and immediately they were turned into grey stones.

Only the youngest sister he had not bewitched. He took her into the cottage, and from that time she was obliged to keep house for him. She was not very unhappy, but one thought troubled her. What if the old man should die and leave her here alone in the solitary cottage deep in the heart of the wood! She would be as ‘terribly lonely’ as he had formerly been.

One day she told him of her fear.

‘Don’t be anxious,’ he said. ‘You need neither fear my death nor desire it, for I have no heart in my breast! However, if I should die, you will find my wand above the door, and with it you can set free your sisters and their lovers. Then you will surely have company enough.’

‘Where in all the world do you keep your heart, if not in your breast?’ asked the girl.

‘Do you want to know everything?’ her husband said. ‘Well, if you must know, my heart is in the bed-cover.’

When the old man had gone out about his business his bride passed her time in embroidering beautiful flowers on the bed quilt to make his heart happy. The old man was much amused. He laughed, and said to her: ‘You are a good child, but I was only joking. My heart is really in—in—’

‘Now where is it, dear husband?’

‘It is in the doorway,’ he replied.

Next day, while he was out, the girl decorated the door with gay feathers and fresh flowers, and hung garlands upon it. And on his return the old fellow asked what it all meant.

‘I did it to show my love for your heart,’ said the girl.

And again the old man smiled, saying, ‘You are a dear child, but my heart is not in the doorway.’

Then the poor young bride was very vexed, and said, ‘Ah, my dear! you really have a heart somewhere, so you may die and leave me all alone.’

The old man did his best to comfort her by repeating all he had said before, but she begged him afresh to tell her truly where his heart was and at last he told her.

‘Far, far from here,’ said he, ‘in a lonely spot, stands a great church, as old as old can be. Its doors are of iron, and round it runs a deep moat,

spanned by no bridge. Within that church is a bird which flies up and down; it never eats, and never drinks, and never dies. No one can catch it, and while that bird lives so shall I, for in it is my heart.'

It made the little bride quite sad to think she could do nothing to show her love for the old man's heart. She used to think about it as she sat all alone during the long days, for her husband was almost always out.

One day a young traveller came past the house, and seeing such a pretty girl he wished her 'Good day.'

She returned his greeting, and as he drew near she asked him whence he came and where he was going.

'Alas!' sighed the youth, 'I am very sorrowful. I had six brothers, who went away to find brides for themselves and one for me; but they have never come home, so now I am going to look for them.'

'Oh, good friend,' said the girl, 'you need go no farther. Come, sit down, eat and drink, and afterwards I'll tell you all about it.'

She gave him food, and when he had finished his meal she told him how his brothers had come to the town where she lived with her sisters, how they had each chosen a bride, and, taking herself with them, had started for home. She wept as she told how the others were turned to stone, and how she was kept as the old man's bride. She left out nothing, even telling him the story of her husband's heart.

When the young man heard this he said: 'I shall go in search of the bird. It may be that God will help me to find and catch it.'

'Yes, do go,' she said; 'it will be a good deed, for then you can set your brothers and my sisters free.' Then she hid the young man, for it was now late, and her husband would soon be home.

Next morning, when the old man had gone out, she prepared a supply of provisions for her guest, and sent him off on his travels, wishing him good luck and success.

He walked on and on till he thought it must be time for breakfast; so he opened his knapsack, and was delighted to find such a store of good things. 'What a feast!' he exclaimed; 'will anyone come and share it?'

'Moo-oo,' sounded close behind him, and looking round he saw a great red ox, which said, 'I have much pleasure in accepting your kind invitation.'

‘I’m delighted to see you. Pray help yourself. All I have is at your service,’ said the hospitable youth. And the ox lay down comfortably, licking his lips, and made a hearty meal.

‘Many thanks to you,’ said the animal as it rose up. ‘When you are in danger or necessity call me, even if only by a thought,’ and it disappeared among the bushes.

The young man packed up all the food that was left, and wandered on till the shortening shadows and his own hunger warned him that it was midday. he laid the cloth on the ground and spread out his provisions, saying at the same time: ‘Dinner is ready, and anyone who wishes to share it is welcome.’

Then there was a great rustling in the undergrowth, and out ran a wild boar, grunting, ‘Umph, umph, umph; someone said dinner was ready. Was it you? and did you mean me to come?’

‘By all means. Help yourself to what I have,’ said the young traveller. And the two enjoyed their meal together.

Afterwards the boar got up, saying, ‘Thank you; when in need you be you must quickly call for me,’ and he rolled off.

For a long time the youth walked on. By evening he was miles away. He felt hungry again, and, having still some provisions left, thought he had better make ready his supper. When it was all spread out he cried as before, ‘Anyone who cares to share my meal is welcome.’

He heard a sound overhead like the flapping of wings, and a shadow was cast upon the ground. Then a huge griffin appeared, saying: ‘I heard someone giving an invitation to eat; is there anything for me?’

‘Why not?’ said the youth. ‘Come down and take all you want. There won’t be much left after this.’

So the griffin alighted and ate his fill, saying, as he flew away, ‘Call me if you need me.’

‘What a hurry he was in!’ the youth said to himself. ‘He might have been able to direct me to the church, for I shall never find it alone.’

He gathered up his things, and started to walk a little farther before resting. He had not gone far when all of a sudden he saw the church!

He soon came to it, or rather to the wide and deep moat which surrounded it without a single bridge by which to cross.

It was too late to attempt anything now; and, besides, the poor youth was very tired, so he lay down on the ground and fell fast asleep.

Next morning, when he awoke, he began to wish himself over the moat; and the thought occurred to him that if only the red ox were there, and thirsty enough to drink up all the water in the moat, he might walk across it dry shod.

Scarcely had the thought crossed his brain before the ox appeared and began to drink up the water.

The grateful youth hastened across as soon as the moat was dry, but found it impossible to penetrate the thick walls and strong iron doors of the church.

‘I believe that big boar would be of more use here than I am,’ he thought, and lo! at the wish the wild boar came and began to push hard against the wall. He managed to loosen one stone with his tusks, and, having made a beginning, stone after stone was poked out till he had made quite a large hole, big enough to let a man go through.

The young man quickly entered the church, and saw a bird flying about, but he could not catch it.

‘Oh!’ he exclaimed, ‘if only the griffin were here, he would soon catch it.’

At these words the griffin appeared, and, seizing the bird, gave it to the youth, who carried it off carefully, while the griffin flew away.

The young man hurried home as fast as possible, and reached the cottage before evening. He told his story to the little bride, who, after giving him some food and drink, hid him with his bird beneath the bed.

Presently the old man came home, and complained of feeling ill. Nothing, he said, would go well with him any more: his ‘heart bird’ was caught.

The youth under the bed heard this, and thought, ‘This old fellow has done me no particular harm, but then he has bewitched my brothers and their brides, and has kept my bride for himself, and that is certainly bad enough.’

So he pinched the bird, and the old man cried, ‘Ah! I feel death gripping me! Child, I am dying!’

With these words he fell fainting from his chair, and as the youth, before he knew what he was doing, had squeezed the bird to death, the old

man died also.

Out crept the young man from under the bed, and the girl took the magic wand (which she found where the old man had told her), and, touching the twelve grey stones, transformed them at once into the six brothers and their brides.

Then there was great joy, and kissing and embracing. And there lay the old man, quite dead, and no magic wand could restore him to life, even had they wished it.

After that they all went away and were married, and lived many years happily together.

THE TWO BROTHERS

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Sicilianische Malirchen. L. Gonzenbach.

Long ago there lived two brothers, both of them very handsome, and both so very poor that they seldom had anything to eat but the fish which they caught. One day they had been out in their boat since sunrise without a single bite, and were just thinking of putting up their lines and going home to bed when they felt a little feeble tug, and, drawing in hastily, they found a tiny fish at the end of the hook.

‘What a wretched little creature!’ cried one brother. ‘However, it is better than nothing, and I will bake him with bread crumbs and have him for supper.’

‘Oh, do not kill me yet!’ begged the fish; ‘I will bring you good luck—indeed I will!’

‘You silly thing!’ said the young man; ‘I’ve caught you, and I shall eat you.’

But his brother was sorry for the fish, and put in a word for him.

‘Let the poor little fellow live. He would hardly make one bite, and, after all, how do we know we are not throwing away our luck! Put him back into the sea. It will be much better.’

‘If you will let me live,’ said the fish, ‘you will find on the sands to-morrow morning two beautiful horses splendidly saddled and bridled, and on them you can go through the world as knights seeking adventures.’

‘Oh dear, what nonsense!’ exclaimed the elder; ‘and, besides, what proof have we that you are speaking the truth?’

But again the younger brother interposed: ‘Oh, do let him live! You know if he is lying to us we can always catch him again. It is quite worth while trying.’

At last the young man gave in, and threw the fish back into the sea; and both brothers went supperless to bed, and wondered what fortune the next day would bring.

At the first streaks of dawn they were both up, and in a very few minutes were running down to the shore. And there, just as the fish had said, stood two magnificent horses, saddled and bridled, and on their backs lay suits of armour and under-dresses, two swords, and two purses of gold.

‘There!’ said the younger brother. ‘Are you not thankful you did not eat that fish? He has brought us good luck, and there is no knowing how great we may become! Now, we will each seek our own adventures. If you will take one road I will go the other.’

‘Very well,’ replied the elder; ‘but how shall we let each other know if we are both living?’

‘Do you see this fig-tree?’ said the younger. ‘Well, whenever we want news of each other we have only to come here and make a slit with our swords in the back. If milk flows, it is a sign that we are well and prosperous; but if, instead of milk, there is blood, then we are either dead or in great danger.’

Then the two brothers put on their armour, buckled their swords, and pocketed their purees; and, after taking a tender farewell of each other, they mounted their horses and went their various ways.

The elder brother rode straight on till he reached the borders of a strange kingdom. He crossed the frontier, and soon found himself on the banks of a river; and before him, in the middle of the stream, a beautiful girl sat chained to a rock and weeping bitterly. For in this river dwelt a serpent with seven heads, who threatened to lay waste the whole land by breathing fire and flame from his nostrils unless the king sent him every morning a man for his breakfast. This had gone on so long that now there were no men left, and he had been obliged to send his own daughter instead, and the poor girl was waiting till the monster got hungry and felt inclined to eat her.

When the young man saw the maiden weeping bitterly he said to her, ‘What is the matter, my poor girl?’

‘Oh!’ she answered, ‘I am chained here till a horrible serpent with seven heads comes to eat me. Oh, sir, do not linger here, or he will eat you too.’

‘I shall stay,’ replied the young man, ‘for I mean to set you free.’

‘That is impossible. You do not know what a fearful monster the serpent is; you can do nothing against him.’

‘That is my affair, beautiful captive,’ answered he; ‘only tell me, which way will the serpent come?’

‘Well, if you are resolved to free me, listen to my advice. Stand a little on one side, and then, when the serpent rises to the surface, I will say to him, “O serpent, to-day you can eat two people. But you had better begin first with the young man, for I am chained and cannot run away.” When he hears this most likely he will attack you.’

So the young man stood carefully on one side, and by-and-bye he heard a great rushing in the water; and a horrible monster came up to the surface and looked out for the rock where the king’s daughter was chained, for it was getting late and he was hungry.

But she cried out, ‘O serpent, to-day you can eat two people. And you had better begin with the young man, for I am chained and cannot run away.’

Then the serpent made a rush at the youth with wide open jaws to swallow him at one gulp, but the young man leaped aside and drew his sword, and fought till he had cut off all the seven heads. And when the great serpent lay dead at his feet he loosed the bonds of the king’s daughter, and she flung herself into his arms and said, ‘You have saved me from that monster, and now you shall be my husband, for my father has made a proclamation that whoever could slay the serpent should have his daughter to wife.’

But he answered, ‘I cannot become your husband yet, for I have still far to travel. But wait for me seven years and seven months. Then, if I do not return, you are free to marry whom you will. And in case you should have forgotten, I will take these seven tongues with me so that when I bring them forth you may know that I am really he who slew the serpent.’

So saying he cut out the seven tongues, and the princess gave him a thick cloth to wrap them in; and he mounted his horse and rode away.

Not long after he had gone there arrived at the river a slave who had been sent by the king to learn the fate of his beloved daughter. And when the slave saw the princess standing free and safe before him, with the body of the monster lying at her feet, a wicked plan came into his head, and he said, ‘Unless you promise to tell your father it was I who slew the serpent, I will kill you and bury you in this place, and no one will ever know what befell.’

What could the poor girl do? This time there was no knight to come to her aid. So she promised to do as the slave wished, and he took up the seven heads and brought the princess to her father.

Oh, how enchanted the king was to see her again, and the whole town shared his joy!

And the slave was called upon to tell how he had slain the monster, and when he had ended the king declared that he should have the princess to wife.

But she flung herself at her father's feet, and prayed him to delay. 'You have passed your royal word, and cannot go back from it Yet grant me this grace, and let seven years and seven months go by before you wed me. When they are over, then I will marry the slave.' And the king listened to her, and seven years and seven months she looked for her bridegroom, and wept for him night and day.

All this time the young man was riding through the world, and when the seven years and seven months were over he came back to the town where the princess lived—only a few days before the wedding. And he stood before the king, and said to him: 'Give me your daughter, O king, for I slew the seven-headed serpent. And as a sign that my words are true, look on these seven tongues, which I cut from his seven heads, and on this embroidered cloth, which was given me by your daughter.'

Then the princess lifted up her voice and said, 'Yes, dear father, he has spoken the truth, and it is he who is my real bridegroom. Yet pardon the slave, for he was sorely tempted.'

But the king answered, 'Such treachery can no man pardon. Quick, away with him, and off with his head!'

So the false slave was put to death, that none might follow in his footsteps, and the wedding feast was held, and the hearts of all rejoiced that the true bridegroom had come at last.

These two lived happy and contentedly for a long while, when one evening, as the young man was looking from the window, he saw on a mountain that lay out beyond the town a great bright light.

'What can it be?' he said to his wife.

'Ah! do not look at it,' she answered, 'for it comes from the house of a wicked witch whom no man can manage to kill.' But the princess had better have kept silence, for her words made her husband's heart burn

within him, and he longed to try his strength against the witch's cunning. And all day long the feeling grew stronger, till the next morning he mounted his horse, and in spite of his wife's tears, he rode off to the mountain.

The distance was greater than he thought, and it was dark before he reached the foot of the mountain; indeed, he could not have found the road at all had it not been for the bright light, which shone like the moon on his path. At length he came to the door of a fine castle, which had a blaze streaming from every window. He mounted a flight of steps and entered a hall where a hideous old woman was sitting on a golden chair.

She scowled at the young man and said, 'With a single one of the hairs of my head I can turn you into stone.'

'Oh, what nonsense!' cried he. 'Be quiet, old woman. What could you do with one hair?' But the witch pulled out a hair and laid it on his shoulder, and his limbs grew cold and heavy, and he could not stir.

Now at this very moment the younger brother was thinking of him, and wondering how he had got on during all the years since they had parted. 'I will go to the fig-tree,' he said to himself, 'to see whether he is alive or dead.' So he rode through the forest till he came where the fig-tree stood, and cut a slit in the bark, and waited. In a moment a little gurgling noise was heard, and out came a stream of blood, running fast. 'Ah, woe is me!' he cried bitterly. 'My brother is dead or dying! Shall I ever reach him in time to save his life?' Then, leaping on his horse, he shouted, 'Now, my steed, fly like the wind!' and they rode right through the world, till one day they came to the town where the young man and his wife lived. Here the princess had been sitting every day since the morning that her husband had left her, weeping bitter tears, and listening for his footsteps. And when she saw his brother ride under the balcony she mistook him for her own husband, for they were so alike that no man might tell the difference, and her heart bounded, and, leaning down, she called to him, 'At last! at last! how long have I waited for thee!' When the younger brother heard these words he said to himself, 'So it was here that my brother lived, and this beautiful woman is my sister-in-law,' but he kept silence, and let her believe he was indeed her husband. Full of joy, the princess led him to the old king, who welcomed him as his own son, and ordered a feast to be made for him. And the princess was beside herself with gladness, but when

she would have put her arms round him and kissed him he held up his hand to stop her, saying, ‘Touch me not,’ at which she marvelled greatly.

In this manner several days went by. And one evening, as the young man leaned from the balcony, he saw a bright light shining on the mountain.

‘What can that be?’ he said to the princess.

‘Oh, come away,’ she cried; ‘has not that light already proved your bane? Do you wish to fight a second time with that old witch?’

He marked her words, though she knew it not, and they taught him where his brother was, and what had befallen him. So before sunrise he stole out early, saddled his horse, and rode off to the mountain. But the way was further than he thought, and on the road he met a little old man who asked him whither he was going.

Then the young man told him his story, and added. ‘Somehow or other I must free my brother, who has fallen into the power of an old witch.’

‘I will tell you what you must do,’ said the old man. ‘The witch’s power lies in her hair; so when you see her spring on her and seize her by the hair, and then she cannot harm you. Be very careful never to let her hair go, bid her lead you to your brother, and force her to bring him back to life. For she has an ointment that will heal all wounds, and even wake the dead. And when your brother stands safe and well before you, then cut off her head, for she is a wicked woman.’

The young man was grateful for these words, and promised to obey them. Then he rode on, and soon reached the castle. He walked boldly up the steps and entered the hall, where the hideous old witch came to meet him. She grinned horribly at him, and cried out, ‘With one hair of my head I can change you into stone.’

‘Can you, indeed?’ said the young man, seizing her by the hair. ‘You old wretch! tell me what you have done with my brother, or I will cut your head off this very instant.’ Now the witch’s strength was all gone from her, and she had to obey.

‘I will take you to your brother,’ she said, hoping to get the better of him by cunning, ‘but leave me alone. You hold me so tight that I cannot walk.’

‘You must manage somehow,’ he answered, and held her tighter than ever. She led him into a large hall filled with stone statues, which once had

been men, and, pointing out one, she said, ‘There is your brother.’

The young man looked at them all and shook his head. ‘My brother is not here. Take me to him, or it will be the worse for you.’ But she tried to put him off with other statues, though it was no good, and it was not until they had reached the last hall of all that he saw his brother lying on the ground.

‘That is my brother,’ said he. ‘Now give me the ointment that will restore him to life.’

Very unwillingly the old witch opened a cupboard close by filled with bottles and jars, and took down one and held it out to the young man. But he was on the watch for trickery, and examined it carefully, and saw that it had no power to heal. This happened many times, till at length she found it was no use, and gave him the one he wanted. And when he had it safe he made her stoop down and smear it over his brother’s face, taking care all the while never to loose her hair, and when the dead man opened his eyes the youth drew his sword and cut off her head with a single blow. Then the elder brother got up and stretched himself, and said, ‘Oh, how long I have slept! And where am I?’

‘The old witch had enchanted you, but now she is dead and you are free. We will wake up the other knights that she laid under her spells, and then we will go.’

This they did, and, after sharing amongst them the jewels and gold they found in the castle, each man went his way. The two brothers remained together, the elder tightly grasping the ointment which had brought him back to life.

They had much to tell each other as they rode along, and at last the younger man exclaimed, ‘O fool, to leave such a beautiful wife to go and fight a witch! She took me for her husband, and I did not say her nay.’

When the elder brother heard this a great rage filled his heart, and, without saying one word, he drew his sword and slew his brother, and his body rolled in the dust. Then he rode on till he reached his home, where his wife was still sitting, weeping bitterly. When she saw him she sprang up with a cry, and threw herself into his arms. ‘Oh, how long have I waited for thee! Never, never must you leave me any more!’

When the old king heard the news he welcomed him as a son, and made ready a feast, and all the court sat down. And in the evening, when

the young man was alone with his wife, she said to him, ‘Why would you not let me touch you when you came back, but always thrust me away when I tried to put my arms round you or kiss you?’

Then the young man understood how true his brother had been to him, and he sat down and wept and wrung his hands because of the wicked murder that he had done. Suddenly he sprang to his feet, for he remembered the ointment which lay hidden in his garments, and he rushed to the place where his brother still lay. He fell on his knees beside the body, and, taking out the salve, he rubbed it over the neck where the wound was gaping wide, and the skin healed and the sinews grew strong, and the dead man sat up and looked round him. And the two brothers embraced each other, and the elder asked forgiveness for his wicked blow; and they went back to the palace together, and were never parted any more.

MASTER AND PUPIL

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From the Danish.

There was once a man who had a son who was very clever at reading, and took great delight in it. He went out into the world to seek service somewhere, and as he was walking between some mounds he met a man, who asked him where he was going.

‘I am going about seeking for service,’ said the boy.

‘Will you serve me?’ asked the man.

‘Oh, yes; just as readily you as anyone else,’ said the boy.

‘But can you read?’ asked the man.

‘As well as the priest,’ said the boy.

Then I can’t have you,’ said the man. ‘In fact, I was just wanting a boy who couldn’t read. His only work would be to dust my old books.’

The man then went on his way, and left the boy looking after him.

‘It was a pity I didn’t get that place,’ thought he ‘That was just the very thing for me.’

Making up his mind to get the situation if possible, he hid himself behind one of the mounds, and turned his jacket outside in, so that the man would not know him again so easily. Then he ran along behind the mounds, and met the man at the other end of them.

‘Where are you going, my little boy?’ said the man, who did not notice that it was the same one he had met before.

‘I am going about seeking for service?’ said the boy.

‘Will you serve me?’ asked the man.

‘Oh, yes; just as readily you as anyone else,’ said the boy.

‘But can you read?’ said the man.

‘No, I don’t know a single letter,’ said the boy.

The man then took him into his service, and all the work he had to do was to dust his master’s books. But as he did this he had plenty of time to read them as well, and he read away at them until at last he was just as

wise as his master—who was a great wizard—and could perform all kinds of magic. Among other feats, he could change himself into the shape of any animal, or any other thing that he pleased.

When he had learned all this he did not think it worth while staying there any longer, so he ran away home to his parents again. Soon after this there was a market in the next village, and the boy told his mother that he had learned how to change himself into the shape of any animal he chose.

‘Now,’ said he, ‘I shall change myself to a horse, and father can take me to market and sell me. I shall come home again all right.’

His mother was frightened at the idea, but the boy told her that she need not be alarmed; all would be well. So he changed himself to a horse, such a fine horse, too, that his father got a high price for it at the market; but after the bargain was made, and the money paid, the boy changed again to his own shape, when no one was looking, and went home.

The story spread all over the country about the fine horse that had been sold and then had disappeared, and at last the news came to the ears of the wizard.

‘Aha!’ said he, ‘this is that boy of mine, who befooled me and ran away; but I shall have him yet.’

The next time that there was a market the boy again changed himself to a horse, and was taken thither by his father. The horse soon found a purchaser, and while the two were inside drinking the luck-penny the wizard came along and saw the horse. He knew at once that it was not an ordinary one, so he also went inside, and offered the purchaser far more than he had paid for it, so the latter sold it to him.

The first thing the wizard now did was to lead the horse away to a smith to get a red-hot nail driven into its mouth, because after that it could not change its shape again. When the horse saw this it changed itself to a dove, and flew up into the air. The wizard at once changed himself into a hawk, and flew up after it. The dove now turned into a gold ring, and fell into a girl’s lap. The hawk now turned into a man, and offered the girl a great sum of money for the gold ring, but she would not part with it, seeing that it had fallen down to her, as it were, from Heaven. However, the wizard kept on offering her more and more for it, until at last the gold ring grew frightened, and changed itself into a grain of barley, which fell on the ground. The man then turned into a hen, and began to search for the

grain of barley, but this again changed itself to a pole-cat, and took off the hen’s head with a single snap.

The wizard was now dead, the pole-cat put on human shape, and the youth afterwards married the girl, and from that time forward let all his magic arts alone.

THE GOLDEN LION

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Sicilianische Mahrchen. L. Gonzenbach.

There was once a rich merchant who had three sons, and when they were grown up the eldest said to him, ‘Father, I wish to travel and see the world. I pray you let me.’

So the father ordered a beautiful ship to be fitted up, and the young man sailed away in it. After some weeks the vessel cast anchor before a large town, and the merchant’s son went on shore.

The first thing he saw was a large notice written on a board saying that if any man could find the king’s daughter within eight days he should have her to wife, but that if he tried and failed his head must be the forfeit.

‘Well,’ thought the youth as he read this proclamation, ‘that ought not to be a very difficult matter;’ and he asked an audience of the king, and told him that he wished to seek for the princess.

‘Certainly,’ replied the king. ‘You have the whole palace to search in; but remember, if you fail it will cost you your head.’

So saying, he commanded the doors to be thrown open, and food and drink to be set before the young man, who, after he had eaten, began to look for the princess. But though he visited every corner and chest and cupboard, she was not in any of them, and after eight days he gave it up and his head was cut off.

All this time his father and brothers had had no news of him, and were very anxious. At last the second son could bear it no longer, and said, ‘Dear father, give me, I pray you, a large ship and some money, and let me go and seek for my brother.’

So another ship was fitted out, and the young man sailed away, and was blown by the wind into the same harbour where his brother had landed.

Now when he saw the first ship lying at anchor his heart beat high, and he said to himself, ‘My brother cannot surely be far off,’ and he ordered a boat and was put on shore.

As he jumped on to the pier his eye caught the notice about the princess, and he thought, ‘He has undertaken to find her, and has certainly lost his head. I must try myself, and seek him as well as her. It cannot be such a very difficult matter.’ But he fared no better than his brother, and in eight days his head was cut off.

So now there was only the youngest at home, and when the other two never came he also begged for a ship that he might go in search of his lost brothers. And when the vessel started a high wind arose, and blew him straight to the harbour where the notice was set.

‘Oho!’ said he, as he read, ‘whoever can find the king’s daughter shall have her to wife. It is quite clear now what has befallen my brothers. But in spite of that I think I must try my luck,’ and he took the road to the castle.

On the way he met an old woman, who stopped and begged.

‘Leave me in peace, old woman,’ replied he.

‘Oh, do not send me away empty,’ she said. ‘You are such a handsome young man you will surely not refuse an old woman a few pence.’

‘I tell you, old woman, leave me alone.’

‘You are in some trouble?’ she asked. ‘Tell me what it is, and perhaps I can help you.’

Then he told her how he had set his heart on finding the king’s daughter.

‘I can easily manage that for you as long as you have enough money.’

‘Oh, as to that, I have plenty,’ answered he.

‘Well, you must take it to a goldsmith and get him to make it into a golden lion, with eyes of crystal; and inside it must have something that will enable it to play tunes. When it is ready bring it to me.’

The young man did as he was bid, and when the lion was made the old woman hid the youth in it, and brought it to the king, who was so delighted with it that he wanted to buy it. But she replied, ‘It does not belong to me, and my master will not part from it at any price.’

‘At any rate, leave it with me for a few days,’ said he; ‘I should like to show it to my daughter.’

‘Yes, I can do that,’ answered the old woman; ‘but to-morrow I must have it back again. And she went away.

The king watched her till she was quite out of sight, so as to make sure that she was not spying upon him; then he took the golden lion into his room and lifted some loose boards from the floor. Below the floor there was a staircase, which he went down till he reached a door at the foot. This he unlocked, and found himself in a narrow passage closed by another door, which he also opened. The young man, hidden in the golden lion, kept count of everything, and marked that there were in all seven doors. After they had all been unlocked the king entered a lovely hall, where the princess was amusing herself with eleven friends. All twelve girls wore the same clothes, and were as like each other as two peas.

'What bad luck!' thought the youth. 'Even supposing that I managed to find my way here again, I don't see how I could ever tell which was the princess.'

And he stared hard at the princess as she clapped her hands with joy and ran up to them, crying, ' Oh, do let us keep that delicious beast for to-night; it will make such a nice plaything.'

The king did not stay long, and when he left he handed over the lion to the maidens, who amused themselves with it for some time, till they got sleepy, and thought it was time to go to bed. But the princess took the lion into her own room and laid it on the floor.

She was just beginning to doze when she heard a voice quite close to her, which made her jump. 'O lovely princess, if you only knew what I have gone through to find you!' The princess jumped out of bed screaming, 'The lion! the lion!' but her friends thought it was a nightmare, and did not trouble themselves to get up.

'O lovely úprincess!' continued the voice, 'fear nothing! I am the son of a rich merchant, and desire above all things to have you for my wife. And in order to get to you I have hidden myself in this golden lion.'

'What use is that?' she asked. 'For if you cannot pick me out from among my companions you will still lose your head.'

'I look to you to help me,' he said. 'I have done so much for you that you might do this one thing for me.'

'Then listen to me. On the eighth day I will tie a white sash round my waist, and by that you will know me.'

The next morning the king came very early to fetch the lion, as the old woman was already at the palace asking for it. When they were safe from

view she let the young man out, and he returned to the king and told him that he wished to find the princess.

‘Very good,’ said the king, who by this time was almost tired of repeating the same words; ‘but if you fail your head will be the forfeit.’

So the youth remained quietly in the castle, eating and looking at all the beautiful things around him, and every now and then pretending to be searching busily in all the closets and corners. On the eighth day he entered the room where the king was sitting. ‘Take up the floor in this place,’ he said. The king gave a cry, but stopped himself, and asked, ‘What do you want the floor up for? There is nothing there.’

But as all his courtiers were watching him he did not like to make any more objections, and ordered the floor to be taken up, as the young man desired. The youth then want straight down the staircase till he reached the door; then he turned and demanded that the key should be brought. So the king was forced to unlock the door, and the next and the next and the next, till all seven were open, and they entered into the hall where the twelve maidens were standing all in a row, so like that none might tell them apart. But as he looked one of them silently drew a white sash from her pocket and slipped it round her waist, and the young man sprang to her and said, ‘This is the princess, and I claim her for my wife.’ And the king owned himself beaten, and commanded that the wedding feast should be held.

After eight days the bridal pair said farewell to the king, and set sail for the youth’s own country, taking with them a whole shipload of treasures as the princess’s dowry. But they did not forget the old woman who had brought about all their happiness, and they gave her enough money to make her comfortable to the end of her days.

THE SPRIG OF ROSEMARY

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Cuentos Populars Catalans, per lo Dr. D. Francisco de S.
Maspons y Labros
(Barcelona: Libreria de Don Alvar Verdaguer 1885).

Once upon a time there lived a man with one daughter and he made her work hard all the day. One morning when she had finished everything he had set her to do, he told her to go out into the woods and get some dry leaves and sticks to kindle a fire.

The girl went out, and soon collected a large bundle, and then she plucked at a sprig of sweet-smelling rosemary for herself. But the harder she pulled the firmer seemed the plant, and at last, determined not to be beaten, she gave one great tug, and the rosemary remained in her hands.

Then she heard a voice close to her saying, ‘Well?’ and turning she saw before her a handsome young man, who asked why she had come to steal his firewood.

The girl, who felt much confused, only managed to stammer out as an excuse that her father had sent her.

‘Very well,’ replied the young man; ‘then come with me.’

So he took her through the opening made by the torn-up root, and they travelled till they reached a beautiful palace, splendidly furnished, but only lighted from the top. And when they had entered he told her that he was a great lord, and that never had he seen a maiden so beautiful as she, and that if she would give him her heart they would be married and live happy for ever after.

And the maiden said ‘yes, she would,’ and so they were married.

The next day the old dame who looked after the house handed her all the keys, but pointed her out one that she would do well never to use, for if she did the whole palace would fall to the ground, and the grass would grow over it, and the damsel herself would be remembered no more.

The bride promised to be careful, but in a little while, when there was nothing left for her to do, she began to wonder what could be in the chest, which was opened by the key. As everybody knows, if we once begin to think we soon begin to do, and it was not very long before the key was no longer in the maiden's hand but in the lock of the chest. But the lock was stiff and resisted all her efforts, and in the end she had to break it. And what was inside after all? Why, nothing but a serpent's skin, which her husband, who was, unknown to her, a magician, put on when he was at work; and at the sight of it the girl was turning away in disgust, when the earth shook violently under her feet, the palace vanished as if it had never been, and the bride found herself in the middle of a field, not knowing where she was or whither to go. She burst into a flood of bitter tears, partly at her own folly, but more for the loss of her husband, whom she dearly loved. Then, breaking a sprig of rosemary off a bush hard by, she resolved, cost what it might, to seek him through the world till she found him. So she walked and she walked and she walked, till she arrived at a house built of straw. And she knocked at the door, and asked if they wanted a servant. The mistress said she did, and if the girl was willing she might stay. But day by day the poor maiden grew more and more sad, till at last her mistress begged her to say what was the matter. Then she told her story—how she was going through the world seeking after her husband.

And her mistress answered her, 'Where he is, none can tell better than the Sun, the Moon, and the Wind, for they go everywhere!'

On hearing these words the damsel set forth once more, and walked till she reached the Golden Castle, where lived the Sun. And she knocked boldly at the door, saying, 'All hail, O Sun! I have come to ask if, of your charity, you will help me in my need. By my own fault have I fallen into these straits, and I am weary, for I seek my husband through the wide world.'

'Indeed!' spoke the Sun. 'Do you, rich as you are, need help? But though you live in a palace without windows, the Sun enters everywhere, and he knows you.'

Then the bride told him the whole story. and did not hide her own ill-doing. And the Sun listened, and was sorry for her; and though he could not tell her where to go, he gave her a nut, and bid her open it in a time of great distress. The damsel thanked him with all her heart, and departed,

and walked and walked and walked, till she came to another castle, and knocked at the door which was opened by an old woman.

‘All hail!’ said the girl. ‘I have come, of your charity, to ask your help!’

‘It is my mistress, the Moon, you seek. I will tell her of your prayer.’

So the Moon came out, and when she saw the maiden she knew her again, for she had watched her sleeping both in the cottage and in the palace. And she spake to her and said:

‘Do you, rich as you are, need help?’

Then the girl told her the whole story, and the Moon listened, and was sorry for her; and though she could not tell her where to find her husband, she gave her an almond, and told her to crack it when she was in great need. So the damsel thanked her, and departed, and walked and walked and walked till she came to another castle. And she knocked at the door, and said:

‘All hail! I have come to ask if, of your charity, you will help me in my need.’

‘It is my lord, the Wind, that you want,’ answered the old woman who opened it. ‘I will tell him of your prayer.’

And the Wind looked on her and knew her again, for he had seen her in the cottage and in the palace, and he spake to her and said:

‘Do you, rich as you are, want help?’

And she told him the whole story. And the Wind listened, and was sorry for her, and he gave her a walnut that she was to eat in time of need. But the girl did not go as the Wind expected. She was tired and sad, and knew not where to turn, so she began to weep bitterly. The Wind wept too for company, and said:

‘Don’t be frightened; I will go and see if I can find out something.’

And the Wind departed with a great noise and fuss, and in the twinkling of an eye he was back again, beaming with delight.

‘From what one person and another have let fall,’ he exclaimed, ‘I have contrived to learn that he is in the palace of the king, who keeps him hidden lest anyone should see him; and that to-morrow he is to marry the princess, who, ugly creature that she is, has not been able to find any man to wed her.’

Who can tell the despair which seized the poor maiden when she heard this news! As soon as she could speak she implored the Wind to do all he could to get the wedding put off for two or three days, for it would take her all that time to reach the palace of the king.

The Wind gladly promised to do what he could, and as he travelled much faster than the maiden he soon arrived at the palace, where he found five tailors working night and day at the wedding clothes of the princess.

Down came the Wind right in the middle of their lace and satin and trimmings of pearl! Away they all went whiz! through the open windows, right up into the tops of the trees, across the river, among the dancing ears of corn! After them ran the tailors, catching, jumping, climbing, but all to no purpose! The lace was torn, the satin stained, the pearls knocked off! There was nothing for it but to go to the shops to buy fresh, and to begin all over again! It was plainly quite impossible that the wedding clothes could be ready next day.

However, the king was much too anxious to see his daughter married to listen to any excuses, and he declared that a dress must be put together somehow for the bride to wear. But when he went to look at the princess, she was such a figure that he agreed that it would be unfitting for her position to be seen in such a gown, and he ordered the ceremony and the banquet to be postponed for a few hours, so that the tailors might take the dress to pieces and make it fit.

But by this time the maiden had arrived footsore and weary at the castle, and as soon as she reached the door she cracked her nut and drew out of it the most beautiful mantle in the world. Then she rang the bell, and asked:

‘Is not the princess to be married to-day?’

‘Yes, she is.’

‘Ask her if she would like to buy this mantle.’

And when the princess saw the mantle she was delighted, for her wedding mantle had been spoilt with all the other things, and it was too late to make another. So she told the maiden to ask what price she would, and it should be given her.

The maiden fixed a large sum, many pieces of gold, but the princess had set her heart on the mantle, and gave it readily.

Now the maiden hid her gold in the pocket of her dress, and turned away from the castle. The moment she was out of sight she broke her almond, and drew from it the most magnificent petticoats that ever were seen. Then she went back to the castle, and asked if the princess wished to buy any petticoats. No sooner did the princess cast her eyes on the petticoats than she declared they were even more beautiful than the mantle, and that she would give the maiden whatever price she wanted for them. And the maiden named many pieces of gold, which the princess paid her gladly, so pleased was she with her new possessions.

Then the girl went down the steps where none could watch her and cracked her walnut, and out came the most splendid court dress that any dressmaker had ever invented; and, carrying it carefully in her arms, she knocked at the door, and asked if the princess wished to buy a court dress.

When the message was delivered the princess sprang to her feet with delight, for she had been thinking that after all it was not much use to have a lovely mantle and elegant petticoats if she had no dress, and she knew the tailors would never be ready in time. So she sent at once to say she would buy the dress, and what sum did the maiden want for it.

This time the maiden answered that the price of the dress was the permission to see the bridegroom.

The princess was not at all pleased when she heard the maiden’s reply, but, as she could not do without the dress, she was forced to give in, and contented herself with thinking that after all it did not matter much.

So the maiden was led to the rooms which had been given to her husband. And when she came near she touched him with the sprig of rosemary that she carried; and his memory came back, and he knew her, and kissed her, and declared that she was his true wife, and that he loved her and no other.

Then they went back to the maiden’s home, and grew to be very old, and lived happy all the days of their life.

THE WHITE DOVE

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From the Danish.

A king had two sons. They were a pair of reckless fellows, who always had something foolish to do. One day they rowed out alone on the sea in a little boat. It was beautiful weather when they set out, but as soon as they had got some distance from the shore there arose a terrific storm. The oars went overboard at once, and the little boat was tossed about on the rolling billows like a nut-shell. The princes had to hold fast by the seats to keep from being thrown out of the boat.

In the midst of all this they met a wonderful vessel—it was a dough-trough, in which there sat an old woman. She called to them, and said that they could still get to shore alive if they would promise her the son that was next to come to their mother the queen.

‘We can’t do that,’ shouted the princes; ‘he doesn’t belong to us so we can’t give him away.’

‘Then you can rot at the bottom of the sea, both of you,’ said the old woman; ‘and perhaps it may be the case that your mother would rather keep the two sons she has than the one she hasn’t got yet.’

Then she rowed away in her dough-trough, while the storm howled still louder than before, and the water dashed over their boat until it was almost sinking. Then the princes thought that there was something in what the old woman had said about their mother, and being, of course, eager to save their lives, they shouted to her, and promised that she should have their brother if she would deliver them from this danger. As soon as they had done so the storm ceased and the waves fell. The boat drove ashore below their father’s castle, and both princes were received with open arms by their father and mother, who had suffered great anxiety for them.

The two brothers said nothing about what they had promised, neither at that time nor later on when the queen’s third son came, a beautiful boy, whom she loved more than anything else in the world. He was brought up

and educated in his father’s house until he was full grown, and still his brothers had never seen or heard anything about the witch to whom they had promised him before he was born.

It happened one evening that there arose a raging storm, with mist and darkness. It howled and roared around the king’s palace, and in the midst of it there came a loud knock on the door of the hall where the youngest prince was. He went to the door and found there an old woman with a dough- trough on her back, who said to him that he must go with her at once; his brothers had promised him to her if she would save their lives.

‘Yes,’ said he; ‘if you saved my brothers’ lives, and they promised me to you, then I will go with you.’

They therefore went down to the beach together, where he had to take his seat in the trough, along with the witch, who sailed away with him, over the sea, home to her dwelling.

The prince was now in the witch’s power, and in her service. The first thing she set him to was to pick feathers. ‘The heap of feathers that you see here,’ said she, ‘you must get finished before I come home in the evening, otherwise you shall be set to harder work.’ He started to the feathers, and picked and picked until there was only a single feather left that had not passed through his hands. But then there came a whirlwind and sent all the feathers flying, and swept them along the floor into a heap, where they lay as if they were trampled together. He had now to begin all his work over again, but by this time it only wanted an hour of evening, when the witch was to be expected home, and he easily saw that it was impossible for him to be finished by that time.

Then he heard something tapping at the window pane, and a thin voice said, ‘Let me in, and I will help you.’ It was a white dove, which sat outside the window, and was pecking at it with its beak. He opened the window, and the dove came in and set to work at once, and picked all the feathers out of the heap with its beak. Before the hour was past the feathers were all nicely arranged: the dove flew out at the window, and at, the same moment the witch came in at the door.

‘Well, well,’ said she, ‘it was more than I would have expected of you to get all the feathers put in order so nicely. However, such a prince might be expected to have neat fingers.’

Next morning the witch said to the prince, ‘To-day you shall have some easy work to do. Outside the door I have some firewood lying; you must split that for me into little bits that I can kindle the fire with. That will soon be done, but you must be finished before I come home.’

The prince got a little axe and set to work at once. He split and clove away, and thought that he was getting on fast; but the day wore on until it was long past midday, and he was still very far from having finished. He thought, in fact, that the pile of wood rather grew bigger than smaller, in spite of what he took off it; so he let his hands fall by his side, and dried the sweat from his forehead, and was ill at ease, for he knew that it would be bad for him if he was not finished with the work before the witch came home.

Then the white dove came flying and settled down on the pile of wood, and cooed and said, ‘Shall I help you?’

‘Yes,’ said the prince, ‘many thanks for your help yesterday, and for what you offer to-day.’ Thereupon the little dove seized one piece of wood after another and split it with its beak. The prince could not take away the wood as quickly as the dove could split it, and in a short time it was all cleft into little sticks.

The dove then flew up on his shoulder and sat there and the prince thanked it, and stroked and caressed its white feathers, and kissed its little red beak. With that it was a dove no longer, but a beautiful young maiden, who stood by his side. She told him then that she was a princess whom the witch had stolen, and had changed to this shape, but with his kiss she had got her human form again; and if he would be faithful to her, and take her to wife, she could free them both from the witch’s power.

The prince was quite captivated by the beautiful princess, and was quite willing to do anything whatsoever to get her for himself.

She then said to him, ‘When the witch comes home you must ask her to grant you a wish, when you have accomplished so well all that she has demanded of you. When she agrees to this you must ask her straight out for the princess that she has flying about as a white dove. But just now you must take a red silk thread and tie it round my little finger, so that you may be able to recognise me again, into whatever shape she turns me.’

The prince made haste to get the silk thread tied round her little white finger; at the same moment the princess became a dove again and flew

away, and immediately after that the old witch came home with her dough-trough on he back.

‘Well,’ said she, ‘I must say that you are clever at your work, and it is something, too, that such princely hands are not accustomed to.’

‘Since you are so well pleased with my work, said the prince, ‘you will, no doubt, be willing to give me a little pleasure too, and give me something that I have taken a fancy to.’

‘Oh yes, indeed,’ said the old woman; ‘what is it that you want?’

‘I want the princess here who is in the shape of a white dove,’ said the prince.

‘What nonsense!’ said the witch. ‘Why should you imagine that there are princesses here flying about in the shape of white doves? But if you will have a princess, you can get one such as we have them.’ She then came to him, dragging a shaggy little grey ass with long ears. ‘Will you have this?’ said she; ‘you can’t get any other princess!’

The prince used his eyes and saw the red silk thread on one of the ass’s hoofs, so he said, ‘Yes, just let me have it.’

‘What will you do with it?’ asked the witch.

‘I will ride on it,’ said the prince; but with that the witch dragged it away again, and came back with an old, wrinkled, toothless hag, whose hands trembled with age. ‘You can have no other princess,’ said she. ‘Will you have her?’

‘Yes, I will,’ said the prince, for he saw the red silk thread on the old woman’s finger.

At this the witch became so furious that she danced about and knocked everything to pieces that she could lay her hands upon, so that the splinters flew about the ears of the prince and princess, who now stood there in her own beautiful shape.

Then their marriage had to be celebrated, for the witch had to stick to what she had promised, and he must get the princess whatever might happen afterwards.

The princess now said to him, ‘At the marriage feast you may eat what you please, but you must not drink anything whatever, for if you do that you will forget me.’

This, however, the prince forgot on the wedding day, and stretched out his hand and took a cup of wine; but the princess was keeping watch over

him, and gave him a push with her elbow, so that the wine flew over the table- cloth.

Then the witch got up and laid about her among the plates and dishes, so that the pieces flew about their ears, just as she had done when she was cheated the first time.

They were then taken to the bridal chamber, and the door was shut. Then the princess said, ‘Now the witch has kept her promise, but she will do no more if she can help it, so we must fly immediately. I shall lay two pieces of wood in the bed to answer for us when the witch speaks to us. You can take the flower-pot and the glass of water that stands in the window, and we must slip out by that and get away.’

No sooner said than done. They hurried off out into the dark night, the princess leading, because she knew the way, having spied it out while she flew about as a dove.

At midnight the witch came to the door of the room and called in to them, and the two pieces of wood answered her, so that she believed they were there, and went away again. Before daybreak she was at the door again and called to them, and again the pieces of wood answered for them. She thus thought that she had them, and when the sun rose the bridal night was past: she had then kept her promise, and could vent her anger and revenge on both of them. With the first sunbeam she broke into the room, but there she found no prince and no princess—nothing but the two pieces of firewood, which lay in the bed, and stared, and spoke not a word. These she threw on the floor, so that they were splintered into a thousand pieces, and off she hastened after the fugitives.

With the first sunbeam the princess said to the prince, ‘Look round; do you see anything behind us?’

‘Yes, I see a dark cloud, far away,’ said he.

‘Then throw the flower-pot over your head,’ said she. When this was done there was a large thick forest behind them.

When the witch came to the forest she could not get through it until she went home and brought her axe to cut a path.

A little after this the princess said again to the prince, ‘Look round; do you see anything behind us?’

‘Yes,’ said the prince, ‘the big black cloud is there again.’

‘Then throw the glass of water over your head,’ said she.

When he had done this there was a great lake behind them, and this the witch could not cross until she ran home again and brought her dough-trough.

Meanwhile the fugitives had reached the castle which was the prince’s home. They climbed over the garden wall, ran across the garden, and crept in at an open window. By this time the witch was just at their heels, but the princess stood in the window and blew upon the witch; hundreds of white doves flew out of her mouth, fluttered and flapped around the witch’s head until she grew so angry that she turned into flint, and there she stands to this day, in the shape of a large flint stone, outside the window.

Within the castle there was great rejoicing over the prince and his bride. His two elder brothers came and knelt before him and confessed what they had done, and said that he alone should inherit the kingdom, and they would always be his faithful subjects.

THE TROLL’S DAUGHTER

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From the Danish.

There was once a lad who went to look for a place. As he went along he met a man, who asked him where he was going. He told him his errand, and the stranger said, ‘Then you can serve me; I am just in want of a lad like you, and I will give you good wages—a bushel of money the first year, two the second year, and three the third year, for you must serve me three years, and obey me in everything, however strange it seems to you. You need not be afraid of taking service with me, for there is no danger in it if you only know how to obey.’

The bargain was made, and the lad went home with the man to whom he had engaged himself. It was a strange place indeed, for he lived in a bank in the middle of the wild forest, and the lad saw there no other person than his master. The latter was a great troll, and had marvellous power over both men and beasts.

Next day the lad had to begin his service. The first thing that the troll set him to was to feed all the wild animals from the forest. These the troll had tied up, and there were both wolves and bears, deer and hares, which the troll had gathered in the stalls and folds in his stable down beneath the ground, and that stable was a mile long. The boy, however, accomplished all this work on that day, and the troll praised him and said that it was very well done.

Next morning the troll said to him, ‘To-day the animals are not to be fed; they don’t get the like of that every day. You shall have leave to play about for a little, until they are to be fed again.’

Then the troll said some words to him which he did not understand, and with that the lad turned into a hare, and ran out into the wood. He got plenty to run for, too, for all the hunters aimed at him, and tried to shoot him, and the dogs barked and ran after him wherever they got wind of him. He was the only animal that was left in the wood now, for the troll had tied

up all the others, and every hunter in the whole country was eager to knock him over. But in this they met with no success; there was no dog that could overtake him, and no marksman that could hit him. They shot and shot at him, and he ran and ran. It was an unquiet life, but in the long run he got used to it, when he saw that there was no danger in it, and it even amused him to befool all the hunters and dogs that were so eager after him.

Thus a whole year passed, and when it was over the troll called him home, for he was now in his power like all the other animals. The troll then said some words to him which he did not understand, and the hare immediately became a human being again. ‘Well, how do you like to serve me?’ said the troll, ‘and how do you like being a hare?’

The lad replied that he liked it very well; he had never been able to go over the ground so quickly before. The troll then showed him the bushel of money that he had already earned, and the lad was well pleased to serve him for another year.

The first day of the second year the boy had the same work to do as on the previous one—namely, to feed all the wild animals in the troll’s stable. When he had done this the troll again said some words to him, and with that he became a raven, and flew high up into the air. This was delightful, the lad thought; he could go even faster now than when he was a hare, and the dogs could not come after him here. This was a great delight to him, but he soon found out that he was not to be left quite at peace, for all the marksmen and hunters who saw him aimed at him and fired away, for they had no other birds to shoot at than himself, as the troll had tied up all the others.

This, however, he also got used to, when he saw that they could never hit him, and in this way he flew about all that year, until the troll called him home again, said some strange words to him, and gave him his human shape again. ‘Well, how did you like being a raven?’ said the troll.

‘I liked it very well,’ said the lad, ‘for never in all my days have I been able to rise so high.’ The troll then showed him the two bushels of money which he had earned that year, and the lad was well content to remain in his service for another year.

Next day he got his old task of feeding all the wild beasts. When this was done the troll again said some words to him, and at these he turned into a fish, and sprang into the river. He swam up and he swam down, and

thought it was pleasant to let himself drive with the stream. In this way he came right out into the sea, and swam further and further out. At last he came to a glass palace, which stood at the bottom of the sea. He could see into all the rooms and halls, where everything was very grand; all the furniture was of white ivory, inlaid with gold and pearl. There were soft rugs and cushions of all the colours of the rainbow, and beautiful carpets that looked like the finest moss, and flowers and trees with curiously crooked branches, both green and yellow, white and red, and there were also little fountains which sprang up from the most beautiful snail-shells, and fell into bright mussel-shells, and at the same time made a most delightful music, which filled the whole palace.

The most beautiful thing of all, however, was a young girl who went about there, all alone. She went about from one room to another, but did not seem to be happy with all the grandeur she had about her. She walked in solitude and melancholy, and never even thought of looking at her own image in the polished glass walls that were on every side of her, although she was the prettiest creature anyone could wish to see. The lad thought so too while he swam round the palace and peeped in from every side.

‘Here, indeed, it would be better to be a man than such a poor dumb fish as I am now,’ said he to himself; ‘if I could only remember the words that the troll says when he changes my shape, then perhaps I could help myself to become a man again.’ He swam and he pondered and he thought over this until he remembered the sound of what the troll said, and then he tried to say it himself. In a moment he stood in human form at the bottom of the sea.

He made haste then to enter the glass palace, and went up to the young girl and spoke to her.

At first he nearly frightened the life out of her, but he talked to her so kindly and explained how he had come down there that she soon recovered from her alarm, and was very pleased to have some company to relieve the terrible solitude that she lived in. Time passed so quickly for both of them that the youth (for now he was quite a young man, and no more a lad) forgot altogether how long he had been there.

One day the girl said to him that now it was close on the time when he must become a fish again—the troll would soon call him home, and he would have to go, but before that he must put on the shape of the fish,

otherwise he could not pass through the sea alive. Before this, while he was staying down there, she had told him that she was a daughter of the same troll whom the youth served, and he had shut her up there to keep her away from everyone. She had now devised a plan by which they could perhaps succeed in getting to see each other again, and spending the rest of their lives together. But there was much to attend to, and he must give careful heed to all that she told him.

She told him then that all the kings in the country round about were in debt to her father the troll, and the king of a certain kingdom, the name of which she told him, was the first who had to pay, and if he could not do so at the time appointed he would lose his head. ‘And he cannot pay,’ said she; ‘I know that for certain. Now you must, first of all, give up your service with my father; the three years are past, and you are at liberty to go. You will go off with your six bushels of money, to the kingdom that I have told you of, and there enter the service of the king. When the time comes near for his debt becoming due you will be able to notice by his manner that he is ill at ease. You shall then say to him that you know well enough what it is that is weighing upon him—that it is the debt which he owes to the troll and cannot pay, but that you can lend him the money. The amount is six bushels—just what you have. You shall, however, only lend them to him on condition that you may accompany him when he goes to make the payment, and that you then have permission to run before him as a fool. When you arrive at the troll’s abode, you must perform all kinds of foolish tricks, and see that you break a whole lot of his windows, and do all other damage that you can. My father will then get very angry, and as the king must answer for what his fool does he will sentence him, even although he has paid his debt, either to answer three questions or to lose his life. The first question my father will ask will be, “Where is my daughter?” Then you shall step forward and answer “She is at the bottom of the sea.” He will then ask you whether you can recognise her, and to this you will answer “Yes.” Then he will bring forward a whole troop of women, and cause them to pass before you, in order that you may pick out the one that you take for his daughter. You will not be able to recognise me at all, and therefore I will catch hold of you as I go past, so that you can notice it, and you must then make haste to catch me and hold me fast. You have then answered his first question. His next question will be, “Where is

my heart?" You shall then step forward again and answer, "It is in a fish." "Do you know that fish?" he will say, and you will again answer "Yes." He will then cause all kinds of fish to come before you, and you shall choose between them. I shall take good care to keep by your side, and when the right fish comes I will give you a little push, and with that you will seize the fish and cut it up. Then all will be over with the troll; he will ask no more questions, and we shall be free to wed.'

When the youth had got all these directions as to what he had to do when he got ashore again the next thing was to remember the words which the troll said when he changed him from a human being to an animal; but these he had forgotten, and the girl did not know them either. He went about all day in despair, and thought and thought, but he could not remember what they sounded like. During the night he could not sleep, until towards morning he fell into a slumber, and all at once it flashed upon him what the troll used to say. He made haste to repeat the words, and at the same moment he became a fish again and slipped out into the sea. Immediately after this he was called upon, and swam through the sea up the river to where the troll stood on the bank and restored him to human shape with the same words as before.

'Well, how do you like to be a fish?' asked the troll.

It was what he had liked best of all, said the youth, and that was no lie, as everybody can guess.

The troll then showed him the three bushels of money which he had earned during the past year; they stood beside the other three, and all the six now belonged to him.

'Perhaps you will serve me for another year yet,' said the troll, 'and you will get six bushels of money for it; that makes twelve in all, and that is a pretty penny.'

'No,' said the youth; he thought he had done enough, and was anxious to go to some other place to serve, and learn other people's ways; but he would, perhaps, come back to the troll some other time.

The troll said that he would always be welcome; he had served him faithfully for the three years they had agreed upon, and he could make no objections to his leaving now.

The youth then got his six bushels of money, and with these he betook himself straight to the kingdom which his sweetheart had told him of. He

got his money buried in a lonely spot close to the king's palace, and then went in there and asked to be taken into service. He obtained his request, and was taken on as stableman, to tend the king's horses.

Some time passed, and he noticed how the king always went about sorrowing and grieving, and was never glad or happy. One day the king came into the stable, where there was no one present except the youth, who said straight out to him that, with his majesty's permission, he wished to ask him why he was so sorrowful.

'It's of no use speaking about that,' said the king; 'you cannot help me, at any rate.'

'You don't know about that,' said the youth; ' I know well enough what it is that lies so heavy on your mind, and I know also of a plan to get the money paid.'

This was quite another case, and the king had more talk with the stableman, who said that he could easily lend the king the six bushels of money, but would only do it on condition that he should be allowed to accompany the king when he went to pay the debt, and that he should then be dressed like the king's court fool, and run before him. He would cause some trouble, for which the king would be severely spoken to, but he would answer for it that no harm would befall him.

The king gladly agreed to all that the youth proposed, and it was now high time for them to set out.

When they came to the troll's dwelling it was no longer in the bank, but on the top of this there stood a large castle which the youth had never seen before. The troll could, in fact, make it visible or invisible, just as he pleased, and, knowing as much as he did of the troll's magic arts, the youth was not at all surprised at this.

When they came near to this castle, which looked as if it was of pure glass, the youth ran on in front as the king's fool. Heran sometimes facing forwards, sometimes backwards, stood sometimes on his head, and sometimes on his feet, and he dashed in pieces so many of the troll's big glass windows and doors that it was something awful to see, and overturned everything he could, and made a fearful disturbance.

The troll came rushing out, and was so angry and furious, and abused the king with all his might for bringing such a wretched fool with him, as

he was sure that he could not pay the least bit of all the damage that had been done when he could not even pay off his old debt.

The fool, however, spoke up, and said that he could do so quite easily, and the king then came forward with the six bushels of money which the youth had lent him. They were measured and found to be correct. This the troll had not reckoned on, but he could make no objection against it. The old debt was honestly paid, and the king got his bond back again.

But there still remained all the damage that had been done that day, and the king had nothing with which to pay for this. The troll, therefore, sentenced the king, either to answer three questions that he would put to him, or have his head taken off, as was agreed on in the old bond.

There was nothing else to be done than to try to answer the troll's riddles. The fool then stationed himself just by the king's side while the troll came forward with his questions. He first asked, 'Where is my daughter?'

The fool spoke up and said, 'She is at the bottom of the sea.'

'How do you know that?' said the troll.

'The little fish saw it,' said the fool.

'Would you know her?' said the troll.

'Yes, bring her forward,' said the fool.

The troll made a whole crowd of women go past them, one after the other, but all these were nothing but shadows and deceptions. Amongst the very last was the troll's real daughter, who pinched the fool as she went past him to make him aware of her presence. He thereupon caught her round the waist and held her fast, and the troll had to admit that his first riddle was solved.

Then the troll asked again: 'Where is my heart?'

'It is in a fish,' said the fool.

'Would you know that fish?' said the troll.

'Yes, bring it forward,' said the fool.

Then all the fishes came swimming past them, and meanwhile the troll's daughter stood just by the youth's side. When at last the right fish came swimming along she gave him a nudge, and he seized it at once, drove his knife into it, and split it up, took the heart out of it, and cut it through the middle.

At the same moment the troll fell dead and turned into pieces of flint. With that a,ll the bonds that the troll had bound were broken; all the wild beasts and birds which he had caught and hid under the ground were free now, and dispersed themselves in the woods and in the air.

The youth and his sweetheart entered the castle, which was now theirs, and held their wedding; and all the kings roundabout, who had been in the troll’s debt, and were now out of it, came to the wedding, and saluted the youth as their emperor, and he ruled over them all, and kept peace between them, and lived in his castle with his beautiful empress in great joy and magnificence. And if they have not died since they are living there to this day.

ESBEN AND THE WITCH

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From the Danish.

There was once a man who had twelve sons: the eleven eldest were both big and strong, but the twelfth, whose name was Esben, was only a little fellow. The eleven eldest went out with their father to field and forest, but Esben preferred to stay at home with his mother, and so he was never reckoned at all by the rest, but was a sort of outcast among them.

When the eleven had grown up to be men they decided to go out into the world to try their fortune, and they plagued their father to give them what they required for the journey. The father was not much in favour of this, for he was now old and weak, and could not well spare them from helping him with his work, but in the long run he had to give in. Each one of the eleven got a fine white horse and money for the journey, and so they said farewell to their father and their home, and rode away.

As for Esben, no one had ever thought about him; his brothers had not even said farewell to him.

After the eleven were gone Esben went to his father and said, ‘Father, give me also a horse and money; I should also like to see round about me in the world.’

‘You are a little fool,’ said his father. ‘If I could have let you go, and kept your eleven brothers at home, it would have been better for me in my old age.’

‘Well, you will soon be rid of me at any rate,’ said Esben.

As he could get no other horse, he went into the forest, broke off a branch, stripped the bark off it, so that it became still whiter than his brothers’ horses, and, mounted on this. rode off after his eleven brothers.

The brothers rode on the whole day, and towards evening they came to a great forest, which they entered. Far within the wood they came to a little house, and knocked at the door. There came an old, ugly, bearded

hag, and opened it, and they asked her whether all of them could get quarters for the night.

‘Yes,’ said the old, bearded hag, ‘you shall all have quarters for the night, and, in addition, each of you shall have one of my daughters.’

The eleven brothers thought that they had come to very hospitable people. They were well attended to, and when they went to bed, each of them got one of the hag’s daughters.

Esben had been coming along behind them, and had followed the same way, and had also found the same house in the forest. He slipped into this, without either the witch or her daughters noticing him, and hid himself under one of the beds. A little before midnight he crept quietly out and wakened his brothers. He told these to change night-caps with the witch’s daughters. The brothers saw no reason for this, but, to get rid of Esben’s persistence, they made the exchange, and slept soundly again.

When midnight came Esben heard the old witch come creeping along. She had a broad-bladed axe in her hand, and went over all the eleven beds. It was so dark that she could not see a hand’s breadth before her, but she felt her way, and hacked the heads off all the sleepers who had the men’s night-caps on—and these were her own daughters. As soon as she had gone her way Esben wakened his brothers, and they hastily took their horses and rode off from the witch’s house, glad that they had escaped so well. They quite forgot to thank Esben for what he had done for them.

When they had ridden onwards for some time they reached a king’s palace, and inquired there whether they could be taken into service. Quite easily, they were told, if they would be stablemen, otherwise the king had no use for them. They were quite ready for this, and got the task of looking after all the king’s horses.

Long after them came Esben riding on his stick, and he also wanted to get a place in the palace, but no one had any use for him, and he was told that he could just go back the way he had come. However, he stayed there and occupied himself as best he could. He got his food, but nothing more, and by night he lay just where he could.

At this time there was in the palace a knight who was called Sir Red. He was very well liked by the king, but hated by everyone else, for he was wicked both in will and deed. This Sir Red became angry with the eleven

brothers, because they would not always stand at attention for him, so he determined to avenge himself on them.

One day, therefore, he went to the king, and said that the eleven brothers who had come to the palace a little while ago, and served as stablemen, could do a great deal more than they pretended. One day he had heard them say that if they liked they could get for the king a wonderful dove which had a feather of gold and a feather of silver time about. But they would not procure it unless they were threatened with death.

The king then had the eleven brothers called before him, and said to them, ‘You have said that you can get me a dove which has feathers of gold and silver time about.’

All the eleven assured him that they had never said anything of the kind, and they did not believe that such a dove existed in the whole world.

‘Take your own mind of it,’ said the king; ‘but if you don’t get that dove within three days you shall lose your heads, the whole lot of you.’

With that the king let them go, and there was great grief among them; some wept and others lamented.

At that moment Esben came along, and, seeing their sorrowful looks, said to them, ‘Hello, what’s the matter with you?’

‘What good would it do to tell you, you little fool? You can’t help us.’

‘Oh, you don’t know that,’ answered Esben. ‘I have helped you before.’

In the end they told him how unreasonable the king was, and how he had ordered them to get for him a dove with feathers of gold and silver time about.

‘Give me a bag of peas’ said Esben, ‘and I shall see what I can do for you.’

Esben got his bag of peas; then he took his white stick, and said,

Fly quick, my little stick,
Carry me across the stream.

Straightway the stick carried him across the river and straight into the old witch’s courtyard. Esben had noticed that she had such a dove; so when he arrived in the courtyard he shook the peas out of the bag, and the dove came fluttering down to pick them up. Esben caught it at once, put it into the bag, and hurried off before the witch caught sight of him; but the next

moment she came running, and shouted after him, ‘ I Hey is that you, Esben.?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘Is it you that has taken my dove?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘Was it you that made me kill my eleven daughters?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘Are you coming back again?’

‘That may be,’ said Esben.

‘Then you’ll catch it,’ shouted the witch.

The stick carried Esben with the dove back to the king’s palace, and his brothers were greatly delighted. The king thanked them many times for the dove, and gave them in return both silver and gold. At this Sir Red became still more embittered, and again thought of how to avenge himself on the brothers.

One day he went to the king and told him that the dove was by no means the best thing that the brothers could get for him; for one day he had heard them talking quietly among themselves, and they had said that they could procure a boar whose bristles were of gold and silver time about.

The king again summoned the brothers before him, and asked whether it was true that they had said that they could get for him a boar whose bristles were of gold and silver time about.

‘No,’ said the brothers; they had never said nor thought such a thing, and they did not believe that there was such a boar in the whole world.

‘You must get me that boar within three days,’ said the king, ‘or it will cost you your heads.’

With that they had to go. This was still worse than before, they thought. Where could they get such a marvellous boar? They all went about hanging their heads; but when only one day remained of the three Esben came along. When he saw his brothers’ sorrowful looks he cried, ‘Hallo, what’s the matter now?’

‘Oh, what’s the use of telling you?’ said his brothers. ‘You can’t help us, at any rate.’

‘Ah, you don’t know that,’ said Esben; ‘I’ve helped you before.’

In the end they told him how Sir Red had stirred up the king against them, so that he had ordered them to get for him a boar with bristles of gold and silver time about.

‘That’s all right,’ said Esben; ‘give me a sack of malt, and it is not quite impossible that I may be able to help you.’

Esben got his sack of malt; then he took his little white stick, set himself upon it, and said,

Fly quick, my little stick,
Carry me across the stream.

Off went the stick with him, and very soon he was again in the witch’s courtyard. There he emptied out the malt, and next moment came the boar, which had every second bristle of gold and of silver. Esben at once put it into his sack and hurried off before the witch should catch sight of him; but the next moment she came running, and shouted after him, ‘Hey! is that you, Esben?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘Is it you that has taken my pretty boar?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘It was also you that took my dove?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘And it was you that made me kill my eleven daughters?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘Are you coming back again?’

‘That may be,’ said Esben.

‘Then you’ll catch it,’ said the witch.

Esben was soon back at the palace with the boar, and his brothers scarcely knew which leg to stand on, so rejoiced were they that they were safe again. Not one of them, however, ever thought of thanking Esben for what he had done for them.

The king was still more rejoiced over the boar than he had been over the dove, and did not know what to give the brothers for it. At this Sir Red was again possessed with anger and envy, and again he went about and planned how to get the brothers into trouble.

One day he went again to the king and said, ‘These eleven brothers have now procured the dove and the boar, but they can do much more than that; I know they have said that if they liked they could get for the king a lamp that can shine over seven kingdoms.’

‘If they have said that,’ said the king, ‘they shall also be made to bring it to me. That would be a glorious lamp for me.’

Again the king sent a message to the brothers to come up to the palace. They went accordingly, although very unwillingly, for they suspected that Sir Red had fallen on some new plan to bring them into trouble.

As soon as they came before the king he said to them,

‘You brothers have said that you could, if you liked, get for me a lamp that can shine over seven kingdoms. That lamp must be mine within three days, or it will cost you your lives.’

The brothers assured him that they had never said so, and they were sure that no such lamp existed, but their words were of no avail.

‘The lamp!’ said the king, ‘or it will cost you your heads.’

The brothers were now in greater despair than ever. They did not know what to do, for such a lamp no one had ever heard of. But just as things looked their worst along came Esben.

‘Something wrong again?’ said he. ‘What’s the matter with you now?’

‘Oh, it’s no use telling you,’ said they. ‘You can’t help us, at any rate.’

‘Oh, you might at least tell me,’ said Esben; ‘I have helped you before.’

In the end they told him that the king had ordered them to bring him a lamp which could shine over seven kingdoms, but such a lamp no one had ever heard tell of.

‘Give me a bushel of salt,’ said Esben, ‘and we shall see how matters go.’

He got his bushel of salt, and then mounted his little white stick, and said,

Fly quick, my little stick,
Carry me across the stream.

With that both he and his bushel of salt were over beside the witch’s courtyard. But now matters were less easy, for he could not get inside the

yard, as it was evening and the gate was locked. Finally he hit upon a plan; he got up on the roof and crept down the chimney.

He searched all round for the lamp, but could find it nowhere, for the witch always had it safely guarded, as it was one of her most precious treasures. When he became tired of searching for it he crept into the baking- oven, intending to lie down there and sleep till morning; but just at that moment he heard the witch calling from her bed to one of her daughters, and telling her to make some porridge for her. She had grown hungry, and had taken such a fancy to some porridge. The daughter got out of bed, kindled the fire, and put on a pot with water in it.

‘You mustn’t put any salt in the porridge, though,’ cried the witch.

‘No, neither will I,’ said the daughter; but while she was away getting the meal Esben slipped out of the oven and emptied the whole bushel of salt into the pot. The daughter came back then and put in the meal, and after it had boiled a little she took it in to her mother. The witch took a spoonful and tasted it.

‘Uh!’ said she; ‘didn’t I tell you not to put any salt in it, and it’s just as salt as the sea.’

So the daughter had to go and make new porridge, and her mother warned her strictly not to put any salt in it. But now there was no water in the house, so she asked her mother to give her the lamp, so that she could go to the well for more.

‘There you have it, then,’ said the witch; ‘but take good care of it.’

The daughter took the lamp which shone over seven kingdoms, and went out to the well for water, while Esben slipped out after her. When she was going to draw the water from the well she set the lamp down on a stone beside her. Esben watched his chance, seized the lamp, and gave her a push from behind, so that she plumped head first into the well. Then he made off with the lamp. But the witch got out of her bed and ran after him, crying:

‘Hey! is that you again, Esben?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘Was it you that took my dove?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘Was it also you that took my boar?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘And it was you that made me kill my eleven daughters?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘And now you have taken my lamp, and drowned my twelfth daughter in the well?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘Are you coming back again?’

‘That may be,’ said Esben.

‘Then you’ll catch it,’ said the witch.

It was only a minute before the stick had again landed Esben at the king’s palace, and the brothers were then freed from their distress. The king gave them many fine presents, but Esben did not get even so much as thanks from them.

Never had Sir Red been so eaten up with envy as he was now, and he racked his brain day and night to find something quite impossible to demand from the brothers.

One day he went to the king and told him that the lamp the brothers had procured was good enough, but they could still get for him something that was far better. The king asked what that was.

‘It is,’ said Sir Red, ‘the most beautiful coverlet that any mortal ever heard tell of. It also has the property that, when anyone touches it, it sounds so that it can be heard over eight kingdoms.’

‘That must be a splendid coverlet,’ said the king, and he at once sent for the brothers.

‘You have said that you know of a coverlet, the most beautiful in the whole world, and which sounds over eight kingdoms when anyone touches it. You shall procure it for me, or else lose your lives,’ said he.

The brothers answered him that they had never said a word about such a coverlet, did not believe it existed, and that it was quite impossible for them to procure it. But the king would not hear a word; he drove them away, telling them that if they did not get it very soon it would cost them their heads.

Things looked very black again for the brothers, for they were sure there was no escape for them. The youngest of them, indeed, asked where Esben was, but the others said that that little fool could scarcely keep himself in clothes, and it was not to be expected that he could help them.

Not one of them thought it worth while to look for Esben, but he soon came along of himself.

‘Well, what’s the matter now?’ said he.

‘Oh, what’s the use of telling you?’ said the brothers. ‘You can’t help us, at any rate.’

‘Ah! who knows that?’ said Esben. ‘I have helped you before.’

In the end the brothers told him about the coverlet which, when one touched it, sounded so that it could be heard over eight kingdoms. Esben thought that this was the worst errand that he had had yet, but he could not do worse than fail, and so he would make the attempt.

He again took his little white stick, set himself on it, and said,

Fly quick, my little stick,
Carry me across the stream.

Next moment he was across the river and beside the witch’s house. It was evening, and the door was locked, but he knew the way down the chimney. When he had got into the house, however, the worst yet remained to do, for the coverlet was on the bed in which the witch lay and slept. He slipped into the room without either she or her daughter wakening; but as soon as he touched the coverlet to take it it sounded so that it could be heard over eight kingdoms. The witch awoke, sprang out of bed, and caught hold of Esben. He struggled with her, but could not free himself, and the witch called to her daughter, ‘Come and help me; we shall put him into the little dark room to be fattened. Ho, ho! now I have him!’

Esben was now put into a little dark hole, where he neither saw sun nor moon, and there he was fed on sweet milk and nut-kernels. The daughter had enough to do cracking nuts for him, and at the end of fourteen days she had only one tooth left in her mouth; she had broken all the rest with the nuts. In this time however, she had taken a liking to Esben, and would willingly have set him free, but could not.

When some time had passed the witch told her daughter to go and cut a finger off Esben, so that she could see whether he was nearly fat enough yet. The daughter went and told Esben, and asked him what she should do. Esben told her to take an iron nail and wrap a piece of skin round it: she could then give her mother this to bite at.

The daughter did so, but when the witch bit it she cried, ‘Uh! no, no! This is nothing but skin and bone; he must be fattened much longer yet.’

So Esben was fed for a while longer on sweet milk and nut-kernels, until one day the witch thought that now he must surely be fat enough, and told her daughter again to go and cut a finger off him. By this time Esben was tired of staying in the dark hole, so he told her to go and cut a teat off a cow, and give it to the witch to bite at. This the daughter did, and the witch cried, ‘Ah! now he is fat—so fat that one can scarcely feel the bone in him. Now he shall be killed.’

Now this was just the very time that the witch had to go to Troms Church, where all the witches gather once every year, so she had no time to deal with Esben herself. She therefore told her daughter to heat up the big oven while she was away, take Esben out of his prison, and roast him in there before she came back. The daughter promised all this, and the witch went off on her journey.

The daughter then made the oven as hot as could be, and took Esben out of his prison in order to roast him. She brought the oven spade, and told Esben to seat himself on it, so that she could shoot him into the oven. Esben accordingly took his seat on it, but when she had got him to the mouth of the oven he spread his legs out wide, so that she could not get him pushed in.

‘You mustn’t sit like that,’ said she.

‘How then?’ said Esben.

‘You must cross your legs,’ said the daughter; but Esben could not understand what she meant by this.

‘Get out of the way,’ said she, ‘and I will show you how to place yourself.’

She seated herself on the oven spade, but no sooner had she done so than Esben laid hold of it, shot her into the oven, and fastened the door of it. Then he ran and seized the coverlet, but as soon as he did so it sounded so that it could be heard over eight kingdoms, and the witch, who was at Troms Church, came flying home, and shouted, ‘Hey! is that you again, Esben?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘It was you that made me kill my eleven daughters?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘And took my dove?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘And my beautiful boar?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘And drowned my twelfth daughter in the well, and took my lamp?’

‘Ye—e—s!’

‘And now you have roasted my thirteenth and last daughter in the oven, and taken my coverlet?’

‘YeÄeÄs!’

‘Are you coming back again?’

‘No, never again,’ said Esben.

At this the witch became so furious that she sprang into numberless pieces of flint, and from this come all the flint stones that one finds about the country.

Esben had found again his little stick, which the witch had taken from him, so he said,

Fly quick, my little stick,
Carry me across the stream.

Next moment he was back at the king’s palace. Here things were in a bad way, for the king had thrown all the eleven brothers into prison, and they were to be executed very shortly because they had not brought him the coverlet. Esben now went up to the king and gave him the coverlet, with which the king was greatly delighted. When he touched it it could be heard over eight kingdoms, and all the other kings sat and were angry because they had not one like it.

Esben also told how everything had happened, and how Sir Red had done the brothers all the ill he could devise because he was envious of them. The brothers were at once set at liberty, while Sir Red, for his wickedness, was hanged on the highest tree that could be found, and so he got the reward he deserved.

Much was made of Esben and his brothers, and these now thanked him for all that he had done for them. The twelve of them received as much gold and silver as they could carry, and betook themselves home to their old father. When he saw again his twelve sons, whom he had never

expected to see more, he was so glad that he wept for joy. The brothers told him how much Esben had done, and how he had saved their lives, and from that time forward he was no longer the butt of the rest at home.

PRINCESS MINON-MINETTE

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Once upon a time there lived a young king whose name was Souci, and he had been brought up, ever since he was a baby, by the fairy Inconstancy. Now the fairy Girouette had a kind heart, but she was a very trying person to live with, for she never knew her own mind for two minutes together, and as she was the sole ruler at Court till the prince grew up everything was always at sixes and sevens. At first she determined to follow the old custom of keeping the young king ignorant of the duties he would have to perform some day; then, quite suddenly, she resigned the reins of government into his hands; but, unluckily, it was too late to train him properly for the post. However, the fairy did not think of that, but, carried away by her new ideas, she hastily formed a Council, and named as Prime Minister the excellent ‘Ditto,’ so called because he had never been known to contradict anybody.

Young Prince Souci had a handsome face, and at the bottom a good deal of common sense; but he had never been taught good manners, and was shy and awkward; and had, besides, never learned how to use his brains.

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the Council did not get through much work. Indeed, the affairs of the country fell into such disorder that at last the people broke out into open rebellion, and it was only the courage of the king, who continued to play the flute while swords and spears were flashing before the palace gate, that prevented civil war from being declared.

No sooner was the revolt put down than the Council turned their attention to the question of the young king’s marriage. Various princesses were proposed to him, and the fairy, who was anxious to get the affair over before she left the Court for ever, gave it as her opinion that the Princess Diaphana would make the most suitable wife. Accordingly envoys were

sent to bring back an exact report of the princess's looks and ways, and they returned saying that she was tall and well made, but so very light that the equerries who accompanied her in her walks had to be always watching her, lest she should suddenly be blown away. This had happened so often that her subjects lived in terror of losing her altogether, and tried everything they could think of to keep her to the ground. They even suggested that she should carry weights in her pockets, or have them tied to her ankles; but this idea was given up, as the princess found it so uncomfortable. At length it was decided that she was never to go out in a wind, and in order to make matters surer still the equerries each held the end of a string which was fastened to her waist.

The Council talked over this report for some days, and then the king made up his mind that he would judge for himself, and pretend to be his own ambassador. This plan was by no means new, but it had often succeeded, and, anyhow, they could think of nothing better.

Such a splendid embassy had never before been seen in any country. The kingdom was left in the charge of the Prime Minister, who answered 'Ditto' to everything; but the choice was better than it seemed, for the worthy man was much beloved by the people, as he agreed with all they said, and they left him feeling very pleased with themselves and their own wisdom.

When the king arrived at Diaphana's Court he found a magnificent reception awaiting him, for, though they pretended not to know who he was, secrets like this are never hidden. Now the young king had a great dislike to long ceremonies, so he proposed that his second interview with the princess should take place in the garden. The princess made some difficulties, but, as the weather was lovely and very still, she at last consented to the king's wishes. But no sooner had they finished their first bows and curtseys than a slight breeze sprung up, and began to sway the princess, whose equerries had retired out of respect. The king went forward to steady her, but the wind that he caused only drove her further away from him. He rushed after her exclaiming, 'O princess! are you really running away from me?'

'Good gracious, no!' she replied. 'Run a little quicker and you will be able to stop me, and I shall be for ever grateful. That is what comes of

talking in a garden,' she added in disgust; 'as if one wasn't much better in a room that was tightly closed all round.'

The king ran as fast as he could, but the wind ran faster still, and in a moment the princess was whirled to the bottom of the garden, which was bounded by a ditch. She cleared it like a bird, and the king, who was obliged to stop short at the edge, saw the lovely Diaphana flying over the plain, sometimes driven to the right, sometimes to the left, till at last she vanished out of sight.

By this time the whole court were running over the plain, some on foot and some on horseback, all hurrying to the help of their princess, who really was in some danger, for the wind was rising to the force of a gale. The king looked on for a little, and then returned with his attendants to the palace, reflecting all the while on the extreme lightness of his proposed bride and the absurdity of having a wife that rose in the air better than any kite. He thought on the whole that it would be wiser not to wait longer, but to depart at once, and he started on horseback at the very moment when the princess had been found by her followers, wet to the skin, and blown against a rick. Souci met the carriage which was bringing her home, and stopped to congratulate her on her escape, and to advise her to put on dry clothes. Then he continued his journey.

It took a good while for the king to get home again, and he was rather cross at having had so much trouble for nothing. Besides which, his courtiers made fun at his adventure, and he did not like being laughed at, though of course they did not dare to do it before his face. And the end of it was that very soon he started on his travels again, only allowing one equerry to accompany him, and even this attendant he managed to lose the moment he had left his own kingdom behind him.

Now it was the custom in those days for princes and princesses to be brought up by fairies, who loved them as their own children, and did not mind what inconvenience they put other people to for their sakes, for all the world as if they had been real mothers. The fairy Aveline, who lived in a country that touched at one point the kingdom of King Souci, had under her care the lovely Princess Minon-Minette, and had made up her mind to marry her to the young king, who, in spite of his awkward manners, which could be improved, was really very much nicer than most of the young men she was likely to meet.

So Aveline made her preparations accordingly, and began by arranging that the equerry should lose himself in the forest, after which she took away the king's sword and his horse while he lay asleep under a tree. Her reason for this was that she felt persuaded that, finding himself suddenly alone and robbed of everything, the king would hide his real birth, and would have to fall back on his powers of pleasing, like other men, which would be much better for him.

When the king awoke and found that the tree to which he had tied his horse had its lowest branch broken, and that nothing living was in sight, he was much dismayed, and sought high and low for his lost treasure, but all in vain. After a time he began to get hungry, so he decided that he had better try to find his way out of the forest, and perhaps he might have a chance of getting something to eat. He had only gone a few steps when he met Aveline, who had taken the shape of an old woman with a heavy bundle of faggots on her back. She staggered along the path and almost fell at his feet, and Souci, afraid that she might have hurt herself, picked her up and set her on her feet again before passing on his way. But he was not to be let off so easy.

'What about my bundle?' cried the old woman. 'Where is your politeness? Really, you seem to have been very nicely brought up! What have they taught you?'

'Taught me? Nothing,' replied he.

'I can well believe it!' she said. 'You don't know even how to pick up a bundle. Oh, you can come near; I am cleverer than you, and know how to pick up a bundle very well.'

The king blushed at her words, which he felt had a great deal of truth in them, and took up the bundle meekly.

Aveline, delighted at the success of her first experiment, hobbled along after him, chattering all the while, as old women do.

'I wish,' she said, 'that all kings had done as much once in their lives. Then they would know what a lot of trouble it takes to get wood for their fires.'

Souci felt this to be true, and was sorry for the old woman.

'Where are we going to?' asked he.

'To the castle of the White Demon; and if you are in want of work I will find you something to do.'

‘But I can’t do anything,’ he said, ‘except carry a bundle, and I shan’t earn much by that.’

‘Oh, you are learning,’ replied the old woman, ‘and it isn’t bad for a first lesson.’ But the king was paying very little attention to her, for he was rather cross and very tired. Indeed, he felt that he really could not carry the bundle any further, and was about to lay it down when up came a young maiden more beautiful than the day, and covered with precious stones. She ran to them, exclaiming to the old woman,

‘Oh, you poor thing! I was just coming after you to see if I could help you.’

‘Here is a young man,’ replied the old woman, ‘who will be quite ready to give you up the bundle. You see he does not look as if he enjoyed carrying it.’

‘Will you let me take it, sir?’ she asked.

But the king felt ashamed of himself, and held on to it tightly, while the presence of the princess put him in a better temper.

So they all travelled together till they arrived at a very ordinary-looking house, which Aveline pointed out as the castle of the White Demon, and told the king that he might put down his bundle in the courtyard. The young man was terribly afraid of being recognised by someone in this strange position, and would have turned on his heel and gone away had it not been for the thought of Minon-Minette. Still, he felt very awkward and lonely, for both the princess and the old woman had entered the castle without taking the slightest notice of the young man, who remained where he was for some time, not quite knowing what he had better do. At length a servant arrived and led him up into a beautiful room filled with people, who were either playing on musical instruments or talking in a lively manner, which astonished the king, who stood silently listening, and not at all pleased at the want of attention paid him.

Matters went on this way for some time. Every day the king fell more and more in love with Minon-Minette, and every day the princess seemed more and more taken up with other people. At last, in despair, the prince sought out the old woman, to try to get some advice from her as to his conduct, or, anyway, to have the pleasure of talking about Minon-Minette.

He found her spinning in an underground chamber, but quite ready to tell him all he wanted to know. In answer to his questions he learned that

in order to win the hand of the princess it was not enough to be born a prince, for she would marry nobody who had not proved himself faithful, and had, besides, all those talents and accomplishments which help to make people happy.

For a moment Souci was very much cast down on hearing this, but then he plucked up. ‘Tell me what I must do in order to win the heart of the princess, and no matter how hard it is I will do it. And show me how I can repay you for your kindness, and you shall have anything I can give you. Shall I bring in your bundle of faggots every day?’

‘It is enough that you should have made the offer,’ replied the old woman; and she added, holding out a skein of thread, ‘Take this; one day you will be thankful for it, and when it becomes useless your difficulties will be past.’

‘Is it the skein of my life?’ he asked.

‘It is the skein of your love’s ill-luck,’ she said.

And he took it and went away.

Now the fairy Girouette, who had brought up Souci, had an old friend called Grimace, the protectress of Prince Fluet. Grimace often talked over the young prince’s affairs with Girouette, and, when she decided that he was old enough to govern his own kingdom, consulted Girouette as to a suitable wife. Girouette, who never stopped to think or to make inquiries, drew such a delightful picture of Minon-Minette that Grimace determined to spare no pains to bring about the marriage, and accordingly Fluet was presented at court. But though the young man was pleasant and handsome, the princess thought him rather womanish in some ways, and displayed her opinion so openly as to draw upon herself and Aveline the anger of the fairy, who declared that Minon-Minette should never know happiness till she had found a bridge without an arch and a bird without feathers. So saying, she also went away.

Before the king set out afresh on his travels Aveline had restored to him his horse and his sword, and though these were but small consolation for the absence of the princess, they were better than nothing, for he felt that somehow they might be the means of leading him back to her.

After crossing several deserts the king arrived at length in a country that seemed inhabited, but the instant he stepped over the border he was seized and flung into chains, and dragged at once to the capital. He asked

his guards why he was treated like this, but the only answer he got was that he was in the territory of the Iron King, for in those days countries had no names of their own, but were called after their rulers.

The young man was led into the presence of the Iron King, who was seated on a black throne in a hall also hung with black, as a token of mourning for all the relations whom he had put to death.

‘What are you doing in my country?’ he cried fiercely.

‘I came here by accident,’ replied Souci, ‘and if I ever escape from your clutches I will take warning by you and treat my subjects differently.’

‘Do you dare to insult me in my own court?’ cried the king. ‘Away with him to Little Ease!’

Now Little Ease was an iron cage hung by four thick chains in the middle of a great vaulted hall, and the prisoner inside could neither sit, nor stand, nor lie; and, besides that, he was made to suffer by turns unbearable heat and cold, while a hundred heavy bolts kept everything safe. Girouette, whose business it was to see after Souci, had forgotten his existence in the excitement of some new idea, and he would not have been alive long to trouble anybody if Aveline had not come to the rescue and whispered in his ear, ‘And the skein of thread?’ He took it up obediently, though he did not see how it would help him but he tied it round one of the iron bars of his cage, which seemed the only thing he could do, and gave a pull. To his surprise the bar gave way at once, and he found he could break it into a thousand pieces. After this it did not take him long to get out of his cage, or to treat the closely barred windows of the hall in the same manner. But even after he had done all this freedom appeared as far from him as ever, for between him and the open country was a high wall, and so smooth that not even a monkey could climb it. Then Souci’s heart died within him. He saw nothing for it but to submit to some horrible death, but he determined that the Iron King should not profit more than he could help, and flung his precious thread into the air, saying, as he did so, ‘O fairy, my misfortunes are greater than your power. I am grateful for your goodwill, but take back your gift!’ The fairy had pity on his youth and want of faith, and took care that one end of the thread remained in his hand. He suddenly felt a jerk, and saw that the thread must have caught on something, and this thought filled him with the daring that is born of despair. ‘Better,’ he said to himself, ‘trust to a thread than to the mercies of a king;’ and, gliding

down, he found himself safe on the other side of the wall. Then he rolled up the thread and put it carefully into his pocket, breathing silent thanks to the fairy.

Now Minon-Minette had been kept informed by Aveline of the prince's adventures, and when she heard of the way in which he had been treated by the Iron King she became furious, and began to prepare for war. She made her plans with all the secrecy she could, but when great armies are collected people are apt to suspect a storm is brewing, and of course it is very difficult to keep anything hidden from fairy godmothers. Anyway, Grimace soon heard of it, and as she had never forgiven Minon-Minette for refusing Prince Fluet, she felt that here was her chance of revenge.

Up to this time Aveline had been able to put a stop to many of Grimace's spiteful tricks, and to keep guard over Minon-Minette, but she had no power over anything that happened at a distance; and when the princess declared her intention of putting herself at the head of her army, and began to train herself to bear fatigue by hunting daily, the fairy entreated her to be careful never to cross the borders of her dominions without Aveline to protect her. The princess at once gave her promise, and all went well for some days. Unluckily one morning, as Minon-Minette was cantering slowly on her beautiful white horse, thinking a great deal about Souci and not at all of the boundaries of her kingdom (of which, indeed, she was very ignorant), she suddenly found herself in front of a house made entirely of dead leaves, which somehow brought all sorts of unpleasant things into her head. She remembered Aveline's warning, and tried to turn her horse, but it stood as still as if it had been marble. Then the princess felt that she was slowly, and against her will, being dragged to the ground. She shrieked, and clung tightly to the saddle, but it was all in vain; she longed to fly, but something outside herself proved too strong for her, and she was forced to take the path that led to the House of Dead Leaves.

Scarcely had her feet touched the threshold than Grimace appeared. 'So here you are at last, Minon-Minette! I have been watching for you a long time, and my trap was ready for you from the beginning. Come here, my darling! I will teach you to make war on my friends! Things won't turn out exactly as you fancied. What you have got to do now is to go on your knees to the king and crave his pardon, and before he consents to a peace

you will have to implore him to grant you the favour of becoming his wife. Meanwhile you will have to be my servant.'

From that day the poor princess was put to the hardest and dirtiest work, and each morning something more disagreeable seemed to await her. Besides which, she had no food but a little black bread, and no bed but a little straw. Out of pure spite she was sent in the heat of the day to look after the geese, and would most likely have got a sunstroke if she had not happened to pick up in the fields a large fan, with which she sheltered her face. To be sure, a fan seems rather an odd possession for a goose girl, but the princess did not think of that, and she forgot all her troubles when, on opening the fan to use it as a parasol, out tumbled a letter from her lover. Then she felt sure that the fairy had not forgotten her, and took heart.

When Grimace saw that Minon-Minette still managed to look as white as snow, instead of being burnt as brown as a berry, she wondered what could have happened, and began to watch her closely. The following day, when the sun was at its highest and hottest, she noticed her draw a fan from the folds of her dress and hold it before her eyes. The fairy, in a rage, tried to snatch it from her, but the princess would not let it go. 'Give me that fan at once!' cried Grimace.

'Never while I live!' answered the princess, and, not knowing where it would be safest, placed it under her feet. In an instant she felt herself rising from the ground, with the fan always beneath her, and while Grimace was too much blinded by her fury to notice what was going on the princess was quickly soaring out of her reach.

All this time Souci had been wandering through the world with his precious thread carefully fastened round him, seeking every possible and impossible place where his beloved princess might chance to be. But though he sometimes found traces of her, or even messages scratched on a rock, or cut in the bark of a tree, she herself was nowhere to be found. 'If she is not on the earth,' said Souci to himself, 'perhaps she is hiding somewhere in the air. It is there that I shall find her.' So, by the help of his thread, he tried to mount upwards, but he could go such a little way, and hurt himself dreadfully when he tumbled back to earth again. Still he did not give up, and after many days of efforts and tumbles he found to his great joy that he could go a little higher and stay up a little longer than he had done at first, and by-and-bye he was able to live in the air altogether.

But alas! the world of the air seemed as empty of her as the world below, and Souci was beginning to despair, and to think that he must go and search the world that lay in the sea. He was floating sadly along, not paying any heed to where he was going, when he saw in the distance a beautiful, bright sort of bird coming towards him. His heart beat fast—he did not know why—and as they both drew near the voice of the princess exclaimed, ‘Behold the bird without feathers and the bridge without an arch!’

So their first meeting took place in the air, but it was none the less happy for that; and the fan grew big enough to hold the king as well as Aveline, who had hastened to give them some good advice. She guided the fan above the spot where the two armies lay encamped before each other ready to give battle. The fight was long and bloody, but in the end the Iron King was obliged to give way and surrender to the princess, who set him to keep King Souci’s sheep, first making him swear a solemn oath that he would treat them kindly.

Then the marriage took place, in the presence of Girouette, whom they had the greatest trouble to find, and who was much astonished to discover how much business had been got through in her absence.

MAIDEN BRIGHT-EYE

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From the Danish

Once, upon a time there was a man and his wife who had two children, a boy and a girl. The wife died, and the man married again. His new wife had an only daughter, who was both ugly and untidy, whereas her stepdaughter was a beautiful girl, and was known as Maiden Bright-eye. Her stepmother was very cruel to her on this account; she had always to do the hardest work, and got very little to eat, and no attention paid to her; but to her own daughter she was all that was good. She was spared from all the hardest of the housework, and had always the prettiest clothes to wear.

Maiden Bright-eye had also to watch the sheep, but of course it would never do to let her go idle and enjoy herself too much at this work, so she had to pull heather while she was out on the moors with them. Her stepmother gave her pancakes to take with her for her dinner, but she had mixed the flour with ashes, and made them just as bad as she could.

The little girl came out on the moor and began to pull heather on the side of a little mound, but next minute a little fellow with a red cap on his head popped up out of the mound and said:

‘Who’s that pulling the roof off my house?’

‘Oh, it’s me, a poor little girl,’ said she; ‘my mother sent me out here, and told me to pull heather. If you will be good to me I will give you a bit of my dinner.’

The little fellow was quite willing, and she gave him the biggest share of her pancakes. They were not particularly good, but when one is hungry anything tastes well. After he had got them all eaten he said to her:

‘Now, I shall give you three wishes, for you are a very nice little girl; but I will choose the wishes for you. You are beautiful, and much more beautiful shall you be; yes, so lovely that there will not be your like in the world. The next wish shall be that every time you open your mouth a gold coin shall fall out of it, and your voice shall be like the most beautiful

music. The third wish shall be that you may be married to the young king, and become the queen of the country. At the same time I shall give you a cap, which you must carefully keep, for it can save you, if you ever are in danger of your life, if you just put it on your head.

Maiden Bright-eye thanked the little bergman ever so often, and drove home her sheep in the evening. By that time she had grown so beautiful that her people could scarcely recognise her. Her stepmother asked her how it had come about that she had grown so beautiful. She told the whole story—for she always told the truth—that a little man had come to her out on the moor and had given her all this beauty. She did not tell, however, that she had given him a share of her dinner.

The stepmother thought to herself, ‘If one can become so beautiful by going out there, my own daughter shall also be sent, for she can well stand being made a little prettier.’

Next morning she baked for her the finest cakes, and dressed her prettily to go out with the sheep. But she was afraid to go away there without having a stick to defend herself with if anything should come near her.

She was not very much inclined for pulling the heather, as she never was in the habit of doing any work, but she was only a minute or so at it when up came the same little fellow with the red cap, and said:

‘Who’s that pulling the roof off my house?’

‘What’s that to you?’ said she.

‘Well, if you will give me a bit of your dinner I won’t do you any mischief,’ said he.

‘I will give you something else in place of my dinner,’ said she. ‘I can easily eat it myself; but if you will have something you can have a whack of my stick,’ and with that she raised it in the air and struck the bergman over the head with it.

‘What a wicked little girl you are!’ said he; ‘but you shall be none the better of this. I shall give you three wishes, and choose them for you. First, I shall say, “Ugly are you, but you shall become so ugly that there will not be an uglier one on earth.” Next I shall wish that every time you open your mouth a big toad may fall out of it, and your voice shall be like the roaring of a bull. In the third place I shall wish for you a violent death.’

The girl went home in the evening, and when her mother saw her she was as vexed as she could be, and with good reason, too; but it was still worse when she saw the toads fall out of her mouth and heard her voice.

Now we must hear something about the stepson. He had gone out into the world to look about him, and took service in the king's palace. About this time he got permission to go home and see his sister, and when he saw how lovely and beautiful she was, he was so pleased and delighted that when he came back to the king's palace everyone there wanted to know what he was always so happy about. He told them that it was because he had such a lovely sister at home.

At last it came to the ears of the king what the brother said about his sister, and, besides that, the report of her beauty spread far and wide, so that the youth was summoned before the king, who asked him if everything was true that was told about the girl. He said it was quite true, for he had seen her beauty with his own eyes, and had heard with his own ears how sweetly she could sing and what a lovely voice she had.

The king then took a great desire for her, and ordered her brother to go home and bring her back with him, for he trusted no one better to accomplish that errand. He got a ship, and everything else that he required, and sailed home for his sister. As soon as the stepmother heard what his errand was she at once said to herself, 'This will never come about if I can do anything to hinder it. She must not be allowed to come to such honour.'

She then got a dress made for her own daughter, like the finest robe for a queen, and she had a mask prepared and put upon her face, so that she looked quite pretty, and gave her strict orders not to take it off until the king had promised to wed her.

The brother now set sail with his two sisters, for the stepmother pretended that the ugly one wanted to see the other a bit on her way. But when they got out to sea, and Maiden Bright-eye came up on deck, the sister did as her mother had instructed her—she gave her a push and made her fall into the water. When the brother learned what had happened he was greatly distressed, and did not know what to do. He could not bring himself to tell the truth about what had happened, nor did he expect that the king would believe it. In the long run he decided to hold on his way, and let things go as they liked. What he had expected happened—the king received his sister and wedded her at once, but repented it after the first

night, as he could scarcely put down his foot in the morning for all the toads that were about the room, and when he saw her real face he was so enraged against the brother that he had him thrown into a pit full of serpents. He was so angry, not merely because he had been deceived, but because he could not get rid of the ugly wretch that was now tied to him for life.

Now we shall hear a little about Maiden Bright-eye When she fell into the water she was fortunate enough to get the bergman's cap put on her head, for now she was in danger of her life, and she was at once transformed into a duck. The duck swam away after the ship, and came to the king's palace on the next evening. There it waddled up the drain, and so into the kitchen, where her little dog lay on the hearth-stone; it could not bear to stay in the fine chambers along with the ugly sister, and had taken refuge down here. The duck hopped up till it could talk to the dog.

'Good evening,' it said.

'Thanks, Maiden Bright-eye,' said the dog.

'Where is my brother?'

'He is in the serpent-pit.'

'Where is my wicked sister?'

'She is with the noble king.'

'Alas! alas! I am here this evening, and shall be for two evenings yet, and then I shall never come again.'

When it had said this the duck waddled off again. Several of the servant girls heard the conversation, and were greatly surprised at it, and thought that it would be worth while to catch the bird next evening and see into the matter a little more closely. They had heard it say that it would come again.

Next evening it appeared as it had said, and a great many were present to see it. It came waddling in by the drain, and went up to the dog, which was lying on the hearth-stone.

'Good evening,' it said.

'Thanks, Maiden Bright-eye,' said the dog.

'Where is my brother?'

'He is in the serpent-pit.'

'Where is my wicked sister?'

'She is with the noble king.'

‘Alas! alas! I am here this evening, and shall be for one evening yet, and then I shall never come again.’

After this it slipped out, and no one could get hold of it. But the king’s cook thought to himself, ‘I shall see if I can’t get hold of you to-morrow evening.’

On the third evening the duck again came waddling in by the drain, and up to the dog on the hearth-stone.

‘Good evening,’ it said.

‘Thanks, Maiden Bright-eye,’ said the dog.

‘Where is my brother?’

‘He is in the serpent-pit.’

‘Where is my wicked sister?’

‘She is with the noble king.’

‘Alas! alas! now I shall never come again.’

With this it slipped out again, but in the meantime the cook had posted himself at the outer end of the drain with a net, which he threw over it as it came out. In this way he caught it, and came in to the others with the most beautiful duck they had ever seen—with so many golden feathers on it that everyone marvelled. No one, however, knew what was to be done with it; but after what they had heard they knew that there was something uncommon about it, so they took good care of it.

At this time the brother in the serpent-pit dreamed that his right sister had come swimming to the king’s palace in the shape of a duck, and that she could not regain her own form until her beak was cut off. He got this dream told to some one, so that the king at last came to hear of it, and had him taken up out of the pit and brought before him. The king then asked him if he could produce to him his sister as beautiful as he had formerly described her. The brother said he could if they would bring him the duck and a knife.

Both of them were brought to him, and he said, ‘I wonder how you would look if I were to cut the point off your beak.’

With this he cut a piece off the beak, and there came a voice which said, ‘Oh, oh, you cut my little finger!’

Next moment Maiden Bright-eye stood there, as lovely and beautiful as he had seen her when he was home. This was his sister now, he said; and the whole story now came out of how the other had behaved to her. The

wicked sister was put into a barrel with spikes round it which was dragged off by six wild horses, and so she came to her end.:But the king was delighted with Maiden Bright-eye, and immediately made her his queen, while her brother became his prime minister.

THE MERRY WIVES

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From the Danish

There lay three houses in a row, in one of which there lived a tailor, in another a carpenter, and in the third a smith. All three were married, and their wives were very good friends. They often talked about how stupid their husbands were, but they could never agree as to which of them had the most stupid one; each one stuck up for her own husband, and maintained that it was he.

The three wives went to church together every Sunday, and had a regular good gossip on the way, and when they were coming home from church they always turned into the tavern which lay by the wayside and drank half a pint together. This was at the time when half a pint of brandy cost threepence, so that was just a penny from each of them.

But the brandy went up in price, and the taverner said that he must have fourpence for the half-pint.

They were greatly annoyed at this, for there were only the three of them to share it, and none of them was willing to pay the extra penny.

As they went home from the church that day they decided to wager with each other as to whose husband was the most stupid, and the one who, on the following Sunday, should be judged to have played her husband the greatest trick should thereafter go free from paying, and each of the two others would give twopence for their Sunday's half-pint.

Next day the tailor's wife said to her husband, 'I have some girls coming to-day to help to card my wool there is a great deal to do, and we must be very busy. I am so annoyed that our watchdog is dead, for in the evening the young fellows will come about to get fun with the girls, and they will get nothing done. If we had only had a fierce watchdog he would have kept them away.'

'Yes,' said the man, 'that would have been a good thing.'

‘Listen, good man,’ said the wife, ‘you must just be the watchdog yourself, and scare the fellows away from the house.’

The husband was not very sure about this, although otherwise he was always ready to give in to her.

‘Oh yes, you will see it will work all right,’ said the wife.

And so towards evening she got the tailor dressed up in a shaggy fur coat, tied a black woollen cloth round his head, and chained him up beside the dog’s kennel.’

There he stood and barked and growled at everyone that moved in his neighbourhood. The neighbour wives knew all about this, and were greatly amused at it.

On the day after this the carpenter had been out at work, and came home quite merry; but as soon as he entered the house his wife clapped her hands together and cried, ‘My dear, what makes you look like that? You are ill.’

The carpenter knew nothing about being ill; he only thought that he wanted something to eat, so he sat down at the table and began his dinner.

His wife sat straight in front of him, with her hands folded, and shook her head, and looked at him with an anxious air.

‘You are getting worse, my dear,’ she said; ‘you are quite pale now; you have a serious illness about you; I can see it by your looks.’

The husband now began to grow anxious, and thought that perhaps he was not quite well.

‘No, indeed,’ said she; ‘it’s high time that you were in bed.’

She then got him to lie down, and piled above him all the bedclothes she could find, and gave him various medicines, while he grew worse and worse.

‘You will never get over it,’ said she; ‘I am afraid you are going to die.’

‘Do you think so?’ said the carpenter; ‘I can well believe it, for I am indeed very poorly.’

In a little while she said again, ‘Ah, now I must part with you. Here comes Death. Now I must close your eyes.’ And she did so.

The carpenter believed everything that his wife said, and so he believed now that he was dead, and lay still and let her do as she pleased.

She got her neighbours summoned, and they helped to lay him in the coffin—it was one of those he himself had made; but his wife had bored holes in it to let him get some air. She made a soft bed under him, and put a coverlet over him, and she folded his hands over his breast; but instead of a flower or a psalm-book, she gave him a pint-bottle of brandy in his hands. After he had lain for a little he took a little pull at this, and then another and another, and he thought this did him good, and soon he was sleeping sweetly, and dreaming that he was in heaven.

Meanwhile word had gone round the village that the carpenter was dead, and was to be buried next day.

It was now the turn of the smith's wife. Her husband was lying sleeping off the effects of a drinking bout, so she pulled off all his clothes and made him black as coal from head to foot, and then let him sleep till far on in the day.

The funeral party had already met at the carpenter's, and marched oft towards the church with the coffin, when the smith's wife came rushing in to her husband.

'Gracious, man,' said she, 'you are lying there yet? You are sleeping too long. You know you are going to the funeral.'

The smith was quite confused; he knew nothing about any funeral.

'It's our neighbour the carpenter,' said his wife, 'who is to be buried to-day. They are already half-way to church with him.'

'All right,' said the smith, 'make haste to help me on with my black clothes.'

'What nonsense!' said his wife, 'you have them on already. Be off with you now.'

The smith looked down at his person and saw that he was a good deal blacker than he usually was, so he caught up his hat and ran out after the funeral. This was already close to the church, and the smith wanted to take part in carrying the coffin, like a good neighbour. So he ran with all his might, and shouted after them, 'Hey! wait a little; let me get a hold of him!'

The people turned round and saw the black figure coming, and thought it was the devil himself, who wanted to get hold of the carpenter, so they threw down the coffin and took to their heels.

The lid sprang off the coffin with the shock, and the carpenter woke up and looked out. He remembered the whole affair; he knew that he was dead and was going to be buried, and recognising the smith, he said to him, in a low voice, ‘My good neighbour, if I hadn’t been dead already, I should have laughed myself to death now to see you coming like this to my funeral.’

From that time forth the carpenter’s wife drank free of expense every Sunday, for the others had to admit that she had fooled her husband the best.

KING LINDORM

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From the Swedish.

There once lived a king and a queen who ruled over a very great kingdom. They had large revenues, and lived happily with each other; but, as the years went past, the king's heart became heavy, because the queen had no children. She also sorrowed greatly over it, because, although the king said nothing to her about this trouble, yet she could see that it vexed him that they had no heir to the kingdom; and she wished every day that she might have one.

One day a poor old woman came to the castle and asked to speak with the queen. The royal servants answered that they could not let such a poor beggar-woman go in to their royal mistress. They offered her a penny, and told her to go away. Then the woman desired them to tell the queen that there stood at the palace gate one who would help her secret sorrow. This message was taken to the queen, who gave orders to bring the old woman to her. This was done, and the old woman said to her:

'I know your secret sorrow, O queen, and am come to help you in it. You wish to have a son; you shall have two if you follow my instructions.'

The queen was greatly surprised that the old woman knew her secret wish so well, and promised to follow her advice.

'You must have a bath set in your room, O queen,' said she, 'and filled with running water. When you have bathed in this you will find. under the bath two red onions. These you must carefully peel and eat, and in time your wish will be fulfilled.'

The queen did as the poor woman told her; and after she had bathed she found the two onions under the bath. They were both alike in size and appearance. When she saw these she knew that the woman had been something more than she seemed to be, and in her delight she ate up one of the onions, skin and all. When she had done so she remembered that the

woman had told her to peel them carefully before she ate them. It was now too late for the one of them, but she peeled the other and then ate it too.

In due time it happened as the woman had said; but the first that the queen gave birth to was a hideous lindorm, or serpent. No one saw this but her waiting-woman, who threw it out of the window into the forest beside the castle. The next that came into the world was the most beautiful little prince, and he was shown to the king and queen, who knew nothing about his brother the lindorm.

There was now joy in all the palace and over the whole country on account of the beautiful prince; but no one knew that the queen's first-born was a lindorm, and lay in the wild forest. Time passed with the king, the queen, and the young prince in all happiness and prosperity, until he was twenty years of his age. Then his parents said to him that he should journey to another kingdom and seek for himself a bride, for they were beginning to grow old, and would fain see their son married. before they were laid in their grave. The prince obeyed, had his horses harnessed to his gilded chariot, and set out to woo his bride. But when he came to the first cross-ways there lay a huge and terrible lindorm right across the road, so that his horses had to come to a standstill.

'Where are you driving to? ' asked the lindorm with a hideous voice.

'That does not concern you,' said the prince. 'I am the prince, and can drive where I please.'

'Turn back,' said the lindorm. 'I know your errand, but you shall get no bride until I have got a mate and slept by her side.'

The prince turned home again, and told the king and the queen what he had met at the cross-roads; but they thought that he should try again on the following day, and see whether he could not get past it, so that he might seek a bride in another kingdom.

The prince did so, but got no further than the first cross-roads; there lay the lindorm again, who stopped him in the same way as before.

The same thing happened on the third day when the prince tried to get past: the lindorm said, with a threatening voice, that before the prince could get a bride he himself must find a mate.

When the king and queen heard this for the third time they could think of no better plan than to invite the lindorm to the palace, and they should find him a mate. They thought that a lindorm would be quite well satisfied

with anyone that they might give him, and so they would get some slave-woman to marry the monster. The lindorm came to the palace and received a bride of this kind, but in the morning she lay torn in pieces. So it happened every time that the king and queen compelled any woman to be his bride.

The report of this soon spread over all the country. Now it happened that there was a man who had married a second time, and his wife heard of the lindorm with great delight. Her husband had a daughter by his first wife who was more beautiful than all other maidens, and so gentle and good that she won the heart of all who knew her. His second wife, however, had also a grown-up daughter, who by herself would have been ugly and disagreeable enough, but beside her good and beautiful stepsister seemed still more ugly and wicked, so that all turned from her with loathing.

The stepmother had long been annoyed that her husband's daughter was so much more beautiful than her own, and in her heart she conceived a bitter hatred for her stepdaughter. When she now heard that there was in the king's palace a lindorm which tore in pieces all the women that were married to him, and demanded a beautiful maiden for his bride, she went to the king, and said that her stepdaughter wished to wed the lindorm, so that the country's only prince might travel and seek a bride. At this the king was greatly delighted, and gave orders that the young girl should be brought to the palace.

When the messengers came to fetch her she was terribly frightened, for she knew that it was her wicked stepmother who in this way was aiming at her life. She begged that she might be allowed to spend another night in her father's house. This was granted her, and she went to her mother's grave. There she lamented her hard fate in being given over to the lindorm, and earnestly prayed her mother for counsel. How long she lay there by the grave and wept one cannot tell, but sure it is that she fell asleep and slept until the sun rose. Then she rose up from the grave, quite happy at heart, and began to search about in the fields. There she found three nuts, which she carefully put away in her pocket.

'When I come into very great danger I must break one of these,' she said to herself. Then she went home, and set out quite willingly with the king's messengers.

When these arrived at the palace with the beautiful young maiden everyone pitied her fate; but she herself was of good courage, and asked the queen for another bridal chamber than the one the lindorm had had before. She got this, and then she requested them to put a pot full of strong lye on the fire and lay down three new scrubbing brushes. The queen gave orders that everything should be done as she desired; and then the maiden dressed herself in seven clean snow-white shirts, and held her wedding with the lindorm.

When they were left alone in the bridal chamber the lindorm, in a threatening voice, ordered her to undress herself.

‘Undress yourself first!’ said she.

‘None of the others bade me do that,’ said he in surprise.

‘But I bid you,’ said she.

Then the lindorm began to writhe, and groan, and breathe heavily; and after a little he had cast his outer skin, which lay on the floor, hideous to behold. Then his bride took off one of her snow-white shirts, and cast it on the lindorm’s skin. Again he ordered her to undress, and again she commanded him to do so first. He had to obey, and with groaning and pain cast off one skin after another, and for each skin the maiden threw off one of her shirts, until there lay on the floor seven lindorm skins and six snow-white shirts; the seventh she still had on. The lindorm now lay before her as a formless, slimy mass, which she with all her might began to scrub with the lye and new scrubbing brushes.

When she had nearly worn out the last of these there stood before her the loveliest youth in the world. He thanked her for having saved him from his enchantment, and told her that he was the king and queen’s eldest son, and heir to the kingdom. Then he asked her whether she would keep the promise she had made to the lindorm, to share everything with him. To this she was well content to answer ‘Yes.’

Each time that the lindorm had held his wedding one of the king’s retainers was sent next morning to open the door of the bridal chamber and see whether the bride was alive. This next morning also he peeped in at the door, but what he saw there surprised him so much that he shut the door in a hurry, and hastened to the king and queen, who were waiting for his report. He told them of the wonderful sight he had seen. On the floor lay seven lindorm skins and six snow-white shirts, and beside these three

worn-out scrubbing brushes, while in the bed a beautiful youth was lying asleep beside the fair young maiden.

The king and queen marvelled greatly what this could mean; but just then the old woman who was spoken of in the beginning of the story was again brought in to the queen. She reminded her how she had not followed her instructions, but had eaten the first onion with all its skins, on which account her first-born had been a lindorm. The waiting-woman was then summoned, and admitted that she had thrown it out through the window into the forest. The king and queen now sent for their eldest son and his young bride. They took them both in their arms, and asked him to tell about his sorrowful lot during the twenty years he had lived in the forest as a hideous lindorm. This he did, and then his parents had it proclaimed over the whole country that he was their eldest son, and along with his spouse should inherit the country and kingdom after them.

Prince Lindorm and his beautiful wife now lived in joy and prosperity for a time in the palace; and when his father was laid in the grave, not long after this, he obtained the whole kingdom. Soon afterwards his mother also departed from this world.

Now it happened that an enemy declared war against the young king; and, as he foresaw that it would be three years at the least before he could return to his country and his queen, he ordered all his servants who remained at home to guard her most carefully. That they might be able to write to each other in confidence, he had two seal rings made, one for himself and one for his young queen, and issued an order that no one, under pain of death, was to open any letter that was sealed with one of these. Then he took farewell of his queen, and marched out to war.

The queen’s wicked stepmother had heard with great grief that her beautiful stepdaughter had prospered so well that she had not only preserved her life, but had even become queen of the country. She now plotted continually how she might destroy her good fortune. While King Lindorm was away at the war the wicked woman came to the queen, and spoke fair to her, saying that she had always foreseen that her stepdaughter was destined to be something great in the world, and that she had on this account secured that she should be the enchanted prince’s bride. The queen, who did not imagine that any person could be so deceitful, bade her stepmother welcome, and kept her beside her.

Soon after this the queen had two children, the prettiest boys that anyone could see. When she had written a letter to the king to tell him of this her stepmother asked leave to comb her hair for her, as her own mother used to do. The queen gave her permission, and the stepmother combed her hair until she fell asleep. Then she took the seal ring off her neck, and exchanged the letter for another, in which she had written that the queen had given birth to two whelps.

When the king received. this letter he was greatly distressed, but he remembered how he himself had lived for twenty years as a lindorm, and had been freed from the spell by his young queen. He therefore wrote back to his most trusted retainer that the queen and her two whelps should be taken care of while he was away.

The stepmother, however, took this letter as well, and wrote a new one, in which the king ordered that the queen and the two little princes should be burnt at the stake. This she also sealed with the queen's seal, which was in all respects like the king's.

The retainer was greatly shocked and grieved at the king's orders, for which he could discover no reason; but, as he had not the heart to destroy three innocent beings, he had a great fire kindled, and in this he burned a sheep and two lambs, so as to make people believe that he had carried out the king's commands. The stepmother had made these known to the people, adding that the queen was a wicked sorceress.

The faithful servant, however, told the queen that it was the king's command that during the years he was absent in the war she should keep herself concealed in the castle, so that no one but himself should see her and the little princes.

The queen obeyed, and no one knew but that both she and her children had been burned. But when the time came near for King Lindorm to return home from the war the old retainer grew frightened because he had not obeyed his orders. He therefore went to the queen, and told her everything, at the same time showing her the king's letter containing the command to burn her and the princes. He then begged her to leave the palace before the king returned.

The queen now took her two little sons, and wandered out into the wild forest. They walked all day without ending a human habitation, and became very tired. The queen then caught sight of a man who carried some

venison. He seemed very poor and wretched, but the queen was glad to see a human being, and asked him whether he knew where she and her little children could get a house over their heads for the night.

The man answered that he had a little hut in the forest, and that she could rest there; but he also said that he was one who lived entirely apart from men, and owned no more than the hut, a horse, and a dog, and supported himself by hunting.

The queen followed him to the hut and rested there overnight with her children, and when she awoke in the morning the man had already gone out hunting. The queen then began to put the room in order and prepare food, so that when the man came home he found everything neat and tidy, and this seemed to give him some pleasure. He spoke but little, however, and all that he said about himself was that his name was Peter.

Later in the day he rode out into the forest, and the queen thought that he looked very unhappy. While he was away she looked about her in the hut a little more closely, and found a tub full of shirts stained with blood, lying among water. She was surprised at this, but thought that the man would get the blood on his shirt when he was carrying home venison. She washed the shirts, and hung them up to dry, and said nothing to Peter about the matter.

After some time had passed she noticed that every day he came riding home from the forest he took off a blood-stained shirt and put on a clean one. She then saw that it was something else than the blood of the deer that stained his shirts, so one day she took courage and asked him about it.

At first he refused to tell her, but she then related to him her own story, and how she had succeeded in delivering the lindorm. He then told her that he had formerly lived a wild life, and had finally entered into a written contract * with the Evil Spirit. Before this contract had expired he had repented and turned from his evil ways, and withdrawn himself to this solitude. The Evil One had then lost all power to take him, but so long as he had the contract he could compel him to meet him in the forest each day at a certain time, where the evil spirits then scourged him till he bled.

Next day, when the time came for the man to ride into the forest, the queen asked him to stay at home and look after the princes, and she would go to meet the evil spirits in his place. The man was amazed, and said that this would not only cost her her life, but would also bring upon him a

greater misfortune than the one he was already under. She bade him be of good courage, looked to see that she had the three nuts which she had found beside her mother's grave, mounted her horse, and rode out into the forest. When she had ridden for some time the evil spirits came forth and said, 'Here comes Peter's horse and Peter's hound; but Peter himself is not with them.'

Then at a distance she heard a terrible voice demanding to know what she wanted.

'I have come to get Peter's contract,' said she.

At this there arose a terrible uproar among the evil spirits, and the worst voice among them all said, 'Ride home and tell Peter that when he comes to-morrow he shall get twice as many strokes as usual.'

The queen then took one of her nuts and cracked it, and turned her horse about. At this sparks of fire flew out of all the trees, and the evil spirits howled as if they were being scourged back to their abode.

Next day at the same time the queen again rode out into the forest; but on this occasion the spirits did not dare to come so near her. They would not, however, give up the contract, but threatened both her and the man. Then she cracked her second nut, and all the forest behind her seemed to be in fire and flames, and the evil spirits howled even worse than on the previous day; but the contract they would not give up.

The queen had only one nut left now, but even that she was ready to give up in order to deliver the man. This time she cracked the nut as soon as she came near the place where the spirits appeared, and what then happened to them she could not see, but amid wild screams and howls the contract was handed to her at the end of a long branch. The queen rode happy home to the hut, and happier still was the man, who had been sitting there in great anxiety, for now he was freed from all the power of the evil spirits.

Meanwhile King Lindorm had come home from the war, and the first question he asked when he entered the palace was about the queen and the whelps. The attendants were surprised: they knew of no whelps. The queen had had two beautiful princes; but the king had sent orders that all these were to be burned.

The king grew pale with sorrow and anger, and ordered them to summon his trusted retainer, to whom he had sent the instructions that the

queen and the whelps were to be carefully looked after. The retainer, however, showed him the letter in which there was written that the queen and her children were to be burned, and everyone then understood that some great treachery had been enacted.

When the king's trusted retainer saw his master's deep sorrow he confessed to him that he had spared the lives of the queen and the princes, and had only burned a sheep and two lambs, and had kept the queen and her children hidden in the palace for three years, but had sent her out into the wild forest just when the king was expected home. When the king heard this his sorrow was lessened, and he said that he would wander out into the forest and search for his wife and children. If he found them he would return to his palace; but if he did not find them he would never see it again, and in that case the faithful retainer who had saved the lives of the queen and the princes should be king in his stead.

The king then went forth alone into the wild forest, and wandered there the whole day without seeing a single human being. So it went with him the second day also, but on the third day he came by roundabout ways to the little hut. He went in there, and asked for leave to rest himself for a little on the bench. The queen and the princes were there, but she was poorly clad and so sorrowful that the king did not recognise her, neither did he think for a moment that the two children, who were dressed only in rough skins, were his own sons.

He lay down on the bench, and, tired as he was, he soon fell asleep. The bench was a narrow one, and as he slept his arm fell down and hung by the side of it.

'My son, go and lift your father's arm up on the bench,' said the queen to one of the princes, for she easily knew the king again, although she was afraid to make herself known to him. The boy went and took the king's arm, but, being only a child, he did not lift it up very gently on to the bench.

The king woke at this, thinking at first that he had fallen into a den of robbers, but he decided to keep quiet and pretend that he was asleep until he should find out what kind of folk were in the house. He lay still for a little, and, as no one moved in the room, he again let his arm glide down off the bench. Then he heard a woman's voice say, 'My son, go you and lift your father's arm up on the bench, but don't do it so rough!y as your

brother did.’ Then he felt a pair of little hands softly clasping his arm; he opened his eyes, and saw his queen and her children.

He sprang up and caught all three in his arms, and afterwards took them, along with the man and his horse and his hound, back to the palace with great joy. The most unbounded rejoicing reigned there then, as well as over the whole kingdom, but the wicked stepmother was burned.

King Lindorm lived long and happily with his queen, and there are some who say that if they are not dead now they are still living to this day.

THE JACKAL, THE DOVE, AND THE PANTHER

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Contes populaires des Bassoutos. Recueillis et traduits par E. Jacottet.
Paris: Leroux, Editeur.

There was once a dove who built a nice soft nest as a home for her three little ones. She was very proud of their beauty, and perhaps talked about them to her neighbours more than she need have done, till at last everybody for miles round knew where the three prettiest baby doves in the whole country-side were to be found.

One day a jackal who was prowling about in search of a dinner came by chance to the foot of the rock where the dove's nest was hidden away, and he suddenly bethought himself that if he could get nothing better he might manage to make a mouthful of one of the young doves. So he shouted as loud as he could, 'Ohe, ohe, mother dove.'

And the dove replied, trembling with fear, 'What do you want, sir?'

'One of your children,' said he; 'and if you don't throw it to me I will eat up you and the others as well.'

Now, the dove was nearly driven distracted at the jackal's words; but, in order to save the lives of the other two, she did at last throw the little one out of the nest. The jackal ate it up, and went home to sleep.

Meanwhile the mother dove sat on the edge of her nest, crying bitterly, when a heron, who was flying slowly past the rock, was filled with pity for her, and stopped to ask, 'What is the matter, you poor dove?'

And the dove answered, 'A jackal came by, and asked me to give him one of my little ones, and said that if I refused he would jump on my nest and eat us all up.'

But the heron replied, 'You should not have believed him. He could never have jumped so high. He only deceived you because he wanted something for supper.' And with these words the heron flew off.

He had hardly got out of sight when again the jackal came creeping slowly round the foot of the rock. And when he saw the dove he cried out a second time, ‘Ohe, ohe, mother dove! give me one of your little ones, or I will jump on your nest and eat you all up.’

This time the dove knew better, and she answered boldly, ‘Indeed, I shall do nothing of the sort,’ though her heart beat wildly with fear when she saw the jackal preparing for a spring.

However, he only cut himself against the rock, and thought he had better stick to threats, so he started again with his old cry, ‘Mother dove, mother dove! be quick and give me one of your little ones, or I will eat you all up.’

But the mother dove only answered as before, ‘Indeed, I shall do nothing of the sort, for I know we are safely out of your reach.’

The jackal felt it was quite hopeless to get what he wanted, and asked, ‘Tell me, mother dove, how have you suddenly become so wise?’

‘It was the heron who told me,’ replied she.

‘And which way did he go?’ said the jackal.

‘Down there among the reeds. You can see him if you look,’ said the dove.

Then the jackal nodded good-bye, and went quickly after the heron. He soon came up to the great bird, who was standing on a stone on the edge of the river watching for a nice fat fish. ‘Tell me, heron,’ said he, ‘when the wind blows from that quarter, to which side do you turn?’

‘And which side do you turn to?’ asked the heron.

The jackal answered, ‘I always turn to this side.’

‘Then that is the side I turn to,’ remarked the heron.

‘And when the rain comes from that quarter, which side do you turn to?’

And the heron replied, ‘And which side do you turn to?’

‘Oh, I always turn to this side,’ said the jackal.

‘Then that is the side I turn to,’ said the heron.

‘And when the rain comes straight down, what do you do?’

‘What do you do yourself?’ asked the heron.

‘I do this,’ answered the jackal. ‘I cover my head with my paws.’

‘Then that is what I do,’ said the heron. ‘I cover my head with my wings,’ and as he spoke he lifted his large wings and spread them

completely over his head.

With one bound the jackal had seized him by the neck, and began to shake him.

‘Oh, have pity, have pity!’ cried the heron. ‘I never did you any harm.’

‘You told the dove how to get the better of me, and I am going to eat you for it.’

‘But if you will let me go,’ entreated the heron, ‘I will show you the place where the panther has her lair.’

‘Then you had better be quick about it,’ said the jackal, holding tight on to the heron until he had pointed out the panther’s den. ‘Now you may go, my friend, for there is plenty of food here for me.’

So the jackal came up to the panther, and asked politely, ‘Panther, would you like me to look after your children while you are out hunting?’

‘I should be very much obliged,’ said the panther; ‘but be sure you take care of them. They always cry all the time that I am away.’

So saying she trotted off, and the jackal marched into the cave, where he found ten little panthers, and instantly ate one up. By-and-bye the panther returned from hunting, and said to him, ‘Jackal, bring out my little ones for their supper.’

The jackal fetched them out one by one till he had brought out nine, and he took the last one and brought it out again, so the whole ten seemed to be there, and the panther was quite satisfied.

Next day she went again to the chase, and the jackal ate up another little panther, so now there were only eight. In the evening, when she came back, the panther said, ‘Jackal, bring out my little ones!’

And the jackal brought out first one and then another, and the last one he brought out three times, so that the whole ten seemed to be there.

The following day the same thing happened, and the next and the next and the next, till at length there was not even one left, and the rest of the day the jackal busied himself with digging a large hole at the back of the den.

That night, when the panther returned from hunting, she said to him as usual, ‘Jackal, bring out my little ones.’

But the jackal replied: ‘Bring out your little ones, indeed! Why, you know as well as I do that you have eaten them all up.’

Of course the panther had not the least idea what the jackal meant by this, and only repeated, ‘Jackal, bring out my children.’ As she got no answer she entered the cave, but found no jackal, for he had crawled through the hole he had made and escaped. And, what was worse, she did not find the little ones either.

Now the panther was not going to let the jackal get off like that, and set off at a trot to catch him. The jackal, however, had got a good start, and he reached a place where a swarm of bees deposited their honey in the cleft of a rock. Then he stood still and waited till the panther came up to him: ‘Jackal, where are my little ones?’ she asked.

And the jackal answered: ‘They are up there. It is where I keep school.’

The panther looked about, and then inquired, ‘But where? I see nothing of them.’

‘Come a little this way,’ said the jackal, ‘and you will hear how beautifully they sing.’

So the panther drew near the cleft of the rock.

‘Don’t you hear them?’ said the jackal; ‘they are in there,’ and slipped away while the panther was listening to the song of the children.

She was still standing in the same place when a baboon went by. ‘What are you doing there, panther?’

‘I am listening to my children singing. It is here that the jackal keeps his school.’

Then the baboon seized a stick, and poked it in the cleft of the rock, exclaiming, ‘Well, then, I should like to see your children!’

The bees flew out in a huge swarm, and made furiously for the panther, whom they attacked on all sides, while the baboon soon climbed up out of the way, crying, as he perched himself on the branch of a tree, ‘I wish you joy of your children!’ while from afar the jackal’s voice was heard exclaiming: ‘Sting, her well! don’t let her go!’

The panther galloped away as if she was mad, and flung herself into the nearest lake, but every time she raised her head, the bees stung her afresh so at last the poor beast was drowned altogether.

THE LITTLE HARE

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Contes populaires des Bassoutos. Recueillis et traduits par E. Jacottet.
Paris: Leroux, Editeur.

A long, long way off, in a land where water is very scarce, there lived a man and his wife and several children. One day the wife said to her husband, ‘I am pining to have the liver of a nyamatsane for my dinner. If you love me as much as you say you do, you will go out and hunt for a nyamatsane, and will kill it and get its liver. If not, I shall know that your love is not worth having.’

‘Bake some bread,’ was all her husband answered, ‘then take the crust and put it in this little bag.’

The wife did as she was told, and when she had finished she said to her husband, ‘The bag is all ready and quite full.’

‘Very well,’ said he, ‘and now good-bye; I am going after the nyamatsane.’

But the nyamatsane was not so easy to find as the woman had hoped. The husband walked on and on and on without ever seeing one, and every now and then he felt so hungry that he was obliged to eat one of the crusts of bread out of his bag. At last, when he was ready to drop from fatigue, he found himself on the edge of a great marsh, which bordered on one side the country of the nyamatsanes. But there were no more nyamatsanes here than anywhere else. They had all gone on a hunting expedition, as their larder was empty, and the only person left at home was their grandmother, who was so feeble she never went out of the house. Our friend looked on this as a great piece of luck, and made haste to kill her before the others returned, and to take out her liver, after which he dressed himself in her skin as well as he could. He had scarcely done this when he heard the noise of the nyamatsanes coming back to their grandmother, for they were very fond of her, and never stayed away from her longer than they could help.

They rushed clattering into the hut, exclaiming, ‘We smell human flesh! Some man is here,’ and began to look about for him; but they only saw their old grandmother, who answered, in a trembling voice, ‘No, my children, no! What should any man be doing here?’ The nyamatsanes paid no attention to her, and began to open all the cupboards, and peep under all the beds, crying out all the while, ‘A man is here! a man is here!’ but they could find nobody, and at length, tired out with their long day’s hunting, they curled themselves up and fell asleep.

Next morning they woke up quite refreshed, and made ready to start on another expedition; but as they did not feel happy about their grandmother they said to her, ‘Grandmother, won’t you come to-day and feed with us?’ And they led their grandmother outside, and all of them began hungrily to eat pebbles. Our friend pretended to do the same, but in reality he slipped the stones into his pouch, and swallowed the crusts of bread instead. However, as the nyamatsanes did not see this they had no idea that he was not really their grandmother. When they had eaten a great many pebbles they thought they had done enough for that day, and all went home together and curled themselves up to sleep. Next morning when they woke they said, ‘Let us go and amuse ourselves by jumping over the ditch,’ and every time they cleared it with a bound. Then they begged their grandmother to jump over it too, end with a tremendous effort she managed to spring right over to the other side. After this they had no doubt at all of its being their true grandmother, and went off to their hunting, leaving our friend at home in the hut.

As soon as they had gone out of sight our hero made haste to take the liver from the place where he had hid it, threw off the skin of the old nyamatsane, and ran away as hard as he could, only stopping to pick up a very brilliant and polished little stone, which he put in his bag by the side of the liver.

Towards evening the nyamatsanes came back to the hut full of anxiety to know how their grandmother had got on during their absence. The first thing they saw on entering the door was her skin lying on the floor, and then they knew that they had been deceived, and they said to each other, ‘So we were right, after all, and it was human flesh we smelt.’ Then they stooped down to find traces of the man’s footsteps, and when they had got them instantly set out in hot pursuit.

Meanwhile our friend had journeyed many miles, and was beginning to feel quite safe and comfortable, when, happening to look round, he saw in the distance a thick cloud of dust moving rapidly. His heart stood still within him, and he said to himself, ‘I am lost. It is the nyamatsanes, and they will tear me in pieces,’ and indeed the cloud of dust was drawing near with amazing quickness, and the nyamatsanes almost felt as if they were already devouring him. Then as a last hope the man took the little stone that he had picked up out of his bag and flung it on the ground. The moment it touched the soil it became a huge rock, whose steep sides were smooth as glass, and on the top of it our hero hastily seated himself. It was in vain that the nyamatsanes tried to climb up and reach him; they slid down again much faster than they had gone up; and by sunset they were quite worn out, and fell asleep at the foot of the rock.

No sooner had the nyamatsanes tumbled off to sleep than the man stole softly down and fled away as fast as his legs would carry him, and by the time his enemies were awake he was a very long way off. They sprang quickly to their feet and began to sniff the soil round the rock, in order to discover traces of his footsteps, and they galloped after him with terrific speed. The chase continued for several days and nights; several times the nyamatsanes almost reached him, and each time he was saved by his little pebble.

Between his fright and his hurry he was almost dead of exhaustion when he reached his own village, where the nyamatsanes could not follow him, because of their enemies the dogs, which swarmed over all the roads. So they returned home.

Then our friend staggered into his own hut and called to his wife: ‘Ichou! how tired I am! Quick, give me something to drink. Then go and get fuel and light a fire.’

So she did what she was bid, and then her husband took the nyamatsane’s liver from his pouch and said to her, ‘There, I have brought you what you wanted, and now you know that I love you truly.’

And the wife answered, ‘It is well. Now go and take out the children, so that I may remain alone in the hut,’ and as she spoke she lifted down an old stone pot and put on the liver to cook. Her husband watched her for a moment, and then said, ‘Be sure you eat it all yourself. Do not give a scrap

to any of the children, but eat every morsel up.’ So the woman took the liver and ate it all herself.

Directly the last mouthful had disappeared she was seized with such violent thirst that she caught up a great pot full of water and drank it at a single draught. Then, having no more in the house, she ran in next door and said, ‘Neighbour, give me, I pray you, something to drink.’ The neighbour gave her a large vessel quite full, and the woman drank it off at a single draught, and held it out for more.

But the neighbour pushed her away, saying, ‘No, I shall have none left for my children.’

So the woman went into another house, and drank all the water she could find; but the more she drank the more thirsty she became. She wandered in this manner through the whole village till she had drunk every water-pot dry. Then she rushed off to the nearest spring, and swallowed that, and when she had finished all the springs and wells about she drank up first the river and then a lake. But by this time she had drunk so much that she could not rise from the ground.

In the evening, when it was time for the animals to have their drink before going to bed, they found the lake quite dry, and they had to make up their minds to be thirsty till the water flowed again and the streams were full. Even then, for some time, the lake was very dirty, and the lion, as king of the beasts, commanded that no one should drink till it was quite clear again.

But the little hare, who was fond of having his own way, and was very thirsty besides, stole quietly off when all the rest were asleep in their dens, and crept down to the margin of the lake and drank his fill. Then he smeared the dirty water all over the rabbit’s face and paws, so that it might look as if it were he who had been disobeying Big Lion’s orders.

The next day, as soon as it was light, Big Lion marched straight for the lake, and all the other beasts followed him. He saw at once that the water had been troubled again, and was very angry.

‘Who has been drinking my water?’ said he; and the little hare gave a jump, and, pointing to the rabbit, he answered, ‘Look there! it must be he! Why, there is mud all over his face and paws!’

The rabbit, frightened out of his wits, tried to deny the fact, exclaiming, ‘Oh, no, indeed I never did;’ but Big Lion would not listen,

and commanded them to cane him with a birch rod.

Now the little hare was very much pleased with his cleverness in causing the rabbit to be beaten instead of himself, and went about boasting of it. At last one of the other animals overheard him, and called out, ‘Little hare, little hare! what is that you are saying?’

But the little hare hastily replied, ‘I only asked you to pass me my stick.’

An hour or two later, thinking that no one was near him, he said to himself again, ‘It was really I who drank up the water, but I made them think it was the rabbit.’

But one of the beasts whose ears were longer than the rest caught the words, and went to tell Big Lion about it. Do you hear what the little hare is saying?’

So Big Lion sent for the little hare, and asked him what he meant by talking like that.

The little hare saw that there was no use trying to hide it, so he answered pertly, ‘It was I who drank the water, but I made them think it was the rabbit.’ Then he turned and ran as fast as he could, with all the other beasts pursuing him.

They were almost up to him when he dashed into a very narrow cleft in the rock, much too small for them to follow; but in his hurry he had left one of his long ears sticking out, which they just managed to seize. But pull as hard as they might they could not drag him out of the hole, and at last they gave it up and left him, with his ear very much torn and scratched.

When the last tail was out of sight the little hare crept cautiously out, and the first person he met was the rabbit. He had plenty of impudence, so he put a bold face on the matter, and said, ‘Well, my good rabbit, you see I have had a beating as well as you.’

But the rabbit was still sore and sulky, and he did not care to talk, so he answered, coldly, ‘You have treated me very badly. It was really you who drank that water, and you accused me of having done it.’

‘Oh, my good rabbit, never mind that! I’ve got such a wonderful secret to tell you! Do you know what to do so as to escape death?’

‘No, I don’t.’

‘Well, we must begin by digging a hole.’

So they dug a hole, and then the little hare said, ‘The next thing is to make a fire in the hole,’ and they set to work to collect wood, and lit quite a large fire.

When it was burning brightly the little hare said to the rabbit, ‘Rabbit, my friend, throw me into the fire, and when you hear my fur crackling, and I call “Itchi, Itchi,” then be quick and pull me out.’

The rabbit did as he was told, and threw the little hare into the fire; but no sooner did the little hare begin to feel the heat of the flames than he took some green bay leaves he had plucked for the purpose and held them in the middle of the fire, where they crackled and made a great noise. Then he called loudly ‘Itchi, Itchi! Rabbit, my friend, be quick, be quick! Don’t you hear how my skin is crackling?’

And the rabbit came in a great hurry and pulled him out.

Then the little hare said, ‘Now it is your turn!’ and he threw the rabbit in the fire. The moment the rabbit felt the flames he cried out ‘Itchi, Itchi, I am burning; pull me out quick, my friend!’

But the little hare only laughed, and said, ‘No, you may stay there! It is your own fault. Why were you such a fool as to let yourself be thrown in? Didn’t you know that fire burns?’ And in a very few minutes nothing was left of the rabbit but a few bones.

When the fire was quite out the little hare went and picked up one of these bones, and made a flute out of it, and sang this song:

Pii, pii, O flute that I love, Pii, pii, rabbits are but little boys. Pii, pii, he would have burned me if he could; Pii, pii, but I burned him, and he crackled finely.

When he got tired of going through the world singing this the little hare went back to his friends and entered the service of Big Lion. One day he said to his master, ‘Grandfather, shall I show you a splendid way to kill game?’

‘What is it?’ asked Big Lion.

‘We must dig a ditch, and then you must lie in it and pretend to be dead.’

Big Lion did as he was told, and when he had lain down the little hare got up on a wall blew a trumpet and shouted—

Pii, pii, all you animals come and see, Big Lion is dead, and now peace will be.

Directly they heard this they all came running. The little hare received them and said, ‘Pass on, this way to the lion.’ So they all entered into the Animal Kingdom. Last of all came the monkey with her baby on her back. She approached the ditch, and took a blade of grass and tickled Big Lion’s nose, and his nostrils moved in spite of his efforts to keep them still. Then the monkey cried, ‘Come, my baby, climb on my back and let us go. What sort of a dead body is it that can still feel when it is tickled?’ And she and her baby went away in a fright. Then the little hare said to the other beasts, ‘Now, shut the gate of the Animal Kingdom.’ And it was shut, and great stones were rolled against it. When everything was tight closed the little hare turned to Big Lion and said ‘Now!’ and Big Lion bounded out of the ditch and tore the other animals in pieces.

But Big Lion kept all the choice bits for himself, and only gave away the little scraps that he did not care about eating; and the little hare grew very angry, and determined to have his revenge. He had long ago found out that Big Lion was very easily taken in; so he laid his plans accordingly. He said to him, as if the idea had just come into his head, ‘Grandfather, let us build a hut,’ and Big Lion consented. And when they had driven the stakes into the ground, and had made the walls of the hut, the little hare told Big Lion to climb upon the top while he stayed inside. When he was ready he called out, ‘Now, grandfather, begin,’ and Big Lion passed his rod through the reeds with which the roofs are always covered in that country. The little hare took it and cried, ‘Now it is my turn to pierce them,’ and as he spoke he passed the rod back through the reeds and gave Big Lion’s tail a sharp poke.

‘What is pricking me so?’ asked Big Lion.

‘Oh, just a little branch sticking out. I am going to break it,’ answered the little hare; but of course he had done it on purpose, as he wanted to fix Big Lion’s tail so firmly to the hut that he would not be able to move. In a little while he gave another prick, and Big Lion called again, ‘What is pricking me so?’

This time the little hare said to himself, ‘He will find out what I am at. I must try some other plan. ‘So he called out, ‘Grandfather, you had better put your tongue here, so that the branches shall not touch you.’ Big Lion did as he was bid, and the little hare tied it tightly to the stakes of the wall.

Then he went outside and shouted, ‘Grandfather, you can come down now,’ and Big Lion tried, but he could not move an inch.

Then the little hare began quietly to eat Big Lion’s dinner right before his eyes, and paying no attention at all to his growls of rage. When he had quite done he climbed up on the hut, and, blowing his flute, he chanted ‘Pii, pii, fall rain and hail,’ and directly the sky was full of clouds, the thunder roared, and huge hailstones whitened the roof of the hut. The little hare, who had taken refuge within, called out again, ‘Big Lion, be quick and come down and dine with me.’ But there was no answer, not even a growl, for the hailstones had killed Big Lion.

The little hare enjoyed himself vastly for some time, living comfortably in the hut, with plenty of food to eat and no trouble at all in getting it. But one day a great wind arose, and flung down the Big Lion’s half-dried skin from the roof of the hut. The little hare bounded with terror at the noise, for he thought Big Lion must have come to life again; but on discovering what had happened he set about cleaning the skin, and propped the mouth open with sticks so that he could get through. So, dressed in Big Lion’s skin, the little hare started on his travels.

The first visit he paid was to the hyaenas, who trembled at the sight of him, and whispered to each other, ‘How shall we escape from this terrible beast?’ Meanwhile the little hare did not trouble himself about them, but just asked where the king of the hyaenas lived, and made himself quite at home there. Every morning each hyaena thought to himself, ‘To-day he is certain to eat me;’ but several days went by, and they were all still alive. At length, one evening, the little hare, looking round for something to amuse him, noticed a great pot full of boiling water, so he strolled up to one of the hyaenas and said, ‘Go and get in.’ The hyaena dared not disobey, and in a few minutes was scalded to death. Then the little hare went the round of the village, saying to every hyaena he met, ‘Go and get into the boiling water,’ so that in a little while there was hardly a male left in the village.

One day all the hyaenas that remained alive went out very early into the fields, leaving only one little daughter at home. The little hare, thinking he was all alone, came into the enclosure, and, wishing to feel what it was like to be a hare again, threw off Big Lion’s skin, and began to jump and dance, singing—

I am just the little hare, the little hare, the little hare; I am just the little hare who killed the great hyaenas.

The little hyaena gazed at him in surprise, saying to herself, ‘What! was it really this tiny beast who put to death all our best people?’ when suddenly a gust of wind rustled the reeds that surrounded the enclosure, and the little hare, in a fright, hastily sprang back into Big Lion’s skin.

When the hyaenas returned to their homes the little hyaena said to her father: ‘Father, our tribe has very nearly been swept away, and all this has been the work of a tiny creature dressed in the lion’s skin.’

But her father answered, ‘Oh, my dear child, you don’t know what you are talking about.’

She replied, ‘Yes, father, it is quite true. I saw it with my own eyes.’

The father did not know what to think, and told one of his friends, who said, ‘To-morrow we had better keep watch ourselves.’

And the next day they hid themselves and waited till the little hare came out of the royal hut. He walked gaily towards the enclosure, threw off, Big Lion’s skin, and sang and danced as before—

I am just the little hare, the little hare, the little hare, I am just the little hare, who killed the great hyaenas.

That night the two hyaenas told all the rest, saying, ‘Do you know that we have allowed ourselves to be trampled on by a wretched creature with nothing of the lion about him but his skin?’

When supper was being cooked that evening, before they all went to bed, the little hare, looking fierce and terrible in Big Lion’s skin, said as usual to one of the hyaenas ‘Go and get into the boiling water.’ But the hyaena never stirred. There was silence for a moment; then a hyaena took a stone, and flung it with all his force against the lion’s skin. The little hare jumped out through the mouth with a single spring, and fled away like lightning, all the hyaenas in full pursuit uttering great cries. As he turned a corner the little hare cut off both his ears, so that they should not know him, and pretended to be working at a grindstone which lay there.

The hyaenas soon came up to him and said, ‘Tell me, friend, have you seen the little hare go by?’

‘No, I have seen no one.’

‘Where can he be?’ said the hyaenas one to another. ‘Of course, this creature is quite different, and not at all like the little hare.’ Then they

went on their way, but, finding no traces of the little hare, they returned sadly to their village, saying, ‘To think we should have allowed ourselves to be swept away by a wretched creature like that!’

THE SPARROW WITH THE SLIT TONGUE

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From the Japanische Marchen und Sagen.

A long long time ago, an old couple dwelt in the very heart of a high mountain. They lived together in peace and harmony, although they were very different in character, the man being good-natured and honest, and the wife being greedy and quarrelsome when anyone came her way that she could possibly quarrel with.

One day the old man was sitting in front of his cottage, as he was very fond of doing, when he saw flying towards him a little sparrow, followed by a big black raven. The poor little thing was very much frightened and cried out as it flew, and the great bird came behind it terribly fast, flapping its wings and craning its beak, for it was hungry and wanted some dinner. But as they drew near the old man, he jumped up, and beat back the raven, which mounted, with hoarse screams of disappointment, into the sky, and the little bird, freed from its enemy, nestled into the old man's hand, and he carried it into the house. He stroked its feathers, and told it not to be afraid, for it was quite safe; but as he still felt its heart beating, he put it into a cage, where it soon plucked up courage to twitter and hop about. The old man was fond of all creatures, and every morning he used to open the cage door, and the sparrow flew happily about until it caught sight of a cat or a rat or some other fierce beast, when it would instantly return to the cage, knowing that there no harm could come to it.

The woman, who was always on the look-out for something to grumble at, grew very jealous of her husband's affection for the bird, and would gladly have done it some harm had she dared. At last, one morning her opportunity came. Her husband had gone to the town some miles away down the mountain, and would not be back for several hours, but before he left he did not forget to open the door of the cage. The sparrow hopped about as usual, twittering happily, and thinking no evil, and all the while

the woman's brow became blacker and blacker, and at length her fury broke out. She threw her broom at the bird, who was perched on a bracket high up on the wall. The broom missed the bird, but knocked down and broke the vase on the bracket, which did not soothe the angry woman. Then she chased it from place to place, and at last had it safe between her fingers, almost as frightened as on the day that it had made its first entrance into the hut.

By this time the woman was more furious than ever. If she had dared, she would have killed the sparrow then and there, but as it was she only ventured to slit its tongue. The bird struggled and piped, but there was no one to hear it, and then, crying out loud with the pain, it flew from the house and was lost in the depths of the forest.

By-and-bye the old man came back, and at once began to ask for his pet. His wife, who was still in a very bad temper, told him the whole story, and scolded him roundly for being so silly as to make such a fuss over a bird. But the old man, who was much troubled, declared she was a bad, hard-hearted woman, to have behaved so to a poor harmless bird; then he left the house, and went into the forest to seek for his pet. He walked many hours, whistling and calling for it, but it never came, and he went sadly home, resolved to be out with the dawn and never to rest till he had brought the wanderer back. Day after day he searched and called; and evening after evening he returned in despair. At length he gave up hope, and made up his mind that he should see his little friend no more.

One hot summer morning, the old man was walking slowly under the cool shadows of the big trees, and without thinking where he was going, he entered a bamboo thicket. As the bamboos became thinner, he found himself opposite to a beautiful garden, in the centre of which stood a tiny spick-and-span little house, and out of the house came a lovely maiden, who unlatched the gate and invited him in the most hospitable way to enter and rest. 'Oh, my dear old friend,' she exclaimed, 'how glad I am you have found me at last! I am your little sparrow, whose life you saved, and whom you took such care of.'

The old man seized her hands eagerly, but no time was given him to ask any questions, for the maiden drew him into the house, and set food before him, and waited on him herself.

While he was eating, the damsel and her maids took their lutes, and sang and danced to him, and altogether the hours passed so swiftly that the old man never saw that darkness had come, or remembered the scolding he would get from his wife for returning home so late.

Thus, in dancing and singing, and talking over the days when the maiden was a sparrow hopping in and out of her cage, the night passed away, and when the first rays of sun broke through the hedge of bamboo, the old man started up, thanked his hostess for her friendly welcome, and prepared to say farewell. ‘I am not going to let you depart like that,’ said she; ‘I have a present for you, which you must take as a sign of my gratitude.’ And as she spoke, her servants brought in two chests, one of them very small, the other large and heavy. ‘Now choose which of them you will carry with you.’ So the old man chose the small chest, and hid it under his cloak, and set out on his homeward way.

But as he drew near the house his heart sank a little, for he knew what a fury his wife would be in, and how she would abuse him for his absence. And it was even worse than he expected. However, long experience had taught him to let her storm and say nothing, so he lit his pipe and waited till she was tired out. The woman was still raging, and did not seem likely to stop, when her husband, who by this time had forgotten all about her, drew out the chest from under his cloak, and opened it. Oh, what a blaze met his eyes! gold and precious stones were heaped up to the very lid, and lay dancing in he sunlight. At the sight of these wonders even the scolding tongue ceased, and the woman approached, and took the stones in her hand, setting greedily aside those that were the largest and most costly. Then her voice softened, and she begged him quite politely to tell her where he had spent his evening, and how he had come by these wonderful riches. So he told her the whole story, and she listened with amazement, till he came to the choice which had been given him between the two chests. At this her tongue broke loose again, as she abused him for his folly in taking the little one, and she never rested till her husband had described the exact way which led to the sparrow-princess’s house. When she had got it into her head, she put on her best clothes and set out at once. But in her blind haste she often missed the path, and she wandered for several hours before she at length reached the little house. She walked boldly up to the door and entered the room as if the whole place belonged

to her, and quite frightened the poor girl, who was startled at the sight of her old enemy. However, she concealed her feelings as well as she could, and bade the intruder welcome, placing before her food and wine, hoping that when she had eaten and drunk she might take her leave. But nothing of the sort.

‘You will not let me go without a little present?’ said the greedy wife, as she saw no signs of one being offered her. ‘Of course not,’ replied the girl, and at her orders two chests were brought in, as they had been before. The old woman instantly seized the bigger, and staggering under the weight of it, disappeared into the forest, hardly waiting even to say good-bye.

It was a long way to her own house, and the chest seemed to grow heavier at every step. Sometimes she felt as if it would be impossible for her to get on at all, but her greed gave her strength, and at last she arrived at her own door. She sank down on the threshold, overcome with weariness, but in a moment was on her feet again, fumbling with the lock of the chest. But by this time night had come, and there was no light in the house, and the woman was in too much hurry to get to her treasures, to go and look for one. At length, however, the lock gave way, and the lid flew open, when, O horror! instead of gold and jewels, she saw before her serpents with glittering eyes and forky tongues. And they twined themselves about her and darted poison into her veins, and she died, and no man regretted her.

THE STORY OF CICCU

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From Sicilianische Mahrchen.

Once upon a time there lived a man who had three sons. The eldest was called Peppe, the second Alfin, and the youngest Ciccu. They were all very poor, and at last things got so bad that they really had not enough to eat. So the father called his sons, and said to them, ‘ My dear boys, I am too old to work any more, and there is nothing left for me but to beg in the streets.’

‘No, no!’ exclaimed his sons; ‘that you shall never do. Rather, if it must be, would we do it ourselves. But we have thought of a better plan than that.’

‘What is it?’ asked the father.

‘Well, we will take you in the forest, where you shall cut wood, and then we will bind it up in bundles and sell it in the town.’ So their father let them do as they said, and they all made their way into the forest; and as the old man was weak from lack of food his sons took it in turns to carry him on their backs. Then they built a little hut where they might take shelter, and set to work. Every morning early the father cut his sticks, and the sons bound them in bundles, and carried them to the town, bringing back the food the old man so much needed.

Some months passed in this way, and then the father suddenly fell ill, and knew that the time had come when he must die. He bade his sons fetch a lawyer, so that he might make his will, and when the man arrived he explained his wishes.

‘I have,’ said he, ‘a little house in the village, and over it grows a fig-tree. The house I leave to my sons, who are to live in it together; the fig-tree I divide as follows. To my son Peppe I leave the branches. To my son Alfin I leave the trunk. To my son Ciccu I leave the fruit. Besides the house and tree, I have an old coverlet, which I leave to my eldest son. And an old purse, which I leave to my second son. And a horn, which I leave to my youngest son. And now farewell.’

Thus speaking, he laid himself down, and died quietly. The brothers wept bitterly for their father, whom they loved, and when they had buried him they began to talk over their future lives. ‘What shall we do now?’ said they. ‘Shall we live in the wood, or go back to the village?’ And they made up their minds to stay where they were and continue to earn their living by selling firewood.

One very hot evening, after they had been working hard all day, they fell asleep under a tree in front of the hut. And as they slept there came by three fairies, who stopped to look at them.

‘What fine fellows!’ said one. ‘Let us give them a present.’

‘Yes, what shall it be?’ asked another.

‘This youth has a coverlet over him,’ said the first fairy. ‘When he wraps it round him, and wishes himself in any place, he will find himself there in an instant.’

Then said the second fairy: ‘This youth has a purse in his hand. I will promise that it shall always give him as much gold as he asks for.’

Last came the turn of the third fairy. ‘This one has a horn slung round him. When he blows at the small end the seas shall be covered with ships. And if he blows at the wide end they shall all be sunk in the waves.’ So they vanished, without knowing that Ciccu had been awake and heard all they said.

The next day, when they were all cutting wood, he said to his brothers, ‘That old coverlet and the purse are no use to you; I wish you would give them to me. I have a fancy for them, for the sake of old times.’ Now Peppe and Alfin were very fond of Ciccu, and never refused him anything, so they let him have the coverlet and the purse without a word. When he had got them safely Ciccu went on, ‘Dear brothers, I am tired of the forest. I want to live in the town, and work at some trade.’

‘O Ciccu! stay with us,’ they cried. ‘We are very happy here; and who knows how we shall get on elsewhere?’

‘We can always try,’ answered Ciccu; ‘and if times are bad we can come back here and take up wood-cutting.’ So saying he picked up his bundle of sticks, and his brothers did the same.

But when they reached the town they found that the market was overstocked with firewood, and they did not sell enough to buy themselves a dinner, far less to get any food to carry home. They were wondering

sadly what they should do when Ciccu said, ‘Come with me to the inn and let us have something to eat.’ They were so hungry by this time that they did not care much whether they paid for it or not, so they followed Ciccu, who gave his orders to the host. ‘Bring us three dishes, the nicest that you have, and a good bottle of wine.’

‘Ciccu! Ciccu!’ whispered his brothers, horrified at this extravagance, ‘are you mad? How do you ever mean to pay for it?’

‘Let me alone,’ replied Ciccu; ‘I know what I am about.’ And when they had finished their dinner Ciccu told the others to go on, and he would wait to pay the bill.

The brothers hurried on, without needing to be told twice, ‘for,’ thought they, ‘he has no money, and of course there will be a row.’

When they were out of sight Ciccu asked the landlord how much he owed, and then said to his purse, ‘Dear purse, give me, I pray you, six florins,’ and instantly six florins were in the purse. Then he paid the bill and joined his brothers.

‘How did you manage?’ they asked.

‘Never you mind,’ answered he. ‘I have paid every penny,’ and no more would he say. But the other two were very uneasy, for they felt sure something must be wrong, and the sooner they parted company with Ciccu the better. Ciccu understood what they were thinking, and, drawing forty gold pieces from his pocket, he held out twenty to each, saying, ‘Take these and turn them to good account. I am going away to seek my own fortune.’ Then he embraced them, and struck down another road.

He wandered on for many days, till at length he came to the town where the king had his court. The first thing Ciccu did was to order himself some fine clothes, and then buy a grand house, just opposite the palace.

Next he locked his door, and ordered a shower of gold to cover the staircase, and when this was done, the door was flung wide open, and everyone came and peeped at the shining golden stairs. Lastly the rumour of these wonders reached the ears of the king, who left his palace to behold these splendours with his own eyes. And Ciccu received him with all respect, and showed him over the house.

When the king went home he told such stories of what he had seen that his wife and daughter declared that they must go and see them too. So the

king sent to ask Ciccu's leave, and Ciccu answered that if the queen and the princess would be pleased to do him such great honour he would show them anything they wished. Now the princess was as beautiful as the sun, and when Ciccu looked upon her his heart went out to her, and he longed to have her to wife. The princess saw what was passing in his mind, and how she could make use of it to satisfy her curiosity as to the golden stairs; so she praised him and flattered him, and put cunning questions, till at length Ciccu's head was quite turned, and he told her the whole story of the fairies and their gifts. Then she begged him to lend her the purse for a few days, so that she could have one made like it, and so great was the love he had for her that he gave it to her at once.

The princess returned to the palace, taking with her the purse, which she had not the smallest intention of ever restoring to Ciccu. Very soon Ciccu had spent all the money he had by him, and could get no more without the help of his purse. Of course, he went at once to the king's daughter, and asked her if she had done with it, but she put him off with some excuse, and told him to come back next day. The next day it was the same thing, and the next, till a great rage filled Ciccu's heart instead of the love that had been there. And when night came he took in his hand a thick stick, wrapped himself in the coverlet, and wished himself in the chamber of the princess. The princess was asleep, but Ciccu seized her arm and pulled her out of bed, and beat her till she gave back the purse. Then he took up the coverlet, and wished he was safe in his own house.

No sooner had he gone than the princess hastened to her father and complained of her sufferings. Then the king rose up in a fury, and commanded Ciccu to be brought before him. 'You richly deserve death,' said he, 'but I will allow you to live if you will instantly hand over to me the coverlet, the purse, and the horn.'

What could Ciccu do? Life was sweet, and he was in the power of the king; so he gave up silently his ill-gotten goods, and was as poor as when he was a boy.

While he was wondering how he was to live it suddenly came into his mind that this was the season for the figs to ripen, and he said to himself, 'I will go and see if the tree has borne well.' So he set off home, where his brothers still lived, and found them living very uncomfortably, for they had spent all their money, and did not know how to make any more.

However, he was pleased to see that the fig-tree looked in splendid condition, and was full of fruit. He ran and fetched a basket, and was just feeling the figs, to make sure which of them were ripe, when his brother Peppe called to him, ‘Stop! The figs of course are yours, but the branches they grow on are mine, and I forbid you to touch them.’

Ciccu did not answer, but set a ladder against the tree, so that he could reach the topmost branches, and had his foot already on the first rung when he heard the voice of his brother Alfin: ‘Stop! the trunk belongs to me, and I forbid you to touch it!’

Then they began to quarrel violently, and there seemed no chance that they would ever cease, till one of them said, ‘Let us go before a judge.’ The others agreed, and when they had found a man whom they could trust Ciccu told him the whole story.

‘This is my verdict,’ said the judge. ‘The figs in truth belong to you, but you cannot pluck them without touching both the trunk and the branches. Therefore you must give your first basketful to your brother Peppe, as the price of his leave to put your ladder against the tree; and the second basketful to your brother Alfin, for leave to shake his boughs. The rest you can keep for yourself.’

And the brothers were contented, and returned home, saying one to the other, ‘We will each of us send a basket of figs to the king. Perhaps he will give us something in return, and if he does we will divide it faithfully between us.’ So the best figs were carefully packed in a basket, and Peppe set out with it to the castle.

On the road he met a little old man who stopped and said to him, ‘What have you got there, my fine fellow?’

‘What is that to you?’ was the answer; ‘mind your own business.’ But the old man only repeated his question, and Peppe, to get rid of him, exclaimed in anger, ‘Dirt.’

‘Good,’ replied the old man; ‘dirt you have said, and dirt let it be.’

Peppe only tossed his head and went on his way till he got to the castle, where he knocked at the door. ‘I have a basket of lovely figs for the king,’ he said to the servant who opened it, ‘if his majesty will be graciously pleased to accept them with my humble duty.’

The king loved figs, and ordered Peppe to be admitted to his presence, and a silver dish to be brought on which to put the figs. When Peppe

uncovered his basket sure enough a layer of beautiful purple figs met the king's eyes, but underneath there was nothing but dirt. 'How dare you play me such a trick?' shrieked the king in a rage. 'Take him away, and give him fifty lashes.' This was done, and Peppe returned home, sore and angry, but determined to say nothing about his adventure. And when his brothers asked him what had happened he only answered, 'When we have all three been I will tell you.'

A few days after this more figs were ready for plucking, and Alfin in his turn set out for the palace. He had not gone far down the road before he met the old man, who asked him what he had in his basket.

'Horns,' answered Alfin, shortly.

'Good,' replied the old man; 'horns you have said, and horns let it be.'

When Alfin reached the castle he knocked at the door and said to the servant: 'Here is a basket of lovely figs, if his majesty will be good enough to accept them with my humble duty.'

The king commanded that Alfin should be admitted to his presence, and a silver dish to be brought on which to lay the figs. When the basket was uncovered some beautiful purple figs lay on the top, but underneath there was nothing but horns. Then the king was beside himself with passion, and screamed out, 'Is this a plot to mock me? Take him away, and give him a hundred and fifty lashes!' So Alfin went sadly home, but would not tell anything about his adventures, only saying grimly, 'Now it is Ciccu's turn.'

Ciccu had to wait a little before he gathered the last figs on the tree, and these were not nearly so good as the first set. However, he plucked them, as they had agreed, and set out for the king's palace. The old man was still on the road, and he came up and said to Ciccu, 'What have you got in that basket?'

'Figs for the king,' answered he.

'Let me have a peep,' and Ciccu lifted the lid. 'Oh, do give me one, I am so fond of figs,' begged the little man.

'I am afraid if I do that the hole will show,' replied Ciccu, but as he was very good-natured he gave him one. The old man ate it greedily and kept the stalk in his hand, and then asked for another and another and another till he had eaten half the basketful. 'But there are not enough left to take to the king,' murmured Ciccu.

‘Don’t be anxious,’ said the old man, throwing the stalks back into the basket; ‘just go on and carry the basket to the castle, and it will bring you luck.’

Ciccu did not much like it; however he went on his way, and with a trembling heart rang the castle bell. ‘Here are some lovely figs for the king,’ said he, ‘if his majesty will graciously accept them with my humble duty.’

When the king was told that there was another man with a basket of figs he cried out, ‘Oh, have him in, have him in! I suppose it is a wager!’ But Ciccu uncovered the basket, and there lay a pile of beautiful ripe figs. And the king was delighted, and emptied them himself on the silver dish, and gave five florins to Ciccu, and offered besides to take him into his service. Ciccu accepted gratefully, but said he must first return home and give the five florins to his brothers.

When he got home Peppe spoke: ‘Now we will see what we each have got from the king. I myself received from him fifty lashes.’

‘And I a hundred and fifty,’ added Alfin.

‘And I five florins and some sweets, which you can divide between you, for the king has taken me into his service.’ Then Ciccu went back to the Court and served the king, and the king loved him.

The other two brothers heard that Ciccu had become quite an important person, and they grew envious, and thought how they could put him to shame. At last they came to the king and said to him, ‘O king! your palace is beautiful indeed, but to be worthy of you it lacks one thing—the sword of the Man-eater.’

‘How can I get it?’ asked the king.

‘Oh, Ciccu can get it for you; ask him.’

So the king sent for Ciccu and said to him, ‘Ciccu, you must at any price manage to get the sword of the Man-eater.’

Ciccu was very much surprised at this sudden command, and he walked thoughtfully away to the stables and began to stroke his favourite horse, saying to himself, ‘Ah, my pet, we must bid each other good-bye, for the king has sent me away to get the sword of the Maneater.’ Now this horse was not like other horses, for it was a talking horse, and knew a great deal about many things, so it answered, ‘Fear nothing, and do as I tell you. Beg the king to give you fifty gold pieces and leave to ride me, and the

rest will be easy.' Ciccu believed what the horse said, and prayed the king to grant him what he asked. Then the two friends set out, but the horse chose what roads he pleased, and directed Ciccu in everything.

It took them many days' hard riding before they reached the country where the Man-eater lived, and then the horse told Ciccu to stop a group of old women who were coming chattering through the wood, and offer them each a shilling if they would collect a number of mosquitos and tie them up in a bag. When the bag was full Ciccu put it on his shoulder and stole into the house of the Man-eater (who had gone to look for his dinner) and let them all out in his bedroom. He himself hid carefully under the bed and waited. The Man-eater came in late, very tired with his long walk, and flung himself on the bed, placing his sword with its shining blade by his side. Scarcely had he lain down than the mosquitos began to buzz about and bite him, and he rolled from side to side trying to catch them, which he never could do, though they always seemed to be close to his nose. He was so busy over the mosquitos that he did not hear Ciccu steal softly out, or see him catch up the sword. But the horse heard and stood ready at the door, and as Ciccu came flying down the stairs and jumped on his back he sped away like the wind, and never stopped till they arrived at the king's palace.

The king had suffered much pain in his absence, thinking that if the Man-eater ate Ciccu, it would be all his fault. And he was so overjoyed to have him safe that he almost forgot the sword which he had sent him to bring. But the two brothers did not love Ciccu any better because he had succeeded when they hoped he would have failed, and one day they spoke to the king. 'It is all very well for Ciccu to have got possession of the sword, but it would have been far more to your majesty's honour if he had captured the Man-eater himself.' The king thought upon these words, and at last he said to Ciccu, 'Ciccu, I shall never rest until you bring me back the Man-eater himself. You may have any help you like, but somehow or other you must manage to do it.' Ciccu felt very much cast, down at these words, and went to the stable to ask advice of his friend the horse. 'Fear nothing,' said the horse; 'just say you want me and fifty pieces of gold.' Ciccu did as he was bid, and the two set out together.

When they reached the country of the Man-eater, Ciccu made all the church bells toll and a proclamation to be made. 'Ciccu, the servant of the

king, is dead.' The Man-eater soon heard what everyone was saying, and was glad in his heart, for he thought, 'Well, it is good news that the thief who stole my sword is dead.' But Ciccu bought an axe and a saw, and cut down a pine tree in the nearest wood, and began to hew it into planks.

'What are you doing in my wood?' asked the Maneater, coming up.

'Noble lord,' answered Ciccu, 'I am making a coffin for the body of Ciccu, who is dead.'

'Don't be in a hurry,' answered the Man-eater, who of course did not know whom he was talking to, 'and perhaps I can help you;' and they set to work sawing and fitting, and very soon the coffin was finished.

Then Ciccu scratched his ear thoughtfully, and cried, 'Idiot that I am! I never took any measures. How am I to know if it is big enough? But now I come to think of it, Ciccu was about your size. I wonder if you would be so good as just to put yourself in the coffin, and see if there is enough room.'

'Oh, delighted!' said the Man-eater, and laid himself at full length in the coffin. Ciccu clapped on the lid, put a strong cord round it, tied it fast on his horse, and rode back to the king. And when the king saw that he really had brought back the Man-eater, he commanded a huge iron chest to be brought, and locked the coffin up inside.

Just about this time the queen died, and soon after the king thought he should like to marry again. He sought everywhere, but he could not hear of any princess that took his fancy. Then the two envious brothers came to him and said, 'O king! there is but one woman that is worthy of being your wife, and that is she who is the fairest in the whole world.'

'But where can I find her?' asked the king

'Oh, Ciccu will know, and he will bring her to you.'

Now the king had got so used to depending on Ciccu, that he really believed he could do everything. So he sent for him and said, 'Ciccu, unless within eight days you bring me the fairest in the whole world, I will have you hewn into a thousand pieces.' This mission seemed to Ciccu a hundred times worse than either of the others, and with tears in his eyes he took his way to the stables.

'Cheer up,' laughed the horse; 'tell the king you must have some bread and honey, and a purse of gold, and leave the rest to me.'

Ciccu did as he was bid, and they started at a gallop.

After they had ridden some way, they saw a swarm of bees lying on the ground, so hungry and weak that they were unable to fly. ‘Get down, and give the poor things some honey,’ said the horse, and Ciccu dismounted. By-and-bye they came to a stream, on the bank of which was a fish, flapping feebly about in its efforts to reach the water. ‘Jump down, and throw the fish into the water; he will be useful to us,’ and Ciccu did so. Farther along the hillside they saw an eagle whose leg was caught in a snare. ‘Go and free that eagle from the snare; he will be useful to us; ‘ and in a moment the eagle was soaring up into the sky.

At length they came to the castle where the fairest in the world lived with her parents. Then said the horse, ‘You must get down and sit upon that stone, for I must enter the castle alone. Directly you see me come tearing by with the princess on my back, jump up behind, and hold her tight, so that she does not escape you. If you fail to do this, we are both lost.’ Ciccu seated himself on the stone, and the horse went on to the courtyard of the castle, where he began to trot round in a graceful and elegant manner. Soon a crowd collected first to watch him and then to pat him, and the king and queen and princess came with the rest. The eyes of the fairest in the world brightened as she looked, and she sprang on the horse’s saddle, crying, ‘Oh, I really must ride him a little!’ But the horse made one bound forward, and the princess was forced to hold tight by his mane, lest she should fall off. And as they dashed past the stone where Ciccu was waiting for them, he swung himself up and held her round the waist. As he put his arms round her waist, the fairest in the world unwound the veil from her head and cast it to the ground, and then she drew a ring from her finger and flung it into the stream. But she said nothing, and they rode on fast, fast.

The king of Ciccu’s country was watching for them from the top of a tower, and when he saw in the distance a cloud of dust, he ran down to the steps so as to be ready to receive them. Bowing low before the fairest in the world, he spoke: ‘Noble lady, will you do me the honour to become my wife?’

But she answered, ‘That can only be when Ciccu brings me the veil that I let fall on my way here.’

And the king turned to Ciccu and said, ‘Ciccu, if you do not find the veil at once, you shall lose your head.’

Ciccu, who by this time had hoped for a little peace, felt his heart sink at this fresh errand, and he went into the stable to complain to the faithful horse.

‘It will be all right,’ answered the horse when he had heard his tale; ‘just take enough food for the day for both of us, and then get on my back.’

They rode back all the way they had come till they reached the place where they had found the eagle caught in the snare; then the horse bade Ciccu to call three times on the king of the birds, and when he replied, to beg him to fetch the veil which the fairest in the world had let fall.

‘Wait a moment,’ answered a voice that seemed to come from somewhere very high up indeed. ‘An eagle is playing with it just now, but he will be here with it in an instant;’ and a few minutes after there was a sound of wings, and an eagle came fluttering towards them with the veil in his beak. And Ciccu saw it was the very same eagle that he had freed from the snare. So he took the veil and rode back to the king.

Now the king was enchanted to see him so soon, and took the veil from Ciccu and flung it over the princess, crying, ‘Here is the veil you asked for, so I claim you for my wife.’

‘Not so fast,’ answered she. ‘I can never be your wife till Ciccu puts on my finger the ring I threw into the stream. Ciccu, who was standing by expecting something of the sort, bowed his head when he heard her words, and went straight to the horse.

‘Mount at once,’ said the horse; ‘this time it is very simple,’ and he carried Ciccu to the banks of the little stream. ‘Now, call three times on the emperor of the fishes, and beg him to restore you the ring that the princess dropped.

Ciccu did as the horse told him, and a voice was heard in answer that seemed to come from a very long way off.

‘What is your will?’ it asked; and Ciccu replied that he had been commanded to bring back the ring that the princess had flung away, as she rode past.

‘A fish is playing with it just now,’ replied the voice; ‘however, you shall have it without delay.’

And sure enough, very soon a little fish was seen rising to the surface with the lost ring in his mouth. And Ciccu knew him to be the fish that he

had saved from death, and he took the ring and rode back with it to the king.

‘That is not enough,’ exclaimed the princess when she saw the ring; ‘before we can be man and wife, the oven must be heated for three days and three nights, and Ciccu must jump in.’ And the king forgot how Ciccu had served him, and desired him to do as the princess had said.

This time Ciccu felt that no escape was possible, and he went to the horse and laid his hand on his neck. ‘Now it is indeed good-bye, and there is no help to be got even from you,’ and he told him what fate awaited him.

But the horse said, ‘Oh, never lose heart, but jump on my back, and make me go till the foam flies in flecks all about me. Then get down, and scrape off the foam with a knife. This you must rub all over you, and when you are quite covered, you may suffer yourself to be cast into the oven, for the fire will not hurt you, nor anything else.’ And Ciccu did exactly as the horse bade him, and went back to the king, and before the eyes of the fairest in the world he sprang into the oven.

And when the fairest in the world saw what he had done, love entered into her heart, and she said to the king, ‘One thing more: before I can be your wife, you must jump into the oven as Ciccu has done.’

‘Willingly,’ replied the king, stooping over the oven. But on the brink he paused a moment and called to Ciccu, ‘Tell me, Ciccu, how did you manage to prevent the fire burning you?’

Now Ciccu could not forgive his master, whom he had served so faithfully, for sending him to his death without a thought, so he answered, ‘I rubbed myself over with fat, and I am not even singed.’

When he heard these words, the king, whose head was full of the princess, never stopped to inquire if they could be true, and smeared himself over with fat, and sprang into the oven. And in a moment the fire caught him, and he was burned up.

Then the fairest in the world held out her hand to Ciccu and smiled, saying, ‘Now we will be man and wife.’ So Ciccu married the fairest in the world, and became king of the country.

DON GIOVANNI DE LA FORTUNA

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Sicilianische Mahrchen

There was once a man whose name was Don Giovanni de la Fortuna, and he lived in a beautiful house that his father had built, and spent a great deal of money. Indeed, he spent so much that very soon there was none left, and Don Giovanni, instead of being a rich man with everything he could wish for, was forced to put on the dress of a pilgrim, and to wander from place to place begging his bread.

One day he was walking down a broad road when he was stopped by a handsome man he had never seen before, who, little as Don Giovanni knew it, was the devil himself.

‘Would you like to be rich,’ asked the devil, ‘and to lead a pleasant life?’

‘Yes, of course I should,’ replied the Don.

‘Well, here is a purse; take it and say to it, “Dear purse, give me some money,” and you will get as much as you can want But the charm will only work if you promise to remain three years, three months, and three days without washing and without combing and without shaving your beard or changing your clothes. If you do all this faithfully, when the time is up you shall keep the purse for yourself, and I will let you off any other conditions.’

Now Don Giovanni was a man who never troubled his head about the future. He did not once think how very uncomfortable he should be all those three years, but only that he should be able, by means of the purse, to have all sorts of things he had been obliged to do without; so he joyfully put the purse in his pocket and went on his way. He soon began to ask for money for the mere pleasure of it, and there was always as much as he needed. For a little while he even forgot to notice how dirty he was getting, but this did not last long, for his hair became matted with dirt and hung

over his eyes, and his pilgrim's dress was a mass of horrible rags and tatters.

He was in this state when, one morning, he happened to be passing a fine palace; and, as the sun was shining bright and warm, he sat down on the steps and tried to shake off some of the dust which he had picked up on the road. But in a few minutes a maid saw him, and said to her master, 'I pray you, sir, to drive away that beggar who is sitting on the steps, or he will fill the whole house with his dirt.'

So the master went out and called from some distance off, for he was really afraid to go near the man, 'You filthy beggar, leave my house at once!'

'You need not be so rude,' said Don Giovanni; 'I am not a beggar, and if I chose I could force you and your wife to leave your house.'

'What is that you can do?' laughed the gentleman.

'Will you sell me your house?' asked Don Giovanni. 'I will buy it from you on the spot.'

'Oh, the dirty creature is quite mad!' thought the gentleman. 'I shall just accept his offer for a joke.' And aloud he said: ' All right; follow me, and we will go to a lawyer and get him to make a contract.' And Don Giovanni followed him, and an agreement was drawn up by which the house was to be sold at once, and a large sum of money paid down in eight days. Then the Don went to an inn, where he hired two rooms, and, standing in one of them, said to his purse, ' Dear purse, fill this room with gold;' and when the eight days were up it was so full you could not have put in another sovereign.

When the owner of the house came to take away his money Don Giovanni led him into the room and said: 'There, just pocket what you want.' The gentleman stared with open mouth at the astonishing sight; but he had given his word to sell the house, so he took his money, as he was told, and went away with his wife to look for some place to live in. And Don Giovanni left the inn and dwelt in the beautiful rooms, where his rags and dirt looked sadly out of place. And every day these got worse and worse.

By-and-bye the fame of his riches reached the ears of the king, and, as he himself was always in need of money, he sent for Don Giovanni, as he

wished to borrow a large sum. Don Giovanni readily agreed to lend him what he wanted, and sent next day a huge waggon laden with sacks of gold.

‘Who can he be?’ thought the king to himself. ‘Why, he is much richer than I!’

The king took as much as he had need of; then ordered the rest to be returned to Don Giovanni, who refused to receive it, saying, ‘Tell his majesty I am much hurt at his proposal. I shall certainly not take back that handful of gold, and, if he declines to accept it, keep it yourself.’

The servant departed and delivered the message, and the king wondered more than ever how anyone could be so rich. At last he spoke to the queen: ‘Dear wife, this man has done me a great service, and has, besides, behaved like a gentleman in not allowing me to send back the money. I wish to give him the hand of our eldest daughter.’

The queen was quite pleased at this idea, and again messenger was sent to Don Giovanni, offering him the hand of the eldest princess.

‘His majesty is too good,’ he replied. ‘I can only humbly accept the honour.’

The messenger took back this answer, but a second time returned with the request that Don Giovanni would present them with his picture, so that they might know what sort of a person to expect. But when it came, and the princess saw the horrible figure, she screamed out, ‘What! marry this dirty beggar? Never, never!’

‘Ah, child,’ answered the king, ‘how could I ever guess that the rich Don Giovanni would ever look like that? But I have passed my royal word, and I cannot break it, so there is no help for you.’

‘No, father; you may cut off my head, if you choose, but marry that horrible beggar—I never will!’

And the queen took her part, and reproached her husband bitterly for wishing his daughter to marry a creature like that.

Then the youngest daughter spoke: ‘Dear father, do not look so sad. As you have given your word, I will marry Don Giovanni.’ The king fell on her neck, and thanked her and kissed her, but the queen and the elder girl had nothing for her but laughs and jeers.

So it was settled, and then the king bade one of his lords go to Don Giovanni and ask him when the wedding day was to be, so that the princess might make ready.

‘Let it be in two months,’ answered Don Giovanni, for the time was nearly up that the devil had fixed, and he wanted a whole month to himself to wash off the dirt of the past three years.

The very minute that the compact with the devil had come to an end his beard was shaved, his hair was cut, and his rags were burned, and day and night he lay in a bath of clear warm water. At length he felt he was clean again, and he put on splendid clothes, and hired a beautiful ship, and arrived in state at the king’s palace.

The whole of the royal family came down to the ship to receive him, and the whole way the queen and the elder princess teased the sister about the dirty husband she was going to have. But when they saw how handsome he really was their hearts were filled with envy and anger, so that their eyes were blinded, and they fell over into the sea and were drowned. And the youngest daughter rejoiced in the good luck that had come to her, and they had a splendid wedding when the days of mourning for her mother and sister were ended.

Soon after the old king died, and Don Giovanni became king. And he was rich and happy to the end of his days, for he loved his wife, and his purse always gave him money.

THE GREY FAIRY BOOK

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PREFACE

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The tales in the Grey Fairy Book are derived from many countries—Lithuania, various parts of Africa, Germany, France, Greece, and other regions of the world. They have been translated and adapted by Mrs. Dent, Mrs. Lang, Miss Eleanor Sellar, Miss Blackley, and Miss hang. ‘The Three Sons of Hali’ is from the last century ‘Cabinet des Fees,’ a very large collection. The French author may have had some Oriental original before him in parts; at all events he copied the Eastern method of putting tale within tale, like the Eastern balls of carved ivory. The stories, as usual, illustrate the method of popular fiction. A certain number of incidents are shaken into many varying combinations, like the fragments of coloured glass in the kaleidoscope. Probably the possible combinations, like possible musical combinations, are not unlimited in number, but children may be less sensitive in the matter of fairies than Mr. John Stuart Mill was as regards music.

DONKEY SKIN

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There was once upon a time a king who was so much beloved by his subjects that he thought himself the happiest monarch in the whole world, and he had everything his heart could desire. His palace was filled with the rarest of curiosities, and his gardens with the sweetest flowers, while in the marble stalls of his stables stood a row of milk-white Arabs, with big brown eyes.

Strangers who had heard of the marvels which the king had collected, and made long journeys to see them, were, however, surprised to find the most splendid stall of all occupied by a donkey, with particularly large and drooping ears. It was a very fine donkey; but still, as far as they could tell, nothing so very remarkable as to account for the care with which it was lodged; and they went away wondering, for they could not know that every night, when it was asleep, bushels of gold pieces tumbled out of its ears, which were picked up each morning by the attendants.

After many years of prosperity a sudden blow fell upon the king in the death of his wife, whom he loved dearly. But before she died, the queen, who had always thought first of his happiness, gathered all her strength, and said to him:

‘Promise me one thing: you must marry again, I know, for the good of your people, as well as of yourself. But do not set about it in a hurry. Wait until you have found a woman more beautiful and better formed than myself.’

‘Oh, do not speak to me of marrying,’ sobbed the king; ‘rather let me die with you!’ But the queen only smiled faintly, and turned over on her pillow and died.

For some months the king’s grief was great; then gradually he began to forget a little, and, besides, his counsellors were always urging him to seek another wife. At first he refused to listen to them, but by-and-by he allowed himself to be persuaded to think of it, only stipulating that the

bride should be more beautiful and attractive than the late queen, according to the promise he had made her.

Overjoyed at having obtained what they wanted, the counsellors sent envoys far and wide to get portraits of all the most famous beauties of every country. The artists were very busy and did their best, but, alas! nobody could even pretend that any of the ladies could compare for a moment with the late queen.

At length, one day, when he had turned away discouraged from a fresh collection of pictures, the king's eyes fell on his adopted daughter, who had lived in the palace since she was a baby, and he saw that, if a woman existed on the whole earth more lovely than the queen, this was she! He at once made known what his wishes were, but the young girl, who was not at all ambitious, and had not the faintest desire to marry him, was filled with dismay, and begged for time to think about it. That night, when everyone was asleep, she started in a little car drawn by a big sheep, and went to consult her fairy godmother.

'I know what you have come to tell me,' said the fairy, when the maiden stepped out of the car; 'and if you don't wish to marry him, I will show you how to avoid it. Ask him to give you a dress that exactly matches the sky. It will be impossible for him to get one, so you will be quite safe.' The girl thanked the fairy and returned home again.

The next morning, when her father (as she had always called him) came to see her, she told him that she could give him no answer until he had presented her with a dress the colour of the sky. The king, overjoyed at this answer, sent for all the choicest weavers and dressmakers in the kingdom, and commanded them to make a robe the colour of the sky without an instant's delay, or he would cut off their heads at once. Dreadfully frightened at this threat, they all began to dye and cut and sew, and in two days they brought back the dress, which looked as if it had been cut straight out of the heavens! The poor girl was thunderstruck, and did not know what to do; so in the night she harnessed her sheep again, and went in search of her godmother.

'The king is cleverer than I thought,' said the fairy; 'but tell him you must have a dress of moonbeams.'

And the next day, when the king summoned her into his presence, the girl told him what she wanted.

‘Madam, I can refuse you nothing,’ said he; and he ordered the dress to be ready in twenty-four hours, or every man should be hanged.

They set to work with all their might, and by dawn next day, the dress of moonbeams was laid across her bed. The girl, though she could not help admiring its beauty, began to cry, till the fairy, who heard her, came to her help.

‘Well, I could not have believed it of him!’ said she; ‘but ask for a dress of sunshine, and I shall be surprised indeed if he manages that!’

The goddaughter did not feel much faith in the fairy after her two previous failures; but not knowing what else to do, she told her father what she was bid.

The king made no difficulties about it, and even gave his finest rubies and diamonds to ornament the dress, which was so dazzling, when finished, that it could not be looked at save through smoked glasses!

When the princess saw it, she pretended that the sight hurt her eyes, and retired to her room, where she found the fairy awaiting her, very much ashamed of herself.

‘There is only one thing to be done now,’ cried she; ‘you must demand the skin of the ass he sets such store by. It is from that donkey he obtains all his vast riches, and I am sure he will never give it to you.’

The princess was not so certain; however, she went to the king, and told him she could never marry him till he had given her the ass’s skin.

The king was both astonished and grieved at this new request, but did not hesitate an instant. The ass was sacrificed, and the skin laid at the feet of the princess.

The poor girl, seeing no escape from the fate she dreaded, wept afresh, and tore her hair; when, suddenly, the fairy stood before her.

‘Take heart,’ she said, ‘all will now go well! Wrap yourself in this skin, and leave the palace and go as far as you can. I will look after you. Your dresses and your jewels shall follow you underground, and if you strike the earth whenever you need anything, you will have it at once. But go quickly: you have no time to lose.’

So the princess clothed herself in the ass’s skin, and slipped from the palace without being seen by anyone.

Directly she was missed there was a great hue and cry, and every corner, possible and impossible, was searched. Then the king sent out

parties along all the roads, but the fairy threw her invisible mantle over the girl when they approached, and none of them could see her.

The princess walked on a long, long way, trying to find some one who would take her in, and let her work for them; but though the cottagers, whose houses she passed, gave her food from charity, the ass's skin was so dirty they would not allow her to enter their houses. For her flight had been so hurried she had had no time to clean it.

Tired and disheartened at her ill-fortune, she was wandering, one day, past the gate of a farmyard, situated just outside the walls of a large town, when she heard a voice calling to her. She turned and saw the farmer's wife standing among her turkeys, and making signs to her to come in.

'I want a girl to wash the dishes and feed the turkeys, and clean out the pig-sty,' said the w omen, 'and, to judge by your dirty clothes, you would not be too fine for the work.'

The girl accepted her offer with joy, and she was at once set to work in a corner of the kitchen, where all the farm servants came and made fun of her, and the ass's skin in which she was wrapped. But by-and-by they got so used to the sight of it that it ceased to amuse them, and she worked so hard and so well, that her mistress grew quite fond of her. And she was so clever at keeping sheep and herding turkeys that you would have thought she had done nothing else during her whole life!

One day she was sitting on the banks of a stream bewailing her wretched lot, when she suddenly caught sight of herself in the water. Her hair and part of her face was quite concealed by the ass's head, which was drawn right over like a hood, and the filthy matted skin covered her whole body. It was the first time she had seen herself as other people saw her, and she was filled with shame at the spectacle. Then she threw off her disguise and jumped into the water, plunging in again and again, till she shone like ivory. When it was time to go back to the farm, she was forced to put on the skin which disguised her, and now seemed more dirty than ever; but, as she did so, she comforted herself with the thought that to-morrow was a holiday, and that she would be able for a few hours to forget that she was a farm girl, and be a princess once more.

So, at break of day, she stamped on the ground, as the fairy had told her, and instantly the dress like the sky lay across her tiny bed. Her room was so small that there was no place for the train of her dress to spread

itself out, but she pinned it up carefully when she combed her beautiful hair and piled it up on the top of her head, as she had always worn it. When she had done, she was so pleased with herself that she determined never to let a chance pass of putting on her splendid clothes, even if she had to wear them in the fields, with no one to admire her but the sheep and turkeys.

Now the farm was a royal farm, and, one holiday, when ‘Donkey Skin’ (as they had nicknamed the princess) had locked the door of her room and clothed herself in her dress of sunshine, the king’s son rode through the gate, and asked if he might come and rest himself a little after hunting. Some food and milk were set before him in the garden, and when he felt rested he got up, and began to explore the house, which was famous throughout the whole kingdom for its age and beauty. He opened one door after the other, admiring the old rooms, when he came to a handle that would not turn. He stooped and peeped through the keyhole to see what was inside, and was greatly astonished at beholding a beautiful girl, clad in a dress so dazzling that he could hardly look at it.

The dark gallery seemed darker than ever as he turned away, but he went back to the kitchen and inquired who slept in the room at the end of the passage. The scullery maid, they told him, whom everybody laughed at, and called ‘Donkey Skin;’ and though he perceived there was some strange mystery about this, he saw quite clearly there was nothing to be gained by asking any more questions. So he rode back to the palace, his head filled with the vision he had seen through the keyhole.

All night long he tossed about, and awoke the next morning in a high fever. The queen, who had no other child, and lived in a state of perpetual anxiety about this one, at once gave him up for lost, and indeed his sudden illness puzzled the greatest doctors, who tried the usual remedies in vain. At last they told the queen that some secret sorrow must be at the bottom of all this, and she threw herself on her knees beside her son’s bed, and implored him to confide his trouble to her. If it was ambition to be king, his father would gladly resign the cares of the crown, and suffer him to reign in his stead; or, if it was love, everything should be sacrificed to get for him the wife he desired, even if she were daughter of a king with whom the country was at war at present!

‘Madam,’ replied the prince, whose weakness would hardly allow him to speak, ‘do not think me so unnatural as to wish to deprive my father of his crown. As long as he lives I shall remain the most faithful of his subjects! And as to the princesses you speak of, I have seen none that I should care for as a wife, though I would always obey your wishes, whatever it might cost me.’

‘Ah! my son,’ cried she, ‘we will do anything in the world to save your life——and ours too, for if you die, we shall die also.’

‘Well, then,’ replied the prince, ‘I will tell you the only thing that will cure me——a cake made by the hand of “Donkey Skin.”’

‘Donkey Skin?’ exclaimed the queen, who thought her son had gone mad; ‘and who or what is that?’

‘Madam,’ answered one of the attendants present, who had been with the prince at the farm, ‘“Donkey Skin” is, next to the wolf, the most disgusting creature on the face of the earth. She is a girl who wears a black, greasy skin, and lives at your farmer’s as hen-wife.’

‘Never mind,’ said the queen; ‘my son seems to have eaten some of her pastry. It is the whim of a sick man, no doubt; but send at once and let her bake a cake.’

The attendant bowed and ordered a page to ride with the message.

Now it is by no means certain that ‘Donkey Skin’ had not caught a glimpse of the prince, either when his eyes looked through the keyhole, or else from her little window, which was over the road. But whether she had actually seen him or only heard him spoken of, directly she received the queen’s command, she flung off the dirty skin, washed herself from head to foot, and put on a skirt and bodice of shining silver. Then, locking herself into her room, she took the richest cream, the finest flour, and the freshest eggs on the farm, and set about making her cake.

As she was stirring the mixture in the saucepan a ring that she sometimes wore in secret slipped from her finger and fell into the dough. Perhaps ‘Donkey Skin’ saw it, or perhaps she did not; but, any way, she went on stirring, and soon the cake was ready to be put in the oven. When it was nice and brown she took off her dress and put on her dirty skin, and gave the cake to the page, asking at the same time for news of the prince. But the page turned his head aside, and would not even condescend to answer.

The page rode like the wind, and as soon as he arrived at the palace he snatched up a silver tray and hastened to present the cake to the prince. The sick man began to eat it so fast that the doctors thought he would choke; and, indeed, he very nearly did, for the ring was in one of the bits which he broke off, though he managed to extract it from his mouth without anyone seeing him.

The moment the prince was left alone he drew the ring from under his pillow and kissed it a thousand times. Then he set his mind to find how he was to see the owner—-for even he did not dare to confess that he had only beheld ‘Donkey Skin’ through a keyhole, lest they should laugh at this sudden passion. All this worry brought back the fever, which the arrival of the cake had diminished for the time; and the doctors, not knowing what else to say, informed the queen that her son was simply dying of love. The queen, stricken with horror, rushed into the king’s presence with the news, and together they hastened to their son’s bedside.

‘My boy, my dear boy!’ cried the king, ‘who is it you want to marry? We will give her to you for a bride; even if she is the humblest of our slaves. What is there in the whole world that we would not do for you?’

The prince, moved to tears at these words, drew the ring, which was an emerald of the purest water, from under his pillow.

‘Ah, dear father and mother, let this be a proof that she whom I love is no peasant girl. The finger which that ring fits has never been thickened by hard work. But be her condition what it may, I will marry no other.’

The king and queen examined the tiny ring very closely, and agreed, with their son, that the wearer could be no mere farm girl. Then the king went out and ordered heralds and trumpeters to go through the town, summoning every maiden to the palace. And she whom the ring fitted would some day be queen.

First came all the princesses, then all the duchesses’ daughters, and so on, in proper order. But not one of them could slip the ring over the tip of her finger, to the great joy of the prince, whom excitement was fast curing. At last, when the high-born damsels had failed, the shopgirls and chambermaids took their turn; but with no better fortune.

‘Call in the scullions and shepherdesses,’ commanded the prince; but the sight of their fat, red fingers satisfied everybody.

‘There is not a woman left, your Highness,’ said the chamberlain; but the prince waved him aside.

‘Have you sent for “Donkey Skin,” who made me the cake?’ asked he, and the courtiers began to laugh, and replied that they would not have dared to introduce so dirty a creature into the palace.

‘Let some one go for her at once,’ ordered the king. ‘I commanded the presence of every maiden, high or low, and I meant it.’

The princess had heard the trumpets and the proclamations, and knew quite well that her ring was at the bottom of it all. She, too, had fallen in love with the prince in the brief glimpse she had had of him, and trembled with fear lest someone else’s finger might be as small as her own. When, therefore, the messenger from the palace rode up to the gate, she was nearly beside herself with delight. Hoping all the time for such a summons, she had dressed herself with great care, putting on the garment of moonlight, whose skirt was scattered over with emeralds. But when they began calling to her to come down, she hastily covered herself with her donkey-skin and announced she was ready to present herself before his Highness. She was taken straight into the hall, where the prince was awaiting her, but at the sight of the donkey-skin his heart sank. Had he been mistaken after all?

‘Are you the girl,’ he said, turning his eyes away as he spoke, ‘are you the girl who has a room in the furthest corner of the inner court of the farmhouse?’

‘Yes, my lord, I am,’ answered she.

‘Hold out your hand then,’ continued the prince, feeling that he must keep his word, whatever the cost, and, to the astonishment of every one present, a little hand, white and delicate, came from beneath the black and dirty skin. The ring slipped on with the utmost ease, and, as it did so, the skin fell to the ground, disclosing a figure of such beauty that the prince, weak as he was, fell on his knees before her, while the king and queen joined their prayers to his. Indeed, their welcome was so warm, and their caresses so bewildering, that the princess hardly knew how to find words to reply, when the ceiling of the hall opened, and the fairy godmother appeared, seated in a car made entirely of white lilac. In a few words she explained the history of the princess, and how she came to be there, and,

without losing a moment, preparations of the most magnificent kind were made for the wedding.

The kings of every country in the earth were invited, including, of course, the princess's adopted father (who by this time had married a widow), and not one refused.

But what a strange assembly it was! Each monarch travelled in the way he thought most impressive; and some came borne in litters, others had carriages of every shape and kind, while the rest were mounted on elephants, tigers, and even upon eagles. So splendid a wedding had never been seen before; and when it was over the king announced that it was to be followed by a coronation, for he and the queen were tired of reigning, and the young couple must take their place. The rejoicings lasted for three whole months, then the new sovereigns settled down to govern their kingdom, and made themselves so much beloved by their subjects, that when they died, a hundred years later, each man mourned them as his own father and mother.

[From le Cabinet de Fees.]

THE GOBLIN PONY

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‘Don’t stir from the fireplace to-night,’ said old Peggy, ‘for the wind is blowing so violently that the house shakes; besides, this is Hallow-e’en, when the witches are abroad, and the goblins, who are their servants, are wandering about in all sorts of disguises, doing harm to the children of men.’

‘Why should I stay here?’ said the eldest of the young people. ‘No, I must go and see what the daughter of old Jacob, the rope-maker, is doing. She wouldn’t close her blue eyes all night if I didn’t visit her father before the moon had gone down.’

‘I must go and catch lobsters and crabs’ said the second, ‘and not all the witches and goblins in the world shall hinder me.’

So they all determined to go on their business or pleasure, and scorned the wise advice of old Peggy. Only the youngest child hesitated a minute, when she said to him, ‘You stay here, my little Richard, and I will tell you beautiful stories.’

But he wanted to pick a bunch of wild thyme and some blackberries by moonlight, and ran out after the others. When they got outside the house they said: ‘The old woman talks of wind and storm, but never was the weather finer or the sky more clear; see how majestically the moon stalks through the transparent clouds!’

Then all of a sudden they noticed a little black pony close beside them.

‘Oh, ho!’ they said, ‘that is old Valentine’s pony; it must have escaped from its stable, and is going down to drink at the horse-pond.’

‘My pretty little pony,’ said the eldest, patting the creature with his hand, ‘you mustn’t run too far; I’ll take you to the pond myself.’

With these words he jumped on the pony’s back and was quickly followed by his second brother, then by the third, and so on, till at last they were all astride the little beast, down to the small Richard, who didn’t like to be left behind.

On the way to the pond they met several of their companions, and they invited them all to mount the pony, which they did, and the little creature did not seem to mind the extra weight, but trotted merrily along.

The quicker it trotted the more the young people enjoyed the fun; they dug their heels into the pony's sides and called out, 'Gallop, little horse, you have never had such brave riders on your back before!'

In the meantime the wind had risen again, and the waves began to howl; but the pony did not seem to mind the noise, and instead of going to the pond, cantered gaily towards the sea-shore.

Richard began to regret his thyme and blackberries, and the eldest brother seized the pony by the mane and tried to make it turn round, for he remembered the blue eyes of Jacob the rope-maker's daughter. But he tugged and pulled in vain, for the pony galloped straight on into the sea, till the waves met its forefeet. As soon as it felt the water it neighed lustily and capered about with glee, advancing quickly into the foaming billows. When the waves had covered the children's legs they repented their careless behaviour, and cried out: 'The cursed little black pony is bewitched. If we had only listened to old Peggy's advice we shouldn't have been lost.'

The further the pony advanced, the higher rose the sea; at last the waves covered the children's heads and they were all drowned.

Towards morning old Peggy went out, for she was anxious about the fate of her grandchildren. She sought them high and low, but could not find them anywhere. She asked all the neighbours if they had seen the children, but no one knew anything about them, except that the eldest had not been with the blue-eyed daughter of Jacob the rope-maker.

As she was going home, bowed with grief, she saw a little black pony coming towards her, springing and curveting in every direction. When it got quite near her it neighed loudly, and galloped past her so quickly that in a moment it was out of her sight.

[From the French, Kletke.]

AN IMPOSSIBLE ENCHANTMENT

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There once lived a king who was much loved by his people, and he, too, loved them warmly. He led a very happy life, but he had the greatest dislike to the idea of marrying, nor had he ever felt the slightest wish to fall in love. His subjects begged him to marry, and at last he promised to try to do so. But as, so far, he had never cared for any woman he had seen, he made up his mind to travel in hopes of meeting some lady he could love.

So he arranged all the affairs of state in an orderly manner, and set out, attended by only one equerry, who, though not very clever, had most excellent good sense. These people indeed generally make the best fellow travellers.

The king explored several countries, doing all he could to fall in love, but in vain; and at the end of two years' journeys he turned his face towards home, with as free a heart as when he set out.

As he was riding along through a forest he suddenly heard the most awful miawing and shrieking of cats you can imagine. The noise drew nearer, and nearer, and at last they saw a hundred huge Spanish cats rush through the trees close to them. They were so closely packed together that you could easily have covered them with a large cloak, and all were following the same track. They were closely pursued by two enormous apes, dressed in purple suits, with the prettiest and best made boots you ever saw.

The apes were mounted on superb mastiffs, and spurred them on in hot haste, blowing shrill blasts on little toy trumpets all the time.

The king and his equerry stood still to watch this strange hunt, which was followed by twenty or more little dwarfs, some mounted on wolves, and leading relays, and others with cats in leash. The dwarfs were all dressed in purple silk liveries like the apes.

A moment later a beautiful young woman mounted on a tiger came in sight. She passed close to the king, riding at full speed, without taking any

notice of him; but he was at once enchanted by her, and his heart was gone in a moment.

To his great joy he saw that one of the dwarfs had fallen behind the rest, and at once began to question him.

The dwarf told him that the lady he had just seen was the Princess Mutinosa, the daughter of the king in whose country they were at that moment. He added that the princess was very fond of hunting, and that she was now in pursuit of rabbits.

The king then asked the way to the court, and having been told it, hurried off, and reached the capital in a couple of hours.

As soon as he arrived, he presented himself to the king and queen, and on mentioning his own name and that of his country, was received with open arms. Not long after, the princess returned, and hearing that the hunt had been very successful, the king complimented her on it, but she would not answer a word.

Her silence rather surprised him, but he was still more astonished when he found that she never spoke once all through supper-time. Sometimes she seemed about to speak, but whenever this was the case her father or mother at once took up the conversation. However, this silence did not cool the king's affection, and when he retired to his rooms at night he confided his feelings to his faithful equerry. But the equerry was by no means delighted at his king's love affair, and took no pains to hide his disappointment.

'But why are you vexed?' asked the king. 'Surely the princess is beautiful enough to please anyone?'

'She is certainly very handsome,' replied the equerry, 'but to be really happy in love something more than beauty is required. To tell the truth, sire,' he added, 'her expression seems to me hard.'

'That is pride and dignity,' said the king, 'and nothing can be more becoming.'

'Pride or hardness, as you will,' said the equerry; 'but to my mind the choice of so many fierce creatures for her amusements seems to tell of a fierce nature, and I also think there is something suspicious in the care taken to prevent her speaking.'

The equerry's remarks were full of good sense; but as opposition is only apt to increase love in the hearts of men, and especially of kings who

hate being contradicted, this king begged, the very next day, for the hand of the Princess Mutinosa. It was granted him on two conditions.

The first was that the wedding should take place the very next day; and the second, that he should not speak to the princess till she was his wife; to all of which the king agreed, in spite of his equerry's objections, so that the first word he heard his bride utter was the 'Yes' she spoke at their marriage.

Once married, however, she no longer placed any check on herself, and her ladies-in-waiting came in for plenty of rude speeches——even the king did not escape scolding; but as he was a good-tempered man, and very much in love, he bore it patiently. A few days after the wedding the newly married pair set out for their kingdom without leaving many regrets behind.

The good equerry's fears proved only too true, as the king found out to his cost. The young queen made her self most disagreeable to all her court, her spite and bad temper knew no bounds, and before the end of a month she was known far and wide as a regular vixen.

One day, when riding out, she met a poor old woman walking along the road, who made a curtsy and was going on, when the queen had her stopped, and cried: 'You are a very impertinent person; don't you know that I am the queen? And how dare you not make me a deeper curtsy?'

'Madam,' said the old woman, 'I have never learnt how to measure curtsies; but I had no wish to fail in proper respect.'

'What!' screamed the queen; 'she dares to answer! Tie her to my horse's tail and I'll just carry her at once to the best dancing-master in the town to learn how to curtsy.'

The old woman shrieked for mercy, but the queen would not listen, and only mocked when she said she was protected by the fairies. At last the poor old thing submitted to be tied up, but when the queen urged her horse on he never stirred. In vain she spurred him, he seemed turned to bronze. At the same moment the cord with which the old woman was tied changed into wreaths of flowers, and she herself into a tall and stately lady.

Looking disdainfully at the queen, she said, 'Bad woman, unworthy of your crown; I wished to judge for myself whether all I heard of you was true. I have now no doubt of it, and you shall see whether the fairies are to be laughed at.'

So saying the fairy Placida (that was her name) blew a little gold whistle, and a chariot appeared drawn by six splendid ostriches. In it was seated the fairy queen, escorted by a dozen other fairies mounted on dragons.

All having dismounted, Placida told her adventures, and the fairy queen approved all she had done, and proposed turning Mutinosa into bronze like her horse.

Placida, however, who was very kind and gentle, begged for a milder sentence, and at last it was settled that Mutinosa should become her slave for life unless she should have a child to take her place.

The king was told of his wife's fate and submitted to it, which, as he could do nothing to help it, was the only course open to him.

The fairies then all dispersed, Placida taking her slave with her, and on reaching her palace she said: 'You ought by rights to be scullion, but as you have been delicately brought up the change might be too great for you. I shall therefore only order you to sweep my rooms carefully, and to wash and comb my little dog.'

Mutinosa felt there was no use in disobeying, so she did as she was bid and said nothing.

After some time she gave birth to a most lovely little girl, and when she was well again the fairy gave her a good lecture on her past life, made her promise to behave better in future, and sent her back to the king, her husband.

Placida now gave herself up entirely to the little princess who was left in her charge. She anxiously thought over which of the fairies she would invite to be godmothers, so as to secure the best gift, for her adopted child.

At last she decided on two very kindly and cheerful fairies, and asked them to the christening feast. Directly it was over the baby was brought to them in a lovely crystal cradle hung with red silk curtains embroidered with gold.

The little thing smiled so sweetly at the fairies that they decided to do all they could for her. They began by naming her Graziella, and then Placida said: 'You know, dear sisters, that the commonest form of spite or punishment amongst us consists of changing beauty to ugliness, cleverness to stupidity, and oftener still to change a person's form altogether. Now, as we can only each bestow one gift, I think the best plan will be for one of

you to give her beauty, the other good understanding, whilst I will undertake that she shall never be changed into any other form.'

The two godmothers quite agreed, and as soon as the little princess had received their gifts, they went home, and Placida gave herself up to the child's education. She succeeded so well with it, and little Graziella grew so lovely, that when she was still quite a child her fame was spread abroad only too much, and one day Placida was surprised by a visit from the Fairy Queen, who was attended by a very grave and severe-looking fairy.

The queen began at once: 'I have been much surprised by your behaviour to Mutinosa; she had insulted our whole race, and deserved punishment. You might forgive your own wrongs if you chose, but not those of others. You treated her very gently whilst she was with you, and I come now to avenge our wrongs on her daughter. You have ensured her being lovely and clever, and not subject to change of form, but I shall place her in an enchanted prison, which she shall never leave till she finds herself in the arms of a lover whom she herself loves. It will be my care to prevent anything of the kind happening.'

The enchanted prison was a large high tower in the midst of the sea, built of shells of all shapes and colours. The lower floor was like a great bathroom, where the water was let in or off at will. The first floor contained the princess's apartments, beautifully furnished. On the second was a library, a large wardrobe-room filled with beautiful clothes and every kind of linen, a music-room, a pantry with bins full of the best wines, and a store-room with all manner of preserves, bonbons, pastry and cakes, all of which remained as fresh as if just out of the oven.

The top of the tower was laid out like a garden, with beds of the loveliest flowers, fine fruit trees, and shady arbours and shrubs, where many birds sang amongst the branches.

The fairies escorted Graziella and her governess, Bonnetta, to the tower, and then mounted a dolphin which was waiting for them. At a little distance from the tower the queen waved her wand and summoned two thousand great fierce sharks, whom she ordered to keep close guard, and not to let a soul enter the tower.

The good governess took such pains with Graziella's education that when she was nearly grown up she was not only most accomplished, but a very sweet, good girl.

One day, as the princess was standing on a balcony, she saw the most extraordinary figure rise out of the sea. She quickly called Bonnetta to ask her what it could be. It looked like some kind of man, with a bluish face and long sea-green hair. He was swimming towards the tower, but the sharks took no notice of him.

‘It must be a merman,’ said Bonnetta.

‘A man, do you say?’ cried Graziella; ‘let us hurry down to the door and see him nearer.’

When they stood in the doorway the merman stopped to look at the princess and made many signs of admiration. His voice was very hoarse and husky, but when he found that he was not understood he took to signs. He carried a little basket made of osiers and filled with rare shells, which he presented to the princess.

She took it with signs of thanks; but as it was getting dusk she retired, and the merman plunged back into the sea.

When they were alone, Graziella said to her governess: ‘What a dreadful-looking creature that was! Why do those odious sharks let him come near the tower? I suppose all men are not like him?’

‘No, indeed,’ replied Bonnetta. ‘I suppose the sharks look on him as a sort of relation, and so did not attack him.’

A few days later the two ladies heard a strange sort of music, and looking out of the window, there was the merman, his head crowned with water plants, and blowing a great sea-shell with all his might.

They went down to the tower door, and Graziella politely accepted some coral and other marine curiosities he had brought her. After this he used to come every evening, and blow his shell, or dive and play antics under the princess’s window. She contented herself with bowing to him from the balcony, but she would not go down to the door in spite of all his signs.

Some days later he came with a person of his own kind, but of another sex. Her hair was dressed with great taste, and she had a lovely voice. This new arrival induced the ladies to go down to the door. They were surprised to find that, after trying various languages, she at last spoke to them in their own, and paid Graziella a very pretty compliment on her beauty.

The mermaid noticed that the lower floor was full of water. ‘Why,’ cried she, ‘that is just the place for us, for we can’t live quite out of water.’

So saying, she and her brother swam in and took up a position in the bathroom, the princess and her governess seating themselves on the steps which ran round the room.

‘No doubt, madam,’ said the mermaid, ‘you have given up living on land so as to escape from crowds of lovers; but I fear that even here you cannot avoid them, for my brother is already dying of love for you, and I am sure that once you are seen in our city he will have many rivals.’

She then went on to explain how grieved her brother was not to be able to make himself understood, adding: ‘I interpret for him, having been taught several languages by a fairy.’

‘Oh, then, you have fairies, too?’ asked Graziella, with a sigh.

‘Yes, we have,’ replied the mermaid; ‘but if I am not mistaken you have suffered from the fairies on earth.’

The princess, on this, told her entire history to the mermaid, who assured her how sorry she felt for her, but begged her not to lose courage; adding, as she took her leave: Perhaps, some day, you may find a way out of your difficulties.’

The princess was delighted with this visit and with the hopes the mermaid held out. It was something to meet someone fresh to talk to.

‘We will make acquaintance with several of these people,’ she said to her governess, ‘and I dare say they are not all as hideous as the first one we saw. Anyhow, we shan’t be so dreadfully lonely.’

‘Dear me,’ said Bonnetta, ‘how hopeful young people are to be sure! As for me I feel afraid of these folk. But what do you think of the lover you have captivated?’

‘Oh, I could never love him,’ cried the princess; ‘I can’t bear him. But, perhaps, as his sister says they are related to the fairy Marina, they may be of some use to us.’

The mermaid often returned, and each time she talked of her brother’s love, and each time Graziella talked of her longing to escape from her prison, till at length the mermaid promised to bring the fairy Marina to see her, in hopes she might suggest something.

Next day the fairy came with the mermaid, and the princess received her with delight. After a little talk she begged Graziella to show her the inside of the tower and let her see the garden on the top, for with the help of crutches she could manage to move about, and being a fairy could live

out of water for a long time, provided she wetted her forehead now and then.

Graziella gladly consented, and Bonnetta stayed below with the mermaid.

When they were in the garden the fairy said: ‘Let us lose no time, but tell me how I can be of use to you.’ Graziella then told all her story and Marina replied: ‘My dear princess, I can do nothing for you as regards dry land, for my power does not reach beyond my own element. I can only say that if you will honour my cousin by accepting his hand, you could then come and live amongst us. I could teach you in a moment to swim and dive with the best of us. I can harden your skin without spoiling its colour. My cousin is one of the best matches in the sea, and I will bestow so many gifts on him that you will be quite happy.’

The fairy talked so well and so long that the princess was rather impressed, and promised to think the matter over.

Just as they were going to leave the garden they saw a ship sailing nearer the tower than any other had done before. On the deck lay a young man under a splendid awning, gazing at the tower through a spy-glass; but before they could see anything clearly the ship moved away, and the two ladies parted, the fairy promising to return shortly.

As soon as she was gone Graziella told her governess what she had said. Bonnetta was not at all pleased at the turn matters were taking, for she did not fancy being turned into a mermaid in her old age. She thought the matter well over, and this was what she did. She was a very clever artist, and next morning she began to paint a picture of a handsome young man, with beautiful curly hair, a fine complexion, and lovely blue eyes. When it was finished she showed it to Graziella, hoping it would show her the difference there was between a fine young man and her marine suitor.

The princess was much struck by the picture, and asked anxiously whether there could be any man so good looking in the world. Bonnetta assured her that there were plenty of them; indeed, many far handsomer.

‘I can hardly believe that,’ cried the princess; ‘but, alas! If there are, I don’t suppose I shall ever see them or they me, so what is the use? Oh, dear, how unhappy I am!’

She spent the rest of the day gazing at the picture, which certainly had the effect of spoiling all the merman’s hopes or prospects.

After some days, the fairy Marina came back to hear what was decided; but Graziella hardly paid any attention to her, and showed such dislike to the idea of the proposed marriage that the fairy went off in a regular huff.

Without knowing it, the princess had made another conquest. On board the ship which had sailed so near was the handsomest prince in the world. He had heard of the enchanted tower, and determined to get as near it as he could. He had strong glasses on board, and whilst looking through them he saw the princess quite clearly, and fell desperately in love with her at once. He wanted to steer straight for the tower and to row off to it in a small boat, but his entire crew fell at his feet and begged him not to run such a risk. The captain, too, urged him not to attempt it. ‘You will only lead us all to certain death,’ he said. ‘Pray anchor nearer land, and I will then seek a kind fairy I know, who has always been most obliging to me, and who will, I am sure, try to help your Highness.’

The prince rather unwillingly listened to reason. He landed at the nearest point, and sent off the captain in all haste to beg the fairy’s advice and help. Meantime he had a tent pitched on the shore, and spent all his time gazing at the tower and looking for the princess through his spyglass.

After a few days the captain came back, bringing the fairy with him. The prince was delighted to see her, and paid her great attention. ‘I have heard about this matter,’ she said; ‘and, to lose no time, I am going to send off a trusty pigeon to test the enchantment. If there is any weak spot he is sure to find it out and get in. I shall bid him bring a flower back as a sign of success; and if he does so I quite hope to get you in too.’

‘But,’ asked the prince, ‘could I not send a line by the pigeon to tell the princess of my love?’

‘Certainly,’ replied the fairy, ‘it would be a very good plan.’

So the prince wrote as follows:—-

> ‘Lovely Princess,—-I adore you, and beg you to accept my heart,
> and to believe there is nothing I will not do to end your misfortunes.—-BLONDEL.

This note was tied round the pigeon’s neck, and he flew off with it at once. He flew fast till he got near the tower, when a fierce wind blew so hard against him that he could not get on. But he was not to be beaten, but flew carefully round the top of the tower till he came to one spot which, by some mistake, had not been enchanted like the rest. He quickly slipped into the arbour and waited for the princess.

Before long Graziella appeared alone, and the pigeon at once fluttered to meet her, and seemed so tame that she stopped to caress the pretty creature. As she did so she saw it had a pink ribbon round its neck, and tied to the ribbon was a letter. She read it over several times and then wrote this answer:—-

‘You say you love me; but I cannot promise to love you without seeing you. Send me your portrait by this faithful messenger. If I return it to you, you must give up hope; but if I keep it you will know that to help me will be to help yourself.—-GRAZIELA.

Before flying back the pigeon remembered about the flower, so, seeing one in the princess’s dress, he stole it and flew away.

The prince was wild with joy at the pigeon’s return with the note. After an hour’s rest the trusty little bird was sent back again, carrying a miniature of the prince, which by good luck he had with him.

On reaching the tower the pigeon found the princess in the garden. She hastened to untie the ribbon, and on opening the miniature case what was her surprise and delight to find it very like the picture her governess had painted for her. She hastened to send the pigeon back, and you can fancy the prince’s joy when he found she had kept his portrait.

‘Now,’ said the fairy, ‘let us lose no more time. I can only make you happy by changing you into a bird, but I will take care to give you back your proper shape at the right time.’

The prince was eager to start, so the fairy, touching him with her wand, turned him into the loveliest humming-bird you ever saw, at the same time letting him keep the power of speech. The pigeon was told to show him the way.

Graziella was much surprised to see a perfectly strange bird, and still more so when it flew to her saying, ‘Good-morning, sweet princess.’

She was delighted with the pretty creature, and let him perch on her finger, when he said, ‘Kiss, kiss, little birdie,’ which she gladly did,

petting and stroking him at the same time.

After a time the princess, who had been up very early, grew tired, and as the sun was hot she went to lie down on a mossy bank in the shade of the arbour. She held the pretty bird near her breast, and was just falling asleep, when the fairy contrived to restore the prince to his own shape, so that as Graziella opened her eyes she found herself in the arms of a lover whom she loved in return!

At the same moment her enchantment came to an end. The tower began to rock and to split. Bonnetta hurried up to the top so that she might at least perish with her dear princess. Just as she reached the garden, the kind fairy who had helped the prince arrived with the fairy Placida, in a car of Venetian glass drawn by six eagles.

‘Come away quickly,’ they cried, ‘the tower is about to sink!’ The prince, princess, and Bonnetta lost no time in stepping into the car, which rose in the air just as, with a terrible crash, the tower sank into the depths of the sea, for the fairy Marina and the mermen had destroyed its foundations to avenge themselves on Graziella. Luckily their wicked plans were defeated, and the good fairies took their way to the kingdom of Graziella’s parents.

They found that Queen Mutinosa had died some years ago, but her kind husband lived on peaceably, ruling his country well and happily. He received his daughter with great delight, and there were universal rejoicings at the return of the lovely princess.

The wedding took place the very next day, and, for many days after, balls, dinners, tournaments, concerts and all sorts of amusements went on all day and all night.

All the fairies were carefully invited, and they came in great state, and promised the young couple their protection and all sorts of good gifts. Prince Blondel and Princess Graziella lived to a good old age, beloved by every one, and loving each other more and more as time went on.

THE STORY OF DSCHEMIL AND DSCHEMILA

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There was once a man whose name was Dschemil, and he had a cousin who was called Dschemila. They had been betrothed by their parents when they were children, and now Dschemil thought that the time had come for them to be married, and he went two or three days' journey, to the nearest big town, to buy furniture for the new house.

While he was away, Dschemila and her friends set off to the neighbouring woods to pick up sticks, and as she gathered them she found an iron mortar lying on the ground. She placed it on her bundle of sticks, but the mortar would not stay still, and whenever she raised the bundle to put it on her shoulders it slipped off sideways. At length she saw the only way to carry the mortar was to tie it in the very middle of her bundle, and had just unfastened her sticks, when she heard her companions' voices.

'Dschemila, what are you doing? it is almost dark, and if you mean to come with us you must be quick!'

But Dschemila only replied, 'You had better go back without me, for I am not going to leave my mortar behind, if I stay here till midnight.'

'Do as you like,' said the girls, and started on their walk home.

The night soon fell, and at the last ray of light the mortar suddenly became an ogre, who threw Dschemila on his back, and carried her off into a desert place, distant a whole month's journey from her native town. Here he shut her into a castle, and told her not to fear, as her life was safe. Then he went back to his wife, leaving Dschemila weeping over the fate that she had brought upon herself.

Meanwhile the other girls had reached home, and Dschemila's mother came out to look for her daughter.

'What have you done with her?' she asked anxiously.

'We had to leave her in the wood,' they replied, 'for she had picked up an iron mortar, and could not manage to carry it.'

So the old woman set off at once for the forest, calling to her daughter as she hurried along.

‘Do go home,’ cried the townspeople, as they heard her; ‘we will go and look for your daughter; you are only a woman, and it is a task that needs strong men.’

But she answered, ‘Yes, go; but I will go with you! Perhaps it will be only her corpse that we shall find after all. She has most likely been stung by asps, or eaten by wild beasts.’

The men, seeing her heart was bent on it, said no more, but told one of the girls she must come with them, and show them the place where they had left Dschemila. They found the bundle of wood lying where she had dropped it, but the maiden was nowhere to be seen.

‘Dschemila! Dschemila!’ cried they; but nobody answered.

‘If we make a fire, perhaps she will see it,’ said one of the men. And they lit a fire, and then went, one this way, and one that, through the forest, to look for her, whispering to each other that if she had been killed by a lion they would be sure to find some trace of it; or if she had fallen asleep, the sound of their voices would wake her; or if a snake had bitten her, they would at least come on her corpse.

All night they searched, and when morning broke and they knew no more than before what had become of the maiden, they grew weary, and said to the mother: ‘It is no use. Let us go home, nothing has happened to your daughter, except that she has run away with a man.’

‘Yes, I will come,’ answered she, ‘but I must first look in the river. Perhaps some one has thrown her in there.’ But the maiden was not in the river.

For four days the father and mother waited and watched for their child to come back; then they gave up hope, and said to each other: ‘What is to be done? What are we to say to the man to whom Dschemila is betrothed? Let us kill a goat, and bury its head in the grave, and when the man returns we must tell him Dschemila is dead.’

Very soon the bridegroom came back, bringing with him carpets and soft cushions for the house of his bride. And as he entered the town Dschemila’s father met him, saying, ‘Greeting to you. She is dead.’

At these words the young man broke into loud cries, and it was some time before he could speak. Then he turned to one of the crowd who had

gathered round him, and asked: ‘Where have they buried her?’

‘Come to the churchyard with me,’ answered he; and the young man went with him, carrying with him some of the beautiful things he had brought. These he laid on the grass and then began to weep afresh. All day he stayed, and at nightfall he gathered up his stuffs and carried them to his own house. But when the day dawned he took them in his arms and returned to the grave, where he remained as long as it was light, playing softly on his flute. And this he did daily for six months.

One morning, a man who was wandering through the desert, having lost his way, came upon a lonely castle. The sun was very hot, and the man was very tired, so he said to himself, ‘I will rest a little in the shadow of this castle.’ He stretched himself out comfortably, and was almost asleep, when he heard a voice calling to him softly:

‘Are you a ghost,’ it said, ‘or a man?’

He looked up, and saw a girl leaning out of a window, and he answered:

‘I am a man, and a better one, too, than your father or your grandfather.’

‘May all good luck be with you,’ said she; ‘but what has brought you into this land of ogres and horrors?’

‘Does an ogre really live in this castle?’ asked he.

‘Certainly he does,’ replied the girl, ‘and as night is not far off he will be here soon. So, dear friend, depart quickly, lest he return and snap you up for supper.’

‘But I am so thirsty!’ said the man. ‘Be kind, and give me some drink, or else I shall die! Surely, even in this desert there must be some spring?’

‘Well, I have noticed that whenever the ogre brings back water he always comes from that side; so if you follow the same direction perhaps you may find some.’

The man jumped up at once and was about to start, when the maiden spoke again: ‘Tell me, where are you going?’

‘Why do you want to know?’

‘I have an errand for you; but tell me first whether you go east or west.’

‘I travel to Damascus.’

‘Then do this for me. As you pass through our village, ask for a man called Dschemil, and say to him: “Dschemila greets you, from the castle,

which lies far away, and is rocked by the wind. In my grave lies only a goat. So take heart."'

And the man promised, and went his way, till he came to a spring of water. And he drank a great draught and then lay on the bank and slept quietly. When he woke he said to himself, 'The maiden did a good deed when she told me where to find water. A few hours more, and I should have been dead. So I will do her bidding, and seek out her native town and the man for whom the message was given.'

For a whole month he travelled, till at last he reached the town where Dschemil dwelt, and as luck would have it, there was the young man sitting before his door with his beard unshaven and his shaggy hair hanging over his eyes.

'Welcome, stranger,' said Dschemil, as the man stopped. 'Where have you come from?'

'I come from the west, and go towards the east,' he answered.

'Well, stop with us awhile, and rest and eat!' said Dschemil. And the man entered; and food was set before him, and he sat down with the father of the maiden and her brothers, and Dschemil. Only Dschemil himself was absent, squatting on the threshold.

'Why do you not eat too?' asked the stranger. But one of the young men whispered hastily: 'Leave him alone. Take no notice! It is only at night that he ever eats.'

So the stranger went on silently with his food. Suddenly one of Dschemil's brothers called out and said: 'Dschemil, bring us some water!' And the stranger remembered his message and said:

'Is there a man here named "Dschemil"? I lost my way in the desert, and came to a castle, and a maiden looked out of the window and...'

'Be quiet,' they cried, fearing that Dschemil might hear. But Dschemil had heard, and came forward and said:

'What did you see? Tell me truly, or I will cut off your head this instant!'

'My lord,' replied the stranger, 'as I was wandering, hot and tired, through the desert, I saw near me a great castle, and I said aloud, "I will rest a little in its shadow." And a maiden looked out of a window and said, "Are you a ghost or a man?" And I answered, "I am a man, and a better one, too, than your father or your grandfather." And I was thirsty and

asked for water, but she had none to give me, and I felt like to die. Then she told me that the ogre, in whose castle she dwelt, brought in water always from the same side, and that if I too went that way most likely I should come to it. But before I started she begged me to go to her native town, and if I met a man called Dschemil I was to say to him, “Dschemila greets you, from the castle which lies far away, and is rocked by the wind. In my grave lies only a goat. So take heart.”’

Then Dschemil turned to his family and said: ‘Is this true? and is Dschemila not dead at all, but simply stolen from her home?’

‘No, no,’ replied they, ‘his story is a pack of lies. Dschemila is really dead. Everybody knows it.’

‘That I shall see for myself,’ said Dschemil, and, snatching up a spade, hastened off to the grave where the goat’s head lay buried.

And they answered, ‘Then hear what really happened. When you were away, she went with the other maidens to the forest to gather wood. And there she found an iron mortar, which she wished to bring home; but she could not carry it, neither would she leave it. So the maidens returned without her, and as night was come, we all set out to look for her, but found nothing. And we said, “The bridegroom will be here to-morrow, and when he learns that she is lost, he will set out to seek her, and we shall lose him too. Let us kill a goat, and bury it in her grave, and tell him she is dead.” Now you know, so do as you will. Only, if you go to seek her, take with you this man with whom she has spoken that he may show you the way.’ ‘Yes; that is the best plan,’ replied Dschemil; ‘so give me food, and hand me my sword, and we will set out directly.’

But the stranger answered: ‘I am not going to waste a whole month in leading you to the castle! If it were only a day or two’s journey I would not mind; but a month—no!’

‘Come with me then for three days,’ said Dschemil, ‘and put me in the right road, and I will reward you richly.’

‘Very well,’ replied the stranger, ‘so let it be.’

For three days they travelled from sunrise to sunset, then the stranger said: ‘Dschemil?’

‘Yes,’ replied he.

‘Go straight on till you reach a spring, then go on a little farther, and soon you will see the castle standing before you.’

‘So I will,’ said Dschemil.

‘Farewell, then,’ said the stranger, and turned back the way he had come.

It was six and twenty days before Dschemil caught sight of a green spot rising out of the sandy desert, and knew that the spring was near at last. He hastened his steps, and soon was kneeling by its side, drinking thirstily of the bubbling water. Then he lay down on the cool grass, and began to think. ‘If the man was right, the castle must be somewhere about. I had better sleep here to-night, and to-morrow I shall be able to see where it is.’ So he slept long and peacefully. When he awoke the sun was high, and he jumped up and washed his face and hands in the spring, before going on his journey. He had not walked far, when the castle suddenly appeared before him, though a moment before not a trace of it could be seen. ‘How am I to get in?’ he thought. ‘I dare not knock, lest the ogre should hear me. Perhaps it would be best for me to climb up the wall, and wait to see what will happen. So he did, and after sitting on the top for about an hour, a window above him opened, and a voice said: ‘Dschemil!’ He looked up, and at the sight of Dschemila, whom he had so long believed to be dead, he began to weep.

‘Dear cousin,’ she whispered, ‘what has brought you here?’

‘My grief at losing you.’

‘Oh! go away at once. If the ogre comes back he will kill you.’

‘I swear by your head, queen of my heart, that I have not found you only to lose you again! If I must die, well, I must!’

‘Oh, what can I do for you?’

‘Anything you like!’

‘If I let you down a cord, can you make it fast under your arms, and climb up?’

‘Of course I can,’ said he.

So Dschemila lowered the cord, and Dschemil tied it round him, and climbed up to her window. Then they embraced each other tenderly, and burst into tears of joy.

‘But what shall I do when the ogre returns?’ asked she.

‘Trust to me,’ he said.

Now there was a chest in the room, where Dschemila kept her clothes. And she made Dschemil get into it, and lie at the bottom, and told him to

keep very still.

He was only hidden just in time, for the lid was hardly closed when the ogre's heavy tread was heard on the stairs. He flung open the door, bringing men's flesh for himself and lamb's flesh for the maiden. 'I smell the smell of a man!' he thundered. 'What is he doing here?'

'How could any one have come to this desert place?' asked the girl, and burst into tears.

'Do not cry,' said the ogre; 'perhaps a raven has dropped some scraps from his claws.'

'Ah, yes, I was forgetting,' answered she. 'One did drop some bones about.'

'Well, burn them to powder,' replied the ogre, 'so that I may swallow it.'

So the maiden took some bones and burned them, and gave them to the ogre, saying, 'Here is the powder, swallow it.'

And when he had swallowed the powder the ogre stretched himself out and went to sleep.

In a little while the man's flesh, which the maiden was cooking for the ogre's supper, called out and said:

'Hist! Hist!
A man lies in the kist!'

And the lamb's flesh answered:

'He is your brother,
And cousin of the other.'

The ogre moved sleepily, and asked, 'What did the meat say, Dschemila?'

'Only that I must be sure to add salt.'

'Well, add salt.'

'Yes, I have done so,' said she.

The ogre was soon sound asleep again, when the man's flesh called out a second time:

‘Hist! Hist!
A man lies in the kist!’

And the lamb’s flesh answered:

‘He is your brother,
And cousin of the other.’

‘What did it say, Dschemila?’ asked the ogre.
‘Only that I must add pepper.’
‘Well, add pepper.’
‘Yes, I have done so,’ said she.

The ogre had had a long day’s hunting, and could not keep himself awake. In a moment his eyes were tight shut, and then the man’s flesh called out for the third time:

‘Hist! Hist
A man lies in the kist,’

And the lamb’s flesh answered:

‘He is your brother,
And cousin of the other.’

‘What did it say, Dschemila?’ asked the ogre.
‘Only that it was ready, and that I had better take it off the fire.’
‘Then if it is ready, bring it to me, and I will eat it.’

So she brought it to him, and while he was eating she supped off the lamb’s flesh herself, and managed to put some aside for her cousin.

When the ogre had finished, and had washed his hands, he said to Dschemila: ‘Make my bed, for I am tired.’

So she made his bed, and put a nice soft pillow for his head, and tucked him up.

‘Father,’ she said suddenly.
‘Well, what is it?’
‘Dear father, if you are really asleep, why are your eyes always open?’

‘Why do you ask that, Dschemila? Do you want to deal treacherously with me?’

‘No, of course not, father. How could I, and what would be the use of it?’

‘Well, why do you want to know?’

‘Because last night I woke up and saw the whole place shining in a red light, which frightened me.’

‘That happens when I am fast asleep.’

‘And what is the good of the pin you always keep here so carefully?’

‘If I throw that pin in front of me, it turns into an iron mountain.’

‘And this darning needle?’

‘That becomes a sea.’

‘And this hatchet?’

‘That becomes a thorn hedge, which no one can pass through. But why do you ask all these questions? I am sure you have something in your head.’

‘Oh, I just wanted to know; and how could anyone find me out here?’ and she began to cry.

‘Oh, don’t cry, I was only in fun,’ said the ogre.

He was soon asleep again, and a yellow light shone through the castle.

‘Come quick!’ called Dschemil from the chest; ‘we must fly now while the ogre is asleep.’

‘Not yet,’ she said, ‘there is a yellow light shining. I don’t think he is asleep.’

So they waited for an hour. Then Dschemil whispered again: ‘Wake up! There is no time to lose!’

‘Let me see if he is asleep,’ said she, and she peeped in, and saw a red light shining. Then she stole back to her cousin, and asked, ‘But how are we to get out?’

‘Get the rope, and I will let you down.’

So she fetched the rope, the hatchet, and the pin and the needles, and said, ‘Take them, and put them in the pocket of your cloak, and be sure not to lose them.’

Dschemil put them carefully in his pocket, and tied the rope round her, and let her down over the wall.

‘Are you safe?’ he asked.

‘Yes, quite.’

‘Then untie the rope, so that I may draw it up.’

And Dschemila did as she was told, and in a few minutes he stood beside her.

Now all this time the ogre was asleep, and had heard nothing. Then his dog came to him and said, ‘O, sleeper, are you having pleasant dreams? Dschemila has forsaken you and run away.’

The ogre got out of bed, gave the dog a kick, then went back again, and slept till morning.

When it grew light, he rose, and called, ‘Dschemila! Dschemila!’ but he only heard the echo of his own voice! Then he dressed himself quickly; buckled on his sword and whistled to his dog, and followed the road which he knew the fugitives must have taken. ‘Cousin,’ said Dschemila suddenly, and turning round as she spoke.

‘What is it?’ answered he.

‘The ogre is coming after us. I saw him.’

‘But where is he? I don’t see him.’

‘Over there. He only looks about as tall as a needle.’

Then they both began to run as fast as they could, while the ogre and his dog kept drawing always nearer. A few more steps, and he would have been by their side, when Dschemila threw the darning needle behind her. In a moment it became an iron mountain between them and their enemy.

‘We will break it down, my dog and I,’ cried the ogre in a rage, and they dashed at the mountain till they had forced a path through, and came ever nearer and nearer.

‘Cousin!’ said Dschemila suddenly.

‘What is it?’

‘The ogre is coming after us with his dog.’

‘You go on in front then,’ answered he; and they both ran on as fast as they could, while the ogre and the dog drew always nearer and nearer.

‘They are close upon us!’ cried the maiden, glancing behind, ‘you must throw the pin.’

So Dschemil took the pin from his cloak and threw it behind him, and a dense thicket of thorns sprang up round them, which the ogre and his dog could not pass through.

‘I will get through it somehow, if I burrow underground,’ cried he, and very soon he and the dog were on the other side.

‘Cousin,’ said Dschemila, ‘they are close to us now.’

‘Go on in front, and fear nothing,’ replied Dschemil.

So she ran on a little way, and then stopped.

‘He is only a few yards away now,’ she said, and Dschemil flung the hatchet on the ground, and it turned into a lake.

‘I will drink, and my dog shall drink, till it is dry,’ shrieked the ogre, and the dog drank so much that it burst and died. But the ogre did not stop for that, and soon the whole lake was nearly dry. Then he exclaimed, ‘Dschemila, let your head become a donkey’s head, and your hair fur!’

But when it was done, Dschemil looked at her in horror, and said, ‘She is really a donkey, and not a woman at all!’

And he left her, and went home.

For two days poor Dschemila wandered about alone, weeping bitterly. When her cousin drew near his native town, he began to think over his conduct, and to feel ashamed of himself.

‘Perhaps by this time she has changed back to her proper shape,’ he said to himself, ‘I will go and see!’

So he made all the haste he could, and at last he saw her seated on a rock, trying to keep off the wolves, who longed to have her for dinner. He drove them off and said, ‘Get up, dear cousin, you have had a narrow escape.’

Dschemila stood up and answered, ‘Bravo, my friend. You persuaded me to fly with you, and then left me helplessly to my fate.’

‘Shall I tell you the truth?’ asked he.

‘Tell it.’

‘I thought you were a witch, and I was afraid of you.’

‘Did you not see me before my transformation? and did you not watch it happen under your very eyes, when the ogre bewitched me?’

‘What shall I do?’ said Dschemil. ‘If I take you into the town, everyone will laugh, and say, “Is that a new kind of toy you have got? It has hands like a woman, feet like a woman, the body of a woman; but its head is the head of an ass, and its hair is fur.”’

‘Well, what do you mean to do with me?’ asked Dschemila. ‘Better take me home to my mother by night, and tell no one anything about it.’

‘So I will,’ said he.

They waited where they were till it was nearly dark, then Dschemil brought his cousin home.

‘Is that Dschemil?’ asked the mother when he knocked softly.

‘Yes, it is.’

‘And have you found her?’

‘Yes, and I have brought her to you.’

‘Oh, where is she? let me see her!’ cried the mother.

‘Here, behind me,’ answered Dschemil.

But when the poor woman caught sight of her daughter, she shrieked, and exclaimed, ‘Are you making fun of me? When did I ever give birth to an ass?’

‘Hush!’ said Dschemil, ‘it is not necessary to let the whole world know! And if you look at her body, you will see two scars on it.’

‘Mother,’ sobbed Dschemila, ‘do you really not know your own daughter?’

‘Yes, of course I know her.’

‘What are her two scars then?’

‘On her thigh is a scar from the bite of a dog, and on her breast is the mark of a burn, where she pulled a lamp over her when she was little.’

‘Then look at me, and see if I am not your daughter,’ said Dschemila, throwing off her clothes and showing her two scars.

And at the sight her mother embraced her, weeping.

‘Dear daughter,’ she cried, ‘what evil fate has befallen you?’

‘It was the ogre who carried me off first, and then bewitched me,’ answered Dschemila.

‘But what is to be done with you?’ asked her mother.

‘Hide me away, and tell no one anything about me. And you, dear cousin, say nothing to the neighbours, and if they should put questions, you can make answer that I have not yet been found.’

‘So I will,’ replied he.

Then he and her mother took her upstairs and hid her in a cupboard, where she stayed for a whole month, only going out to walk when all the world was asleep.

Meanwhile Dschemil had returned to his own home, where his father and mother, his brothers and neighbours, greeted him joyfully.

‘When did you come back?’ said they, ‘and have you found Dschemila?’

‘No, I searched the whole world after her, and could hear nothing of her.’

‘Did you part company with the man who started with you?’

‘Yes; after three days he got so weak and useless he could not go on. It must be a month by now since he reached home again. I went on and visited every castle, and looked in every house. But there were no signs of her; and so I gave it up.’

And they answered him: ‘We told you before that it was no good. An ogre or an ogress must have snapped her up, and how can you expect to find her?’

‘I loved her too much to be still,’ he said.

But his friends did not understand, and soon they spoke to him again about it.

‘We will seek for a wife for you. There are plenty of girls prettier than Dschemila.’

‘I dare say; but I don’t want them.’

‘But what will you do with all the cushions and carpets, and beautiful things you bought for your house?’

‘They can stay in the chests.’

‘But the moths will eat them! For a few weeks, it is of no consequence, but after a year or two they will be quite useless.’

‘And if they have to lie there ten years I will have Dschemila, and her only, for my wife. For a month, or even two months, I will rest here quietly. Then I will go and seek her afresh.’

‘Oh, you are quite mad! Is she the only maiden in the world? There are plenty of others better worth having than she is.’

‘If there are I have not seen them! And why do you make all this fuss? Every man knows his own business best.

‘Why, it is you who are making all the fuss yourself.’

But Dschemil turned and went into the house, for he did not want to quarrel.

Three months later a Jew, who was travelling across the desert, came to the castle, and laid himself down under the wall to rest.

In the evening the ogre saw him there and said to him, ‘Jew, what are you doing here? Have you anything to sell?’

‘I have only some clothes,’ answered the Jew, who was in mortal terror of the ogre.

‘Oh, don’t be afraid of me,’ said the ogre, laughing. ‘I shall not eat you. Indeed, I mean to go a bit of the way with you myself.’

‘I am ready, gracious sir,’ replied the Jew, rising to his feet.

‘Well, go straight on till you reach a town, and in that town you will find a maiden called Dschemila and a young man called Dschemil. Take this mirror and this comb with you, and say to Dschemila, “Your father, the ogre, greets you, and begs you to look at your face in this mirror, and it will appear as it was before, and to comb your hair with this comb, and it will be as formerly.” If you do not carry out my orders, I will eat you the next time we meet.’

‘Oh, I will obey you punctually,’ cried the Jew.

After thirty days the Jew entered the gate of the town, and sat down in the first street he came to, hungry, thirsty, and very tired.

Quite by chance, Dschemil happened to pass by, and seeing a man sitting there, full in the glare of the sun, he stopped, and said, ‘Get up at once, Jew; you will have a sunstroke if you sit in such a place.’

‘Ah, good sir,’ replied the Jew, ‘for a whole month I have been travelling, and I am too tired to move.’

‘Which way did you come?’ asked Dschemil.

‘From out there,’ answered the Jew pointing behind him.

‘And you have been travelling for a month, you say? Well, did you see anything remarkable?’

‘Yes, good sir; I saw a castle, and lay down to rest under its shadow. And an ogre woke me, and told me to come to this town, where I should find a young man called Dschemil, and a girl called Dschemila.’

‘My name is Dschemil. What does the ogre want with me?’

‘He gave me some presents for Dschemila. How can I see her?’

‘Come with me, and you shall give them into her own hands.’

So the two went together to the house of Dschemil’s uncle, and Dschemil led the Jew into his aunt’s room.

‘Aunt!’ he cried, ‘this Jew who is with me has come from the ogre, and has brought with him, as presents, a mirror and a comb which the ogre has

sent her.’

‘But it may be only some wicked trick on the part of the ogre,’ said she.

‘Oh, I don’t think so,’ answered the young man, ‘give her the things.’

Then the maiden was called, and she came out of her hiding place, and went up to the Jew, saying, ‘Where have you come from, Jew?’

‘From your father the ogre.’

‘And what errand did he send you on?’

‘He told me I was to give you this mirror and this comb, and to say “Look in this mirror, and comb your hair with this comb, and both will become as they were formerly.”’

And Dschemila took the mirror and looked into it, and combed her hair with the comb, and she had no longer an ass’s head, but the face of a beautiful maiden.

Great was the joy of both mother and cousin at this wonderful sight, and the news that Dschemila had returned soon spread, and the neighbours came flocking in with greetings.

‘When did you come back?’

‘My cousin brought me.’

‘Why, he told us he could not find you!’

‘Oh, I did that on purpose,’ answered Dschemil. ‘I did not want everyone to know.’

Then he turned to his father and his mother, his brothers and his sisters-in-law, and said, ‘We must set to work at once, for the wedding will be to-day.’

A beautiful litter was prepared to carry the bride to her new home, but she shrank back, saying, ‘I am afraid, lest the ogre should carry me off again.’

‘How can the ogre get at you when we are all here?’ they said. ‘There are two thousand of us all told, and every man has his sword.’

‘He will manage it somehow,’ answered Dschemila, ‘he is a powerful king!’

‘She is right,’ said an old man. ‘Take away the litter, and let her go on foot if she is afraid.’

‘But it is absurd!’ exclaimed the rest; ‘how can the ogre get hold of her?’

‘I will not go,’ said Dschemila again. ‘You do not know that monster; I do.’

And while they were disputing the bridegroom arrived.

‘Let her alone. She shall stay in her father’s house. After all, I can live here, and the wedding feast shall be made ready.’

And so they were married at last, and died without having had a single quarrel.

[Marehen und Gedichte aus der Stadt Tripolis,]

JANNI AND THE DRAKEN

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Once there was a man who shunned the world, and lived in the wilderness. He owned nothing but a flock of sheep, whose milk and wool he sold, and so procured himself bread to eat; he also carried wooden spoons, and sold them. He had a wife and one little girl, and after a long time his wife had another child. The evening it was born the man went to the nearest village to fetch a nurse, and on the way he met a monk who begged him for a night's lodging. This the man willingly granted, and took him home with him. There being no one far nor near to baptize the child, the man asked the monk to do him this service, and the child was given the name of Janni.

In the course of time Janni's parents died, and he and his sister were left alone in the world; soon affairs went badly with them, so they determined to wander away to seek their fortune. In packing up, the sister found a knife which the monk had left for his godson, and this she gave to her brother.

Then they went on their way, taking with them the three sheep which were all that remained of their flocks. After wandering for three days they met a man with three dogs who proposed that they should exchange animals, he taking the sheep, and they the dogs. The brother and sister were quite pleased at this arrangement, and after the exchange was made they separated, and went their different ways.

Janni and his sister in course of time came to a great castle, in which dwelt forty Draken, who, when they heard that Janni had come, fled forty fathoms underground.

So Janni found the castle deserted, and abode there with his sister, and every day went out to hunt with the weapons the Draken had left in the castle.

One day, when he was away hunting, one of the Draken came up to get provisions, not knowing that there was anyone in the castle. When he saw Janni's sister he was terrified, but she told him not to be afraid, and by-

and-by they fell in love with each other, for every time that Janni went to hunt the sister called the Drakos up. Thus they went on making love to each other till at length, unknown to Janni, they got married. Then, when it was too late, the sister repented, and was afraid of Janni's wrath when he found it out.

One day the Drakos came to her, and said: 'You must pretend to be ill, and when Janni asks what ails you, and what you want, you must answer: "Cherries," and when he inquires where these are to be found, you must say: "There are some in a garden a day's journey from here." Then your brother will go there, and will never come back, for there dwell three of my brothers who will look after him well.'

Then the sister did as the Drakos advised, and next day Janni set out to fetch the cherries, taking his three dogs with him. When he came to the garden where the cherries grew he jumped off his horse, drank some water from the spring, which rose there, and fell directly into a deep sleep. The Draken came round about to eat him, but the dogs flung themselves on them and tore them in pieces, and scratched a grave in the ground with their paws, and buried the Draken so that Janni might not see their dead bodies. When Janni awoke, and saw his dogs all covered with blood, he believed that they had caught, somewhere, a wild beast, and was angry because they had left none of it for him. But he plucked the cherries, and took them back to his sister.

When the Drakos heard that Janni had come back, he fled for fear forty fathoms underground. And the sister ate the cherries and declared herself well again.

The next day, when Janni was gone to hunt, the Drakos came out, and advised the sister that she should pretend to be ill again, and when her brother asked her what she would like, she should answer 'Quinces,' and when he inquired where these were to be found, she should say: 'In a garden distant about two days' journey.' Then would Janni certainly be destroyed, for there dwelt six brothers of the Drakos, each of whom had two heads.

The sister did as she was advised, and next day Janni again set off, taking his three dogs with him. When he came to the garden he dismounted, sat down to rest a little, and fell fast asleep. First there came three Draken round about to eat him, and when these three had been

worried by the dogs, there came three others who were worried in like manner. Then the dogs again dug a grave and buried the dead Draken, that their master might not see them. When Janni awoke and beheld the dogs all covered with blood, he thought, as before, that they had killed a wild beast, and was again angry with them for leaving him nothing. But he took the quinces and brought them back to his sister, who, when she had eaten them, declared herself better. The Drakos, when he heard that Janni had come back, fled for fear forty fathoms deeper underground.

Next day, when Janni was hunting, the Drakos went to the sister and advised that she should again pretend to be ill, and should beg for some pears, which grew in a garden three days' journey from the castle. From this quest Janni would certainly never return, for there dwelt nine brothers of the Drakos, each of whom had three heads.

The sister did as she was told, and next day Janni, taking his three dogs with him, went to get the pears. When he came to the garden he laid himself down to rest, and soon fell asleep.

Then first came three Draken to eat him, and when the dogs had worried these, six others came and fought the dogs a long time. The noise of this combat awoke Janni, and he slew the Draken, and knew at last why the dogs were covered with blood.

After that he freed all whom the Draken held prisoners, amongst others, a king's daughter. Out of gratitude she would have taken him for her husband; but he put her off, saying: 'For the kindness that I have been able to do to you, you shall receive in this castle all the blind and lame who pass this way.' The princess promised him to do so, and on his departure gave him a ring.

So Janni plucked the pears and took them to his sister, who, when she had eaten them, declared she felt better. When, however, the Drakos heard that Janni had come back yet a third time safe and sound, he fled for fright forty fathoms deeper underground; and, next day, when Janni was away hunting, he crept out and said to the sister: 'Now are we indeed both lost, unless you find out from him wherein his strength lies, and then between us we will contrive to do away with him.'

When, therefore, Janni had come back from hunting, and sat at evening with his sister by the fire, she begged him to tell her wherein lay his

strength, and he answered: ‘It lies in my two fingers; if these are bound together then all my strength disappears.’

‘That I will not believe,’ said the sister, ‘unless I see it for myself.’

Then he let her tie his fingers together with a thread, and immediately he became powerless. Then the sister called up the Drakos, who, when he had come forth, tore out Janni’s eyes, gave them to his dogs to eat, and threw him into a dry well.

Now it happened that some travellers, going to draw water from this well, heard Janni groaning at the bottom. They came near, and asked him where he was, and he begged them to draw him up from the well, for he was a poor unfortunate man.

The travellers let a rope down and drew him up to daylight. It was not till then that he first became aware that he was blind, and he begged the travellers to lead him to the country of the king whose daughter he had freed, and they would be well repaid for their trouble.

When they had brought him there he sent to beg the princess to come to him; but she did not recognise him till he had shown her the ring she had given him.

Then she remembered him, and took him with her into the castle.

When she learnt what had befallen him she called together all the sorceresses in the country in order that they should tell her where the eyes were. At last she found one who declared that she knew where they were, and that she could restore them. This sorceress then went straight to the castle where dwelt the sister and the Drakos, and gave something to the dogs to eat which caused the eyes to reappear. She took them with her and put them back in Janni’s head, so that he saw as well as before.

Then he returned to the castle of the Drakos, whom he slew as well as his sister; and, taking his dogs with him, went back to the princess and they were immediately married.

THE PARTNERSHIP OF THE THIEF AND THE LIAR

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There was once upon a time a thief, who, being out of a job, was wandering by himself up and down the seashore. As he walked he passed a man who was standing still, looking at the waves.

‘I wonder,’ said the thief, addressing the stranger, ‘if you have ever seen a stone swimming?’

‘Most certainly I have,’ replied the other man, ‘and, what is more, I saw the same stone jump out of the water and fly through the air.’

‘This is capital,’ replied the thief. ‘You and I must go into partnership. We shall certainly make our fortunes. Let us start together for the palace of the king of the neighbouring country. When we get there, I will go into his presence alone, and will tell him the most startling thing I can invent. Then you must follow and back up my lie.’

Having agreed to do this, they set out on their travels. After several days’ journeying, they reached the town where the king’s palace was, and here they parted for a few hours, while the thief sought an interview with the king, and begged his majesty to give him a glass of beer.

‘That is impossible,’ said the king, ‘as this year there has been a failure of all the crops, and of the hops and the vines; so we have neither wine nor beer in the whole kingdom.’

‘How extraordinary!’ answered the thief. ‘I have just come from a country where the crops were so fine that I saw twelve barrels of beer made out of one branch of hops.’

‘I bet you three hundred florins that is not true,’ answered the king.

‘And I bet you three hundred florins it is true,’ replied the thief.

Then each staked his three hundred florins, and the king said he would decide the question by sending a servant into that country to see if it was true.

So the servant set out on horseback, and on the way he met a man, and he asked him whence he came. And the man told him that he came from

the self-same country to which the servant was at that moment bound.

‘If that is the case,’ said the servant, ‘you can tell me how high the hops grow in your country, and how many barrels of beer can be brewed from one branch?’

‘I can’t tell you that,’ answered the man, ‘but I happened to be present when the hops were being gathered in, and I saw that it took three men with axes three days to cut down one branch.’

Then the servant thought that he might save himself a long journey; so he gave the man ten florins, and told him he must repeat to the king what he had just told him. And when they got back to the palace, they came together into the king’s presence.

And the king asked him: ‘Well, is it true about the hops?’

‘Yes, sire, it is,’ answered the servant; ‘and here is a man I have brought with me from the country to confirm the tale.’

So the king paid the thief the three hundred florins; and the partners once more set out together in search of adventures. As they journeyed, the thief said to his comrade: ‘I will now go to another king, and will tell him something still more startling; and you must follow and back up my lie, and we shall get some money out of him; just see if we don’t.’

When they reached the next kingdom, the thief presented himself to the king, and requested him to give him a cauliflower. And the king answered: ‘Owing to a blight among the vegetables we have no cauliflower.’

‘That is strange,’ answered the thief. ‘I have just come from a country where it grows so well that one head of cauliflower filled twelve water-tubs.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ answered the king.

‘I bet you six hundred florins it is true,’ replied the thief.

‘And I bet you six hundred florins it is not true,’ answered the king. And he sent for a servant, and ordered him to start at once for the country whence the thief had come, to find out if his story of the cauliflower was true. On his journey the servant met with a man. Stopping his horse he asked him where he came from, and the man replied that he came from the country to which the other was travelling.

‘If that is the case,’ said the servant, ‘you can tell me to what size cauliflower grows in your country? Is it so large that one head fills twelve

water-tubs?’

‘I have not seen that,’ answered the man. ‘But I saw twelve waggons, drawn by twelve horses, carrying one head of cauliflower to the market.’

And the servant answered: ‘Here are ten florins for you, my man, for you have saved me a long journey. Come with me now, and tell the king what you have just told me.’

‘All right,’ said the man, and they went together to the palace; and when the king asked the servant if he had found out the truth about the cauliflower, the servant replied: ‘Sire, all that you heard was perfectly true; here is a man from the country who will tell you so.’

So the king had to pay the thief the six hundred florins. And the two partners set out once more on their travels, with their nine hundred florins. When they reached the country of the neighbouring king, the thief entered the royal presence, and began conversation by asking if his majesty knew that in an adjacent kingdom there was a town with a church steeple on which a bird had alighted, and that the steeple was so high, and the bird’s beak so long, that it had pecked the stars till some of them fell out of the sky.

‘I don’t believe it,’ said the king.

‘Nevertheless I am prepared to bet twelve hundred florins that it is true,’ answered the thief.

‘And I bet twelve hundred florins that it is a lie,’ replied the king. And he straightway sent a servant into the neighbouring country to find out the truth.

As he rode, the servant met a man coming in the opposite direction. So he hailed him and asked him where he came from. And the man replied that he came out of the very town to which the man was bound. Then the servant asked him if the story they had heard about the bird with the long beak was true.

‘I don’t know about that,’ answered the man, ‘as I have never seen the bird; but I once saw twelve men shoving all their might and main with brooms to push a monster egg into a cellar.’

‘That is capital,’ answered the servant, presenting the man with ten florins. ‘Come and tell your tale to the king, and you will save me a long journey.’

So, when the story was repeated to the king, there was nothing for him to do but to pay the thief the twelve hundred florins.

Then the two partners set out again with their ill-gotten gains, which they proceeded to divide into two equal shares; but the thief kept back three of the florins that belonged to the liar's half of the booty. Shortly afterwards they each married, and settled down in homes of their own with their wives. One day the liar discovered that he had been done out of three florins by his partner, so he went to his house and demanded them from him.

'Come next Saturday, and I will give them to you,' answered the thief. But as he had no intention of giving the liar the money, when Saturday morning came he stretched himself out stiff and stark upon the bed, and told his wife she was to say he was dead. So the wife rubbed her eyes with an onion, and when the liar appeared at the door, she met him in tears, and told him that as her husband was dead he could not be paid the three florins.

But the liar, who knew his partner's tricks, instantly suspected the truth, and said: 'As he has not paid me, I will pay him out with three good lashes of my riding whip.'

At these words the thief sprang to his feet, and, appearing at the door, promised his partner that if he would return the following Saturday he would pay him. So the liar went away satisfied with this promise.

But when Saturday morning came the thief got up early and hid himself under a truss of hay in the hay-loft.

When the liar appeared to demand his three florins, the wife met him with tears in her eyes, and told him that her husband was dead.

'Where have you buried him?' asked the liar.

'In the hay-loft,' answered the wife.

'Then I will go there, and take away some hay in payment of his debt,' said the liar. And proceeding to the hay-loft, he began to toss about the hay with a pitchfork, prodding it into the trusses of hay, till, in terror of his life, the thief crept out and promised his partner to pay him the three florins on the following Saturday.

When the day came he got up at sunrise, and going down into the crypt of a neighbouring chapel, stretched himself out quite still and stiff in an old stone coffin. But the liar, who was quite as clever as his partner, very

soon bethought him of the crypt, and set out for the chapel, confident that he would shortly discover the hiding-place of his friend. He had just entered the crypt, and his eyes were not yet accustomed to the darkness, when he heard the sound of whispering at the grated windows. Listening intently, he overheard the plotting of a band of robbers, who had brought their treasure to the crypt, meaning to hide it there, while they set out on fresh adventures. All the time they were speaking they were removing the bars from the window, and in another minute they would all have entered the crypt, and discovered the liar. Quick as thought he wound his mantle round him and placed himself, standing stiff and erect, in a niche in the wall, so that in the dim light he looked just like an old stone statue. As soon as the robbers entered the crypt, they set about the work of dividing their treasure. Now, there were twelve robbers, but by mistake the chief of the band divided the gold into thirteen heaps. When he saw his mistake he said they had not time to count it all over again, but that the thirteenth heap should belong to whoever among them could strike off the head of the old stone statue in the niche with one stroke. With these words he took up an axe, and approached the niche where the liar was standing. But, just as he had waved the axe over his head ready to strike, a voice was heard from the stone coffin saying, in sepulchral tones: ‘Clear out of this, or the dead will arise from their coffins, and the statues will descend from the walls, and you will be driven out more dead than alive.’ And with a bound the thief jumped out of his coffin and the liar from his niche, and the robbers were so terrified that they ran helter-skelter out of the crypt, leaving all their gold behind them, and vowing that they would never put foot inside the haunted place again. So the partners divided the gold between them, and carried it to their homes; and history tells us no more about them.

FORTUNATUS AND HIS PURSE

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Once upon a time there lived in the city of Famagosta, in the island of Cyprus, a rich man called Theodorus. He ought to have been the happiest person in the whole world, as he had all he could wish for, and a wife and little son whom he loved dearly; but unluckily, after a short time he always grew tired of everything, and had to seek new pleasures. When people are made like this the end is generally the same, and before Fortunatus (for that was the boy's name) was ten years old, his father had spent all his money and had not a farthing left.

But though Theodorus had been so foolish he was not quite without sense, and set about getting work at once. His wife, too, instead of reproaching him sent away the servants and sold their fine horses, and did all the work of the house herself, even washing the clothes of her husband and child.

Thus time passed till Fortunatus was sixteen. One day when they were sitting at supper, the boy said to Theodorus, 'Father, why do you look so sad. Tell me what is wrong, and perhaps I can help you.'

'Ah, my son, I have reason enough to be sad; but for me you would now have been enjoying every kind of pleasure, instead of being buried in this tiny house.'

'Oh, do not let that trouble you,' replied Fortunatus, 'it is time I made some money for myself. To be sure I have never been taught any trade. Still there must be something I can do. I will go and walk on the seashore and think about it.'

Very soon—sooner than he expected—a chance came, and Fortunatus, like a wise boy, seized on it at once. The post offered him was that of page to the Earl of Flanders, and as the Earl's daughter was just going to be married, splendid festivities were held in her honour, and at some of the tilting matches Fortunatus was lucky enough to win the prize. These prizes, together with presents from the lords and ladies of the court, who liked him for his pleasant ways, made Fortunatus feel quite a rich man.

But though his head was not turned by the notice taken of him, it excited the envy of some of the other pages about the Court, and one of them, called Robert, invented a plot to move Fortunatus out of his way. So he told the young man that the Earl had taken a dislike to him and meant to kill him; Fortunatus believed the story, and packing up his fine clothes and money, slipped away before dawn.

He went to a great many big towns and lived well, and as he was generous and not wiser than most youths of his age, he very soon found himself penniless. Like his father, he then began to think of work, and tramped half over Brittany in search of it. Nobody seemed to want him, and he wandered about from one place to another, till he found himself in a dense wood, without any paths, and not much light. Here he spent two whole days, with nothing to eat and very little water to drink, going first in one direction and then in another, but never being able to find his way out. During the first night he slept soundly, and was too tired to fear either man or beast, but when darkness came on for the second time, and growls were heard in the distance, he grew frightened and looked about for a high tree out of reach of his enemies. Hardly had he settled himself comfortably in one of the forked branches, when a lion walked up to a spring that burst from a rock close to the tree, and crouching down drank greedily. This was bad enough, but after all, lions do not climb trees, and as long as Fortunatus stayed up on his perch, he was quite safe. But no sooner was the lion out of sight, than his place was taken by a bear, and bears, as Fortunatus knew very well, are tree-climbers. His heart beat fast, and not without reason, for as the bear turned away he looked up and saw Fortunatus!

Now in those days every young man carried a sword slung to his belt, and it was a fashion that came in very handily for Fortunatus. He drew his sword, and when the bear got within a yard of him he made a fierce lunge forward. The bear, wild with pain, tried to spring, but the bough he was standing on broke with his weight, and he fell heavily to the ground. Then Fortunatus descended from his tree (first taking good care to see no other wild animals were in sight) and killed him with a single blow. He was just thinking he would light a fire and make a hearty dinner off bear’s flesh, which is not at all bad eating, when he beheld a beautiful lady standing by his side leaning on a wheel, and her eyes hidden by a bandage.

‘I am Dame Fortune,’ she said, ‘and I have a gift for you. Shall it be wisdom, strength, long life, riches, health, or beauty? Think well, and tell me what you will have.’

But Fortunatus, who had proved the truth of the proverb that ‘It’s ill thinking on an empty stomach,’ answered quickly, ‘Good lady, let me have riches in such plenty that I may never again be as hungry as I am now.’

And the lady held out a purse and told him he had only to put his hand into it, and he and his children would always find ten pieces of gold. But when they were dead it would be a magic purse no longer.

At this news Fortunatus was beside himself with joy, and could hardly find words to thank the lady. But she told him that the best thing he could do was to find his way out of the wood, and before bidding him farewell pointed out which path he should take. He walked along it as fast as his weakness would let him, until a welcome light at a little distance showed him that a house was near. It turned out to be an inn, but before entering Fortunatus thought he had better make sure of the truth of what the lady had told him, and took out the purse and looked inside. Sure enough there were the ten pieces of gold, shining brightly. Then Fortunatus walked boldly up to the inn, and ordered them to get ready a good supper at once, as he was very hungry, and to bring him the best wine in the house. And he seemed to care so little what he spent that everybody thought he was a great lord, and vied with each other who should run quickest when he called.

After a night passed in a soft bed, Fortunatus felt so much better that he asked the landlord if he could find him some men-servants, and tell him where any good horses were to be got. The next thing was to provide himself with smart clothes, and then to take a big house where he could give great feasts to the nobles and beautiful ladies who lived in palaces round about.

In this manner a whole year soon slipped away, and Fortunatus was so busy amusing himself that he never once remembered his parents whom he had left behind in Cyprus. But though he was thoughtless, he was not bad-hearted. As soon as their existence crossed his mind, he set about making preparations to visit them, and as he was not fond of being alone he looked round for some one older and wiser than himself to travel with him. It was not long before he had the good luck to come across an old

man who had left his wife and children in a far country many years before, when he went out into the world to seek the fortune which he never found. He agreed to accompany Fortunatus back to Cyprus, but only on condition he should first be allowed to return for a few weeks to his own home before venturing to set sail for an island so strange and distant. Fortunatus agreed to his proposal, and as he was always fond of anything new, said that he would go with him.

The journey was long, and they had to cross many large rivers, and climb over high mountains, and find their way through thick woods, before they reached at length the old man's castle. His wife and children had almost given up hopes of seeing him again, and crowded eagerly round him. Indeed, it did not take Fortunatus five minutes to fall in love with the youngest daughter, the most beautiful creature in the whole world, whose name was Cassandra.

'Give her to me for my wife,' he said to the old man, 'and let us all go together to Famagosta.'

So a ship was bought big enough to hold Fortunatus, the old man and his wife, and their ten children—five of them sons and five daughters. And the day before they sailed the wedding was celebrated with magnificent rejoicings, and everybody thought that Fortunatus must certainly be a prince in disguise. But when they reached Cyprus, he learned to his sorrow that both his father and mother were dead, and for some time he shut himself up in his house and would see nobody, full of shame at having forgotten them all these years. Then he begged that the old man and his wife would remain with him, and take the place of his parents.

For twelve years Fortunatus and Cassandra and their two little boys lived happily in Famagosta. They had a beautiful house and everything they could possibly want, and when Cassandra's sisters married the purse provided them each with a fortune. But at last Fortunatus grew tired of staying at home, and thought he should like to go out and see the world again. Cassandra shed many tears at first when he told her of his wishes, and he had a great deal of trouble to persuade her to give her consent. But on his promising to return at the end of two years she agreed to let him go. Before he went away he showed her three chests of gold, which stood in a room with an iron door, and walls twelve feet thick. 'If anything should happen to me,' he said, 'and I should never come back, keep one of the

chests for yourself, and give the others to our two sons.' Then he embraced them all and took ship for Alexandria.

The wind was fair and in a few days they entered the harbour, where Fortunatus was informed by a man whom he met on landing, that if he wished to be well received in the town, he must begin by making a handsome present to the Sultan. 'That is easily done,' said Fortunatus, and went into a goldsmith's shop, where he bought a large gold cup, which cost five thousand pounds. This gift so pleased the Sultan that he ordered a hundred casks of spices to be given to Fortunatus; Fortunatus put them on board his ship, and commanded the captain to return to Cyprus and deliver them to his wife, Cassandra. He next obtained an audience of the Sultan, and begged permission to travel through the country, which the Sultan readily gave him, adding some letters to the rulers of other lands which Fortunatus might wish to visit.

Filled with delight at feeling himself free to roam through the world once more, Fortunatus set out on his journey without losing a day. From court to court he went, astonishing everyone by the magnificence of his dress and the splendour of his presents. At length he grew as tired of wandering as he had been of staying at home, and returned to Alexandria, where he found the same ship that had brought him from Cyprus lying in the harbour. Of course the first thing he did was to pay his respects to the Sultan, who was eager to hear about his adventures.

When Fortunatus had told them all, the Sultan observed: 'Well, you have seen many wonderful things, but I have something to show you more wonderful still;' and he led him into a room where precious stones lay heaped against the walls. Fortunatus' eyes were quite dazzled, but the Sultan went on without pausing and opened a door at the farther end. As far as Fortunatus could see, the cupboard was quite bare, except for a little red cap, such as soldiers wear in Turkey.

'Look at this,' said the Sultan.

'But there is nothing very valuable about it,' answered Fortunatus. 'I've seen a dozen better caps than that, this very day.'

'Ah,' said the Sultan, 'you do not know what you are talking about. Whoever puts this cap on his head and wishes himself in any place, will find himself there in a moment.'

'But who made it?' asked Fortunatus.

‘That I cannot tell you,’ replied the Sultan.

‘Is it very heavy to wear?’ asked Fortunatus.

‘No, quite light,’ replied the Sultan, ‘just feel it.’

Fortunatus took the cap and put it on his head, and then, without thinking, wished himself back in the ship that was starting for Famagosta. In a second he was standing at the prow, while the anchor was being weighed, and while the Sultan was repenting of his folly in allowing Fortunatus to try on the cap, the vessel was making fast for Cyprus.

When it arrived, Fortunatus found his wife and children well, but the two old people were dead and buried. His sons had grown tall and strong, but unlike their father had no wish to see the world, and found their chief pleasure in hunting and tilting. In the main, Fortunatus was content to stay quietly at home, and if a restless fit did seize upon him, he was able to go away for a few hours without being missed, thanks to the cap, which he never sent back to the Sultan.

By-and-by he grew old, and feeling that he had not many days to live, he sent for his two sons, and showing them the purse and cap, he said to them: ‘Never part with these precious possessions. They are worth more than all the gold and lands I leave behind me. But never tell their secret, even to your wife or dearest friend. That purse has served me well for forty years, and no one knows whence I got my riches.’ Then he died and was buried by his wife Cassandra, and he was mourned in Famagosta for many years.

THE GOAT-FACED GIRL

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There was once upon a time a peasant called Masaniello who had twelve daughters. They were exactly like the steps of a staircase, for there was just a year between each sister. It was all the poor man could do to bring up such a large family, and in order to provide food for them he used to dig in the fields all day long. In spite of his hard work he only just succeeded in keeping the wolf from the door, and the poor little girls often went hungry to bed.

One day, when Masaniello was working at the foot of a high mountain, he came upon the mouth of a cave which was so dark and gloomy that even the sun seemed afraid to enter it. Suddenly a huge green lizard appeared from the inside and stood before Masaniello, who nearly went out of his mind with terror, for the beast was as big as a crocodile and quite as fierce looking.

But the lizard sat down beside him in the most friendly manner, and said: ‘Don’t be afraid, my good man, I am not going to hurt you; on the contrary, I am most anxious to help you.’

When the peasant heard these words he knelt before the lizard and said: ‘Dear lady, for I know not what to call you, I am in your power; but I beg of you to be merciful, for I have twelve wretched little daughters at home who are dependent on me.’

‘That’s the very reason why I have come to you,’ replied the lizard. ‘Bring me your youngest daughter to-morrow morning. I promise to bring her up as if she were my own child, and to look upon her as the apple of my eye.’

When Masaniello heard her words he was very unhappy, because he felt sure, from the lizard’s wanting one of his daughters, the youngest and tenderest too, that the poor little girl would only serve as dessert for the terrible creature’s supper. At the same time he said to himself, ‘If I refuse her request, she will certainly eat me up on the spot. If I give her what she asks she does indeed take part of myself, but if I refuse she will take the

whole of me. What am I to do, and how in the world am I to get out of the difficulty?'

As he kept muttering to himself the lizard said, 'Make up your mind to do as I tell you at once. I desire to have your youngest daughter, and if you won't comply with my wish, I can only say it will be the worse for you.'

Seeing that there was nothing else to be done, Masaniello set off for his home, and arrived there looking so white and wretched that his wife asked him at once: 'What has happened to you, my dear husband? Have you quarrelled with anyone, or has the poor donkey fallen down?'

'Neither the one nor the other,' answered her husband,' but something far worse than either. A terrible lizard has nearly frightened me out of my senses, for she threatened that if I did not give her our youngest daughter, she would make me repent it. My head is going round like a mill-wheel, and I don't know what to do. I am indeed between the Devil and the Deep Sea. You know how dearly I love Renzolla, and yet, if I fail to bring her to the lizard to-morrow morning, I must say farewell to life. Do advise me what to do.'

When his wife had heard all he had to say, she said to him: 'How do you know, my dear husband, that the lizard is really our enemy? May she not be a friend in disguise? And your meeting with her may be the beginning of better things and the end of all our misery. Therefore go and take the child to her, for my heart tells me that you will never repent doing so.'

Masaniello was much comforted by her words, and next morning as soon as it was light he took his little daughter by the hand and led her to the cave.

The lizard, who was awaiting the peasant's arrival, came forward to meet him, and taking the girl by the hand, she gave the father a sack full of gold, and said: 'Go and marry your other daughters, and give them dowries with this gold, and be of good cheer, for Renzolla will have both father and mother in me; it is a great piece of luck for her that she has fallen into my hands.'

Masaniello, quite overcome with gratitude, thanked the lizard, and returned home to his wife.

As soon as it was known how rich the peasant had become, suitors for the hands of his daughters were not wanting, and very soon he married

them all off; and even then there was enough gold left to keep himself and his wife in comfort and plenty all their days.

As soon as the lizard was left alone with Renzolla, she changed the cave into a beautiful palace, and led the girl inside. Here she brought her up like a little princess, and the child wanted for nothing. She gave her sumptuous food to eat, beautiful clothes to wear, and a thousand servants to wait on her.

Now, it happened, one day, that the king of the country was hunting in a wood close to the palace, and was overtaken by the dark. Seeing a light shining in the palace he sent one of his servants to ask if he could get a night's lodging there.

When the page knocked at the door the lizard changed herself into a beautiful woman, and opened it herself. When she heard the king's request she sent him a message to say that she would be delighted to see him, and give him all he wanted.

The king, on hearing this kind invitation, instantly betook himself to the palace, where he was received in the most hospitable manner. A hundred pages with torches came to meet him, a hundred more waited on him at table, and another hundred waved big fans in the air to keep the flies from him. Renzolla herself poured out the wine for him, and, so gracefully did she do it, that his Majesty could not take his eyes off her.

When the meal was finished and the table cleared, the king retired to sleep, and Renzolla drew the shoes from his feet, at the same time drawing his heart from his breast. So desperately had he fallen in love with her, that he called the fairy to him, and asked her for Renzolla's hand in marriage. As the kind fairy had only the girl's welfare at heart, she willingly gave her consent, and not her consent only, but a wedding portion of seven thousand golden guineas.

The king, full of delight over his good fortune, prepared to take his departure, accompanied by Renzolla, who never so much as thanked the fairy for all she had done for her. When the fairy saw such a base want of gratitude she determined to punish the girl, and, cursing her, she turned her face into a goat's head. In a moment Renzolla's pretty mouth stretched out into a snout, with a beard a yard long at the end of it, her cheeks sank in, and her shining plaits of hair changed into two sharp horns. When the king turned round and saw her he thought he must have taken leave of his

senses. He burst into tears, and cried out: ‘Where is the hair that bound me so tightly, where are the eyes that pierced through my heart, and where are the lips I kissed? Am I to be tied to a goat all my life? No, no! nothing will induce me to become the laughing-stock of my subjects for the sake of a goat-faced girl!’

When they reached his own country he shut Renzolla up in a little turret chamber of his palace, with a waiting-maid, and gave each of them ten bundles of flax to spin, telling them that their task must be finished by the end of the week.

The maid, obedient to the king’s commands, set at once to work and combed out the flax, wound it round the spindle, and sat spinning at her wheel so diligently that her work was quite done by Saturday evening. But Renzolla, who had been spoilt and petted in the fairy’s house, and was quite unaware of the change that had taken place in her appearance, threw the flax out of the window and said: ‘What is the king thinking of that he should give me this work to do? If he wants shirts he can buy them. It isn’t even as if he had picked me out of the gutter, for he ought to remember that I brought him seven thousand golden guineas as my wedding portion, and that I am his wife and not his slave. He must be mad to treat me like this.’

All the same, when Saturday evening came, and she saw that the waiting-maid had finished her task, she took fright lest she should be punished for her idleness. So she hurried off to the palace of the fairy, and confided all her woes to her. The fairy embraced her tenderly, and gave her a sack full of spun flax, in order that she might show it to the king, and let him see what a good worker she was. Renzolla took the sack without one word of thanks, and returned to the palace, leaving the kind fairy very indignant over her want of gratitude.

When the king saw the flax all spun, he gave Renzolla and the waiting-maid each a little dog, and told them to look after the animals and train them carefully.

The waiting-maid brought hers up with the greatest possible care, and treated it almost as if it were her son. But Renzolla said: ‘I don’t know what to think. Have I come among a lot of lunatics? Does the king imagine that I am going to comb and feed a dog with my own hands?’ With these

words she opened the window and threw the poor little beast out, and he fell on the ground as dead as a stone.

When a few months had passed the king sent a message to say he would like to see how the dogs were getting on. Renzolla, who felt very uncomfortable in her mind at this request, hurried off once more to the fairy. This time she found an old man at the door of the fairy's palace, who said to her: 'Who are you, and what do you want?'

When Renzolla heard his question she answered angrily: 'Don't you know me, old Goat-beard? And how dare you address me in such a way?'

'The pot can't call the kettle black,' answered the old man, 'for it is not I, but you who have a goat's head. Just wait a moment, you ungrateful wretch, and I will show you to what a pass your want of gratitude has brought you.'

With these words he hurried away, and returned with a mirror, which he held up before Renzolla. At the sight of her ugly, hairy face, the girl nearly fainted with horror, and she broke into loud sobs at seeing her countenance so changed.

Then the old man said: 'You must remember, Renzolla, that you are a peasant's daughter, and that the fairy turned you into a queen; but you were ungrateful, and never as much as thanked her for all she had done for you. Therefore she has determined to punish you. But if you wish to lose your long white beard, throw yourself at the fairy's feet and implore her to forgive you. She has a tender heart, and will, perhaps, take pity on you.'

Renzolla, who was really sorry for her conduct, took the old man's advice, and the fairy not only gave her back her former face, but she dressed her in a gold embroidered dress, presented her with a beautiful carriage, and brought her back, accompanied by a host of servants, to her husband. When the king saw her looking as beautiful as ever, he fell in love with her once more, and bitterly repented having caused her so much suffering.

So Renzolla lived happily ever afterwards, for she loved her husband, honoured the fairy, and was grateful to the old man for having told her the truth.

[From the Italian. Kletke.]

WHAT CAME OF PICKING FLOWERS

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There was once a woman who had three daughters whom she loved very much. One day the eldest was walking in a water-meadow, when she saw a pink growing in the stream. She stooped to pick the flower, but her hand had scarcely touched it, when she vanished altogether. The next morning the second sister went out into the meadow, to see if she could find any traces of the lost girl, and as a branch of lovely roses lay trailing across her path, she bent down to move it away, and in so doing, could not resist plucking one of the roses. In a moment she too had disappeared. Wondering what could have become of her two sisters, the youngest followed in their footsteps, and fell a victim to a branch of delicious white jessamine. So the old woman was left without any daughters at all.

She wept, and wept, and wept, all day and all night, and went on weeping so long, that her son, who had been a little boy when his sisters disappeared, grew up to be a tall youth. Then one night he asked his mother to tell him what was the matter.

When he had heard the whole story, he said, ‘Give me your blessing, mother, and I will go and search the world till I find them.’

So he set forth, and after he had travelled several miles without any adventures, he came upon three big boys fighting in the road. He stopped and inquired what they were fighting about, and one of them answered:

‘My lord! our father left to us, when he died, a pair of boots, a key, and a cap. Whoever puts on the boots and wishes himself in any place, will find himself there. The key will open every door in the world, and with the cap on your head no one can see you. Now our eldest brother wants to have all three things for himself, and we wish to draw lots for them.’

‘Oh, that is easily settled,’ said the youth. ‘I will throw this stone as far as I can, and the one who picks it up first, shall have the three things.’ So he took the stone and flung it, and while the three brothers were running after it, he drew hastily on the boots, and said, ‘Boots, take me to the place where I shall find my eldest sister.’

The next moment the young man was standing on a steep mountain before the gates of a strong castle guarded by bolts and bars and iron chains. The key, which he had not forgotten to put in his pocket, opened the doors one by one, and he walked through a number of halls and corridors, till he met a beautiful and richly-dressed young lady who started back in surprise at the sight of him, and exclaimed, ‘Oh, sir, how did you contrive *to* get in here?’ The young man replied that he was her brother, and told her by what means he had been able to pass through the doors. In return, she told him how happy she was, except for one thing, and that was, her husband lay under a spell, and could never break it till there should be put to death a man who could not die.

They talked together for a long time, and then the lady said he had better leave her as she expected her husband back at any moment, and he might not like him to be there; but the young man assured her she need not be afraid, as he had with him a cap which would make him invisible. They were still deep in conversation when the door suddenly opened, and a bird flew in, but he saw nothing unusual, for, at the first noise, the youth had put on his cap. The lady jumped up and brought a large golden basin, into which the bird flew, reappearing directly after as a handsome man. Turning to his wife, he cried, ‘I am sure someone is in the room!’ She got frightened, and declared that she was quite alone, but her husband persisted, and in the end she had to confess the truth.

‘But if he is really your brother, why did you hide him?’ asked he. ‘I believe you are telling me a lie, and if he comes back I shall kill him!’

At this the youth took off his cap, and came forward. Then the husband saw that he was indeed so like his wife that he doubted her word no longer, and embraced his brother-in-law with delight. Drawing a feather from his bird’s skin, he said, ‘If you are in danger and cry, “Come and help me, King of the Birds,” everything will go well with you.’

The young man thanked him and went away, and after he had left the castle he told the boots that they must take him to the place where his second sister was living. As before, he found himself at the gates of a huge castle, and within was his second sister, very happy with her husband, who loved her dearly, but longing for the moment when he should be set free from the spell that kept him half his life a fish. When he arrived and had been introduced by his wife to her brother, he welcomed him warmly, and

gave him a fish-scale, saying, ‘If you are in danger, call to me, “Come and help me, King of the Fishes,” and everything will go well with you.’

The young man thanked him and took his leave, and when he was outside the gates he told the boots to take him to the place where his youngest sister lived. The boots carried him to a dark cavern, with steps of iron leading up to it. Inside she sat, weeping and sobbing, and as she had done nothing else the whole time she had been there, the poor girl had grown very thin. When she saw a man standing before her, she sprang to her feet and exclaimed, ‘Oh, whoever you are, save me and take me from this horrible place!’ Then he told her who he was, and how he had seen her sisters, whose happiness was spoilt by the spell under which both their husbands lay, and she, in turn, related her story. She had been carried off in the water-meadow by a horrible monster, who wanted to make her marry him by force, and had kept her a prisoner all these years because she would not submit to his will. Every day he came to beg her to consent to his wishes, and to remind her that there was no hope of her being set free, as he was the most constant man in the world, and besides that he could never die. At these words the youth remembered his two enchanted brothers-in-law, and he advised his sister to promise to marry the old man, if he would tell her why he could never die. Suddenly everything began to tremble, as if it was shaken by a whirlwind, and the old man entered, and flinging himself at the feet of the girl, he said: ‘Are you still determined never to marry me? If so you will have to sit there weeping till the end of the world, for I shall always be faithful to my wish to marry you!’ ‘Well, I will marry you,’ she said, ‘if you will tell me why it is that you can never die.’

Then the old man burst into peals of laughter. ‘Ah, ah, ah! You are thinking how you would be able to kill me? Well, to do that, you would have to find an iron casket which lies at the bottom of the sea, and has a white dove inside, and then you would have to find the egg which the dove laid, and bring it here, and dash it against my head.’ And he laughed again in his certainty that no one had ever got down to the bottom of the sea, and that if they did, they would never find the casket, or be able to open it. When he could speak once more, he said, ‘Now you will be obliged to marry me, as you know my secret.’ But she begged so hard that the wedding might be put off for three days, that he consented, and went away

rejoicing at his victory. When he had disappeared, the brother took off the cap which had kept him invisible all this time, and told his sister not to lose heart as he hoped in three days she would be free. Then he drew on his boots, and wished himself at the seashore, and there he was directly. Drawing out the fish-scale, he cried, ‘Come and help me, King of the Fishes!’ and his brother-in-law swam up, and asked what he could do. The young man related the story, and when he had finished his listener summoned all the fishes to his presence. The last to arrive was a little sardine, who apologised for being so late, but said she had hurt herself by knocking her head against an iron casket that lay in the bottom of the sea. The king ordered several of the largest and strongest of his subjects to take the little sardine as a guide, and bring him the iron casket. They soon returned with the box placed across their backs and laid it down before him. Then the youth produced the key and said ‘Key, open that box!’ and the key opened it, and though they were all crowding round, ready to catch it, the white dove within flew away.

It was useless to go after it, and for a moment the young man’s heart sank. The next minute, however, he remembered that he had still his feather, and drew it out crying, ‘Come to me, King of the Birds!’ and a rushing noise was heard, and the King of the Birds perched on his shoulder, and asked what he could do to help him. His brother-in-law told him the whole story, and when he had finished the King of the Birds commanded all his subjects to hasten to his presence. In an instant the air was dark with birds of all sizes, and at the very last came the white dove, apologising for being so late by saying that an old friend had arrived at his nest, and he had been obliged to give him some dinner. The King of the Birds ordered some of them to show the young man the white dove’s nest, and when they reached it, there lay the egg which was to break the spell and set them all free. When it was safely in his pocket, he told the boots to carry him straight to the cavern where his youngest sister sat awaiting him.

Now it was already far on into the third day, which the old man had fixed for the wedding, and when the youth reached the cavern with his cap on his head, he found the monster there, urging the girl to keep her word and let the marriage take place at once. At a sign from her brother she sat down and invited the old monster to lay his head on her lap. He did so with

delight, and her brother standing behind her back passed her the egg unseen. She took it, and dashed it straight at the horrible head, and the monster started, and with a groan that people took for the rumblings of an earthquake, he turned over and died.

As the breath went out of his body the husbands of the two eldest daughters resumed their proper shapes, and, sending for their mother-in-law, whose sorrow was so unexpectedly turned into joy, they had a great feast, and the youngest sister was rich to the end of her days with the treasures she found in the cave, collected by the monster.

[From the Portuguese.]

THE STORY OF BENSURDATU

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There was once a king and a queen who had three wonderfully beautiful daughters, and their one thought, from morning till night, was how they could make the girls happy.

One day the princesses said to the king, ‘Dear father, we want so much to have a picnic, and eat our dinner in the country.’

‘Very well, dear children, let us have a picnic by all means,’ answered he, and gave orders that everything should be got ready.

When luncheon was prepared it was put into a cart, and the royal family stepped into a carriage and drove right away into the country. After a few miles they reached a house and garden belonging to the king, and close by was their favourite place for lunch. The drive had made them very hungry, and they ate with a hearty appetite, till almost all the food had disappeared.

When they had quite done, they said to their parents: ‘Now we should like to wander about the garden a little, but when you want to go home, just call to us.’ And they ran off, laughing, down a green glade, which led to the garden.

But no sooner had they stepped across the fence, than a dark cloud came down and covered them, and prevented them seeing whither they were going.

Meanwhile the king and queen sat lazily among the heather, and an hour or two slipped away. The sun was dropping towards the horizon, and they began to think it was time to go home. So they called to their daughters and called again, but no one answered them.

Frightened at the silence, they searched every corner of the garden, the house, and the neighbouring wood, but no trace of the girls was to be found anywhere. The earth seemed to have swallowed them up. The poor parents were in despair. The queen wept all the way home, and for many days after, and the king issued a proclamation that whoever should bring

back his lost daughters should have one of them to wife, and should, after his death, reign in his stead.

Now two young generals were at that time living at the court, and when they heard the king's declaration, they said one to the other: 'Let us go in search of them; perhaps we shall be the lucky persons.'

And they set out, each mounted on a strong horse, taking with them a change of raiment and some money.

But though they inquired at every village they rode through, they could hear nothing of the princesses, and by-and-by their money was all spent, and they were forced to sell their horses, or give up the search. Even this money only lasted a little while longer, and nothing but their clothes lay between them and starvation. They sold the spare garments that were bound on their saddles, and went in the coats they stood up in to the inn, to beg for some food, as they were really starving. When, however, they had to pay for what they had eaten and drank, they said to the host: 'We have no money, and naught but the clothes we stand up in. Take these, and give us instead some old rags, and let us stay here and serve you.' And the innkeeper was content with the bargain, and the generals remained, and were his servants.

All this time the king and queen remained in their palace hungering for their children, but not a word was heard of either of them or of the generals who had gone to seek for them.

Now there was living in the palace a faithful servant of the king's called Bensurdatu, who had served him for many years, and when Bensurdatu saw how grieved the king was, he lifted up his voice and said to him: 'Your majesty, let me go and seek your daughters.'

'No, no, Bensurdatu,' replied the king. 'Three daughters have I lost, and two generals, and shall I lose you also?'

But Bensurdatu said again: 'Let me now go, your majesty; trust me, and I will bring you back your daughters.'

Then the king gave way, and Bensurdatu set forth, and rode on till he came to the inn, where he dismounted and asked for food. It was brought by the two generals, whom he knew at once in spite of their miserable clothes, and, much astonished, asked them how in the world they came there.

They told him all their adventures, and he sent for the innkeeper, and said to him: ‘Give them back their garments, and I will pay everything that they owe you.’

And the innkeeper did as he was bid, and when the two generals were dressed in their proper clothes, they declared they would join Bensurdatu, and with him seek for the king’s daughters.

The three companions rode on for many miles, and at length they came to a wild place, without sign of a human being. It was getting dark, and fearing to be lost on this desolate spot they pushed on their horses, and at last saw a light in the window of a tiny hut.

‘Who comes there?’ asked a voice, as they knocked at the door.

‘Oh! have pity on us, and give us a night’s shelter,’ replied Bensurdatu; ‘we are three tired travellers who have lost our way.’

Then the door was opened by a very old woman who stood back, and beckoned them to enter. ‘Whence do you come, and whither do you go?’ said she.

‘Ah, good woman, we have a heavy task before us,’ answered Bensurdatu, ‘we are bound to carry the king’s daughters back to the palace!’

‘Oh, unhappy creatures,’ cried she, ‘you know not what you are doing! The king’s daughters were covered by a thick cloud, and no one knows where they may now be.’

‘Oh, tell us, if you know, my good woman,’ entreated Bensurdatu, ‘for with them lies all our happiness.’

‘Even if I were to tell you,’ answered she, ‘you could not rescue them. To do that you would have to go to the very bottom of a deep river, and though certainly you would find the king’s daughters there, yet the two eldest are guarded by two giants, and the youngest is watched by a serpent with seven heads.’

The two generals, who stood by listening, were filled with terror at her words, and wished to return immediately; but Bensurdatu stood firm, and said: ‘Now we have got so far we must carry the thing through. Tell us where the river is, so that we may get there as soon as possible.’ And the old woman told them, and gave them some cheese, wine, and bread, so that they should not set forth starving; and when they had eaten and drunk they laid themselves down to sleep.

The sun had only just risen above the hills next morning before they all woke, and, taking leave of the wise woman who had helped them, they rode on till they came to the river.

‘I am the eldest,’ said one of the generals, ‘and it is my right to go down first.’

So the others fastened a cord round him, and gave him a little bell, and let him down into the water. But scarcely had the river closed above his head when such dreadful rushing sounds and peals of thunder came crashing round about him that he lost all his courage, and rang his bell, if perchance it might be heard amidst all this clamour. Great was his relief when the rope began slowly to pull him upwards.

Then the other general plunged in; but he fared no better than the first, and was soon on dry ground again.

‘Well, you are a brave pair!’ said Bensurdatu, as he tied the rope round his own waist; ‘let us see what will happen to me.’ And when he heard the thunder and clamour round about him he thought to himself, ‘Oh, make as much noise as you like, it won’t hurt me!’ When his feet touched the bottom he found himself in a large, brilliantly lighted hall, and in the middle sat the eldest princess, and in front of her lay a huge giant, fast asleep. Directly she saw Bensurdatu she nodded to him, and asked with her eyes how he had come there.

For answer he drew his sword, and was about to cut off the giant’s head, when she stopped him quickly, and made signs to hide himself, as the giant was just beginning to wake. ‘I smell the flesh of a man!’ murmured he, stretching his great arms.

‘Why, how in the world could any man get down here?’ replied she; ‘you had better go to sleep again.’

So he turned over and went to sleep. Then the princess signed to Bensurdatu, who drew his sword and cut off the giant’s head with such a blow that it flew into the corner. And the heart of the princess leapt within her, and she placed a golden crown on the head of Bensurdatu, and called him her deliverer.

‘Now show me where your sisters are,’ he said, ‘that I may free them also.’

So the princess opened a door, and led him into another hall, wherein sat her next sister, guarded by a giant who was fast asleep. When the

second princess saw them, she made a sign to them to hide themselves, for the giant was showing symptoms of waking.

‘I smell man’s flesh!’ murmured he, sleepily.

‘Now, how could any man get down here?’ asked she; ‘go to sleep again.’ And as soon as he closed his eyes, Bensurdatu stole out from his corner, and struck such a blow at his head that it flew far, far away. The princess could not find words to thank Bensurdatu for what he had done, and she too placed in his hand a golden crown.

‘Now show me where your youngest sister is,’ said he, ‘that I may free her also.’

‘Ah! that I fear you will never be able to do,’ sighed they, ‘for she is in the power of a serpent with seven heads.’

‘Take me to him,’ replied Bensurdatu. ‘It will be a splendid fight.’

Then the princess opened a door, and Bensurdatu passed through, and found himself in a hall that was even larger than the other two. And there stood the youngest sister, chained fast to the wall, and before her was stretched a serpent with seven heads, horrible to see. As Bensurdatu came forward it twisted all its seven heads in his direction, and then made a quick dart to snatch him within its grasp. But Bensurdatu drew his sword and laid about him, till the seven heads were rolling on the floor. Flinging down his sword he rushed to the princess and broke her chains, and she wept for joy, and embraced him, and took the golden crown from off her head, and placed it in his hand.

‘Now we must go back to the upper world,’ said Bensurdatu, and led her to the bottom of the river. The other princesses were waiting there, and he tied the rope round the eldest, and rung his bell. And the generals above heard, and drew her gently up. They then unfastened the cord and threw it back into the river, and in a few moments the second princess stood beside her sister.

So now there were left only Bensurdatu and the youngest princess. ‘Dear Bensurdatu,’ said she, ‘do me a kindness, and let them draw you up before me. I dread the treachery of the generals.

‘No, no,’ replied Bensurdatu, ‘I certainly will not leave you down here. There is nothing to fear from my comrades.’

‘If it is your wish I will go up then; but first I swear that if you do not follow to marry me, I shall stay single for the rest of my life.’ Then he

bound the rope round her, and the generals drew her up.

But instead of lowering the rope again into the river, envy at the courage and success of Bensurdatu so filled the hearts of the two generals, that they turned away and left him to perish. And, more than that, they threatened the princesses, and forced them to promise to tell their parents that it was the two generals who had set them free. ‘And if they should ask you about Bensurdatu, you must say you have never seen him,’ they added; and the princesses, fearing for their lives, promised everything, and they rode back to court together.

The king and queen were beside themselves with joy when they saw their dear children once more. But when the generals had told their story, and the dangers they had run, the king declared that they had gained their reward, and that the two eldest princesses should become their wives.

And now we must see what poor Bensurdatu was doing.

He waited patiently a long, long time, but when the rope never came back he knew he had been right, and that his comrades had betrayed him. ‘Ah, now I shall never reach the world again,’ murmured he; but being a brave man, and knowing that moaning his fate would profit him nothing, he rose and began to search through the three halls, where, perhaps, he might find something to help him. In the last one stood a dish, covered with food, which reminded him that he was hungry, and he sat down and ate and drank.

Months passed away, when, one morning, as he was walking through the halls, he noticed a purse hanging on the wall, which had never been there before. He took it down to examine it, and nearly let it fall with surprise when a voice came from the purse saying: ‘What commands have you?’

‘Oh, take me out of this horrible place, and up into the world again; ‘and in a moment he was standing by the river bank, with the purse tightly grasped in his hand.

‘Now let me have the most beautiful ship that ever was built, all manned and ready for sea.’ And there was the ship, with a flag floating from its mast on which were the words, ‘King with the three crowns.’ Then Bensurdatu climbed on board, and sailed away to the city where the three princesses dwelt; and when he reached the harbour he blew trumpets and beat drums, so that every one ran to the doors and windows. And the

king heard too, and saw the beautiful vessel, and said to himself: ‘That must indeed be a mighty monarch, for he has three crowns while I have only one.’ So he hastened to greet the stranger, and invited him to his castle, for, thought he, ‘this will be a fine husband for my youngest daughter.’ Now, the youngest princess had never married, and had turned a deaf ear to all her wooers.

Such a long time had passed since Bensurdatu had left the palace, that the king never guessed for a moment that the splendidly clad stranger before him was the man whom he had so deeply mourned as dead. ‘Noble lord,’ said he, ‘let us feast and make merry together, and then, if it seem good to you, do me the honour to take my youngest daughter to wife.’

And Bensurdatu was glad, and they all sat down to a great feast, and there were great rejoicings. But only the youngest daughter was sad, for her thoughts were with Bensurdatu. After they arose from the table the king said to her, ‘Dear child, this mighty lord does you the honour to ask your hand in marriage.’

‘Oh, father,’ answered she, ‘spare me, I pray you, for I desire to remain single.’

Then Bensurdatu turned to her, and said: ‘And if I were Bensurdatu, would you give the same answer to me?’

And as she stood silently gazing at him, he added: ‘Yes, I am Bensurdatu; and this is my story.’

The king and queen had their hearts stirred within them at the tale of his adventures, and when he had ended the king stretched out his hand, and said: ‘Dear Bensurdatu, my youngest daughter shall indeed be your wife; and when I die my crown shall be yours. As for the men who have betrayed you, they shall leave the country and you shall see them no more.’

And the wedding feast was ordered, and rejoicings were held for three days over the marriage of Bensurdatu and the youngest princess.

[From the Sicilianische Märchen.]

THE MAGICIAN’S HORSE

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Once upon a time, there was a king who had three sons. Now it happened that one day the three princes went out hunting in a large forest at some distance from their father’s palace, and the youngest prince lost his way, so his brothers had to return home without him.

For four days the prince wandered through the glades of the forest, sleeping on moss beneath the stars at night, and by day living on roots and wild berries. At last, on the morning of the fifth day, he came to a large open space in the middle of the forest, and here stood a stately palace; but neither within nor without was there a trace of human life. The prince entered the open door and wandered through the deserted rooms without seeing a living soul. At last he came on a great hall, and in the centre of the hall was a table spread with dainty dishes and choice wines. The prince sat down, and satisfied his hunger and thirst, and immediately afterwards the table disappeared from his sight. This struck the prince as very strange; but though he continued his search through all the rooms, upstairs and down, he could find no one to speak to. At last, just as it was beginning to get dark, he heard steps in the distance and he saw an old man coming towards him up the stairs.

‘What are you doing wandering about my castle?’ asked the old man.

To whom the prince replied: ‘I lost my way hunting in the forest. If you will take me into your service, I should like to stay with you, and will serve you faithfully.’

‘Very well,’ said the old man. ‘You may enter my service. You will have to keep the stove always lit, you will have to fetch the wood for it from the forest, and you will have the charge of the black horse in the stables. I will pay you a florin a day, and at meal times you will always find the table in the hall spread with food and wine, and you can eat and drink as much as you require.’

The prince was satisfied, and he entered the old man’s service, and promised to see that there was always wood on the stove, so that the fire

should never die out. Now, though he did not know it, his new master was a magician, and the flame of the stove was a magic fire, and if it had gone out the magician would have lost a great part of his power.

One day the prince forgot, and let the fire burn so low that it very nearly burnt out. Just as the flame was flickering the old man stormed into the room.

‘What do you mean by letting the fire burn so low?’ he growled. ‘I have only arrived in the nick of time.’ And while the prince hastily threw a log on the stove and blew on the ashes to kindle a glow, his master gave him a severe box on the ear, and warned him that if ever it happened again it would fare badly with him.

One day the prince was sitting disconsolate in the stables when, to his surprise, the black horse spoke to him.

‘Come into my stall,’ it said, ‘I have something to say to you. Fetch my bridle and saddle from that cupboard and put them on me. Take the bottle that is beside them; it contains an ointment which will make your hair shine like pure gold; then put all the wood you can gather together on to the stove, till it is piled quite high up.’

So the prince did what the horse told him; he saddled and bridled the horse, he put the ointment on his hair till it shone like gold, and he made such a big fire in the stove that the flames sprang up and set fire to the roof, and in a few minutes the palace was burning like a huge bonfire.

Then he hurried back to the stables, and the horse said to him: ‘There is one thing more you must do. In the cupboard you will find a looking-glass, a brush and a riding-whip. Bring them with you, mount on my back, and ride as hard as you can, for now the house is burning merrily.’

The prince did as the horse bade him. Scarcely had he got into the saddle than the horse was off and away, galloping at such a pace that, in a short time, the forest and all the country belonging to the magician lay far behind them.

In the meantime the magician returned to his palace, which he found in smouldering ruins. In vain he called for his servant. At last he went to look for him in the stables, and when he discovered that the black horse had disappeared too, he at once suspected that they had gone together; so he mounted a roan horse that was in the next stall, and set out in pursuit.

As the prince rode, the quick ears of his horse heard the sound of pursuing feet.

‘Look behind you,’ he said, ‘and see if the old man is following.’ And the prince turned in his saddle and saw a cloud like smoke or dust in the distance.

‘We must hurry,’ said the horse.

After they had galloped for some time, the horse said again: ‘Look behind, and see if he is still at some distance.’

‘He is quite close,’ answered the prince.

‘Then throw the looking-glass on the ground,’ said the horse. So the prince threw it; and when the magician came up, the roan horse stepped on the mirror, and crash! his foot went through the glass, and he stumbled and fell, cutting his feet so badly that there was nothing for the old man to do but to go slowly back with him to the stables, and put new shoes on his feet. Then they started once more in pursuit of the prince, for the magician set great value on the horse, and was determined not to lose it.

In the meanwhile the prince had gone a great distance; but the quick ears of the black horse detected the sound of following feet from afar.

‘Dismount,’ he said to the prince; ‘put your ear to the ground, and tell me if you do not hear a sound.’

So the prince dismounted and listened. ‘I seem to hear the earth tremble,’ he said; ‘I think he cannot be very far off.’

‘Mount me at once,’ answered the horse, ‘and I will gallop as fast as I can.’ And he set off so fast that the earth seemed to fly from under his hoofs.

‘Look back once more,’ he said, after a short time, ‘and see if he is in sight.’

‘I see a cloud and a flame,’ answered the prince; ‘but a long way off.’

‘We must make haste,’ said the horse. And shortly after he said: ‘Look back again; he can’t be far off now.’

The prince turned in his saddle, and exclaimed: ‘He is close behind us, in a minute the flame from his horse’s nostrils will reach us.’

‘Then throw the brush on the ground,’ said the horse.

And the prince threw it, and in an instant the brush was changed into such a thick wood that even a bird could not have got through it, and when the old man got up to it the roan horse came suddenly to a stand-still, not

able to advance a step into the thick tangle. So there was nothing for the magician to do but to retrace his steps, to fetch an axe, with which he cut himself a way through the wood. But it took him some time, during which the prince and the black horse got on well ahead.

But once more they heard the sound of pursuing feet. ‘Look back,’ said the black horse, ‘and see if he is following.’

‘Yes,’ answered the prince, ‘this time I hear him distinctly.

‘Let us hurry on,’ said the horse. And a little later he said: ‘Look back now, and see if he is in sight.’

‘Yes,’ said the prince, turning round, ‘I see the flame; he is close behind us.’

‘Then you must throw down the whip,’ answered the horse.’ And in the twinkling of an eye the whip was changed into a broad river. When the old man got up to it he urged the roan horse into the water, but as the water mounted higher and higher, the magic flame which gave the magician all his power grew smaller and smaller, till, with a fizz, it went out, and the old man and the roan horse sank in the river and disappeared. When the prince looked round they were no longer to be seen.

‘Now,’ said the horse, ‘you may dismount; there is nothing more to fear, for the magician is dead. Beside that brook you will find a willow wand. Gather it, and strike the earth with it, and it will open and you will see a door at your feet.’

When the prince had struck the earth with the wand a door appeared, and opened into a large vaulted stone hall.

‘Lead me into that hall,’ said the horse, ‘I will stay there; but you must go through the fields till you reach a garden, in the midst of which is a king’s palace. When you get there you must ask to be taken into the king’s service. Good-bye, and don’t forget me.’

So they parted; but first the horse made the prince promise not to let anyone in the palace see his golden hair. So he bound a scarf round it, like a turban, and the prince set out through the fields, till he reached a beautiful garden, and beyond the garden he saw the walls and towers of a stately palace. At the garden gate he met the gardener, who asked him what he wanted.

‘I want to take service with the king,’ replied the prince.

‘Well, you may stay and work under me in the garden,’ said the man; for as the prince was dressed like a poor man, he could not tell that he was a king’s son. ‘I need someone to weed the ground and to sweep the dead leaves from the paths. You shall have a florin a day, a horse to help you to cart the leaves away, and food and drink.’

So the prince consented, and set about his work. But when his food was given to him he only ate half of it; the rest he carried to the vaulted hall beside the brook, and gave to the black horse. And this he did every day, and the horse thanked him for his faithful friendship.

One evening, as they were together, after his work in the garden was over, the horse said to him: ‘To-morrow a large company of princes and great lords are coming to your king’s palace. They are coming from far and near, as wooers for the three princesses. They will all stand in a row in the courtyard of the palace, and the three princesses will come out, and each will carry a diamond apple in her hand, which she will throw into the air. At whosesoever feet the apple falls he will be the bridegroom of that princess. You must be close by in the garden at your work. The apple of the youngest princess, who is much the most beautiful of the sisters, will roll past the wooers and stop in front of you. Pick it up at once and put it in your pocket.’

The next day, when the wooers were all assembled in the courtyard of the castle, everything happened just as the horse had said. The princesses threw the apples into the air, and the diamond apple of the youngest princess rolled past all the wooers, out on to the garden, and stopped at the feet of the young gardener, who was busy sweeping the leaves away. In a moment he had stooped down, picked up the apple and put it in his pocket. As he stooped the scarf round his head slipped a little to one side, and the princess caught sight of his golden hair, and loved him from that moment.

But the king was very sad, for his youngest daughter was the one he loved best. But there was no help for it; and the next day a threefold wedding was celebrated at the palace, and after the wedding the youngest princess returned with her husband to the small hut in the garden where he lived.

Some time after this the people of a neighbouring country went to war with the king, and he set out to battle, accompanied by the husbands of his two eldest daughters mounted on stately steeds. But the husband of the

youngest daughter had nothing but the old broken-down horse which helped him in his garden work; and the king, who was ashamed of this son-in-law, refused to give him any other.

So as he was determined not to be left behind, he went into the garden, mounted the sorry nag, and set out. But scarcely had he ridden a few yards before the horse stumbled and fell. So he dismounted and went down to the brook, to where the black horse lived in the vaulted hall. And the horse said to him: ‘Saddle and bridle me, and then go into the next room and you will find a suit of armour and a sword. Put them on, and we will ride forth together to battle.’

And the prince did as he was told; and when he had mounted the horse his armour glittered in the sun, and he looked so brave and handsome, that no one would have recognised him as the gardener who swept away the dead leaves from the paths. The horse bore him away at a great pace, and when they reached the battle-field they saw that the king was losing the day, so many of his warriors had been slain. But when the warrior on his black charger and in glittering armour appeared on the scene, hewing right and left with his sword, the enemy were dismayed and fled in all directions, leaving the king master of the field. Then the king and his two sons-in-law, when they saw their deliverer, shouted, and all that was left of the army joined in the cry: ‘A god has come to our rescue!’ And they would have surrounded him, but his black horse rose in the air and bore him out of their sight.

Soon after this, part of the country rose in rebellion against the king, and once more he and his two sons-in-law had to fare forth to battle. And the son-in-law who was disguised as a gardener wanted to fight too. So he came to the king and said: ‘Dear father, let me ride with you to fight your enemies.’

‘I don’t want a blockhead like you to fight for me,’ answered the king. ‘Besides, I haven’t got a horse fit for you. But see, there is a carter on the road carting hay; you may take his horse.’

So the prince took the carter’s horse, but the poor beast was old and tired, and after it had gone a few yards it stumbled and fell. So the prince returned sadly to the garden and watched the king ride forth at the head of the army accompanied by his two sons-in-law. When they were out of sight the prince betook himself to the vaulted chamber by the brook-side,

and having taken counsel of the faithful black horse, he put on the glittering suit of armour, and was borne on the back of the horse through the air, to where the battle was being fought. And once more he routed the king's enemies, hacking to right and left with his sword. And again they all cried: 'A god has come to our rescue!' But when they tried to detain him the black horse rose in the air and bore him out of their sight.

When the king and his sons-in-law returned home they could talk of nothing but the hero who had fought for them, and all wondered who he could be.

Shortly afterwards the king of a neighbouring country declared war, and once more the king and his sons-in-law and his subjects had to prepare themselves for battle, and once more the prince begged to ride with them, but the king said he had no horse to spare for him. 'But,' he added, 'you may take the horse of the woodman who brings the wood from the forest, it is good enough for you.'

So the prince took the woodman's horse, but it was so old and useless that it could not carry him beyond the castle gates. So he betook himself once more to the vaulted hall, where the black horse had prepared a still more magnificent suit of armour for him than the one he had worn on the previous occasions, and when he had put it on, and mounted on the back of the horse, he bore him straight to the battle-field, and once more he scattered the king's enemies, fighting single-handed in their ranks, and they fled in all directions. But it happened that one of the enemy struck with his sword and wounded the prince in the leg. And the king took his own pocket-handkerchief, with his name and crown embroidered on it, and bound it round the wounded leg. And the king would fain have compelled him to mount in a litter and be carried straight to the palace, and two of his knights were to lead the black charger to the royal stables. But the prince put his hand on the mane of his faithful horse, and managed to pull himself up into the saddle, and the horse mounted into the air with him. Then they all shouted and cried: 'The warrior who has fought for us is a god! He must be a god.'

And throughout all the kingdom nothing else was spoken about, and all the people said: 'Who can the hero be who has fought for us in so many battles? He cannot be a man, he must be a god.'

And the king said: ‘If only I could see him once more, and if it turned out that after all he was a man and not a god, I would reward him with half my kingdom.’

Now when the prince reached his home—the gardener’s hut where he lived with his wife—he was weary, and he lay down on his bed and slept. And his wife noticed the handkerchief bound round his wounded leg, and she wondered what it could be. Then she looked at it more closely and saw in the corner that it was embroidered with her father’s name and the royal crown. So she ran straight to the palace and told her father. And he and his two sons-in-law followed her back to her house, and there the gardener lay asleep on his bed. And the scarf that he always wore bound round his head had slipped off, and his golden hair gleamed on the pillow. And they all recognised that this was the hero who had fought and won so many battles for them.

Then there was great rejoicing throughout the land, and the king rewarded his son-in-law with half of his kingdom, and he and his wife reigned happily over it.

THE LITTLE GRAY MAN

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A nun, a countryman, and a blacksmith were once wandering through the world together. One day they lost their way in a thick, dark forest, and were thankful when they saw, in the distance, the walls of a house, where they hoped they might obtain refuge for the night. When they got close to the house they found that it was an old deserted castle, fast falling into ruins, but with some of the rooms in it still habitable. As they were homeless they determined to take up their abode in the castle, and they arranged that one of them should always stay at home and keep house, while the other two went out into the world to seek their fortunes.

The lot of remaining at home fell first to the nun, and when the countryman and the blacksmith had gone out into the wood, she set to work, tidied up the house, and prepared all the food for the day. As her companions did not come home for their mid-day meal, she ate up her own portion and put the rest in the oven to keep warm. Just as she was sitting down to sew, the door opened and a little gray man came in, and, standing before her, said: ‘Oh! how cold I am!’

The nun was very sorry for him, and said at once: ‘Sit down by the fire and warm yourself.’

The little man did as he was told, and soon called out: ‘Oh! how hungry I am!’

The nun answered: ‘There is food in the oven, help yourself.’

The little man did not need to be told twice, for he set to work and ate up everything with the greatest possible despatch. When the nun saw this she was very angry, and scolded the dwarf because he had left nothing for her companions.

The little man resented her words, and flew into such a passion that he seized the nun, beat her, and threw her first against one wall and then against the other. When he had nearly killed her he left her lying on the floor, and hastily walked out of the house.

In the evening the countryman and the blacksmith returned home, and when they found, on demanding their dinner, that there was nothing left for them, they reproached the nun bitterly, and refused to believe her when she tried to tell them what had happened.

The next day the countryman asked to be left in charge of the house, and promised that, if he remained at home, no one should go hungry to bed. So the other two went out into the forest, and the countryman having prepared the food for the day, ate up his own portion, and put the rest in the oven. Just as he had finished clearing away, the door opened and the little gray man walked in, and this time he had two heads. He shook and trembled as before, and exclaimed: ‘Oh! how cold I am.’

The countryman, who was frightened out of his wits, begged him to draw near the fire and warm himself.

Soon after the dwarf looked greedily round, and said: ‘Oh! how hungry I am!’

‘There is food in the oven, so you can eat,’ replied the countryman.

Then the little man fell to with both his heads, and soon finished the last morsel.

When the countryman scolded him for this proceeding he treated him exactly as he had done the nun, and left the poor fellow more dead than alive.

Now when the blacksmith came home with the nun in the evening, and found nothing for supper, he flew into a passion; and swore that he would stay at home the following day, and that no one should go supperless to bed.

When day dawned the countryman and the nun set out into the wood, and the blacksmith prepared all the food for the day as the others had done. Again the gray dwarf entered the house without knocking, and this time he had three heads. When he complained of cold, the blacksmith told him to sit near the fire; and when he said he was hungry, the blacksmith put some food on a plate and gave it to him. The dwarf made short work of what was provided for him, and then, looking greedily round with his six eyes, he demanded more. When the blacksmith refused to give him another morsel, he flew into a terrible rage, and proceeded to treat him in the same way as he had treated his companions.

But the blacksmith was a match for him, for he seized a huge hammer and struck off two of the dwarf's heads with it. The little man yelled with pain and rage, and hastily fled from the house. The blacksmith ran after him, and pursued him for a long way; but at last they came to an iron door, and through it the little creature vanished. The door shut behind him, and the blacksmith had to give up the pursuit and return home. He found that the nun and the countryman had come back in the meantime, and they were much delighted when he placed some food before them, and showed them the two heads he had struck off with his hammer. The three companions determined there and then to free themselves from the power of the gray dwarf, and the very next day they set to work to find him.

They had to walk a long way, and to search for many hours, before they found the iron door through which the dwarf had disappeared; and when they had found it they had the greatest difficulty in opening it. When at last they succeeded in forcing the lock, they entered a large hall, in which sat a young and lovely girl, working at a table. The moment she saw the nun, the blacksmith, and the countryman, she fell at their feet, thanking them with tears in her eyes for having set her free. She told them that she was a king's daughter, who had been shut up in the castle by a mighty magician. The day before, just about noon, she had suddenly felt the magic power over her disappear, and ever since that moment she had eagerly awaited the arrival of her deliverers. She went on to say that there was yet another princess shut up in the castle, who had also fallen under the might of the magician.

They wandered through many halls and rooms till at last they found the second princess, who was quite as grateful as the first, and thanked the three companions most warmly for having set her free.

Then the princesses told their rescuers that a great treasure lay hidden in the cellars of the castle, but that it was carefully guarded by a fierce and terrible dog.

Nothing daunted, they all went down below at once, and found the fierce animal mounting guard over the treasure as the princesses had said. But one blow from the blacksmith's hammer soon made an end of the monster, and they found themselves in a vaulted chamber full of gold and silver and precious stones. Beside the treasure stood a young and handsome man, who advanced to meet, them, and thanked the nun, the

blacksmith, and the countryman, for having freed him from the magic spell he was under. He told them that he was a king’s son, who had been banished to this castle by a wicked magician, and that he had been changed into the three-headed dwarf. When he had lost two of his heads the magic power over the two princesses had been removed, and when the blacksmith had killed the horrible dog, then he too had been set free.

To show his gratitude he begged the three companions to divide the treasure between them, which they did; but there was so much of it that it took a very long time.

The princesses, too, were so grateful to their rescuers, that one married the blacksmith, and the other the countryman.

Then the prince claimed the nun as his bride, and they all lived happily together till they died.

[From the German. Kletke.]

HERR LAZARUS AND THE DRAKEN

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Once upon a time there was a cobbler called Lazarus, who was very fond of honey. One day, as he ate some while he sat at work, the flies collected in such numbers that with one blow he killed forty. Then he went and ordered a sword to be made for him, on which he had written these words: ‘With one blow I have slain forty.’ When the sword was ready he took it and went out into the world, and when he was two days’ journey from home he came to a spring, by which he laid himself down and slept.

Now in that country there dwelt Draken, one of whom came to the spring to draw water; there he found Lazarus sleeping, and read what was written on his sword. Then he went back to his people and told them what he had seen, and they all advised him to make fellowship with this powerful stranger. So the Draken returned to the spring, awoke Lazarus, and said that if it was agreeable to him they should make fellowship together.

Lazarus answered that he was willing, and after a priest had blessed the fellowship, they returned together to the other Draken, and Lazarus dwelt among them. After some days they told him that it was their custom to take it in turns to bring wood and water, and as he was now of their company, he must take his turn. They went first for water and wood, but at last it came to be Lazarus’s turn to go for water. The Draken had a great leathern bag, holding two hundred measures of water. This Lazarus could only, with great difficulty, drag empty to the spring, and because he could not carry it back full, he did not fill it at all, but, instead, he dug up the ground all round the spring.

As Lazarus remained so long away, the Draken sent one of their number to see what had become of him, and when this one came to the spring, Lazarus said to him: ‘We will no more plague ourselves by carrying water every day. I will bring the entire spring home at once, and so we shall be freed from this burden.’

But the Draken called out: ‘On no account, Herr Lazarus, else we shall all die of thirst; rather will we carry the water ourselves in turns, and you alone shall be exempt.’

Next it comes to be Lazarus’s turn to bring the wood. Now the Draken, when they fetched the wood, always took an entire tree on their shoulder, and so carried it home. Because Lazarus could not imitate them in this, he went to the forest, tied all the trees together with a thick rope, and remained in the forest till evening. Again the Draken sent one of them after him to see what had become of him, and when this one asked what he was about, Lazarus answered: ‘I will bring the entire forest home at once, so that after that we may have rest.’

But the Draken called out: ‘By no means, Herr Lazarus, else we shall all die of cold; rather will we go ourselves to bring wood, and let you be free.’ And then the Draken tore up one tree, threw it over his shoulder, and so carried it home.

When they had lived together some time, the Draken became weary of Lazarus, and agreed among themselves to kill him; each Draken, in the night while Lazarus slept, should strike him a blow with a hatchet. But Lazarus heard of this scheme, and when the evening came, he took a log of wood, covered it with his cloak, laid it in the place where he usually slept, and then hid himself. In the night the Draken came, and each one hit the log a blow with his hatchet, till it flew in pieces.

Then they believed their object was gained, and they lay down again.

Thereupon Lazarus took the log, threw it away, and laid himself down in its stead. Towards dawn, he began to groan, and when the Draken heard that, they asked what ailed him, to which he made answer: ‘The gnats have stung me horribly.’ This terrified the Draken, for they believed that Lazarus took their blows for gnat-stings, and they determined at any price to get rid of him. Next morning, therefore, they asked him if he had not wife or child, and said that if he would like to go and visit them they would give him a bag of gold to take away with him. He agreed willingly to this, but asked further that one of the Draken should go with him to carry the bag of gold. They consented, and one was sent with him.

When they had come to within a short; distance of Lazarus’s house, he said to the Draken: ‘Stop here, in the meantime, for I must go on in front and tie up my children, lest they eat you.’

So he went and tied his children with strong ropes, and said to them: ‘As soon as the Draken comes in sight, call out as loud as you can, “Drakenflesh! Drakenflesh!”’

So, when the Draken appeared, the children cried out: ‘Drakenflesh! Drakenflesh!’ and this so terrified the Draken that he let the bag fall and fled.

On the road he met a fox, which asked him why he seemed so frightened. He answered that he was afraid of the children of Herr Lazarus, who had been within a hair-breadth of eating him up. But the fox laughed, and said: ‘What! you were afraid of the children of Herr Lazarus? He had two fowls, one of which I ate yesterday, the other I will go and fetch now —if you do not believe me, come and see for yourself; but you must first tie yourself on to my tail.’

The Draken then tied himself on to the fox’s tail, and went back thus with it to Lazarus’s house, in order to see what it would arrange. There stood Lazarus with his gun raised ready to fire, who, when he saw the fox coming along with the Draken, called out to the fox: ‘Did I not tell you to bring me all the Draken, and you bring me only one?’

When the Draken heard that he made off to the rightabout at once, and ran so fast that the fox was dashed in pieces against the stones.

When Lazarus had got quit of the Draken he built himself, with their gold, a magnificent house, in which he spent the rest of his days in great enjoyment.

THE STORY OF THE QUEEN OF THE FLOWERY ISLES

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There once lived a queen who ruled over the Flowery Isles, whose husband, to her extreme grief, died a few years after their marriage. On being left a widow she devoted herself almost entirely to the education of the two charming princesses, her only children. The elder of them was so lovely that as she grew up her mother greatly feared she would excite the jealousy of the Queen of all the Isles, who prided herself on being the most beautiful woman in the world, and insisted on all rivals bowing before her charms.

In order the better to gratify her vanity she had urged the king, her husband, to make war on all the surrounding islands, and as his greatest wish was to please her, the only conditions he imposed on any newly-conquered country was that each princess of every royal house should attend his court as soon as she was fifteen years old, and do homage to the transcendent beauty of his queen.

The queen of the Flowery Isles, well aware of this law, was fully determined to present her daughter to the proud queen as soon as her fifteenth birthday was past.

The queen herself had heard a rumour of the young princess’s great beauty, and awaited her visit with some anxiety, which soon developed into jealousy, for when the interview took place it was impossible not to be dazzled by such radiant charms, and she was obliged to admit that she had never beheld anyone so exquisitely lovely.

Of course she thought in her own mind ‘excepting myself!’ for nothing could have made her believe it possible that anyone could eclipse her.

But the outspoken admiration of the entire court soon undeceived her, and made her so angry that she pretended illness and retired to her own rooms, so as to avoid witnessing the princess’s triumph. She also sent word to the Queen of the Flowery Isles that she was sorry not to be well

enough to see her again, and advised her to return to her own states with the princess, her daughter.

This message was entrusted to one of the great ladies of the court, who was an old friend of the Queen of the Flowery Isles, and who advised her not to wait to take a formal leave but to go home as fast as she could.

The queen was not slow to take the hint, and lost no time in obeying it. Being well aware of the magic powers of the incensed queen, she warned her daughter that she was threatened by some great danger if she left the palace for any reason whatever during the next six months.

The princess promised obedience, and no pains were spared to make the time pass pleasantly for her.

The six months were nearly at an end, and on the very last day a splendid fête was to take place in a lovely meadow quite near the palace. The princess, who had been able to watch all the preparations from her window, implored her mother to let her go as far as the meadow; and the queen, thinking all risk must be over, consented, and promised to take her there herself.

The whole court was delighted to see their much-loved princess at liberty, and everyone set off in high glee to join in the fête.

The princess, overjoyed at being once more in the open air, was walking a little in advance of her party when suddenly the earth opened under her feet and closed again after swallowing her up!

The queen fainted away with terror, and the younger princess burst into floods of tears and could hardly be dragged away from the fatal spot, whilst the court was overwhelmed with horror at so great a calamity.

Orders were given to bore the earth to a great depth, but in vain; not a trace of the vanished princess was to be found.

She sank right through the earth and found herself in a desert place with nothing but rocks and trees and no sign of any human being. The only living creature she saw was a very pretty little dog, who ran up to her and at once began to caress her. She took him in her arms, and after playing with him for a little put him down again, when he started off in front of her, looking round from time to time as though begging her to follow.

She let him lead her on, and presently reached a little hill, from which she saw a valley full of lovely fruit trees, bearing flowers and fruit

together. The ground was also covered with fruit and flowers, and in the middle of the valley rose a fountain surrounded by a velvety lawn.

The princess hastened to this charming spot, and sitting down on the grass began to think over the misfortune which had befallen her, and burst into tears as she reflected on her sad condition.

The fruit and clear fresh water would, she knew, prevent her from dying of hunger or thirst, but how could she escape if any wild beast appeared and tried to devour her?

At length, having thought over every possible evil which could happen, the princess tried to distract her mind by playing with the little dog. She spent the whole day near the fountain, but as night drew on she wondered what she should do, when she noticed that the little dog was pulling at her dress.

She paid no heed to him at first, but as he continued to pull her dress and then run a few steps in one particular direction, she at last decided to follow him; he stopped before a rock with a large opening in the centre, which he evidently wished her to enter.

The princess did so and discovered a large and beautiful cave lit up by the brilliancy of the stones with which it was lined, with a little couch covered with soft moss in one corner. She lay down on it and the dog at once nestled at her feet. Tired out with all she had gone through she soon fell asleep.

Next morning she was awakened very early by the songs of many birds. The little dog woke up too, and sprang round her in his most caressing manner. She got up and went outside, the dog as before running on in front and turning back constantly to take her dress and draw her on.

She let him have his way and he soon led her back to the beautiful garden where she had spent part of the day before. Here she ate some fruit, drank some water of the fountain, and felt as if she had made an excellent meal. She walked about amongst the flowers, played with her little dog, and at night returned to sleep in the cave.

In this way the princess passed several months, and as her first terrors died away she gradually became more resigned to her fate. The little dog, too, was a great comfort, and her constant companion.

One day she noticed that he seemed very sad and did not even caress her as usual. Fearing he might be ill she carried him to a spot where she

had seen him eat some particular herbs, hoping they might do him good, but he would not touch them. He spent all the night, too, sighing and groaning as if in great pain.

At last the princess fell asleep, and when she awoke her first thought was for her little pet, but not finding him at her feet as usual, she ran out of the cave to look for him. As she stepped out of the cave she caught sight of an old man, who hurried away so fast that she had barely time to see him before he disappeared.

This was a fresh surprise and almost as great a shock as the loss of her little dog, who had been so faithful to her ever since the first day she had seen him. She wondered if he had strayed away or if the old man had stolen him.

Tormented by all kinds of thoughts and fears she wandered on, when suddenly she felt herself wrapped in a thick cloud and carried through the air. She made no resistance and before very long found herself, to her great surprise, in an avenue leading to the palace in which she had been born. No sign of the cloud anywhere.

As the princess approached the palace she perceived that everyone was dressed in black, and she was filled with fear as to the cause of this mourning. She hastened on and was soon recognised and welcomed with shouts of joy. Her sister hearing the cheers ran out and embraced the wanderer, with tears of happiness, telling her that the shock of her disappearance had been so terrible that their mother had only survived it a few days. Since then the younger princess had worn the crown, which she now resigned to her sister to whom it by right belonged.

But the elder wished to refuse it, and would only accept the crown on condition that her sister should share in all the power.

The first acts of the new queen were to do honour to the memory of her dear mother and to shower every mark of generous affection on her sister. Then, being still very grieved at the loss of her little dog, she had a careful search made for him in every country, and when nothing could be heard of him she was so grieved that she offered half her kingdom to whoever should restore him to her.

Many gentlemen of the court, tempted by the thought of such a reward, set off in all directions in search of the dog; but all returned empty-handed to the queen, who, in despair announced that since life was unbearable

without her little dog, she would give her hand in marriage to the man who brought him back.

The prospect of such a prize quickly turned the court into a desert, nearly every courtier starting on the quest. Whilst they were away the queen was informed one day that a very ill-looking man wished to speak with her. She desired him to be shown into a room where she was sitting with her sister.

On entering her presence he said that he was prepared to give the queen her little dog if she on her side was ready to keep her word.

The princess was the first to speak. She said that the queen had no right to marry without the consent of the nation, and that on so important an occasion the general council must be summoned. The queen could not say anything against this statement; but she ordered an apartment in the palace to be given to the man, and desired the council to meet on the following day.

Next day, accordingly, the council assembled in great state, and by the princess's advice it was decided to offer the man a large sum of money for the dog, and should he refuse it, to banish him from the kingdom without seeing the queen again. The man refused the price offered and left the hall.

The princess informed the queen of what had passed, and the queen approved of all, but added that as she was her own mistress she had made up her mind to abdicate her throne, and to wander through the world till she had found her little dog.

The princess was much alarmed by such a resolution, and implored the queen to change her mind. Whilst they were discussing the subject, one of the chamberlains appeared to inform the queen that the bay was covered with ships. The two sisters ran to the balcony, and saw a large fleet in full sail for the port.

In a little time they came to the conclusion that the ships must come from a friendly nation, as every vessel was decked with gay flags, streamers, and pennons, and the way was led by a small ship flying a great white flag of peace.

The queen sent a special messenger to the harbour, and was soon informed that the fleet belonged to the Prince of the Emerald Isles, who begged leave to land in her kingdom, and to present his humble respects to

her. The queen at once sent some of the court dignitaries to receive the prince and bid him welcome.

She awaited him seated on her throne, but rose on his appearance, and went a few steps to meet him; then begged him to be seated, and for about an hour kept him in close conversation.

The prince was then conducted to a splendid suite of apartments, and the next day he asked for a private audience. He was admitted to the queen's own sitting-room, where she was sitting alone with her sister.

After the first greetings the prince informed the queen that he had some very strange things to tell her, which she only would know to be true.

'Madam,' said he, 'I am a neighbour of the Queen of all the Isles; and a small isthmus connects part of my states with hers. One day, when hunting a stag, I had the misfortune to meet her, and not recognising her, I did not stop to salute her with all proper ceremony. You, Madam, know better than anyone how revengeful she is, and that she is also a mistress of magic. I learnt both facts to my cost. The ground opened under my feet, and I soon found myself in a far distant region transformed into a little dog, under which shape I had the honour to meet your Majesty. After six months, the queen's vengeance not being yet satisfied, she further changed me into a hideous old man, and in this form I was so afraid of being unpleasant in your eyes, Madam, that I hid myself in the depths of the woods, where I spent three months more. At the end of that time I was so fortunate as to meet a benevolent fairy who delivered me from the proud queen's power, and told me all your adventures and where to find you. I now come to offer you a heart which has been entirely yours, Madam, since first we met in the desert.'

A few days later a herald was sent through the kingdom to proclaim the joyful news of the marriage of the Queen of the Flowery Isles with the young prince. They lived happily for many years, and ruled their people well.

As for the bad queen, whose vanity and jealousy had caused so much mischief, the Fairies took all her power away for a punishment.

['Cabinet des Fées.']

UDEA AND HER SEVEN BROTHERS

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Once upon a time there was a man and his wife who had seven boys. The children lived in the open air and grew big and strong, and the six eldest spent part of every day hunting wild beasts. The youngest did not care so much about sport, and he often stayed with his mother.

One morning, however, as the whole seven were going out for a long expedition, they said to their aunt, ‘Dear aunt, if a baby sister comes into the world to-day, wave a white handkerchief, and we will return immediately; but if it is only a boy, just brandish a sickle, and we will go on with what we are doing.’

Now the baby when it arrived really proved to be a girl, but as the aunt could not bear the boys, she thought it was a good opportunity to get rid of them. So she waved the sickle. And when the seven brothers saw the sign they said, ‘Now we have nothing to go back for,’ and plunged deeper into the desert.

The little girl soon grew to be a big girl, and she was called by all her friends (though she did not know it) ‘Udea, who had driven her seven brothers into strange lands.’

One day, when she had been quarrelling with her playmates, the oldest among them said to her, ‘It is a pity you were born, as ever since, your brothers have been obliged to roam about the world.’

Udea did not answer, but went home to her mother and asked her, ‘Have I really got brothers?’

‘Yes,’ replied her mother, ‘seven of them. But they went away the day you were born, and I have never heard of them since.’

Then the girl said, ‘I will go and look for them till I find them.’

‘My dear child,’ answered her mother, ‘it is fifteen years since they left, and no man has seen them. How will you know which way to go?’

‘Oh, I will follow them, north and south, east and west, and though I may travel far, yet some day I will find them.’

Then her mother said no more, but gave her a camel and some food, and a negro and his wife to take care of her, and she fastened a cowrie shell round the camel's neck for a charm, and bade her daughter go in peace.

During the first day the party journeyed on without any adventures, but the second morning the negro said to the girl, 'Get down, and let the negress ride instead of you.'

'Mother,' cried Udea.

'What is it?' asked her mother.

'Barka wants me to dismount from my camel.'

'Leave her alone, Barka,' commanded the mother, and Barka did not dare to persist.

But on the following day he said again to Udea, 'Get down, and let the negress ride instead of you,' and though Udea called to her mother she was too far away, and the mother never heard her. Then the negro seized her roughly and threw her on the ground, and said to his wife, 'Climb up,' and the negress climbed up, while the girl walked by the side. She had meant to ride all the way on her camel as her feet were bare and the stones cut them till the blood came. But she had to walk on till night, when they halted, and the next morning it was the same thing again. Weary and bleeding the poor girl began to cry, and implored the negro to let her ride, if only for a little. But he took no notice, except to bid her walk a little faster.

By-and-by they passed a caravan, and the negro stopped and asked the leader if they had come across seven young men, who were thought to be hunting somewhere about. And the man answered, 'Go straight on, and by midday you will reach the castle where they live.'

When he heard this, the black melted some pitch in the sun, and smeared the girl with it, till she looked as much a negro as he did. Next he bade his wife get down from the camel, and told Udea to mount, which she was thankful to do. So they arrived at her brothers' castle.

Leaving the camel kneeling at the entrance for Udea to dismount, the negro knocked loudly at the door, which was opened by the youngest brother, all the others being away hunting. He did not of course recognise Udea, but he knew the negro and his wife, and welcomed them gladly, adding, 'But who does the other negress belong to?'

‘Oh, that is your sister!’ said they.

‘My sister! but she is coal black!’

‘That may be, but she is your sister for all that.’

The young man asked no more questions, but took them into the castle, and he himself waited outside till his brothers came home.

As soon as they were alone, the negro whispered to Udea, ‘If you dare to tell your brothers that I made you walk, or that I smeared you with pitch, I will kill you.’

‘Oh, I will be sure to say nothing,’ replied the girl, trembling, and at that moment the six elder brothers appeared in sight.

‘I have some good news for you,’ said the youngest, hastening to meet them; ‘our sister is here!’

‘Nonsense,’ they answered. ‘We have no sister; you know the child that was born was a boy.’

‘But that was not true,’ replied he, ‘and here she is with the negro and his wife. Only—she too is black,’ he added softly, but his brothers did not hear him, and pushed past joyfully.

‘How are you, good old Barka?’ they said to the negro; ‘and how comes it that we never knew that we had a sister till now?’ and they greeted Udea warmly, while she shed tears of relief and gladness.

The next morning they all agreed that they would not go out hunting. And the eldest brother took Udea on his knee, and she combed his hair and talked to him of their home till the tears ran down his cheeks and dropped on her bare arm. And where the tears fell a white mark was made. Then the brother took a cloth and rubbed the place, and he saw that she was not black at all.

‘Tell me, who painted you over like this?’ cried he.

‘I am afraid to tell you,’ sobbed the girl, ‘the negro will kill me.’

‘Afraid! and with seven brothers!’

‘Well, I will tell you then,’ she answered. ‘The negro forced me to dismount from the camel and let his wife ride instead. And the stones cut my feet till they bled and I had to bind them. And after that, when we heard your castle was near by, he took pitch and smeared my body with it.’

Then the brother rushed in wrath from the room, and seizing his sword, cut off first the negro’s head and then his wife’s. He next brought in some

warm water, and washed his sister all over, till her skin was white and shining again.

‘Ah, now we see that you are our sister!’ they all said. ‘What fools the negro must have thought us, to believe for an instant that we could have a sister who was black!’ And all that day and the next they remained in the castle.

But on the third morning they said to their sister: ‘Dear sister, you must lock yourself into this castle, with only the cat for company. And be very careful never to eat anything which she does not eat too. You must be sure to give her a bit of everything. In seven days we shall be back again.’

‘All right,’ she answered, and locked herself into the castle with the cat.

On the eighth day the brothers came home. ‘How are you?’ they asked. ‘You have not been anxious?’

‘No, why should I be anxious? The gates were fast locked, and in the castle are seven doors, and the seventh is of iron. What is there to frighten me?’

‘No one will try to hurt us,’ said the brothers, ‘for they fear us greatly. But for yourself, we implore you to do nothing without consulting the cat, who has grown up in the house, and take care never to neglect her advice.’

‘All right,’ replied Udea, ‘and whatever I eat she shall have half.’

‘Capital! and if ever you are in danger the cat will come and tell us—only elves and pigeons, which fly round your window, know where to find us.’

‘This is the first I have heard of the pigeons,’ said Udea. ‘Why did you not speak of them before?’

We always leave them food and water for seven days,’ replied the brothers.

‘Ah,’ sighed the girl, ‘if I had only known, I would have given them fresh food and fresh water; for after seven days anything becomes bad. Would it not be better if I fed them every day?’

‘Much better,’ said they, ‘and we shall feel any kindnesses you do towards the cat or the pigeons exactly as if they were shown to ourselves.’

‘Set your minds at ease,’ answered the girl, ‘I will treat them as if they were my brothers.’

That night the brothers slept in the castle, but after breakfast next morning they buckled on their weapons and mounted their horses, and rode off to their hunting grounds, calling out to their sister, ‘Mind you let nobody in till we come back.’

‘Very well,’ cried she, and kept the doors carefully locked for seven days and on the eighth the brothers returned as before. Then, after spending one evening with her, they departed as soon as they had done breakfast.

Directly they were out of sight Udea began to clean the house, and among the dust she found a bean which she ate.

‘What are you eating?’ asked the cat.

‘Nothing,’ said she.

‘Open your mouth, and let me see.’ The girl did as she was told, and then the cat said ‘Why did you not give me half?’

‘I forgot,’ answered she, ‘but there are plenty of beans about, you can have as many as you like.’

‘No, that won’t do. I want half of that particular bean.’

‘But how can I give it you? I tell you I have eaten it. I can roast you a hundred others.’

‘No, I want half of that one.’

‘Oh! do as you like, only go away!’ cried she.

So the cat ran straight to the kitchen fire, and spit on it and put it out, and when Udea came to cook the supper she had nothing to light it with. ‘Why did you put the fire out?’ asked she.

‘Just to show you how nicely you would be able to cook the supper. Didn’t you tell me to do what I liked?’

The girl left the kitchen and climbed up on the roof of the castle and looked out. Far, far away, so far that she could hardly see it, was the glow of a fire. ‘I will go and fetch a burning coal from there and light my fire,’ thought she, and opened the door of the castle. When she reached the place where the fire was kindled, a hideous man-eater was crouching over it.

‘Peace be with you, grandfather,’ said she.

‘The same to you,’ replied the man-eater. ‘What brings you here, Udea?’

‘I came to ask for a lump of burning coal, to light my fire with.’

‘Do you want a big lump or a little lump?’

‘Why, what difference does it make?’ said she.

‘If you have a big lump you must give me a strip of your skin from your ear to your thumb, and if you have a little lump, you must give me a strip from your ear to your little finger.’

Udea, who thought that one sounded as bad as the other, said she would take the big lump, and when the man-eater had cut the skin, she went home again. And as she hastened on a raven beheld the blood on the ground, and plastered it with earth, and stayed by her till she reached the castle. And as she entered the door he flew past, and she shrieked from fright, for up to that moment she had not seen him. In her terror she called after him. ‘May you get the same start as you have given me!’

‘Why should you wish me harm,’ asked the raven pausing in his flight, ‘when I have done you a service?’

‘What service have you done me?’ said she.

‘Oh, you shall soon see,’ replied the raven, and with his bill he scraped away all the earth he had smeared over the blood and then flew away.

In the night the man-eater got up, and followed the blood till he came to Udea’s castle. He entered through the gate which she had left open, and went on till he reached the inside of the house. But here he was stopped by the seven doors, six of wood and one of iron, and all fast locked. And he called through them ‘Oh Udea, what did you see your grandfather doing?’

‘I saw him spread silk under him, and silk over him, and lay himself down in a four-post bed.’

When he heard that, the man-eater broke in one door, and laughed and went away.

And the second night he came back, and asked her again what she had seen her grandfather doing, and she answered him as before, and he broke in another door, and laughed and went away, and so each night till he reached the seventh door. Then the maiden wrote a letter to her brothers, and bound it round the neck of a pigeon, and said to it, ‘Oh, thou pigeon that served my father and my grandfather, carry this letter to my brothers, and come back at once.’ And the pigeon flew away.

It flew and it flew and it flew till it found the brothers. The eldest unfastened the letter from the pigeon’s neck, and read what his sister had written: ‘I am in a great strait, my brothers. If you do not rescue me to-

night, to-morrow I shall be no longer living, for the man-eater has broken open six doors, and only the iron door is left. So haste, haste, post haste.'

'Quick, quick! my brothers,' cried he.

'What is the matter?' asked they.

'If we cannot reach our sister to-night, to-morrow she will be the prey of the man-eater.'

And without more words they sprang on their horses, and rode like the wind.

The gate of the castle was thrown down, and they entered the court and called loudly to their sister. But the poor girl was so ill with fear and anxiety that she could not even speak. Then the brothers dismounted and passed through the six open doors, till they stood before the iron one, which was still shut. 'Udea, open!' they cried, 'it is only your brothers!' And she arose and unlocked the door, and throwing herself on the neck of the eldest burst into tears.

'Tell us what has happened,' he said, 'and how the man-eater traced you here.' 'It is all the cat's fault,' replied Udea. 'She put out my fire so that I could not cook. All about a bean! I ate one and forgot to give her any of it.'

'But we told you so particularly,' said the eldest brother, 'never to eat anything without sharing it with the cat.'

'Yes, but I tell you I forgot,' answered Udea.

'Does the man-eater come here every night?' asked the brothers.

'Every night,' said Udea, 'and he breaks one door in and then goes away.'

Then all the brothers cried together, 'We will dig a great hole, and fill it with burning wood, and spread a covering over the top; and when the man-eater arrives we will push him into it.' So they all set to work and prepared the great hole, and set fire to the wood, till it was reduced to a mass of glowing charcoal. And when the man-eater came, and called as usual, 'Udea, what did you see your grandfather doing?' she answered, 'I saw him pull off the ass' skin and devour the ass, and he fell in the fire, and the fire burned him up.'

Then the man-eater was filled with rage, and he flung himself upon the iron door and burst it in. On the other side stood Udea's seven brothers, who said, 'Come, rest yourself a little on this mat.' And the man-eater sat

down, and he fell right into the burning pit which was under the mat, and they heaped on more wood, till nothing was left of him, not even a bone. Only one of his finger-nails was blown away, and fell into an upper chamber where Udea was standing, and stuck under one of the nails of her own fingers. And she sank lifeless to the earth.

Meanwhile her brothers sat below waiting for her and wondering why she did not come. ‘What can have happened to her!’ exclaimed the eldest brother. ‘Perhaps she has fallen into the fire, too.’ So one of the others ran upstairs and found his sister stretched on the floor. ‘Udea! Udea!’ he cried, but she did not move or reply. Then he saw that she was dead, and rushed down to his brothers in the courtyard and called out, ‘Come quickly, our sister is dead!’ In a moment they were all beside her and knew that it was true, and they made a bier and laid her on it, and placed her across a camel, and said to the camel, ‘Take her to her mother, but be careful not to halt by the way, and let no man capture you, and see you kneel down before no man, save him who shall say “string” [Footnote: ‘Riemen.‘] to you. But to him who says “string,” then kneel.’

So the camel started, and when it had accomplished half its journey it met three men, who ran after it in order to catch it; but they could not. Then they cried ‘Stop!’ but the camel only went the faster. The three men panted behind till one said to the others, ‘Wait a minute! The string of my sandal is broken!’ The camel caught the word ‘string’ and knelt down at once, and the men came up and found a dead girl lying on a bier, with a ring on her finger. And as one of the young men took hold of her hand to pull off the ring, he knocked out the man-eater’s finger-nail, which had stuck there, and the maiden sat up and said, ‘Let him live who gave me life, and slay him who slew me!’ And when the camel heard the maiden speak, it turned and carried her back to her brothers.

Now the brothers were still seated in the court bewailing their sister, and their eyes were dim with weeping so that they could hardly see. And when the camel stood before them they said, ‘Perhaps it has brought back our sister!’ and rose to give it a beating. But the camel knelt down and the girl dismounted, and they flung themselves on her neck and wept more than ever for gladness.

‘Tell me,’ said the eldest, as soon as he could speak, ‘how it all came about, and what killed you.’

‘I was waiting in the upper chamber,’ said she, ‘and a nail of the man-eater’s stuck under my nail, and I fell dead upon the ground. That is all I know.’

‘But who pulled out the nail?’ asked he.

‘A man took hold of my hand and tried to pull off my ring, and the nail jumped out and I was alive again. And when the camel heard me say “Let him live who gave me life, slay him who slew me!” it turned and brought me back to the castle. That is my story.’

She was silent and the eldest brother spoke. ‘Will you listen to what I have to say, my brothers?’

And they replied, ‘How should we not hear you? Are you not our father as well as our brother?’

‘Then this is my advice. Let us take our sister back to our father and mother, that we may see them once more before they die.’

And the young men agreed, and they mounted their horses and placed their sister in a litter on the camel. So they set out.

At the end of five days’ journey they reached the old home where their father and mother dwelt alone. And the heart of their father rejoiced, and he said to them, ‘Dear sons, why did you go away and leave your mother and me to weep for you night and day?’

‘Dear father,’ answered the son, ‘let us rest a little now, and then I will tell you everything from the beginning.’

‘All right,’ replied the father, and waited patiently for three days.

And on the morning of the fourth day the eldest brother said, ‘Dear father, would you like to hear our adventures?’

‘Certainly I should!’

‘Well, it was our aunt who was the cause of our leaving home, for we agreed that if the baby was a sister she should wave a white handkerchief, and if it was a brother, she should brandish a sickle, for then there would be nothing to come back for, and we might wander far away. Now our aunt could not bear us, and hated us to live in the same house with her, so she brandished the sickle, and we went away. That is all our story.’

And that is all this story.

[Märchen und Gedichte aus der Stadt Tripolis. Von Hans Stumme.]

THE WHITE WOLF

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Once upon a time there was a king who had three daughters; they were all beautiful, but the youngest was the fairest of the three. Now it happened that one day their father had to set out for a tour in a distant part of his kingdom. Before he left, his youngest daughter made him promise to bring her back a wreath of wild flowers. When the king was ready to return to his palace, he bethought himself that he would like to take home presents to each of his three daughters; so he went into a jeweller's shop and bought a beautiful necklace for the eldest princess; then he went to a rich merchant's and bought a dress embroidered in gold and silver thread for the second princess, but in none of the flower shops nor in the market could he find the wreath of wild flowers that his youngest daughter had set her heart on. So he had to set out on his homeward way without it. Now his journey led him through a thick forest. While he was still about four miles distant from his palace, he noticed a white wolf squatting on the roadside, and, behold! on the head of the wolf, there was a wreath of wild flowers.

Then the king called to the coachman, and ordered him to get down from his seat and fetch him the wreath from the wolf's head. But the wolf heard the order and said: 'My lord and king, I will let you have the wreath, but I must have something in return.'

'What do you want?' answered the king. 'I will gladly give you rich treasure in exchange for it.'

'I do not want rich treasure,' replied the wolf. 'Only promise to give me the first thing that meets you on your way to your castle. In three days I shall come and fetch it.'

And the king thought to himself: 'I am still a good long way from home, I am sure to meet a wild animal or a bird on the road, it will be quite safe to promise.' So he consented, and carried the wreath away with him. But all along the road he met no living creature till he turned into the palace gates, where his youngest daughter was waiting to welcome him home.

That evening the king was very sad, remembering his promise; and when he told the queen what had happened, she too shed bitter tears. And the youngest princess asked them why they both looked so sad, and why they wept. Then her father told her what a price he would have to pay for the wreath of wild flowers he had brought home to her, for in three days a white wolf would come and claim her and carry her away, and they would never see her again. But the queen thought and thought, and at last she hit upon a plan.

There was in the palace a servant maid the same age and the same height as the princess, and the queen dressed her up in a beautiful dress belonging to her daughter, and determined to give her to the white wolf, who would never know the difference.

On the third day the wolf strode into the palace yard and up the great stairs, to the room where the king and queen were seated.

‘I have come to claim your promise,’ he said. ‘Give me your youngest daughter.’

Then they led the servant maid up to him, and he said to her: ‘You must mount on my back, and I will take you to my castle.’ And with these words he swung her on to his back and left the palace.

When they reached the place where he had met the king and given him the wreath of wild flowers, he stopped, and told her to dismount that they might rest a little.

So they sat down by the roadside.

‘I wonder,’ said the wolf, ‘what your father would do if this forest belonged to him?’

And the girl answered: ‘My father is a poor man, so he would cut down the trees, and saw them into planks, and he would sell the planks, and we should never be poor again; but would always have enough to eat.’

Then the wolf knew that he had not got the real princess, and he swung the servant-maid on to his back and carried her to the castle. And he strode angrily into the king’s chamber, and spoke.

‘Give me the real princess at once. If you deceive me again I will cause such a storm to burst over your palace that the walls will fall in, and you will all be buried in the ruins.’

Then the king and the queen wept, but they saw there was no escape. So they sent for their youngest daughter, and the king said to her: ‘Dearest

child, you must go with the white wolf, for I promised you to him, and I must keep my word.'

So the princess got ready to leave her home; but first she went to her room to fetch her wreath of wild flowers, which she took with her. Then the white wolf swung her on his back and bore her away. But when they came to the place where he had rested with the servant-maid, he told her to dismount that they might rest for a little at the roadside. Then he turned to her and said: 'I wonder what your father would do if this forest belonged to him?'

And the princess answered: 'My father would cut down the trees and turn it into a beautiful park and gardens, and he and his courtiers would come and wander among the glades in the summer time.'

'This is the real princess,' said the wolf to himself. But aloud he said: 'Mount once more on my back, and I will bear you to my castle.'

And when she was seated on his back he set out through the woods, and he ran, and ran, and ran, till at last he stopped in front of a stately courtyard, with massive gates.

'This is a beautiful castle,' said the princess, as the gates swung back and she stepped inside. 'If only I were not so far away from my father and my mother!'

But the wolf answered: 'At the end of a year we will pay a visit to your father and mother.'

And at these words the white furry skin slipped from his back, and the princess saw that he was not a wolf at all, but a beautiful youth, tall and stately; and he gave her his hand, and led her up the castle stairs.

One day, at the end of half a year, he came into her room and said: 'My dear one, you must get ready for a wedding. Your eldest sister is going to be married, and I will take you to your father's palace. When the wedding is over, I shall come and fetch you home. I will whistle outside the gate, and when you hear me, pay no heed to what your father or mother say, leave your dancing and feasting, and come to me at once; for if I have to leave without you, you will never find your way back alone through the forests.'

When the princess was ready to start, she found that he had put on his white fur skin, and was changed back into the wolf; and he swung her on to his back, and set out with her to her father's palace, where he left her,

while he himself returned home alone. But, in the evening, he went back to fetch her, and, standing outside the palace gate, he gave a long, loud whistle. In the midst of her dancing the princess heard the sound, and at once she went to him, and he swung her on his back and bore her away to his castle.

Again, at the end of half a year, the prince came into her room, as the white wolf, and said: ‘Dear heart, you must prepare for the wedding of your second sister. I will take you to your father’s palace to-day, and we will remain there together till to-morrow morning.’

So they went together to the wedding. In the evening, when the two were alone together, he dropped his fur skin, and, ceasing to be a wolf, became a prince again. Now they did not know that the princess’s mother was hidden in the room. When she saw the white skin lying on the floor, she crept out of the room, and sent a servant to fetch the skin and to burn it in the kitchen fire. The moment the flames touched the skin there was a fearful clap of thunder heard, and the prince disappeared out of the palace gate in a whirlwind, and returned to his palace alone.

But the princess was heart-broken, and spent the night weeping bitterly. Next morning she set out to find her way back to the castle, but she wandered through the woods and forests, and she could find no path or track to guide her. For fourteen days she roamed in the forest, sleeping under the trees, and living upon wild berries and roots, and at last she reached a little house. She opened the door and went in, and found the wind seated in the room all by himself, and she spoke to the wind and said: ‘Wind, have you seen the white wolf?’

And the wind answered: ‘All day and all night I have been blowing round the world, and I have only just come home; but I have not seen him.’

But he gave her a pair of shoes, in which, he told her, she would be able to walk a hundred miles with every step. Then she walked through the air till she reached a star, and she said: ‘Tell me, star, have you seen the white wolf?’

And the star answered: ‘I have been shining all night, and I have not seen him.’

But the star gave her a pair of shoes, and told her that if she put them on she would be able to walk two hundred miles at a stride. So she drew

them on, and she walked to the moon, and she said: ‘Dear moon, have you not seen the white wolf?’

But the moon answered, ‘All night long I have been sailing through the heavens, and I have only just come home; but I did not see him.’

But he gave her a pair of shoes, in which she would be able to cover four hundred miles with every stride. So she went to the sun, and said: ‘Dear sun, have you seen the white wolf?’

And the sun answered, ‘Yes, I have seen him, and he has chosen another bride, for he thought you had left him, and would never return, and he is preparing for the wedding. But I will help you. Here are a pair of shoes. If you put these on you will be able to walk on glass or ice, and to climb the steepest places. And here is a spinning-wheel, with which you will be able to spin moss into silk. When you leave me you will reach a glass mountain. Put on the shoes that I have given you and with them you will be able to climb it quite easily. At the summit you will find the palace of the white wolf.’

Then the princess set out, and before long she reached the glass mountain, and at the summit she found the white wolf’s palace, as the sun had said.

But no one recognised her, as she had disguised herself as an old woman, and had wound a shawl round her head. Great preparations were going on in the palace for the wedding, which was to take place next day. Then the princess, still disguised as an old woman, took out her spinning-wheel, and began to spin moss into silk. And as she spun the new bride passed by, and seeing the moss turn into silk, she said to the old woman: ‘Little mother, I wish you would give me that spinning-wheel.’

And the princess answered, ‘I will give it to you if you will allow me to sleep to-night on the mat outside the prince’s door.’

And the bride replied, ‘Yes, you may sleep on the mat outside the door.’

So the princess gave her the spinning-wheel. And that night, winding the shawl all round her, so that no one could recognise her, she lay down on the mat outside the white wolf’s door. And when everyone in the palace was asleep she began to tell the whole of her story. She told how she had been one of three sisters, and that she had been the youngest and the fairest of the three, and that her father had betrothed her to a white wolf. And she

told how she had gone first to the wedding of one sister, and then with her husband to the wedding of the other sister, and how her mother had ordered the servant to throw the white fur skin into the kitchen fire. And then she told of her wanderings through the forest; and of how she had sought the white wolf weeping; and how the wind and star and moon and sun had befriended her, and had helped her to reach his palace. And when the white wolf heard all the story, he knew that it was his first wife, who had sought him, and had found him, after such great dangers and difficulties.

But he said nothing, for he waited till the next day, when many guests —kings and princes from far countries—were coming to his wedding. Then, when all the guests were assembled in the banqueting hall, he spoke to them and said: ‘Hearken to me, ye kings and princes, for I have something to tell you. I had lost the key of my treasure casket, so I ordered a new one to be made; but I have since found the old one. Now, which of these keys is the better?’

Then all the kings and royal guests answered: ‘Certainly the old key is better than the new one.’

‘Then,’ said the wolf, ‘if that is so, my former bride is better than my new one.’

And he sent for the new bride, and he gave her in marriage to one of the princes who was present, and then he turned to his guests, and said: ‘And here is my former bride’—and the beautiful princess was led into the room and seated beside him on his throne. ‘I thought she had forgotten me, and that she would never return. But she has sought me everywhere, and now we are together once more we shall never part again.’

MOHAMMED WITH THE MAGIC FINGER

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Once upon a time, there lived a woman who had a son and a daughter. One morning she said to them: ‘I have heard of a town where there is no such thing as death: let us go and dwell there.’ So she broke up her house, and went away with her son and daughter.

When she reached the city, the first thing she did was to look about and see if there was any churchyard, and when she found none, she exclaimed, ‘This is a delightful spot. We will stay here for ever.’

By-and-by, her son grew to be a man, and he took for a wife a girl who had been born in the town. But after a little while he grew restless, and went away on his travels, leaving his mother, his wife, and his sister behind him.

He had not been gone many weeks when one evening his mother said, ‘I am not well, my head aches dreadfully.’

‘What did you say?’ inquired her daughter-in-law.

‘My head feels ready to split,’ replied the old woman.

The daughter-in-law asked no more questions, but left the house, and went in haste to some butchers in the next street.

‘I have got a woman to sell; what will you give me for her?’ said she.

The butchers answered that they must see the woman first, and they all returned together.

Then the butchers took the woman and told her they must kill her.

‘But why?’ she asked.

‘Because,’ they said, ‘it is always our custom that when persons are ill and complain of their head they should be killed at once. It is a much better way than leaving them to die a natural death.’

‘Very well,’ replied the woman. ‘But leave, I pray you, my lungs and my liver untouched, till my son comes back. Then give both to him.’

But the men took them out at once, and gave them to the daughter-in-law, saying: ‘Put away these things till your husband returns.’ And the

daughter-in-law took them, and hid them in a secret place.

When the old woman's daughter, who had been in the woods, heard that her mother had been killed while she was out, she was filled with fright, and ran away as fast as she could. At last she reached a lonely spot far from the town, where she thought she was safe, and sat down on a stone, and wept bitterly. As she was sitting, sobbing, a man passed by.

'What is the matter, little girl? Answer me! I will be your friend.'

'Ah, sir, they have killed my mother; my brother is far away, and I have nobody.'

'Will you come with me?' asked the man.

'Thankfully,' said she, and he led her down, down, under the earth, till they reached a great city. Then he married her, and in course of time she had a son. And the baby was known throughout the city as 'Mohammed with the magic finger,' because, whenever he stuck out his little finger, he was able to see anything that was happening for as far as two days' distance.

By-and-by, as the boy was growing bigger, his uncle returned from his long journey, and went straight to his wife.

'Where are my mother and sister?' he asked; but his wife answered: 'Have something to eat first, and then I will tell you.'

But he replied: 'How can I eat till I know what has become of them?'

Then she fetched, from the upper chamber, a box full of money, which she laid before him, saying, 'That is the price of your mother. She sold well.'

'What do you mean?' he gasped.

'Oh, your mother complained one day that her head was aching, so I got in two butchers and they agreed to take her. However, I have got her lungs and liver hidden, till you came back, in a safe place.'

'And my sister?'

'Well, while the people were chopping up your mother she ran away, and I heard no more of her.'

'Give me my mother's liver and lungs,' said the young man. And she gave them to him. Then he put them in his pocket, and went away, saying: 'I can stay no longer in this horrible town. I go to seek my sister.'

Now, one day, the little boy stretched out his finger and said to his mother, 'My uncle is coming!'

‘Where is he?’ she asked.

‘He is still two days’ journey off: looking for us; but he will soon be here.’ And in two days, as the boy had foretold, the uncle had found the hole in the earth, and arrived at the gate of the city. All his money was spent, and not knowing where his sister lived, he began to beg of all the people he saw.

‘Here comes my uncle,’ called out the little boy. ‘Where?’ asked his mother. ‘Here at the house door;’ and the woman ran out and embraced him, and wept over him. When they could both speak, he said: ‘My sister, were you by when they killed my mother?’

‘I was absent when they slew her,’ replied she, ‘and as I could do nothing, I ran away. But you, my brother, how did you get here?’

‘By chance,’ he said, ‘after I had wandered far; but I did not know I should find you!’ ‘My little boy told me you were coming,’ she explained, ‘when you were yet two days distant; he alone of all men has that great gift.’

But she did not tell him that her husband could change himself into a serpent, a dog, or a monster, whenever he pleased. He was a very rich man, and possessed large herds of camels, goats, sheep, cattle, horses and asses; all the best of their kind. And the next morning, the sister said: ‘Dear brother, go and watch our sheep, and when you are thirsty, drink their milk!’

‘Very well,’ answered he, and he went.

Soon after, she said again, ‘Dear brother, go and watch our goats.’

‘But why? I like tending sheep better!’

‘Oh, it is much nicer to be a goatherd,’ she said; so he took the goats out.

When he was gone, she said to her husband, ‘You must kill my brother, for I cannot have him living here with me.’

‘But, my dear, why should I? He has done me no harm.’

‘I wish you to kill him,’ she answered, ‘or if not I will leave.’

‘Oh, all right, then,’ said he; ‘to-morrow I will change myself into a serpent, and hide myself in the date barrel; and when he comes to fetch dates I will sting him in the hand.’

‘That will do very well,’ said she.

When the sun was up next day, she called to her brother, ‘Go and mind the goats.’

‘Yes, of course,’ he replied; but the little boy called out: ‘Uncle, I want to come with you.’

‘Delighted,’ said the uncle, and they started together.

After they had got out of sight of the house the boy said to him, ‘Dear uncle, my father is going to kill you. He has changed himself into a serpent, and has hidden himself in the date barrel. My mother has told him to do it.’

‘And what am I to do?’ asked the uncle.

‘I will tell you. When we bring the goats back to the house, and my mother says to you, “I am sure you must be hungry: get a few dates out of the cask,” just say to me, “I am not feeling very well, Mohammed, you go and get them for me.”’

So, when they reached the house the sister came out to meet them, saying, ‘Dear brother, you must certainly be hungry: go and get a few dates.’

But he answered, ‘I am not feeling very well. Mohammed, you go and get them for me.’

‘Of course I will,’ replied the little boy, and ran at once to the cask.

‘No, no,’ his mother called after him; ‘come here directly! Let your uncle fetch them himself!’

But the boy would not listen, and crying out to her ‘I would rather get them,’ thrust his hand into the date cask.

Instead of the fruit, it struck against something cold and slimy, and he whispered softly, ‘Keep still; it is I, your son!’

Then he picked up his dates and went away to his uncle.

‘Here they are, dear uncle; eat as many as you want.’

And his uncle ate them.

When he saw that the uncle did not mean to come near the cask, the serpent crawled out and regained his proper shape.

‘I am thankful I did not kill him,’ he said to his wife; ‘for, after all, he is my brother-in-law, and it would have been a great sin!’

‘Either you kill him or I leave you,’ said she.

‘Well, well!’ sighed the man, ‘to-morrow I will do it.’

The woman let that night go by without doing anything further, but at daybreak she said to her brother, ‘Get up, brother; it is time to take the goats to pasture!’

‘All right,’ cried he.

‘I will come with you, uncle,’ called out the little boy.

‘Yes, come along,’ replied he.

But the mother ran up, saying, ‘The child must not go out in this cold or he will be ill;’ to which he only answered, ‘Nonsense! I am going, so it is no use your talking! I am going! I am! I am!’

‘Then go!’ she said.

And so they started, driving the goats in front of them.

When they reached the pasture the boy said to his uncle: ‘Dear uncle, this night my father means to kill you. While we are away he will creep into your room and hide in the straw. Directly we get home my mother will say to you, “Take that straw and give it to the sheep,” and, if you do, he will bite you.’

‘Then what am I to do?’ asked the man.

‘Oh, do not be afraid, dear uncle! I will kill my father myself.’

‘All right,’ replied the uncle.

As they drove back the goats towards the house, the sister cried: ‘Be quick, dear brother, go and get me some straw for the sheep.’

‘Let me go,’ said the boy.

‘You are not big enough; your uncle will get it,’ replied she.

‘We will both get it,’ answered the boy; ‘come, uncle, let us go and fetch that straw!’

‘All right,’ replied the uncle, and they went to the door of the room.

‘It seems very dark,’ said the boy; ‘I must go and get a light;’ and when he came back with one, he set fire to the straw, and the serpent was burnt.

Then the mother broke into sobs and tears. ‘Oh, you wretched boy! What have you done? Your father was in that straw, and you have killed him!’

‘Now, how was I to know that my father was lying in that straw, instead of in the kitchen?’ said the boy.

But his mother only wept the more, and sobbed out, ‘From this day you have no father. You must do without him as best you can!’

‘Why did you marry a serpent?’ asked the boy. ‘I thought he was a man! How did he learn those odd tricks?’

As the sun rose, she woke her brother, and said, ‘Go and take the goats to pasture!’

‘I will come too,’ said the little boy.

‘Go then!’ said his mother, and they went together.

On the way the boy began: ‘Dear uncle, this night my mother means to kill both of us, by poisoning us with the bones of the serpent, which she will grind to powder and sprinkle in our food.’

‘And what are we to do?’ asked the uncle.

‘I will kill her, dear uncle. I do not want either a father or a mother like that!’

When they came home in the evening they saw the woman preparing supper, and secretly scattering the powdered bones of the serpent on one side of the dish. On the other, where she meant to eat herself, there was no poison.

And the boy whispered to his uncle, ‘Dear uncle, be sure you eat from the same side of the dish as I do!’

‘All right,’ said the uncle.

So they all three sat down to the table, but before they helped themselves the boy said, ‘I am thirsty, mother; will you get me some milk?’

‘Very well,’ said she, ‘but you had better begin your supper.’

And when she came back with the milk they were both eating busily.

‘Sit down and have something too,’ said the boy, and she sat down and helped herself from the dish, but at the very first moment she sank dead upon the ground.

‘She has got what she meant for us,’ observed the boy; ‘and now we will sell all the sheep and cattle.’

So the sheep and cattle were sold, and the uncle and nephew took the money and went to see the world.

For ten days they travelled through the desert, and then they came to a place where the road parted in two.

‘Uncle!’ said the boy.

‘Well, what is it?’ replied he.

‘You see these two roads? You must take one, and I the other; for the time has come when we must part.’

But the uncle cried, ‘No, no, my boy, we will keep together always.’

‘Alas! that cannot be,’ said the boy; ‘so tell me which way you will go.’

‘I will go to the west,’ said the uncle.

‘One word before I leave you,’ continued the boy. ‘Beware of any man who has red hair and blue eyes. Take no service under him.’

‘All right,’ replied the uncle, and they parted.

For three days the man wandered on without any food, till he was very hungry. Then, when he was almost fainting, a stranger met him and said, ‘Will you work for me?’

‘By contract?’ asked the man.

‘Yes, by contract,’ replied the stranger, ‘and whichever of us breaks it, shall have a strip of skin taken from his body.’

‘All right,’ replied the man; ‘what shall I have to do?’

‘Every day you must take the sheep out to pasture, and carry my old mother on your shoulders, taking great care her feet shall never touch the ground. And, besides that, you must catch, every evening, seven singing birds for my seven sons.’

‘That is easily done,’ said the man.

Then they went back together, and the stranger said, ‘Here are your sheep; and now stoop down, and let my mother climb on your back.’

‘Very good,’ answered Mohammed’s uncle.

The new shepherd did as he was told, and returned in the evening with the old woman on his back, and the seven singing birds in his pocket, which he gave to the seven boys, when they came to meet him. So the days passed, each one exactly like the other.

At last, one night, he began to weep, and cried: ‘Oh, what have I done, that I should have to perform such hateful tasks?’

And his nephew Mohammed saw him from afar, and thought to himself, ‘My uncle is in trouble—I must go and help him;’ and the next morning he went to his master and said: ‘Dear master, I must go to my uncle, and I wish to send him here instead of myself, while I serve under his master. And that you may know it is he and no other man, I will give him my staff, and put my mantle on him.’

‘All right,’ said the master.

Mohammed set out on his journey, and in two days he arrived at the place where his uncle was standing with the old woman on his back trying to catch the birds as they flew past. And Mohammed touched him on the arm, and spoke: ‘Dear uncle, did I not warn you never to take service under any blue-eyed red-haired man!

‘But what could I do?’ asked the uncle. ‘I was hungry, and he passed, and we signed a contract.’

‘Give the contract to me!’ said the young man.

‘Here it is,’ replied the uncle, holding it out.

‘Now,’ continued Mohammed, ‘let the old woman get down from your back.’

‘Oh no, I mustn’t do that!’ cried he.

But the nephew paid no attention, and went on talking: ‘Do not worry yourself about the future. I see my way out of it all. And, first, you must take my stick and my mantle, and leave this place. After two days’ journey, straight before you, you will come to some tents which are inhabited by shepherds. Go in there, and wait.’

‘All right!’ answered the uncle.

Then Mohammed with the Magic Finger picked up a stick and struck the old woman with it, saying, ‘Get down, and look after the sheep; I want to go to sleep.’

‘Oh, certainly!’ replied she.

So Mohammed lay down comfortably under a tree and slept till evening. Towards sunset he woke up and said to the old woman: ‘Where are the singing birds which you have got to catch?’

‘You never told me anything about that,’ replied she.

‘Oh, didn’t I?’ he answered. ‘Well, it is part of your business, and if you don’t do it, I shall just kill you.’

‘Of course I will catch them!’ cried she in a hurry, and ran about the bushes after the birds, till thorns pierced her foot, and she shrieked from pain and exclaimed, ‘Oh dear, how unlucky I am! and how abominably this man is treating me!’ However, at last she managed to catch the seven birds, and brought them to Mohammed, saying, ‘Here they are!’

‘Then now we will go back to the house,’ said he.

When they had gone some way he turned to her sharply:

‘Be quick and drive the sheep home, for I do not know where their fold is.’ And she drove them before her. By-and-by the young man spoke:

‘Look here, old hag; if you say anything to your son about my having struck you, or about my not being the old shepherd, I’ll kill you!’

‘Oh, no, of course I won’t say anything!’

When they got back, the son said to his mother: ‘That is a good shepherd I’ve got, isn’t he?’

‘Oh, a splendid shepherd!’ answered she. ‘Why, look how fat the sheep are, and how much milk they give!’

‘Yes, indeed!’ replied the son, as he rose to get supper for his mother and the shepherd.

In the time of Mohammed’s uncle, the shepherd had had nothing to eat but the scraps left by the old woman; but the new shepherd was not going to be content with that.

‘You will not touch the food till I have had as much as I want,’ whispered he.

‘Very good!’ replied she. And when he had had enough, he said:

‘Now, eat!’ But she wept, and cried: ‘That was not written in your contract. You were only to have what I left!’

‘If you say a word more, I will kill you!’ said he.

The next day he took the old woman on his back, and drove the sheep in front of him till he was some distance from the house, when he let her fall, and said: ‘Quick! go and mind the sheep!’

Then he took a ram, and killed it. He lit a fire and broiled some of its flesh, and called to the old woman:

‘Come and eat with me!’ and she came. But instead of letting her eat quietly, he took a large lump of the meat and rammed it down her throat with his crook, so that she died. And when he saw she was dead, he said: ‘That is what you have got for tormenting my uncle!’ and left her lying where she was, while he went after the singing birds. It took him a long time to catch them; but at length he had the whole seven hidden in the pockets of his tunic, and then he threw the old woman’s body into some bushes, and drove the sheep before him, back to their fold. And when they drew near the house the seven boys came to meet him, and he gave a bird to each.

‘Why are you weeping?’ asked the boys, as they took their birds.

‘Because your grandmother is dead!’ And they ran and told their father. Then the man came up and said to Mohammed: ‘What was the matter? How did she die?’

And Mohammed answered: ‘I was tending the sheep when she said to me, “Kill me that ram; I am hungry!” So I killed it, and gave her the meat. But she had no teeth, and it choked her.’

‘But why did you kill the ram, instead of one of the sheep?’ asked the man.

‘What was I to do?’ said Mohammed. ‘I had to obey orders!’

‘Well, I must see to her burial!’ said the man; and the next morning Mohammed drove out the sheep as usual, thinking to himself, ‘Thank goodness I’ve got rid of the old woman! Now for the boys!’

All day long he looked after the sheep, and towards evening he began to dig some little holes in the ground, out of which he took six scorpions. These he put in his pockets, together with one bird which he caught. After this he drove his flock home.

When he approached the house the boys came out to meet him as before, saying: ‘Give me my bird!’ and he put a scorpion into the hand of each, and it stung him, and he died. But to the youngest only he gave a bird.

As soon as he saw the boys lying dead on the ground, Mohammed lifted up his voice and cried loudly: ‘Help, help! the children are dead!’

And the people came running fast, saying: ‘What has happened? How have they died?’

And Mohammed answered: ‘It was your own fault! The boys had been accustomed to birds, and in this bitter cold their fingers grew stiff, and could hold nothing, so that the birds flew away, and their spirits flew with them. Only the youngest, who managed to keep tight hold of his bird, is still alive.’

And the father groaned, and said, ‘I have borne enough! Bring no more birds, lest I lose the youngest also!’

‘All right,’ said Mohammed.

As he was driving the sheep out to grass he said to his master: ‘Out there is a splendid pasture, and I will keep the sheep there for two or, perhaps, three days, so do not be surprised at our absence.’

‘Very good!’ said the man; and Mohammed started. For two days he drove them on and on, till he reached his uncle, and said to him, ‘Dear uncle, take these sheep and look after them. I have killed the old woman and the boys, and the flock I have brought to you!’

Then Mohammed returned to his master; and on the way he took a stone and beat his own head with it till it bled, and bound his hands tight, and began to scream. The master came running and asked, ‘What is the matter?’

And Mohammed answered: ‘While the sheep were grazing, robbers came and drove them away, and because I tried to prevent them, they struck me on the head and bound my hands. See how bloody I am!’

‘What shall we do?’ said the master; ‘are the animals far off?’

‘So far that you are not likely ever to see them again,’ replied Mohammed. ‘This is the fourth day since the robbers came down. How should you be able to overtake them?’

‘Then go and herd the cows!’ said the man.

‘All right!’ replied Mohammed, and for two days he went. But on the third day he drove the cows to his uncle, first cutting off their tails. Only one cow he left behind him.

‘Take these cows, dear uncle,’ said he. ‘I am going to teach that man a lesson.’

‘Well, I suppose you know your own business best,’ said the uncle. ‘And certainly he almost worried me to death.’

So Mohammed returned to his master, carrying the cows’ tails tied up in a bundle on his back. When he came to the sea-shore, he stuck all the tails in the sand, and went and buried the one cow, whose tail he had not cut off, up to her neck, leaving the tail projecting. After he had got everything ready, he began to shriek and scream as before, till his master and all the other servants came running to see what was the matter.

‘What in the world has happened?’ they cried

‘The sea has swallowed up the cows,’ said Mohammed, ‘and nothing remains but their tails. But if you are quick and pull hard, perhaps you may get them out again!’

The master ordered each man instantly to take hold of a tail, but at the first pull they nearly tumbled backwards, and the tails were left in their hands.

‘Stop,’ cried Mohammed, ‘you are doing it all wrong. You have just pulled off their tails, and the cows have sunk to the bottom of the sea.’

‘See if you can do it any better,’ said they; and Mohammed ran to the cow which he had buried in the rough grass, and took hold of her tail and dragged the animal out at once.

‘There! that is the way to do it!’ said he, ‘I told you you knew nothing about it!’

The men slunk away, much ashamed of themselves; but the master came up to Mohammed. ‘Get you gone!’ he said, ‘there is nothing more for you to do! You have killed my mother, you have slain my children, you have stolen my sheep, you have drowned my cows; I have now no work to give you.’

‘First give me the strip of your skin which belongs to me of right, as you have broken your contract!’

‘That a judge shall decide,’ said the master; ‘we will go before him.’

‘Yes, we will,’ replied Mohammed. And they went before the judge.

‘What is your case?’ asked the judge of the master.

‘My lord,’ said the man, bowing low, ‘my shepherd here has robbed me of everything. He has killed my children and my old mother; he has stolen my sheep, he has drowned my cows in the sea.’

The shepherd answered: ‘He must pay me what he owes me, and then I will go.’

‘Yes, that is the law,’ said the judge.

‘Very well,’ returned the master, ‘let him reckon up how long he has been in my service.’

‘That won’t do,’ replied Mohammed, ‘I want my strip of skin, as we agreed in the contract.’

Seeing there was no help for it, the master cut a bit of skin, and gave it to Mohammed, who went off at once to his uncle.

‘Now we are rich, dear uncle,’ cried he; ‘we will sell our cows and sheep and go to a new country. This one is no longer the place for us.’

The sheep were soon sold, and the two comrades started on their travels. That night they reached some Bedouin tents, where they had supper with the Arabs. Before they lay down to sleep, Mohammed called the owner of the tent aside. ‘Your greyhound will eat my strip of leather,’ he said to the Arab.

‘No; do not fear.’

‘But supposing he does?’

‘Well, then, I will give him to you in exchange,’ replied the Arab.

Mohammed waited till everyone was fast asleep, then he rose softly, and tearing the bit of skin in pieces, threw it down before the greyhound, setting up wild shrieks as he did so.

‘Oh, master, said I not well that your dog would eat my thong?’

‘Be quiet, don’t make such a noise, and you shall have the dog.’

So Mohammed put a leash round his neck, and led him away.

In the evening they arrived at the tents of some more Bedouin, and asked for shelter. After supper Mohammed said to the owner of the tent, ‘Your ram will kill my greyhound.’

‘Oh, no, he won’t.’

‘And supposing he does?’

‘Then you can take him in exchange.’

So in the night Mohammed killed the greyhound, and laid his body across the horns of the ram. Then he set up shrieks and yells, till he roused the Arab, who said: ‘Take the ram and go away.’

Mohammed did not need to be told twice, and at sunset he reached another Bedouin encampment. He was received kindly, as usual, and after supper he said to his host: ‘Your daughter will kill my ram.’

‘Be silent, she will do nothing of the sort; my daughter does not need to steal meat, she has some every day.’

‘Very well, I will go to sleep; but if anything happens to my ram I will call out.’

‘If my daughter touches anything belonging to my guest I will kill her,’ said the Arab, and went to his bed.

When everybody was asleep, Mohammed got up, killed the ram, and took out his liver, which he broiled on the fire. He placed a piece of it in the girl’s hands, and laid some more on her night-dress while she slept and knew nothing about it. After this he began to cry out loudly.

‘What is the matter? be silent at once!’ called the Arab.

‘How can I be silent, when my ram, which I loved like a child, has been slain by your daughter?’

‘But my daughter is asleep,’ said the Arab.

‘Well, go and see if she has not some of the flesh about her.’

‘If she has, you may take her in exchange for the ram;’ and as they found the flesh exactly as Mohammed had foretold, the Arab gave his daughter a good beating, and then told her to get out of sight, for she was now the property of this stranger.

They wandered in the desert till, at nightfall, they came to a Bedouin encampment, where they were hospitably bidden to enter. Before lying down to sleep, Mohammed said to the owner of the tent: ‘Your mare will kill my wife.’

‘Certainly not.’

‘And if she does?’

‘Then you shall take the mare in exchange.’

When everyone was asleep, Mohammed said softly to his wife: ‘Maiden, I have got such a clever plan! I am going to bring in the mare and put it at your feet, and I will cut you, just a few little flesh wounds, so that you may be covered with blood, and everybody will suppose you to be dead. But remember that you must not make a sound, or we shall both be lost.’

This was done, and then Mohammed wept and wailed louder than ever.

The Arab hastened to the spot and cried, ‘Oh, cease making that terrible noise! Take the mare and go; but carry off the dead girl with you. She can lie quite easily across the mare’s back.’

Then Mohammed and his uncle picked up the girl, and, placing her on the mare’s back, led it away, being very careful to walk one on each side, so that she might not slip down and hurt herself. After the Arab tents could be seen no longer, the girl sat up on the saddle and looked about her, and as they were all hungry they tied up the mare, and took out some dates to eat. When they had finished, Mohammed said to his uncle: ‘Dear uncle, the maiden shall be your wife; I give her to you. But the money we got from the sheep and cows we will divide between us. You shall have two-thirds and I will have one. For you will have a wife, but I never mean to marry. And now, go in peace, for never more will you see me. The bond of bread and salt is at an end between us.’

So they wept, and fell on each other’s necks, and asked forgiveness for any wrongs in the past. Then they parted and went their ways.

[Märchen und Gedichte aus der Stadt Tripolis. Von Haus Stumme.]

BOBINO

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Once on a time there was a rich merchant, who had an only son called Bobino. Now, as the boy was clever, and had a great desire for knowledge, his father sent him to be under a master, from whom he thought he would learn to speak all sorts of foreign languages. After some years with this master, Bobino returned to his home.

One evening, as he and his father were walking in the garden, the sparrows in the trees above their heads began such a twittering, that they found it impossible to hear each other speak. This annoyed the merchant very much, so, to soothe him, Bobino said: ‘Would you like me to explain to you what the sparrows are saying to each other?’

The merchant looked at his son in astonishment, and answered: ‘What can you mean? How can you explain what the sparrows say? Do you consider yourself a soothsayer or a magician?’

‘I am neither a soothsayer nor a magician,’ answered Bobino; ‘but my master taught me the language of all the animals.’

‘Alas! for my good money!’ exclaimed the merchant. ‘The master has certainly mistaken my intention. Of course I meant you to learn the languages that human beings talk, and not the language of animals.’

‘Have patience,’ answered the son. ‘My master thought it best to begin with the language of animals, and later to learn the languages of human beings.’

On their way into the house the dog ran to meet them, barking furiously.

‘What can be the matter with the beast?’ said the merchant. ‘Why should he bark at me like that, when he knows me quite well?’

‘Shall I explain to you what he is saying?’ said Bobino.

‘Leave me in peace, and don’t trouble me with your nonsense,’ said the merchant quite crossly. ‘How my money has been wasted!’

A little later, as they sat down to supper, some frogs in a neighbouring pond set up such a croaking as had never been heard. The noise so irritated

the merchant that he quite lost his temper and exclaimed: ‘This only was wanting to add the last drop to my discomfort and disappointment.’

‘Shall I explain to you?’ began Bobino.

‘Will you hold your tongue with your explanations?’ shouted the merchant. ‘Go to bed, and don’t let me see your face again!’

So Bobino went to bed and slept soundly. But his father, who could not get over his disappointment at the waste of his money, was so angry, that he sent for two servants, and gave them orders, which they were to carry out on the following day.

Next morning one of the servants awakened Bobino early, and made him get into a carriage that was waiting for him. The servant placed himself on the seat beside him, while the other servant rode alongside the carriage as an escort. Bobino could not understand what they were going to do with him, or where he was being taken; but he noticed that the servant beside him looked very sad, and his eyes were all swollen with crying.

Curious to know the reason he said to him: ‘Why are you so sad? and where are you taking me?’

But the servant would say nothing. At last, moved by Bobino’s entreaties, he said: ‘My poor boy, I am taking you to your death, and, what is worse, I am doing so by the order of your father.’

‘But why,’ exclaimed Bobino, ‘does he want me to die? What evil have I done him, or what fault have I committed that he should wish to bring about my death?’

‘You have done him no evil,’ answered the servant ‘neither have you committed any fault; but he is half mad with anger because, in all these years of study, you have learnt nothing but the language of animals. He expected something quite different from you, that is why he is determined you shall die.’

‘If that is the case, kill me at once,’ said Bobino. ‘What is the use of waiting, if it must be done?’

‘I have not the heart to do it,’ answered the servant. ‘I would rather think of some way of saving your life, and at the same time of protecting ourselves from your father’s anger. By good luck the dog has followed us. We will kill it, and cut out the heart and take it back to your father. He will believe it is yours, and you, in the meantime, will have made your escape.’

When they had reached the thickest part of the wood, Bobino got out of the carriage, and having said good-bye to the servants set out on his wanderings.

On and on he walked, till at last, late in the evening, he came to a house where some herdsmen lived. He knocked at the door and begged for shelter for the night. The herdsmen, seeing how gentle a youth he seemed, made him welcome, and bade him sit down and share their supper.

While they were eating it, the dog in the courtyard began to bark. Bobino walked to the window, listened attentively for a minute, and then turning to the herdsmen said: ‘Send your wives and daughters at once to bed, and arm yourselves as best you can, because at midnight a band of robbers will attack this house.’

The herdsmen were quite taken aback, and thought that the youth must have taken leave of his senses.

‘How can you know,’ they said, ‘that a band of robbers mean to attack us? Who told you so?’

‘I know it from the dog’s barking,’ answered Bobino. ‘I understand his language, and if I had not been here, the poor beast would have wasted his breath to no purpose. You had better follow my advice, if you wish to save your lives and property.’

The herdsmen were more and more astonished, but they decided to do as Bobino advised. They sent their wives and daughters upstairs, then, having armed themselves, they took up their position behind a hedge, waiting for midnight.

Just as the clock struck twelve they heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and a band of robbers cautiously advanced towards the house. But the herdsmen were on the look-out; they sprang on the robbers from behind the hedge, and with blows from their cudgels soon put them to flight.

You may believe how grateful they were to Bobino, to whose timely warning they owed their safety. They begged him to stay and make his home with them; but as he wanted to see more of the world, he thanked them warmly for their hospitality, and set out once more on his wanderings. All day he walked, and in the evening he came to a peasant’s house. While he was wondering whether he should knock and demand shelter for the night, he heard a great croaking of frogs in a ditch behind

the house. Stepping to the back he saw a very strange sight. Four frogs were throwing a small bottle about from one to the other, making a great croaking as they did so. Bobino listened for a few minutes, and then knocked at the door of the house. It was opened by the peasant, who asked him to come in and have some supper.

When the meal was over, his host told him that they were in great trouble, as his eldest daughter was so ill, that they feared she could not recover. A great doctor, who had been passing that way some time before, had promised to send her some medicine that would have cured her, but the servant to whom he had entrusted the medicine had let it drop on the way back, and now there seemed no hope for the girl.

Then Bobino told the father of the small bottle he had seen the frogs play with, and that he knew that was the medicine which the doctor had sent to the girl. The peasant asked him how he could be sure of this, and Bobino explained to him that he understood the language of animals, and had heard what the frogs said as they tossed the bottle about. So the peasant fetched the bottle from the ditch, and gave the medicine to his daughter. In the morning she was much better, and the grateful father did not know how to thank Bobino enough. But Bobino would accept nothing from him, and having said good-bye, set out once more on his wanderings.

One day, soon after this, he came upon two men resting under a tree in the heat of the day. Being tired he stretched himself on the ground at no great distance from them, and soon they all three began to talk to one another. In the course of conversation, Bobino asked the two men where they were going; and they replied that they were on their way to a neighbouring town, where, that day, a new ruler was to be chosen by the people.

While they were still talking, some sparrows settled on the tree under which they were lying. Bobino was silent, and appeared to be listening attentively. At the end of a few minutes he said to his companions, ‘Do you know what those sparrows are saying? They are saying that to-day one of us will be chosen ruler of that town.’

The men said nothing, but looked at each other. A few minutes later, seeing that Bobino had fallen asleep, they stole away, and made with all haste for the town, where the election of a new ruler was to take place.

A great crowd was assembled in the market-place, waiting for the hour when an eagle should be let loose from a cage, for it had been settled that on whose-soever house the eagle alighted, the owner of that house should become ruler of the town. At last the hour arrived; the eagle was set free, and all eyes were strained to see where it would alight. But circling over the heads of the crowd, it flew straight in the direction of a young man, who was at that moment entering the town. This was none other than Bobino, who had awakened soon after his companions had left him, and had followed in their footsteps. All the people shouted and proclaimed that he was their future ruler, and he was conducted by a great crowd to the Governor’s house, which was for the future to be his home. And here he lived happily, and ruled wisely over the people.

THE DOG AND THE SPARROW

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There was once upon a time a sheep-dog whose master was so unkind that he starved the poor beast, and ill-treated him in the cruellest manner. At last the dog determined to stand this ill-usage no longer, and, one day, he ran away from home. As he was trotting along the road he met a sparrow, who stopped him and said: ‘Brother, why do you look so sad?’

The dog answered: ‘I am sad because I am hungry, and have nothing to eat.’

‘If that’s all, dear brother,’ said the sparrow, ‘come to the town with me, and I’ll soon get food for you.’

So they went together to the town, and when they came to a butcher’s shop, the sparrow said to the dog: ‘You stand still and I’ll peck down a piece of meat for you.’

First she looked all round to see that no one was watching her, and then she set to work to peck at a piece of meat that lay on the edge of a shelf, till at last it fell down. The dog seized it ravenously, and ran with it to a dark corner where he gobbled it up in a very few minutes.

When he had finished it, the sparrow said: ‘Now come with me to another shop, and I will get you a second piece, so that your hunger may be satisfied.’ When the dog had finished the second piece of meat, the sparrow asked him: ‘Brother, have you had enough now?’

‘Yes,’ replied the dog, ‘I’ve had quite enough meat, but I haven’t had any bread yet.’

The sparrow said: ‘You shall have as much bread as you like, only come with me.’ Then she led him to a baker’s shop, and pecked so long at two rolls on a shelf that at last they fell down, and the dog ate them up.

But still his hunger was not appeased; so the sparrow took him to another baker’s shop, and got some more rolls for him. Then she asked him: ‘Well, brother, are you satisfied?’

‘Yes,’ he replied; ‘and now let us go for a little walk outside the town.’

So the two went for a stroll into the country; but the day was very hot, and after they had gone a short distance the dog said: ‘I am very tired, and would like to go to sleep.’

‘Sleep, then,’ said the sparrow, ‘and I will keep watch meantime on the branch of a tree.’

So the dog lay down in the middle of the road, and was soon fast asleep. While he was sleeping a carter passed by, driving a waggon drawn by three horses, and laden with two barrels of wine. The sparrow noticed that the man was not going out of his way to avoid the dog, but was driving right in the middle of the road where the poor animal lay; so she called out: ‘Carter, take care what you are about, or I shall make you suffer for it.’

But the carter merely laughed at her words, and, cracking his whip, he drove his waggon right over the dog, so that the heavy wheels killed him.

Then the sparrow called out: ‘You have caused my brother’s death, and your cruelty will cost you your waggon and horses.’

‘Waggon and horses, indeed,’ said the carter; ‘I’d like to know how you could rob me of them!’

The sparrow said nothing, but crept under the cover of the waggon and pecked so long at the bunghole of one of the barrels that at last she got the cork away, and all the wine ran out without the carter’s noticing it.

But at last he turned round and saw that the bottom of the cart was wet, and when he examined it, he found that one of the barrels was quite empty. ‘Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!’ he exclaimed.

‘You’ll have worse luck still,’ said the sparrow, as she perched on the head of one of the horses and pecked out its eyes.

When the carter saw what had happened, he seized an axe and tried to hit the sparrow with it, but the little bird flew up into the air, and the carter only hit the blind horse on the head, so that it fell down dead. ‘Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!’ he exclaimed again.

‘You’ll have worse luck yet,’ said the sparrow; and when the carter drove on with his two horses she crept under the covering again, and pecked away at the cork of the second barrel till she got it away, and all the wine poured out on to the road.

When the carter perceived this fresh disaster he called out once more: ‘Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!’

But the sparrow answered: ‘Your bad luck is not over yet,’ and flying on to the head of the second horse she pecked out its eyes.

The carter jumped out of the waggon and seized his axe, with which he meant to kill the sparrow; but the little bird flew high into the air, and the blow fell on the poor blind horse instead, and killed it on the spot. Then the carter exclaimed: ‘Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!’

‘You’ve not got to the end of your bad luck yet,’ sang the sparrow; and, perching on the head of the third horse, she pecked out its eyes.

The carter, blind with rage, let his axe fly at the bird; but once more she escaped the blow, which fell on the only remaining horse, and killed it. And again the carter called out: ‘Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!’

‘You’ll have worse luck yet,’ said the sparrow, ‘for now I mean to make your home desolate.’

The carter had to leave his waggon on the road, and he went home in a towering passion. As soon as he saw his wife, he called out: ‘Oh! what bad luck I have had! all my wine is spilt, and my horses are all three dead.’

‘My dear husband,’ replied his wife, ‘your bad luck pursues you, for a wicked little sparrow has assembled all the other birds in the world, and they are in our barn eating everything up.’

The carter went out to the barn where he kept his corn and found it was just as his wife had said. Thousands and thousands of birds were eating up the grain, and in the middle of them sat the little sparrow. When he saw his old enemy, the carter cried out: ‘Oh! what an unlucky fellow I am!’

‘Not unlucky enough yet,’ answered the sparrow; ‘for, mark my words, carter, your cruel conduct will cost you your life;’ and with these words she flew into the air.

The carter was much depressed by the loss of all his worldly goods, and sat down at the fire plotting vengeance on the sparrow, while the little bird sat on the window ledge and sang in mocking tones: ‘Yes, carter, your cruel conduct will cost you your life.’

Then the carter seized his axe and threw it at the sparrow, but he only broke the window panes, and did not do the bird a bit of harm. She hopped in through the broken window and, perching on the mantelpiece, she called out; ‘Yes, carter, it will cost you your life.’

The carter, quite beside himself with rage, flew at the sparrow again with his axe, but the little creature always eluded his blows, and he only

succeeded in destroying all his furniture. At last, however, he managed to catch the bird in his hands. Then his wife called out: ‘Shall I wring her neck?’

‘Certainly not,’ replied her husband, ‘that would be far too easy a death for her; she must die in a far crueller fashion than that. I will eat her alive;’ and he suited the action to his words. But the sparrow fluttered and struggled inside him till she got up into the man’s mouth, and then she popped out her head and said: ‘Yes, carter, it will cost you your life.’

The carter handed his wife the axe, and said: ‘Wife, kill the bird in my mouth dead.’

The woman struck with all her might, but she missed the bird and hit the carter right on the top of his head, so that he fell down dead. But the sparrow escaped out of his mouth and flew away into the air.

[From the German, Kletke.]

THE STORY OF THE THREE SONS OF HALI

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Till his eighteenth birthday the young Neangir lived happily in a village about forty miles from Constantinople, believing that Mohammed and Zinebi his wife, who had brought him up, were his real parents.

Neangir was quite content with his lot, though he was neither rich nor great, and unlike most young men of his age had no desire to leave his home. He was therefore completely taken by surprise when one day Mohammed told him with many sighs that the time had now come for him to go to Constantinople, and fix on a profession for himself. The choice would be left to him, but he would probably prefer either to be a soldier or one of the doctors learned in the law, who explain the Koran to the ignorant people. ‘You know the holy book nearly by heart,’ ended the old man, ‘so that in a very short time you would be fitted to teach others. But write to us and tell us how you pass your life, and we, on our side, will promise never to forget you.’

So saying, Mohammed gave Neangir four piastres to start him in the great city, and obtained leave for him to join a caravan which was about to set off for Constantinople.

The journey took some days, as caravans go very slowly, but at last the walls and towers of the capital appeared in the distance. When the caravan halted the travellers went their different ways, and Neangir was left, feeling very strange and rather lonely. He had plenty of courage and made friends very easily; still, not only was it the first time he had left the village where he had been brought up, but no one had ever spoken to him of Constantinople, and he did not so much as know the name of a single street or of a creature who lived in it.

Wondering what he was to do next, Neangir stood still for a moment to look about him, when suddenly a pleasant-looking man came up, and bowing politely, asked if the youth would do him the honour of staying in his house till he had made some plans for himself. Neangir, not seeing

anything else he could do, accepted the stranger's offer and followed him home.

They entered a large room, where a girl of about twelve years old was laying three places at the table.

'Zelida,' said the stranger, 'was I not quite right when I told you that I should bring back a friend to sup with us?'

'My father,' replied the girl, 'you are always right in what you say, and what is better still, you never mislead others.' As she spoke, an old slave placed on the table a dish called pillau, made of rice and meat, which is a great favourite among people in the East, and setting down glasses of sherbet before each person, left the room quietly.

During the meal the host talked a great deal upon all sorts of subjects; but Neangir did nothing but look at Zelida, as far as he could without being positively rude.

The girl blushed and grew uncomfortable, and at last turned to her father. 'The stranger's eyes never wander from me,' she said in a low and hesitating voice. 'If Hassan should hear of it, jealousy will make him mad.'

'No, no,' replied the father, 'you are certainly not for this young man. Did I not tell you before that I intend him for your sister Argentine. I will at once take measures to fix his heart upon her,' and he rose and opened a cupboard, from which he took some fruits and a jug of wine, which he put on the table, together with a small silver and mother-of-pearl box.

'Taste this wine,' he said to the young man, pouring some into a glass.

'Give me a little, too,' cried Zelida.

'Certainly not,' answered her father, 'you and Hassan both had as much as was good for you the other day.'

'Then drink some yourself,' replied she, 'or this young man will think we mean to poison him.'

'Well, if you wish, I will do so,' said the father; 'this elixir is not dangerous at my age, as it is at yours.'

When Neangir had emptied his glass, his host opened the mother-of-pearl box and held it out to him. Neangir was beside himself with delight at the picture of a young maiden more beautiful than anything he had ever dreamed of. He stood speechless before it, while his breast swelled with a feeling quite new to him.

His two companions watched him with amusement, until at last Neangir roused himself. ‘Explain to me, I pray you,’ he said, ‘the meaning of these mysteries. Why did you ask me here? Why did you force me to drink this dangerous liquid which has set fire to my blood? Why have you shown me this picture which has almost deprived me of reason?’

‘I will answer some of your questions,’ replied his host, ‘but all, I may not. The picture that you hold in your hand is that of Zelida’s sister. It has filled your heart with love for her; therefore, go and seek her. When you find her, you will find yourself.’

‘But where shall I find her?’ cried Neangir, kissing the charming miniature on which his eyes were fixed.

‘I am unable to tell you more,’ replied his host cautiously.

‘But I can’ interrupted Zelida eagerly. ‘To-morrow you must go to the Jewish bazaar, and buy a watch from the second shop on the right hand. And at midnight—’

But what was to happen at midnight Neangir did not hear, for Zelida’s father hastily laid his hand over her mouth, crying: ‘Oh, be silent, child! Would you draw down on you by imprudence the fate of your unhappy sisters?’ Hardly had he uttered the words, when a thick black vapour rose about him, proceeding from the precious bottle, which his rapid movement had overturned. The old slave rushed in and shrieked loudly, while Neangir, upset by this strange adventure, left the house.

He passed the rest of the night on the steps of a mosque, and with the first streaks of dawn he took his picture out of the folds of his turban. Then, remembering Zelida’s words, he inquired the way to the bazaar, and went straight to the shop she had described.

In answer to Neangir’s request to be shown some watches, the merchant produced several and pointed out the one which he considered the best. The price was three gold pieces, which Neangir readily agreed to give him; but the man made a difficulty about handing over the watch unless he knew where his customer lived.

‘That is more than I know myself,’ replied Neangir. ‘I only arrived in the town yesterday and cannot find the way to the house where I went first.’

‘Well,’ said the merchant, ‘come with me, and I will take you to a good Mussulman, where you will have everything you desire at a small charge.’

Neangir consented, and the two walked together through several streets till they reached the house recommended by the Jewish merchant. By his advice the young man paid in advance the last gold piece that remained to him for his food and lodging.

As soon as Neangir had dined he shut himself up in his room, and thrusting his hand into the folds of his turban, drew out his beloved portrait. As he did so, he touched a sealed letter which had apparently been hidden there without his knowledge, and seeing it was written by his foster-mother, Zinebi, he tore it eagerly open. Judge of his surprise when he read these words:

‘My dearest Child,—This letter, which you will some day find in your turban, is to inform you that you are not really our son. We believe your father to have been a great lord in some distant land, and inside this packet is a letter from him, threatening to be avenged on us if you are not restored to him at once. We shall always love you, but do not seek us or even write to us. It will be useless.’

In the same wrapper was a roll of paper with a few words as follows, traced in a hand unknown to Neangir:

‘Traitors, you are no doubt in league with those magicians who have stolen the two daughters of the unfortunate Siroco, and have taken from them the talisman given them by their father. You have kept my son from me, but I have found out your hiding-place and swear by the Holy Prophet to punish your crime. The stroke of my scimitar is swifter than the lightning.’

The unhappy Neangir on reading these two letters—of which he understood absolutely nothing—felt sadder and more lonely than ever. It soon dawned on him that he must be the son of the man who had written to Mohammed and his wife, but he did not know where to look for him, and indeed thought much more about the people who had brought him up and whom he was never to see again.

To shake off these gloomy feelings, so as to be able to make some plans for the future, Neangir left the house and walked briskly about the city till darkness had fallen. He then retraced his steps and was just crossing the threshold when he saw something at his feet sparkling in the moonlight. He picked it up, and discovered it to be a gold watch shining with precious stones. He gazed up and down the street to see if there was

anyone about to whom it might belong, but there was not a creature visible. So he put it in his sash, by the side of a silver watch which he had bought from the Jew that morning.

The possession of this piece of good fortune cheered Neangir up a little, ‘for,’ thought he, ‘I can sell these jewels for at least a thousand sequins, and that will certainly last me till I have found my father.’ And consoled by this reflection he laid both watches beside him and prepared to sleep.

In the middle of the night he awoke suddenly and heard a soft voice speaking, which seemed to come from one of the watches.

‘Aurora, my sister,’ it whispered gently. ‘Did they remember to wind you up at midnight?’

‘No, dear Argentine,’ was the reply. ‘And you?’

‘They forgot me, too,’ answered the first voice, ‘and it is now one o’clock, so that we shall not be able to leave our prison till to-morrow—if we are not forgotten again—then.’

‘We have nothing now to do here,’ said Aurora. ‘We must resign ourselves to our fate—let us go.’

Filled with astonishment Neangir sat up in bed, and beheld by the light of the moon the two watches slide to the ground and roll out of the room past the cats’ quarters. He rushed towards the door and on to the staircase, but the watches slipped downstairs without his seeing them, and into the street. He tried to unlock the door and follow them, but the key refused to turn, so he gave up the chase and went back to bed.

The next day all his sorrows returned with tenfold force. He felt himself lonelier and poorer than ever, and in a fit of despair he thrust his turban on his head, stuck his sword in his belt, and left the house determined to seek an explanation from the merchant who had sold him the silver watch.

When Neangir reached the bazaar he found the man he sought was absent from his shop, and his place filled by another Jew.

‘It is my brother you want,’ said he; ‘we keep the shop in turn, and in turn go into the city to do our business.’

‘Ah! what business?’ cried Neangir in a fury. ‘You are the brother of a scoundrel who sold me yesterday a watch that ran away in the night. But I will find it somehow, or else you shall pay for it, as you are his brother!’

‘What is that you say?’ asked the Jew, around whom a crowd had rapidly gathered. ‘A watch that ran away. If it had been a cask of wine, your story might be true, but a watch—! That is hardly possible!’

‘The Cadi shall say whether it is possible or not,’ replied Neangir, who at that moment perceived the other Jew enter the bazaar. Darting up, he seized him by the arm and dragged him to the Cadi’s house; but not before the man whom he had found in the shop contrived to whisper to his brother, in a tone loud enough for Neangir to hear, ‘Confess nothing, or we shall both be lost.’

When the Cadi was informed of what had taken place he ordered the crowd to be dispersed by blows, after the Turkish manner, and then asked Neangir to state his complaint. After hearing the young man’s story, which seemed to him most extraordinary, he turned to question the Jewish merchant, who instead of answering raised his eyes to heaven and fell down in a dead faint.

The judge took no notice of the swooning man, but told Neangir that his tale was so singular he really could not believe it, and that he should have the merchant carried back to his own house. This so enraged Neangir that he forgot the respect due to the Cadi, and exclaimed at the top of his voice, ‘Recover this fellow from his fainting fit, and force him to confess the truth,’ giving the Jew as he spoke a blow with his sword which caused him to utter a piercing scream.

‘You see for yourself,’ said the Jew to the Cadi, ‘that this young man is out of his mind. I forgive him his blow, but do not, I pray you, leave me in his power.’

At that moment the Bassa chanced to pass the Cadi’s house, and hearing a great noise, entered to inquire the cause. When the matter was explained he looked attentively at Neangir, and asked him gently how all these marvels could possibly have happened.

‘My lord,’ replied Neangir, ‘I swear I have spoken the truth, and perhaps you will believe me when I tell you that I myself have been the victim of spells wrought by people of this kind, who should be rooted out from the earth. For three years I was changed into a three-legged pot, and only returned to man’s shape when one day a turban was laid upon my lid.’

At these words the Bassa rent his robe for joy, and embracing Neangir, he cried, ‘Oh, my son, my son, have I found you at last? Do you not come

from the house of Mohammed and Zinebi?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied Neangir, 'it was they who took care of me during my misfortune, and taught me by their example to be less worthy of belonging to you.'

'Blessed be the Prophet,' said the Bassa, 'who has restored one of my sons to me, at the time I least expected it! You know,' he continued, addressing the Cadi, 'that during the first years of my marriage I had three sons by the beautiful Zambac. When he was three years old a holy dervish gave the eldest a string of the finest coral, saying "Keep this treasure carefully, and be faithful to the Prophet, and you will be happy." To the second, who now stands before you, he presented a copper plate on which the name of Mahomet was engraved in seven languages, telling him never to part from his turban, which was the sign of a true believer, and he would taste the greatest of all joys; while on the right arm of the third the dervish clasped a bracelet with the prayer that his right hand should be pure and the left spotless, so that he might never know sorrow.

'My eldest son neglected the counsel of the dervish and terrible troubles fell on him, as also on the youngest. To preserve the second from similar misfortunes I brought him up in a lonely place, under the care of a faithful servant named Gouloucou, while I was fighting the enemies of our Holy Faith. On my return from the wars I hastened to embrace my son, but both he and Gouloucou had vanished, and it is only a few months since that I learned that the boy was living with a man called Mohammed, whom I suspected of having stolen him. Tell me, my son, how it came about that you fell into his hands.'

'My lord,' replied Neangir, 'I can remember little of the early years of my life, save that I dwelt in a castle by the seashore with an old servant. I must have been about twelve years old when one day as we were out walking we met a man whose face was like that of this Jew, coming dancing towards us. Suddenly I felt myself growing faint. I tried to raise my hands to my head, but they had become stiff and hard. In a word, I had been changed into a copper pot, and my arms formed the handle. What happened to my companion I know not, but I was conscious that someone had picked me up, and was carrying me quickly away.

'After some days, or so it seemed to me, I was placed on the ground near a thick hedge, and when I heard my captor snoring beside me I

resolved to make my escape. So I pushed my way among the thorns as well as I could, and walked on steadily for about an hour.

‘You cannot imagine, my lord, how awkward it is to walk with three legs, especially when your knees are as stiff as mine were. At length after much difficulty I reached a market-garden, and hid myself deep down among the cabbages, where I passed a quiet night.

‘The next morning, at sunrise, I felt some one stooping over me and examining me closely. “What have you got there, Zinebi?” said the voice of a man a little way off.

‘“The most beautiful pot in the whole world,” answered the woman beside me, “and who would have dreamed of finding it among my cabbages!”

‘Mohammed lifted me from the ground and looked at me with admiration. That pleased me, for everyone likes to be admired, even if he is only a pot! And I was taken into the house and filled with water, and put on the fire to boil.

‘For three years I led a quiet and useful life, being scrubbed bright every day by Zinebi, then a young and beautiful woman.

‘One morning Zinebi set me on the fire, with a fine fillet of beef inside me to cook for dinner. Being afraid that some of the steam would escape through the lid, and that the taste of her stew would be spoilt, she looked about for something to put over the cover, but could see nothing handy but her husband’s turban. She tied it firmly round the lid, and then left the room. For the first time during three years I began to feel the fire burning the soles of my feet, and moved away a little—doing this with a great deal more ease than I had felt when making my escape to Mohammed’s garden. I was somehow aware, too, that I was growing taller; in fact in a few minutes I was a man again.

‘After the third hour of prayer Mohammed and Zinebi both returned, and you can guess their surprise at finding a young man in the kitchen instead of a copper pot! I told them my story, which at first they refused to believe, but in the end I succeeded in persuading them that I was speaking the truth. For two years more I lived with them, and was treated like their own son, till the day when they sent me to this city to seek my fortune. And now, my lords, here are the two letters which I found in my turban. Perhaps they may be another proof in favour of my story.’

Whilst Neangir was speaking, the blood from the Jew's wound had gradually ceased to flow; and at this moment there appeared in the doorway a lovely Jewess, about twenty-two years old, her hair and her dress all disordered, as if she had been flying from some great danger. In one hand she held two crutches of white wood, and was followed by two men. The first man Neangir knew to be the brother of the Jew he had struck with his sword, while in the second the young man thought he recognised the person who was standing by when he was changed into a pot. Both of these men had a wide linen band round their thighs and held stout sticks.

The Jewess approached the wounded man and laid the two crutches near him; then, fixing her eyes on him, she burst into tears.

'Unhappy Izouf,' she murmured, 'why do you suffer yourself to be led into such dangerous adventures? Look at the consequences, not only to yourself, but to your two brothers,' turning as she spoke to the men who had come in with her, and who had sunk down on the mat at the feet of the Jew.

The Bassa and his companions were struck both with the beauty of the Jewess and also with her words, and begged her to give them an explanation.

'My lords,' she said, 'my name is Sumi, and I am the daughter of Moizes, one of our most famous rabbis. I am the victim of my love for Izaf,' pointing to the man who had entered last, 'and in spite of his ingratitude, I cannot tear him from my heart. Cruel enemy of my life,' she continued turning to Izaf, 'tell these gentlemen your story and that of your brothers, and try to gain your pardon by repentance.'

'We all three were born at the same time,' said the Jew, obeying the command of Sumi at a sign from the Cadi, 'and are the sons of the famous Nathan Ben-Sadi, who gave us the names of Izif, Izouf, and Izaf. From our earliest years we were taught the secrets of magic, and as we were all born under the same stars we shared the same happiness and the same troubles.

'Our mother died before I can remember, and when we were fifteen our father was seized with a dangerous illness which no spells could cure. Feeling death draw near, he called us to his bedside and took leave of us in these words:

‘“My sons, I have no riches to bequeath to you; my only wealth was those secrets of magic which you know. Some stones you already have, engraved with mystic signs, and long ago I taught you how to make others. But you still lack the most precious of all talismans—the three rings belonging to the daughters of Siroco. Try to get possession of them, but take heed on beholding these young girls that you do not fall under the power of their beauty. Their religion is different from yours, and further, they are the betrothed brides of the sons of the Bassa of the Sea. And to preserve you from a love which can bring you nothing but sorrow, I counsel you in time of peril to seek out the daughter of Moizes the Rabbi, who cherishes a hidden passion for Izaf, and possesses the Book of Spells, which her father himself wrote with the sacred ink that was used for the Talmud.” So saying, our father fell back on his cushions and died, leaving us burning with desire for the three rings of the daughters of Siroco.

‘No sooner were our sad duties finished than we began to make inquiries where these young ladies were to be found, and we learned after much trouble that Siroco, their father, had fought in many wars, and that his daughters, whose beauty was famous throughout all the land, were named Aurora, Argentine, and Zelida.’

At the second of these names, both the Bassa and his son gave a start of surprise, but they said nothing and Izaf went on with his story.

‘The first thing to be done was to put on a disguise, and it was in the dress of foreign merchants that we at length approached the young ladies, taking care to carry with us a collection of fine stones which we had hired for the occasion. But alas! it was to no purpose that Nathan Ben-Sadi had warned us to close our hearts against their charms! The peerless Aurora was clothed in a garment of golden hue, studded all over with flashing jewels; the fair-haired Argentine wore a dress of silver, and the young Zelida, loveliest of them all, the costume of a Persian lady.

‘Among other curiosities that we had brought with us, was a flask containing an elixir which had the quality of exciting love in the breasts of any man or woman who drank of it. This had been given me by the fair Sumi, who had used it herself and was full of wrath because I refused to drink it likewise, and so return her passion. I showed this liquid to the three maidens who were engaged in examining the precious stones, and choosing those that pleased them best; and I was in the act of pouring

some in a crystal cup, when Zelida's eyes fell on a paper wrapped round the flask containing these words. "Beware lest you drink this water with any other man than him who will one day be your husband." "Ah, traitor!" she exclaimed, "what snare have you laid for me?" and glancing where her finger pointed I recognised the writing of Sumi.

'By this time my two brothers had already got possession of the rings of Aurora and Argentine in exchange for some merchandise which they coveted, and no sooner had the magic circles left their hands than the two sisters vanished completely, and in their place nothing was to be seen but a watch of gold and one of silver. At this instant the old slave whom we had bribed to let us enter the house, rushed into the room announcing the return of Zelida's father. My brothers, trembling with fright, hid the watches in their turbans, and while the slave was attending to Zelida, who had sunk fainting to the ground, we managed to make our escape.

'Fearing to be traced by the enraged Siroco, we did not dare to go back to the house where we lodged, but took refuge with Sumi.

'"Unhappy wretches!" cried she, "is it thus that you have followed the counsels of your father? This very morning I consulted my magic books, and saw you in the act of abandoning your hearts to the fatal passion which will one day be your ruin. No, do not think I will tamely bear this insult! It was I who wrote the letter which stopped Zelida in the act of drinking the elixir of love! As for you," she went on, turning to my brothers, "you do not yet know what those two watches will cost you! But you can learn it now, and the knowledge of the truth will only serve to render your lives still more miserable."

'As she spoke she held out the sacred book written by Moizes, and pointed to the following lines:

'"If at midnight the watches are wound with the key of gold and the key of silver, they will resume their proper shapes during the first hour of the day. They will always remain under the care of a woman, and will come back to her wherever they may be. And the woman appointed to guard them is the daughter of Moizes."

'My brothers were full of rage when they saw themselves outwitted, but there was no help for it. The watches were delivered up to Sumi and they went their way, while I remained behind curious to see what would happen.

‘As night wore on Sumi wound up both watches, and when midnight struck Aurora and her sister made their appearance. They knew nothing of what had occurred and supposed they had just awakened from sleep, but when Sumi’s story made them understand their terrible fate, they both sobbed with despair and were only consoled when Sumi promised never to forsake them. Then one o’clock sounded, and they became watches again.

‘All night long I was a prey to vague fears, and I felt as if something unseen was pushing me on—in what direction I did not know. At dawn I rose and went out, meeting Izif in the street suffering from the same dread as myself. We agreed that Constantinople was no place for us any longer, and calling to Izouf to accompany us, we left the city together, but soon determined to travel separately, so that we might not be so easily recognised by the spies of Siroco.

‘A few days later I found myself at the door of an old castle near the sea, before which a tall slave was pacing to and fro. The gift of one or two worthless jewels loosened his tongue, and he informed me that he was in the service of the son of the Bassa of the Sea, at that time making war in distant countries. The youth, he told me, had been destined from his boyhood to marry the daughter of Siroco, whose sisters were to be the brides of his brothers, and went on to speak of the talisman that his charge possessed. But I could think of nothing but the beautiful Zelida, and my passion, which I thought I had conquered, awoke in full force.

‘In order to remove this dangerous rival from my path, I resolved to kidnap him, and to this end I began to act a madman, and to sing and dance loudly, crying to the slave to fetch the boy and let him see my tricks. He consented, and both were so diverted with my antics that they laughed till the tears ran down their cheeks, and even tried to imitate me. Then I declared I felt thirsty and begged the slave to fetch me some water, and while he was absent I advised the youth to take off his turban, so as to cool his head. He complied gladly, and in the twinkling of an eye was changed into a pot. A cry from the slave warned me that I had no time to lose if I would save my life, so I snatched up the pot and fled with it like the wind.

‘You have heard, my lords, what became of the pot, so I will only say now that when I awoke it had disappeared; but I was partly consoled for its loss by finding my two brothers fast asleep not far from me. “How did you get here?” I inquired, “and what has happened to you since we parted?”

‘“Alas!” replied Izouf, “we were passing a wayside inn from which came sounds of songs and laughter, and fools that we were—we entered and sat down. Circassian girls of great beauty were dancing for the amusement of several men, who not only received us politely, but placed us near the two loveliest maidens. Our happiness was complete, and time flew unknown to us, when one of the Circassians leaned forward and said to her sister, ‘Their brother danced, and they must dance too.’ What they meant by these words I know not, but perhaps you can tell us?”

‘“I understand quite well,” I replied. “They were thinking of the day that I stole the son of the Bassa, and had danced before him.”

‘“Perhaps you are right,” continued Izouf, “for the two ladies took our hands and danced with us till we were quite exhausted, and when at last we sat down a second time to table we drank more wine than was good for us. Indeed, our heads grew so confused, that when the men jumped up and threatened to kill us, we could make no resistance and suffered ourselves to be robbed of everything we had about us, including the most precious possession of all, the two talismans of the daughters of Siroco.”

‘Not knowing what else to do, we all three returned to Constantinople to ask the advice of Sumi, and found that she was already aware of our misfortunes, having read about them in the book of Moizes. The kind-hearted creature wept bitterly at our story, but, being poor herself, could give us little help. At last I proposed that every morning we should sell the silver watch into which Argentine was changed, as it would return to Sumi every evening unless it was wound up with the silver key—which was not at all likely. Sumi consented, but only on the condition that we would never sell the watch without ascertaining the house where it was to be found, so that she might also take Aurora thither, and thus Argentine would not be alone if by any chance she was wound up at the mystic hour. For some weeks now we have lived by this means, and the two daughters of Siroco have never failed to return to Sumi each night. Yesterday Izouf sold the silver watch to this young man, and in the evening placed the gold watch on the steps by order of Sumi, just before his customer entered the house; from which both watches came back early this morning.’

‘If I had only known!’ cried Neangir. ‘If I had had more presence of mind, I should have seen the lovely Argentine, and if her portrait is so fair, what must the original be!’

‘It was not your fault,’ replied the Cadi, ‘you are no magician; and who could guess that the watch must be wound at such an hour? But I shall give orders that the merchant is to hand it over to you, and this evening you will certainly not forget.’

‘It is impossible to let you have it to-day,’ answered Izouf, ‘for it is already sold.’

‘If that is so,’ said the Cadi, ‘you must return the three gold pieces which the young man paid.’

The Jew, delighted to get off so easily, put his hand in his pocket, when Neangir stopped him.

‘No, no,’ he exclaimed, ‘it is not money I want, but the adorable Argentine; without her everything is valueless.’

‘My dear Cadi,’ said the Bassa, ‘he is right. The treasure that my son has lost is absolutely priceless.’

‘My lord,’ replied the Cadi, ‘your wisdom is greater than mine. Give judgment I pray you in the matter.’

So the Bassa desired them all to accompany him to his house, and commanded his slaves not to lose sight of the three Jewish brothers.

When they arrived at the door of his dwelling, he noticed two women sitting on a bench close by, thickly veiled and beautifully dressed. Their wide satin trousers were embroidered in silver, and their muslin robes were of the finest texture. In the hand of one was a bag of pink silk tied with green ribbons, containing something that seemed to move.

At the approach of the Bassa both ladies rose, and came towards him. Then the one who held the bag addressed him saying, ‘Noble lord, buy, I pray you, this bag, without asking to see what it contains.’

‘How much do you want for it?’ asked the Bassa.

‘Three hundred sequins,’ replied the unknown.

At these words the Bassa laughed contemptuously, and passed on without speaking.

‘You will not repent of your bargain,’ went on the woman. ‘Perhaps if we come back to-morrow you will be glad to give us the four hundred sequins we shall then ask. And the next day the price will be five hundred.’

‘Come away,’ said her companion, taking hold of her sleeve. ‘Do not let us stay here any longer. It may cry, and then our secret will be discovered.’ And so saying, the two young women disappeared.

The Jews were left in the front hall under the care of the slaves, and Neangir and Sumi followed the Bassa inside the house, which was magnificently furnished. At one end of a large, brilliantly-lighted room a lady of about thirty-five years old reclined on a couch, still beautiful in spite of the sad expression of her face.

‘Incomparable Zambac,’ said the Bassa, going up to her, ‘give me your thanks, for here is the lost son for whom you have shed so many tears,’ but before his mother could clasp him in her arms Neangir had flung himself at her feet.

‘Let the whole house rejoice with me,’ continued the Bassa, ‘and let my two sons Ibrahim and Hassan be told, that they may embrace their brother.’

‘Alas! my lord!’ said Zambac, ‘do you forget that this is the hour when Hassan weeps on his hand, and Ibrahim gathers up his coral beads?’

‘Let the command of the Prophet be obeyed,’ replied the Bassa; ‘then we will wait till the evening.’

‘Forgive me, noble lord,’ interrupted Sumi, ‘but what is this mystery? With the help of the Book of Spells perhaps I may be of some use in the matter.’

‘Sumi,’ answered the Bassa, ‘I owe you already the happiness of my life; come with me then, and the sight of my unhappy sons will tell you of our trouble better than any words of mine.’

The Bassa rose from his divan and drew aside the hangings leading to a large hall, closely followed by Neangir and Sumi. There they saw two young men, one about seventeen, and the other nineteen years of age. The younger was seated before a table, his forehead resting on his right hand, which he was watering with his tears. He raised his head for a moment when his father entered, and Neangir and Sumi both saw that this hand was of ebony.

The other young man was occupied busily in collecting coral beads which were scattered all over the floor of the room, and as he picked them up he placed them on the same table where his brother was sitting. He had already gathered together ninety-eight beads, and thought they were all there, when they suddenly rolled off the table and he had to begin his work over again.

‘Do you see,’ whispered the Bassa, ‘for three hours daily one collects these coral beads, and for the same space of time the other laments over his hand which has become black, and I am wholly ignorant what is the cause of either misfortune.’

‘Do not let us stay here,’ said Sumi, ‘our presence must add to their grief. But permit me to fetch the Book of Spells, which I feel sure will tell us not only the cause of their malady but also its cure.’

The Bassa readily agreed to Sumi’s proposal, but Neangir objected strongly. ‘If Sumi leaves us,’ he said to his father, ‘I shall not see my beloved Argentine when she returns to-night with the fair Aurora. And life is an eternity till I behold her.’

‘Be comforted,’ replied Sumi. ‘I will be back before sunset; and I leave you my adored Izaf as a pledge.’

Scarcely had the Jewess left Neangir, when the old female slave entered the hall where the three Jews still remained carefully guarded, followed by a man whose splendid dress prevented Neangir from recognising at first as the person in whose house he had dined two days before. But the woman he knew at once to be the nurse of Zelida.

He started eagerly forward, but before he had time to speak the slave turned to the soldier she was conducting. ‘My lord,’ she said, ‘those are the men; I have tracked them from the house of the Cadi to this palace. They are the same; I am not mistaken, strike and avenge yourself.’

As he listened the face of the stranger grew scarlet with anger. He drew his sword and in another moment would have rushed on the Jews, when Neangir and the slaves of the Bassa seized hold of him.

‘What are you doing?’ cried Neangir. ‘How dare you attack those whom the Bassa has taken under his protection?’

‘Ah, my son,’ replied the soldier, ‘the Bassa would withdraw his protection if he knew that these wretches have robbed me of all I have dearest in the world. He knows them as little as he knows you.’

‘But he knows me very well,’ replied Neangir, ‘for he has recognised me as his son. Come with me now into his presence.’

The stranger bowed and passed through the curtain held back by Neangir, whose surprise was great at seeing his father spring forward and clasp the soldier in his arms.

‘What! is it you, my dear Siroco?’ cried he. ‘I believed you had been slain in that awful battle when the followers of the Prophet were put to flight. But why do your eyes kindle with the flames they shot forth on that fearful day? Calm yourself and tell me what I can do to help you. See, I have found my son, let that be a good omen for your happiness also.’

‘I did not guess,’ answered Siroco, ‘that the son you have so long mourned had come back to you. Some days since the Prophet appeared to me in a dream, floating in a circle of light, and he said to me, “Go to-morrow at sunset to the Galata Gate, and there you will find a young man whom you must bring home with you. He is the second son of your old friend the Bassa of the Sea, and that you may make no mistake, put your fingers in his turban and you will feel the plaque on which my name is engraved in seven different languages.”’

‘I did as I was bid,’ went on Siroco, ‘and so charmed was I with his face and manner that I caused him to fall in love with Argentine, whose portrait I gave him. But at the moment when I was rejoicing in the happiness before me, and looking forward to the pleasure of restoring you your son, some drops of the elixir of love were spilt on the table, and caused a thick vapour to arise, which hid everything. When it had cleared away he was gone. This morning my old slave informed me that she had discovered the traitors who had stolen my daughters from me, and I hastened hither to avenge them. But I place myself in your hands, and will follow your counsel.’

‘Fate will favour us, I am sure,’ said the Bassa, ‘for this very night I expect to secure both the silver and the gold watch. So send at once and pray Zelida to join us.’

A rustling of silken stuffs drew their eyes to the door, and Ibrahim and Hassan, whose daily penance had by this time been performed, entered to embrace their brother. Neangir and Hassan, who had also drunk of the elixir of love, could think of nothing but the beautiful ladies who had captured their hearts, while the spirits of Ibrahim had been cheered by the news that the daughter of Moizes hoped to find in the Book of Spells some charm to deliver him from collecting the magic beads.

It was some hours later that Sumi returned, bringing with her the sacred book.

‘See,’ she said, beckoning to Hassan, ‘your destiny is written here.’ And Hassan stooped and read these words in Hebrew. ‘His right hand has become black as ebony from touching the fat of an impure animal, and will remain so till the last of its race is drowned in the sea.’

‘Alas!’ sighed the unfortunate youth. ‘It now comes back to my memory. One day the slave of Zambac was making a cake. She warned me not to touch, as the cake was mixed with lard, but I did not heed her, and in an instant my hand became the ebony that it now is.’

‘Holy dervish!’ exclaimed the Bassa, ‘how true were your words! My son has neglected the advice you gave him on presenting him the bracelet, and he has been severely punished. But tell me, O wise Sumi, where I can find the last of the accursed race who has brought this doom on my son?’

‘It is written here,’ replied Sumi, turning over some leaves. ‘The little black pig is in the pink bag carried by the two Circassians.’

When he read this the Bassa sank on his cushions in despair.

‘Ah,’ he said, ‘that is the bag that was offered me this morning for three hundred sequins. Those must be the women who caused Izif and Izouf to dance, and took from them the two talismans of the daughters of Siroco. They only can break the spell that has been cast on us. Let them be found and I will gladly give them the half of my possessions. Idiot that I was to send them away!’

While the Bassa was bewailing his folly, Ibrahim in his turn had opened the book, and blushed deeply as he read the words: ‘The chaplet of beads has been defiled by the game of “Odd and Even.” Its owner has tried to cheat by concealing one of the numbers. Let the faithless Moslem seek for ever the missing bead.’

‘O heaven,’ cried Ibrahim, ‘that unhappy day rises up before me. I had cut the thread of the chaplet, while playing with Aurora. Holding the ninety-nine beads in my hand she guessed “Odd,” and in order that she might lose I let one bead fall from my hand. Since then I have sought it daily, but it never has been found.’

‘Holy dervish!’ cried the Bassa, ‘how true were your words! From the time that the sacred chaplet was no longer complete, my son has borne the penalty. But may not the Book of Spells teach us how to deliver Ibrahim also?’

‘Listen,’ said Sumi, ‘this is what I find: “The coral bead lies in the fifth fold of the dress of yellow brocade.”’ ‘Ah, what good fortune!’ exclaimed the Bassa; ‘we shall shortly see the beautiful Aurora, and Ibrahim shall at once search in the fifth fold of her yellow brocade. For it is she no doubt of whom the book speaks.’

As the Jewess closed the Book of Moizes, Zelida appeared, accompanied by a whole train of slaves and her old nurse. At her entrance Hassan, beside himself with joy, flung himself on his knees and kissed her hand.

‘My lord,’ he said to the Bassa, ‘pardon me these transports. No elixir of love was needed to inflame my heart! Let the marriage rite make us speedily one.’

‘My son, are you mad?’ asked the Bassa. ‘As long as the misfortunes of your brothers last, shall you alone be happy? And whoever heard of a bridegroom with a black hand? Wait yet a little longer, till the black pig is drowned in the sea.’

‘Yes! dear Hassan,’ said Zelida, ‘our happiness will be increased tenfold when my sisters have regained their proper shapes. And here is the elixir which I have brought with me, so that their joy may equal ours.’ And she held out the flask to the Bassa, who had it closed in his presence.

Zambac was filled with joy at the sight of Zelida, and embraced her with delight. Then she led the way into the garden, and invited all her friends to seat themselves under the thick overhanging branches of a splendid jessamine tree. No sooner, however, were they comfortably settled, than they were astonished to hear a man’s voice, speaking angrily on the other side of the wall.

‘Ungrateful girls!’ it said, ‘is this the way you treat me? Let me hide myself for ever! This cave is no longer dark enough or deep enough for me.’

A burst of laughter was the only answer, and the voice continued, ‘What have I done to earn such contempt? Was this what you promised me when I managed to get for you the talismans of beauty? Is this the reward I have a right to expect when I have bestowed on you the little black pig, who is certain to bring you good luck?’

At these words the curiosity of the listeners passed all bounds, and the Bassa commanded his slaves instantly to tear down the wall. It was done,

but the man was nowhere to be seen, and there were only two girls of extraordinary beauty, who seemed quite at their ease, and came dancing gaily on to the terrace. With them was an old slave in whom the Bassa recognised Gouloucou, the former guardian of Neangir.

Gouloucou shrank with fear when he saw the Bassa, as he expected nothing less than death at his hands for allowing Neangir to be snatched away. But the Bassa made him signs of forgiveness, and asked him how he had escaped death when he had thrown himself from the cliff. Gouloucou explained that he had been picked up by a dervish who had cured his wounds, and had then given him as slave to the two young ladies now before the company, and in their service he had remained ever since.

‘But,’ said the Bassa, ‘where is the little black pig of which the voice spoke just now?’

‘My lord,’ answered one of the ladies, ‘when at your command the wall was thrown down, the man whom you heard speaking was so frightened at the noise that he caught up the pig and ran away.’

‘Let him be pursued instantly,’ cried the Bassa; but the ladies smiled.

‘Do not be alarmed, my lord,’ said one, ‘he is sure to return. Only give orders that the entrance to the cave shall be guarded, so that when he is once in he shall not get out again.’

By this time night was falling and they all went back to the palace, where coffee and fruits were served in a splendid gallery, near the women’s apartments. The Bassa then ordered the three Jews to be brought before him, so that he might see whether these were the two damsels who had forced them to dance at the inn, but to his great vexation it was found that when their guards had gone to knock down the wall the Jews had escaped.

At this news the Jewess Sumi turned pale, but glancing at the Book of Spells her face brightened, and she said half aloud, ‘There is no cause for disquiet; they will capture the dervish,’ while Hassan lamented loudly that as soon as fortune appeared on one side she fled on the other!

On hearing this reflection one of the Bassa’s pages broke into a laugh. ‘This fortune comes to us dancing my lord,’ said he, ‘and the other leaves us on crutches. Do not be afraid. She will not go very far.’

The Bassa, shocked at his impertinent interference, desired him to leave the room and not to come back till he was sent for.

‘My lord shall be obeyed,’ said the page, ‘but when I return, it shall be in such good company that you will welcome me gladly.’ So saying, he went out.

When they were alone, Neangir turned to the fair strangers and implored their help. ‘My brothers and myself,’ he cried, ‘are filled with love for three peerless maidens, two of whom are under a cruel spell. If their fate happened to be in your hands, would you not do all in your power to restore them to happiness and liberty?’

But the young man’s appeal only stirred the two ladies to anger. ‘What,’ exclaimed one, ‘are the sorrows of lovers to us? Fate has deprived us of our lovers, and if it depends on us the whole world shall suffer as much as we do!’

This unexpected reply was heard with amazement by all present, and the Bassa entreated the speaker to tell them her story. Having obtained permission of her sister, she began:

THE STORY OF THE FAIR CIRCASSIANS

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‘We were born in Circassia of poor people, and my sister’s name is Tezila and mine Dely. Having nothing but our beauty to help us in life, we were carefully trained in all the accomplishments that give pleasure. We were both quick to learn, and from our childhood could play all sorts of instruments, could sing, and above all could dance. We were besides, lively and merry, as in spite of our misfortunes we are to this day.

‘We were easily pleased and quite content with our lives at home, when one morning the officials who had been sent to find wives for the Sultan saw us, and were struck with our beauty. We had always expected something of the sort, and were resigned to our lot, when we chanced to see two young men enter our house. The elder, who was about twenty years of age, had black hair and very bright eyes. The other could not have been more than fifteen, and was so fair that he might easily have passed for a girl.

‘They knocked at the door with a timid air and begged our parents to give them shelter, as they had lost their way. After some hesitation their request was granted, and they were invited into the room in which we were. And if our parents’ hearts were touched by their beauty, our own were not any harder, so that our departure for the palace, which had been arranged for the next day, suddenly became intolerable to us.

‘Night came, and I awoke from my sleep to find the younger of the two strangers sitting at my bedside and felt him take my hand.

‘“Fear nothing, lovely Dely,” he whispered, “from one who never knew love till he saw you. My name,” he went on, “is Prince Delicate, and I am the son of the king of the Isle of Black Marble. My friend, who travels with me, is one of the richest nobles of my country, and the secrets which he knows are the envy of the Sultan himself. And we left our native country because my father wished me to marry a lady of great beauty, but with one eye a trifle smaller than the other.”

‘My vanity was flattered at so speedy a conquest, and I was charmed with the way the young man had declared his passion. I turned my eyes slowly on him, and the look I gave him caused him almost to lose his senses. He fell fainting forward, and I was unable to move till Tezila, who had hastily put on a dress, ran to my assistance together with Thelamis, the young noble of whom the Prince had spoken.

‘As soon as we were all ourselves again we began to bewail our fate, and the journey that we were to take that very day to Constantinople. But we felt a little comforted when Thelamis assured us that he and the prince would follow in our steps, and would somehow contrive to speak to us. Then they kissed our hands, and left the house by a side-way.

‘A few moments later our parents came to tell us that the escort had arrived, and having taken farewell of them we mounted the camels, and took our seats in a kind of box that was fixed to the side of the animal. These boxes were large enough for us to sleep in comfortably, and as there was a window in the upper part, we were able to see the country through which we passed.

‘For several days we journeyed on, feeling sad and anxious as to what might become of us, when one day as I was looking out of the window of our room, I heard my name called, and beheld a beautifully dressed girl jumping out of the box on the other side of our camel. One glance told me that it was the prince, and my heart bounded with joy. It was, he said, Thelamis’s idea to disguise him like this, and that he himself had assumed the character of a slave-dealer who was taking this peerless maiden as a present to the Sultan. Thelamis had also persuaded the officer in charge of the caravan to let him hire the vacant box, so it was easy for the prince to scramble out of his own window and approach ours.

This ingenious trick enchanted us, but our agreeable conversation was soon interrupted by the attendants, who perceived that the camel was walking in a crooked manner and came to find out what was wrong. Luckily they were slow in their movements, and the prince had just time to get back to his own box and restore the balance, before the trick was discovered.

‘But neither the prince nor his friend had any intention of allowing us to enter the Sultan’s palace, though it was difficult to know how we were to escape, and what was to become of us when once we had escaped. At

length, one day as we were drawing near Constantinople, we learned from the prince that Thelamis had made acquaintance with a holy dervish whom he had met on the road, and had informed him that we were his sisters, who were being sold as slaves against his will. The good man was interested in the story, and readily agreed to find us shelter if we could manage to elude the watchfulness of our guards. The risk was great, but it was our only chance.

‘That night, when the whole caravan was fast asleep, we raised the upper part of our boxes and by the help of Thelamis climbed silently out. We next went back some distance along the way we had come, then, striking into another road, reached at last the retreat prepared for us by the dervish. Here we found food and rest, and I need not say what happiness it was to be free once more.

‘The dervish soon became a slave to our beauty, and the day after our escape he proposed that we should allow him to conduct us to an inn situated at a short distance, where we should find two Jews, owners of precious talismans which did not really belong to them. “Try,” said the dervish, “by some means to get possession of them.”

‘The inn, though not on the direct road to Constantinople, was a favourite one with merchants, owing to the excellence of the food, and on our arrival we discovered at least six or eight other people who had stopped for refreshment. They greeted us politely, and we sat down to table together.

‘In a short time the two men described by the dervish entered the room, and at a sign from him my sister made room at her side for one, while I did the same for the other.

‘Now the dervish had happened to mention that “their brother had danced.” At the moment we paid no attention to this remark, but it came back to our minds now, and we determined that they should dance also. To accomplish this we used all our arts and very soon bent them to our wills, so that they could refuse us nothing. At the end of the day we remained possessors of the talismans and had left them to their fate, while the prince and Thelamis fell more in love with us than ever, and declared that we were more lovely than any women in the world.

‘The sun had set before we quitted the inn, and we had made no plans as to where we should go next, so we readily consented to the prince’s

proposal that we should embark without delay for the Isle of Black Marble. What a place it was! Rocks blacker than jet towered above its shores and shed thick darkness over the country. Our sailors had not been there before and were nearly as frightened as ourselves, but thanks to Thelamis, who undertook to be our pilot, we landed safely on the beach.

‘When we had left the coast behind us, with its walls of jet, we entered a lovely country where the fields were greener, the streams clearer, and the sun brighter than anywhere else. The people crowded round to welcome their prince, whom they loved dearly, but they told him that the king was still full of rage at his son’s refusal to marry his cousin the Princess Okimpare, and also at his flight. Indeed, they all begged him not to visit the capital, as his life would hardly be safe. So, much as I should have enjoyed seeing the home of my beloved prince, I implored him to listen to this wise advice and to let us all go to Thelamis’s palace in the middle of a vast forest.

‘To my sister and myself, who had been brought up in a cottage, this house of Thelamis’s seemed like fairyland. It was built of pink marble, so highly polished that the flowers and streams surrounding it were reflected as in a mirror. One set of rooms was furnished especially for me in yellow silk and silver, to suit my black hair. Fresh dresses were provided for us every day, and we had slaves to wait on us. Ah, why could not this happiness have lasted for ever!

‘The peace of our lives was troubled by Thelamis’s jealousy of my sister, as he could not endure to see her on friendly terms with the prince, though knowing full well that his heart was mine. Every day we had scenes of tender reproaches and of explanations, but Tezila’s tears never failed to bring Thelamis to his knees, with prayers for forgiveness.

‘We had been living in this way for some months when one day the news came that the king had fallen dangerously ill. I begged the prince to hurry at once to the Court, both to see his father and also to show himself to the senators and nobles, but as his love for me was greater than his desire of a crown, he hesitated as if foreseeing all that afterwards happened. At last Tezila spoke to him so seriously in Thelamis’s presence, that he determined to go, but promised that he would return before night.

‘Night came but no prince, and Tezila, who had been the cause of his departure, showed such signs of uneasiness that Thelamis’s jealousy was

at once awakened. As for me, I cannot tell what I suffered. Not being able to sleep I rose from my bed and wandered into the forest, along the road which he had taken so many hours before. Suddenly I heard in the distance the sound of a horse's hoofs, and in a few moments the prince had flung himself down and was by my side. "Ah, how I adore you!" he exclaimed; "Thelamis's love will never equal mine." The words were hardly out of his mouth when I heard a slight noise behind, and before we could turn round both our heads were rolling in front of us, while the voice of Thelamis cried:

'"Perjured wretches, answer me; and you, faithless Tezila, tell me why you have betrayed me like this?"

'Then I understood what had happened, and that, in his rage, he had mistaken me for my sister.

'"Alas," replied my head in weak tones, "I am not Tezila, but Dely, whose life you have destroyed, as well as that of your friend." At this Thelamis paused and seemed to reflect for an instant.

'"Be not frightened," he said more quietly, "I can make you whole again," and laying a magic powder on our tongues he placed our heads on our necks. In the twinkling of an eye our heads were joined to our bodies without leaving so much as a scar; only that, blinded with rage as he still was, Thelamis had placed my head on the prince's body, and his on mine!

'I cannot describe to you how odd we both felt at this strange transformation. We both instinctively put up our hands—he to feel his hair, which was, of course, dressed like a woman's, and I to raise the turban which pressed heavily on my forehead. But we did not know what had happened to us, for the night was still dark.

'At this point Tezila appeared, followed by a troop of slaves bearing flowers. It was only by the light of their torches that we understood what had occurred. Indeed the first thought of both of us was that we must have changed clothes.

'Now in spite of what we may say, we all prefer our own bodies to those of anybody else, so notwithstanding our love for each other, at first we could not help feeling a little cross with Thelamis. However, so deep was the prince's passion for me, that very soon he began to congratulate himself on the change. "My happiness is perfect," he said; "my heart, beautiful Dely, has always been yours, and now I have your head also."

‘But though the prince made the best of it, Thelamis was much ashamed of his stupidity. “I have,” he said hesitatingly, “two other pastilles which have the same magic properties as those I used before. Let me cut off your heads again, and that will put matters straight.” The proposal sounded tempting, but was a little risky, and after consulting together we decided to let things remain as they were. “Do not blame me then,” continued Thelamis, “if you will not accept my offer. But take the two pastilles, and if it ever happens that you are decapitated a second time, make use of them in the way I have shown you, and each will get back his own head.” So saying he presented us with the pastilles, and we all returned to the castle.

‘However, the troubles caused by the unfortunate exchange were only just beginning. My head, without thinking what it was doing, led the prince’s body to my apartments. But my women, only looking at the dress, declared I had mistaken the corridor, and called some slaves to conduct me to his highness’s rooms. This was bad enough, but when—as it was still night my servants began to undress me, I nearly fainted from surprise and confusion, and no doubt the prince’s head was suffering in the same manner at the other end of the castle!

‘By the next morning—you will easily guess that we slept but little—we had grown partly accustomed to our strange situation, and when we looked in the mirror, the prince had become brown-skinned and black-haired, while my head was covered with his curly golden locks. And after that first day, everyone in the palace had become so accustomed to the change that they thought no more about it.

‘Some weeks after this, we heard that the king of the Isle of Black Marble was dead. The prince’s head, which once was mine, was full of ambitious desires, and he longed to ride straight to the capital and proclaim himself king. But then came the question as to whether the nobles would recognise the prince with a girl’s body, and indeed, when we came to think of it, which was prince and which was girl?

‘At last, after much argument, my head carried the day and we set out; but only to find that the king had declared the Princess Okimpare his successor. The greater part of the senators and nobles openly professed that they would much have preferred the rightful heir, but as they could

not recognise him either in the prince or me, they chose to consider us as impostors and threw us into prison.

‘A few days later Tezila and Thelamis, who had followed us to the capital, came to tell us that the new queen had accused us of high treason, and had herself been present at our trial—which was conducted without us. They had been in mortal terror as to what would be our sentence, but by a piece of extraordinary luck we had been condemned to be beheaded.

‘I told my sister that I did not see exactly where the luck came in, but Thelamis interrupted me rudely:

‘“What!” he cried, “of course I shall make use of the pastilles, and—” but here the officers arrived to lead us to the great square where the execution was to take place—for Okimpare was determined there should be no delay.

‘The square was crowded with people of all ages and all ranks, and in the middle a platform had been erected on which was the scaffold, with the executioner, in a black mask, standing by. At a sign from him I mounted first, and in a moment my head was rolling at his feet. With a bound my sister and Thelamis were beside me, and like lightning Thelamis seized the sabre from the headsman, and cut off the head of the prince. And before the multitude had recovered from their astonishment at these strange proceedings, our bodies were joined to our right heads, and the pastilles placed on our tongues. Then Thelamis led the prince to the edge of the platform and presented him to the people, saying, “Behold your lawful king.”

‘Shouts of joy rent the air at the sound of Thelamis’s words, and the noise reached Okimpare in the palace. Smitten with despair at the news, she fell down unconscious on her balcony, and was lifted up by the slaves and taken back to her own house.

‘Meanwhile our happiness was all turned to sorrow. I had rushed up to the prince to embrace him fondly, when he suddenly grew pale and staggered.

‘“I die faithful to you,” he murmured, turning his eyes towards me, “and I die a king!” and leaning his head on my shoulder he expired quietly, for one of the arteries in his neck had been cut through.

‘Not knowing what I did I staggered towards the sabre which was lying
near me, with the intention of following my beloved prince as speedily
as possible. And when Thelamis seized my hand (but only just in time),
in my madness I turned the sabre upon him, and he fell struck through
the heart at my feet.’

The whole company were listening to the story with breathless attention, when it became plain that Dely could go no further, while
Tezila had flung herself on a heap of cushions and hidden her face.
Zambac ordered her women to give them all the attention possible, and
desired they should be carried into her own rooms.

When the two sisters were in this condition, Ibrahim, who was a very prudent young man, suggested to his parents that, as the two Circassians were both unconscious, it would be an excellent opportunity to search them and see if the talismans belonging to the daughters of Siroco were concealed about their persons. But the Bassa, shocked at the notion of treating his guests in so inhospitable a manner, refused to do anything of the kind, adding that the next day he hoped to persuade them to give the talismans up of their own free will.

By this time it was nearly midnight and Neangir, who was standing near the Jewess Sumi, drew out the portrait of Argentine, and heard with delight that she was even more beautiful than her picture. Everyone was waiting on tip-toe for the appearance of the two watches, who were expected when the clock struck twelve to come in search of Sumi, and that there might be no delay the Bassa ordered all the doors to be flung wide open. It was done, and there entered not the longed-for watches, but the page who had been sent away in disgrace.

Then the Bassa arose in wrath. ‘Azemi,’ he said, ‘did I not order you to stand no more in my presence?’

‘My lord,’ replied Azemi, modestly, ‘I was hidden outside the door, listening to the tale of the two Circassians. And as I know you are fond of stories, give me also leave to tell you one. I promise you it shall not be long.’

‘Speak on,’ replied the Bassa, ‘but take heed what you say.’

‘My lord,’ began Azemi, ‘this morning I was walking in the town when I noticed a man going in the same direction followed by a slave. He entered a baker’s shop, where he bought some bread which he gave to the slave to carry. I watched him and saw that he purchased many other kinds of provisions at other places, and when the slave could carry no more his master commanded him to return home and have supper ready at midnight.

‘When left alone the man went up the street, and turning into a jeweller’s shop, brought out a watch that as far as I could see was made of silver. He walked on a few steps, then stooped and picked up a gold watch which lay at his feet. At this point I ran up and told him that if he did not give me half its price I would report him to the Cadi; he agreed, and conducting me to his house produced four hundred sequins, which he said was my share, and having got what I wanted I went away.

‘As it was the hour for attending on my lord I returned home and accompanied you to the Cadi, where I heard the story of the three Jews and learned the importance of the two watches I had left at the stranger’s. I hastened to his house, but he had gone out, and I could only find the slave, whom I told that I was the bearer of important news for his master. Believing me to be one of his friends, he begged me to wait, and showed me into a room where I saw the two watches lying on the table. I put them in my pocket, leaving the four hundred sequins in place of the gold watch and three gold pieces which I knew to be the price of the other. As you know the watches never remain with the person who buys them, this man may think himself very lucky to get back his money. I have wound them both up, and at this instant Aurora and Argentine are locked safely into my own room.’

Everybody was so delighted to hear this news that Azemi was nearly stifled with their embraces, and Neangir could hardly be prevented from

running to break in the door, though he did not even know where the page slept.

But the page begged to have the honour of fetching the ladies himself, and soon returned leading them by the hand.

For some minutes all was a happy confusion, and Ibrahim took advantage of it to fall on his knees before Aurora, and search in the fifth fold of her dress for the missing coral bead. The Book of Spells had told the truth; there it was, and as the chaplet was now complete the young man's days of seeking were over.

In the midst of the general rejoicing Hassan alone bore a gloomy face.

'Alas!' he said, 'everyone is happy but the miserable being you see before you. I have lost the only consolation in my grief, which was to feel that I had a brother in misfortune!'

'Be comforted,' replied the Bassa; 'sooner or later the dervish who stole the pink bag is sure to be found.'

Supper was then served, and after they had all eaten of rare fruits which seemed to them the most delicious in the whole world, the Bassa ordered the flask containing the elixir of love to be brought and the young people to drink of it. Then their eyes shone with a new fire, and they swore to be true to each other till death.

This ceremony was scarcely over when the clock struck one, and in an instant Aurora and Argentine had vanished, and in the place where they stood lay two watches. Silence fell upon all the company—they had forgotten the enchantment; then the voice of Azemi was heard asking if he might be allowed to take charge of the watches till the next day, pledging his head to end their enchantment. With the consent of Sumi, this was granted, and the Bassa gave Azemi a purse containing a thousand sequins, as a reward for the services he had already rendered to them. After this everybody went to his own apartment.

Azemi had never possessed so much money before, and never closed his eyes for joy the whole night long. Very early he got up and went into the garden, thinking how he could break the enchantment of the daughters of Siroco. Suddenly the soft tones of a woman fell on his ear, and peeping through the bushes he saw Tezila, who was arranging flowers in her sister's hair. The rustling of the leaves caused Dely to start; she jumped up as if to fly, but Azemi implored her to remain and begged her to tell him

what happened to them after the death of their lovers, and how they had come to find the dervish.

‘The punishment decreed to us by the Queen Okimpare,’ answered Dely, ‘was that we were to dance and sing in the midst of our sorrow, at a great fete which was to be held that very day for all her people. This cruel command nearly turned our brains, and we swore a solemn oath to make all lovers as wretched as we were ourselves. In this design we succeeded so well that in a short time the ladies of the capital came in a body to Okimpare, and prayed her to banish us from the kingdom, before their lives were made miserable for ever. She consented, and commanded us to be placed on board a ship, with our slave Gouloucou.

‘On the shore we saw an old man who was busily engaged in drowning some little black pigs, talking to them all the while, as if they could understand him.

‘“Accursed race,” said he, “it is you who have caused all the misfortunes of him to whom I gave the magic bracelet. Perish all of you!”

‘We drew near from curiosity, and recognised in him the dervish who had sheltered us on our first escape from the caravan.

‘When the old man discovered who we were he was beside himself with pleasure, and offered us a refuge in the cave where he lived. We gladly accepted his offer, and to the cave we all went, taking with us the last little pig, which he gave us as a present.

‘“The Bassa of the Sea,” he added, “will pay you anything you like to ask for it.”

‘Without asking why it was so precious I took the pig and placed it in my work bag, where it has been ever since. Only yesterday we offered it to the Bassa, who laughed at us, and this so enraged us against the dervish that we cut off his beard when he was asleep, and now he dare not show himself.’

‘Ah,’ exclaimed the page, ‘it is not fitting that such beauty should waste itself in making other people miserable. Forget the unhappy past and think only of the future. And accept, I pray you, this watch, to mark the brighter hours in store.’ So saying he laid the watch upon her knee. Then he turned to Tezila. ‘And you fair maiden, permit me to offer you this other watch. True it is only of silver, but it is all I have left to give. And I

feel quite sure that you must have somewhere a silver seal, that will be exactly the thing to go with it.'

'Why, so you have,' cried Dely; 'fasten your silver seal to your watch, and I will hang my gold one on to mine.'

The seals were produced, and, as Azemi had guessed, they were the talismans which the two Circassians had taken from Izif and Izouf, mounted in gold and silver. As quick as lightning the watches slid from the hands of Tezila and her sister, and Aurora and Argentine stood before them, each with her talisman on her finger.

At first they seemed rather confused themselves at the change which had taken place, and the sunlight which they had not seen for so long, but when gradually they understood that their enchantment had come to an end, they could find no words to express their happiness.

The Circassians could with difficulty be comforted for the loss of the talismans, but Aurora and Argentine entreated them to dry their tears, as their father, Siroco, who was governor of Alexandria, would not fail to reward them in any manner they wished. This promise was soon confirmed by Siroco himself, who came into the garden with the Bassa and his two sons, and was speedily joined by the ladies of the family. Only Hassan was absent. It was the hour in which he was condemned to bewail his ebony hand.

To the surprise of all a noise was at this moment heard in a corner of the terrace, and Hassan himself appeared surrounded by slaves, clapping his hands and shouting with joy. 'I was weeping as usual,' cried he, 'when all at once the tears refused to come to my eyes, and on looking down at my hand I saw that its blackness had vanished. And now, lovely Zelida, nothing prevents me any longer from offering you the hand, when the heart has been yours always.'

But though Hassan never thought of asking or caring what had caused his cure, the others were by no means so indifferent. It was quite clear that the little black pig must be dead—but how, and when? To this the slaves answered that they had seen that morning a man pursued by three others, and that he had taken refuge in the cavern which they had been left to guard. Then, in obedience to orders, they had rolled a stone over the entrance.

Piercing shrieks interrupted their story, and a man, whom the Circassians saw to be the old dervish, rushed round the corner of the terrace with the three Jews behind him. When the fugitive beheld so many people collected together, he turned down another path, but the slaves captured all four and brought them before their master.

What was the surprise of the Bassa when he beheld in the old dervish the man who had given the chaplet, the copper plaque, and the bracelet to his three sons. ‘Fear nothing, holy father,’ he said, ‘you are safe with me. But tell us, how came you here?’

‘My lord,’ explained the dervish, ‘when my beard was cut off during my sleep by the two Circassians, I was ashamed to appear before the eyes of men, and fled, bearing with me the pink silk bag. In the night these three men fell in with me, and we passed some time in conversation, but at dawn, when it was light enough to see each other’s faces, one of them exclaimed that I was the dervish travelling with the two Circassians who had stolen the talismans from the Jews. I jumped up and tried to fly to my cave, but they were too quick for me, and just as we reached your garden they snatched the bag which contained the little black pig and flung it into the sea. By this act, which delivers your son, I would pray you to forgive them for any wrongs they may have done you—nay more, that you will recompense them for it.’ The Bassa granted the holy man’s request, and seeing that the two Jews had fallen victims to the charms of the Circassian ladies, gave his consent to their union, which was fixed to take place at the same time as that of Izaf with the wise Sumi. The Cadi was sent for, and the Jews exchanged the hats of their race for the turbans of the followers of the Prophet. Then, after so many misfortunes, the Bassa’s three sons entreated their father to delay their happiness no longer, and the six marriages were performed by the Cadi at the hour of noon.

[Cabinet des Fees.]

THE JACKAL AND THE SPRING

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Once upon a time all the streams and rivers ran so dry that the animals did not know how to get water. After a very long search, which had been quite in vain, they found a tiny spring, which only wanted to be dug deeper so as to yield plenty of water. So the beasts said to each other, ‘Let us dig a well, and then we shall not fear to die of thirst;’ and they all consented except the jackal, who hated work of any kind, and generally got somebody to do it for him.

When they had finished their well, they held a council as to who should be made the guardian of the well, so that the jackal might not come near it, for, they said, ‘he would not work, therefore he shall not drink.’

After some talk it was decided that the rabbit should be left in charge; then all the other beasts went back to their homes.

When they were out of sight the jackal arrived. ‘Good morning! Good morning, rabbit!’ and the rabbit politely said, ‘Good morning!’ Then the jackal unfastened the little bag that hung at his side, and pulled out of it a piece of honeycomb which he began to eat, and turning to the rabbit he remarked:

‘As you see, rabbit, I am not thirsty in the least, and this is nicer than any water.’

‘Give me a bit,’ asked the rabbit. So the jackal handed him a very little morsel.

‘Oh, how good it is!’ cried the rabbit; ‘give me a little more, dear friend!’

But the jackal answered, ‘If you really want me to give you some more, you must have your paws tied behind you, and lie on your back, so that I can pour it into your mouth.’

The rabbit did as he was bid, and when he was tied tight and popped on his back, the jackal ran to the spring and drank as much as he wanted. When he had quite finished he returned to his den.

In the evening the animals all came back, and when they saw the rabbit lying with his paws tied, they said to him: ‘Rabbit, how did you let yourself be taken in like this?’

‘It was all the fault of the jackal,’ replied the rabbit; ‘he tied me up like this, and told me he would give me something nice to eat. It was all a trick just to get at our water.’

‘Rabbit, you are no better than an idiot to have let the jackal drink our water when he would not help to find it. Who shall be our next watchman? We must have somebody a little sharper than you!’ and the little hare called out, ‘I will be the watchman.’

The following morning the animals all went their various ways, leaving the little hare to guard the spring. When they were out of sight the jackal came back. ‘Good morning! good morning, little hare,’ and the little hare politely said, ‘Good morning.’

‘Can you give me a pinch of snuff?’ said the jackal.

‘I am so sorry, but I have none,’ answered the little hare.

The jackal then came and sat down by the little hare, and unfastened his little bag, pulling out of it a piece of honeycomb. He licked his lips and exclaimed, ‘Oh, little hare, if you only knew how good it is!’

‘What is it?’ asked the little hare.

‘It is something that moistens my throat so deliciously,’ answered the jackal, ‘that after I have eaten it I don’t feel thirsty any more, while I am sure that all you other beasts are for ever wanting water.’

‘Give me a bit, dear friend,’ asked the little hare.

‘Not so fast,’ replied the jackal. ‘If you really wish to enjoy what you are eating, you must have your paws tied behind you, and lie on your back, so that I can pour it into your mouth.’

‘You can tie them, only be quick,’ said the little hare, and when he was tied tight and popped on his back, the jackal went quietly down to the well, and drank as much as he wanted. When he had quite finished he returned to his den.

In the evening the animals all came back; and when they saw the little hare with his paws tied, they said to him: ‘Little hare, how did you let yourself be taken in like this? Didn’t you boast you were very sharp? You undertook to guard our water; now show us how much is left for us to drink!’

‘It is all the fault of the jackal,’ replied the little hare. ‘He told me he would give me something nice to eat if I would just let him tie my hands behind my back.’

Then the animals said, ‘Who can we trust to mount guard now?’ And the panther answered, ‘Let it be the tortoise.’

The following morning the animals all went their various ways, leaving the tortoise to guard the spring. When they were out of sight the jackal came back. ‘Good morning, tortoise; good morning.’

But the tortoise took no notice.

‘Good morning, tortoise; good morning.’ But still the tortoise pretended not to hear.

Then the jackal said to himself, ‘Well, to-day I have only got to manage a bigger idiot than before. I shall just kick him on one side, and then go and have a drink.’ So he went up to the tortoise and said to him in a soft voice, ‘Tortoise! tortoise!’ but the tortoise took no notice. Then the jackal kicked him out of the way, and went to the well and began to drink, but scarcely had he touched the water, than the tortoise seized him by the leg. The jackal shrieked out: ‘Oh, you will break my leg!’ but the tortoise only held on the tighter. The jackal then took his bag and tried to make the tortoise smell the honeycomb he had inside; but the tortoise turned away his head and smelt nothing. At last the jackal said to the tortoise, ‘I should like to give you my bag and everything in it,’ but the only answer the tortoise made was to grasp the jackal’s leg tighter still.

So matters stood when the other animals came back. The moment he saw them, the jackal gave a violent tug, and managed to free his leg, and then took to his heels as fast as he could. And the animals all said to the tortoise:

‘Well done, tortoise, you have proved your courage; now we can drink from our well in peace, as you have got the better of that thieving jackal!’

[Contes Populaires des Bassoutos, recueillis et traduits par E. Jacottet.
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THE BEAR

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Once on a time there was a king who had an only daughter. He was so proud and so fond of her, that he was in constant terror that something would happen to her if she went outside the palace, and thus, owing to his great love for her, he forced her to lead the life of a prisoner, shut up within her own rooms.

The princess did not like this at all, and one day she complained about it very bitterly to her nurse. Now, the nurse was a witch, though the king did not know it. For some time she listened and tried to soothe the princess; but when she saw that she would not be comforted, she said to her: ‘Your father loves you very dearly, as you know. Whatever you were to ask from him he would give you. The one thing he will not grant you is permission to leave the palace. Now, do as I tell you. Go to your father and ask him to give you a wooden wheel-barrow, and a bear’s skin. When you have got them bring them to me, and I will touch them with my magic wand. The wheel-barrow will then move of itself, and will take you at full speed wherever you want to go, and the bear’s skin will make such a covering for you, that no one will recognise you.’

So the princess did as the witch advised her. The king, when he heard her strange request, was greatly astonished, and asked her what she meant to do with a wheel-barrow and a bear’s skin. And the princess answered, ‘You never let me leave the house—at least you might grant me this request’ So the king granted it, and the princess went back to her nurse, taking the barrow and the bear’s skin with her.

As soon as the witch saw them, she touched them with her magic wand, and in a moment the barrow began to move about in all directions. The princess next put on the bear’s skin, which so completely changed her appearance, that no one could have known that she was a girl and not a bear. In this strange attire she seated herself on the barrow, and in a few minutes she found herself far away from the palace, and moving rapidly through a great forest. Here she stopped the barrow with a sign that the

witch had shown her, and hid herself and it in a thick grove of flowering shrubs.

Now it happened that the prince of that country was hunting with his dogs in the forest. Suddenly he caught sight of the bear hiding among the shrubs, and calling his dogs, hounded them on to attack it. But the girl, seeing what peril she was in, cried, ‘Call off your dogs, or they will kill me. What harm have I ever done to you?’ At these words, coming from a bear, the prince was so startled that for a moment he stood stock-still, then he said quite gently, ‘Will you come with me? I will take you to my home.’

‘I will come gladly,’ replied the bear; and seating herself on the barrow it at once began to move in the direction of the prince’s palace. You may imagine the surprise of the prince’s mother when she saw her son return accompanied by a bear, who at once set about doing the house-work better than any servant that the queen had ever seen.

Now it happened that there were great festivities going on in the palace of a neighbouring prince, and at dinner, one day, the prince said to his mother: ‘This evening there is to be a great ball, to which I must go.’

And his mother answered, ‘Go and dance, and enjoy yourself.’

Suddenly a voice came from under the table, where the bear had rolled itself, as was its wont: ‘Let me come to the ball; I, too, would like to dance.’

But the only answer the prince made was to give the bear a kick, and to drive it out of the room.

In the evening the prince set off for the ball. As soon as he had started, the bear came to the queen and implored to be allowed to go to the ball, saying that she would hide herself so well that no one would know she was there. The kind-hearted queen could not refuse her.

Then the bear ran to her barrow, threw off her bear’s skin, and touched it with the magic wand that the witch had given her. In a moment the skin was changed into an exquisite ball dress woven out of moon-beams, and the wheel-barrow was changed into a carriage drawn by two prancing steeds. Stepping into the carriage the princess drove to the grand entrance of the palace. When she entered the ball-room, in her wondrous dress of moon-beams, she looked so lovely, so different from all the other guests,

that everyone wondered who she was, and no one could tell where she had come from.

From the moment he saw her, the prince fell desperately in love with her, and all the evening he would dance with no one else but the beautiful stranger.

When the ball was over, the princess drove away in her carriage at full speed, for she wished to get home in time to change her ball dress into the bear's skin, and the carriage into the wheel-barrow, before anyone discovered who she was.

The prince, putting spurs into his horse, rode after her, for he was determined not to let her out of his sight. But suddenly a thick mist arose and hid her from him. When he reached his home he could talk to his mother of nothing else but the beautiful stranger with whom he had danced so often, and with whom he was so much in love. And the bear beneath the table smiled to itself, and muttered: 'I am the beautiful stranger; oh, how I have taken you in!'

The next evening there was a second ball, and, as you may believe, the prince was determined not to miss it, for he thought he would once more see the lovely girl, and dance with her and talk to her, and make her talk to him, for at the first ball she had never opened her lips.

And, sure enough, as the music struck up the first dance, the beautiful stranger entered the room, looking even more radiant than the night before, for this time her dress was woven out of the rays of the sun. All evening the prince danced with her, but she never spoke a word.

When the ball was over he tried once more to follow her carriage, that he might know whence she came, but suddenly a great waterspout fell from the sky, and the blinding sheets of rain hid her from his sight.

When he reached his home he told his mother that he had again seen the lovely girl, and that this time she had been even more beautiful than the night before. And again the bear smiled beneath the table, and muttered: 'I have taken him in a second time, and he has no idea that I am the beautiful girl with whom he is so much in love.'

On the next evening, the prince returned to the palace for the third ball. And the princess went too, and this time she had changed her bear's skin into a dress woven out of the star-light, studded all over with gems, and she looked so dazzling and so beautiful, that everyone wondered at her,

and said that no one so beautiful had ever been seen before. And the prince danced with her, and, though he could not induce her to speak, he succeeded in slipping a ring on her finger.

When the ball was over, he followed her carriage, and rode at such a pace that for long he kept it in sight. Then suddenly a terrible wind arose between him and the carriage, and he could not overtake it.

When he reached his home he said to his mother, ‘I do not know what is to become of me; I think I shall go mad, I am so much in love with that girl, and I have no means of finding out who she is. I danced with her and I gave her a ring, and yet I do not know her name, nor where I am to find her.’

Then the bear laughed beneath the table and muttered to itself.

And the prince continued: ‘I am tired to death. Order some soup to be made for me, but I don’t want that bear to meddle with it. Every time I speak of my love the brute mutters and laughs, and seems to mock at me. I hate the sight of the creature!’

When the soup was ready, the bear brought it to the prince; but before handing it to him, she dropped into the plate the ring the prince had given her the night before at the ball. The prince began to eat his soup very slowly and languidly, for he was sad at heart, and all his thoughts were busy, wondering how and where he could see the lovely stranger again. Suddenly he noticed the ring at the bottom of the plate. In a moment he recognised it, and was dumb with surprise.

Then he saw the bear standing beside him, looking at him with gentle, beseeching eyes, and something in the eyes of the bear made him say: ‘Take off that skin, some mystery is hidden beneath it.’

And the bear’s skin dropped off, and the beautiful girl stood before him, in the dress woven out of the star-light, and he saw that she was the stranger with whom he had fallen so deeply in love. And now she appeared to him a thousand times more beautiful than ever, and he led her to his mother. And the princess told them her story, and how she had been kept shut up by her father in his palace, and how she had wearied of her imprisonment. And the prince’s mother loved her, and rejoiced that her son should have so good and beautiful a wife.

So they were married, and lived happily for many years, and reigned wisely over their kingdom.

THE SUNCHILD

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Once there was a woman who had no children, and this made her very unhappy. So she spoke one day to the Sunball, saying: ‘Dear Sunball, send me only a little girl now, and when she is twelve years old you may take her back again.’

So soon after this the Sunball sent her a little girl, whom the woman called Letiko, and watched over with great care till she was twelve years old. Soon after that, while Letiko was away one day gathering herbs, the Sunball came to her, and said: ‘Letiko, when you go home, tell your mother that she must bethink herself of what she promised me.’

Then Letiko went straight home, and said to her mother: ‘While I was gathering herbs a fine tall gentleman came to me and charged me to tell you that you should remember what you promised him.’

When the woman heard that she was sore afraid, and immediately shut all the doors and windows of the house, stopped up all the chinks and holes, and kept Letiko hidden away, that the Sunball should not come and take her away. But she forgot to close up the keyhole, and through it the Sunball sent a ray into the house, which took hold of the little girl and carried her away to him.

One day, the Sunball having sent her to the straw shed to fetch straw, the girl sat down on the piles of straw and bemoaned herself, saying: ‘As sighs this straw under my feet so sighs my heart after my mother.’

And this caused her to be so long away that the Sunball asked her, when she came back: ‘Eh, Letiko, where have you been so long?’

She answered: ‘My slippers are too big, and I could not go faster.’

Then the Sunball made the slippers shorter.

Another time he sent her to fetch water, and when she came to the spring, she sat down and lamented, saying: ‘As flows the water even so flows my heart with longing for my mother.’

Thus she again remained so long away that the Sunball asked her: ‘Eh, Letiko, why have you remained so long away?’

And she answered: ‘My petticoat is too long and hinders me in walking.’

Then the Sunball cut her petticoat to make it shorter.

Another time the Sunball sent her to bring him a pair of sandals, and as the girl carried these in her hand she began to lament, saying: ‘As creaks the leather so creaks my heart after my little mother.’

When she came home the Sunball asked her again: ‘Eh, Letiko, why do you come home so late?’

‘My red hood is too wide, and falls over my eyes, therefore I could not go fast.’

Then he made the hood narrower.

At last, however, the Sunball became aware how sad Letiko was. He sent her a second time to bring straw, and, slipping in after her, he heard how she lamented for her mother. Then he went home, called two foxes to him, and said: ‘Will you take Letiko home?’

‘Yes, why not?’

‘But what will you eat and drink if you should become hungry and thirsty by the way?’

‘We will eat her flesh and drink her blood.’

When the Sunball heard that, he said: ‘You are not suited for this affair.’

Then he sent them away, and called two hares to him, and said: ‘Will you take Letiko home to her mother?’

‘Yes, why not?’

‘What will you eat and drink if you should become hungry and thirsty by the way?’

‘We will eat grass and drink from streamlets.’

‘Then take her, and bring her home.’

Then the hares set out, taking Letiko with them, and because it was a long way to her home they became hungry by the way. Then they said to the little girl: ‘Climb this tree, dear Letiko, and remain there till we have finished eating.’

So Letiko climbed the tree, and the hares went grazing.

It was not very long, however, before a lamia came under the tree and called out: ‘Letiko, Letiko, come down and see what beautiful shoes I have on.’

‘Oh! my shoes are much finer than yours.’

‘Come down. I am in a hurry, for my house is not yet swept.’

‘Go home and sweep it then, and come back when you are ready.’

Then the lamia went away and swept her house, and when she was ready she came back and called out: ‘Letiko, Letiko, come down and see what a beautiful apron I have.’

‘Oh! my apron is much finer than yours.’

‘If you will not come down I will cut down the tree and eat you.’

‘Do so, and then eat me.’

Then the lamia hewed with all her strength at the tree, but could not cut it down. And when she saw that, she called out: ‘Letiko, Letiko, come down, for I must feed my children.’

‘Go home then and feed them, and come back when you are ready.’

When the lamia was gone away, Letiko called out: ‘Little hares! little hares!’

Then said one hare to the other: ‘Listen, Letiko is calling;’ and they both ran back to her as fast as they could go. Then Letiko came down from the tree, and they went on their way.

The lamia ran as fast as she could after them, to catch them up, and when she came to a field where people were working she asked them: ‘Have you seen anyone pass this way?’

They answered: ‘We are planting beans.’

‘Oh! I did not ask about that; but if anyone had passed this way.’

But the people only answered the louder: ‘Are you deaf? It is beans, beans, beans we are planting.’

When Letiko had nearly reached her home the dog knew her, and called out, ‘Bow wow! see here comes Letiko!’

And the mother said, ‘Hush! thou beast of ill-omen! wilt thou make me burst with misery?’

Next the cat on the roof saw her, and called out ‘Miaouw! miaouw! see here comes Letiko!’

And the mother said, ‘Keep silence! thou beast of ill-omen! wilt thou make me burst with misery?’

Then the cock spied, and called out: ‘Cock-a-doodle-do! see here comes Letiko!’

And the mother said again: ‘Be quiet! thou bird of ill-omen! wilt thou make me burst with misery?’

The nearer Letiko and the two hares came to the house the nearer also came the lamia, and when the hare was about to slip in by the house door she caught it by its little tail and tore it out.

When the hare came in the mother stood up and said to it: ‘Welcome, dear little hare; because you have brought me back Letiko I will silver your little tail.’

And she did so; and lived ever after with her daughter in happiness and content.

THE DAUGHTER OF BUK ETTEMSUCH

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Once upon a time there lived a man who had seven daughters. For a long time they dwelt quite happily at home together, then one morning the father called them all before him and said:

‘Your mother and I are going on a journey, and as we do not know how long we may be away, you will find enough provisions in the house to last you three years. But see you do not open the door to anyone till we come home again.’

‘Very well, dear father,’ replied the girls.

For two years they never left the house or unlocked the door; but one day, when they had washed their clothes, and were spreading them out on the roof to dry, the girls looked down into the street where people were walking to and fro, and across to the market, with its stalls of fresh meat, vegetables, and other nice things.

‘Come here,’ cried one. ‘It makes me quite hungry! Why should not we have our share? Let one of us go to the market, and buy meat and vegetables.’

‘Oh, we mustn’t do that!’ said the youngest. ‘You know our father forbade us to open the door till he came home again.’

Then the eldest sister sprang at her and struck her, the second spit at her, the third abused her, the fourth pushed her, the fifth flung her to the ground, and the sixth tore her clothes. Then they left her lying on the floor, and went out with a basket.

In about an hour they came back with the basket full of meat and vegetables, which they put in a pot, and set on the fire, quite forgetting that the house door stood wide open. The youngest sister, however, took no part in all this, and when dinner was ready and the table laid, she stole softly out to the entrance hall, and hid herself behind a great cask which stood in one corner.

Now, while the other sisters were enjoying their feast, a witch passed by, and catching sight of the open door, she walked in. She went up to the eldest girl, and said: ‘Where shall I begin on you, you fat bolster?’

‘You must begin,’ answered she, ‘with the hand which struck my little sister.’

So the witch gobbled her up, and when the last scrap had disappeared, she came to the second and asked: ‘Where shall I begin on you, my fat bolster?’

And the second answered, ‘You must begin on my mouth, which spat on my sister.’

And so on to the rest; and very soon the whole six had disappeared. And as the witch was eating the last mouthful of the last sister, the youngest, who had been crouching, frozen with horror, behind the barrel, ran out through the open door into the street. Without looking behind her, she hastened on and on, as fast as her feet would carry her, till she saw an ogre’s castle standing in front of her. In a corner near the door she spied a large pot, and she crept softly up to it and pulled the cover over it, and went to sleep.

By-and-by the ogre came home. ‘Fee, Fo, Fum,’ cried he, ‘I smell the smell of a man. What ill fate has brought him here?’ And he looked through all the rooms, and found nobody. ‘Where are you?’ he called. ‘Do not be afraid, I will do you no harm.’

But the girl was still silent.

‘Come out, I tell you,’ repeated the ogre. ‘Your life is quite safe. If you are an old man, you shall be my father. If you are a boy, you shall be my son. If your years are as many as mine, you shall be my brother. If you are an old woman, you shall be my mother. If you are a young one, you shall be my daughter. If you are middle-aged, you shall be my wife. So come out, and fear nothing.’

Then the maiden came out of her hiding-place, and stood before him.

‘Fear nothing,’ said the ogre again; and when he went away to hunt he left her to look after the house. In the evening he returned, bringing with him hares, partridges, and gazelles, for the girl’s supper; for himself he only cared for the flesh of men, which she cooked for him. He also gave into her charge the keys of six rooms, but the key of the seventh he kept himself.

And time passed on, and the girl and the ogre still lived together.

She called him ‘Father,’ and he called her ‘Daughter,’ and never once did he speak roughly to her.

One day the maiden said to him, ‘Father, give me the key of the upper chamber.’

‘No, my daughter,’ replied the ogre. ‘There is nothing there that is any use to you.’

‘But I want the key,’ she repeated again.

However the ogre took no notice, and pretended not to hear. The girl began to cry, and said to herself: ‘To-night, when he thinks I am asleep, I will watch and see where he hides it;’ and after she and the ogre had supped, she bade him good-night, and left the room. In a few minutes she stole quietly back, and watched from behind a curtain. In a little while she saw the ogre take the key from his pocket, and hide it in a hole in the ground before he went to bed. And when all was still she took out the key, and went back to the house.

The next morning the ogre awoke with the first ray of light, and the first thing he did was to look for the key. It was gone, and he guessed at once what had become of it.

But instead of getting into a great rage, as most ogres would have done, he said to himself, ‘If I wake the maiden up I shall only frighten her. For to-day she shall keep the key, and when I return to-night it will be time enough to take it from her.’ So he went off to hunt.

The moment he was safe out of the way, the girl ran upstairs and opened the door of the room, which was quite bare. The one window was closed, and she threw back the lattice and looked out. Beneath lay a garden which belonged to the prince, and in the garden was an ox, who was drawing up water from the well all by himself—for there was nobody to be seen anywhere. The ox raised his head at the noise the girl made in opening the lattice, and said to her, ‘Good morning, O daughter of Buk Ettemsuch! Your father is feeding you up till you are nice and fat, and then he will put you on a spit and cook you.’

These words so frightened the maiden that she burst into tears and ran out of the room. All day she wept, and when the ogre came home at night, no supper was ready for him.

‘What are you crying for?’ said he. ‘Where is my supper, and is it you who have opened the upper chamber?’

‘Yes, I opened it,’ answered she.

‘And what did the ox say to you?’

‘He said, “Good morning, O daughter of Buk Ettemsuch. Your father is feeding you up till you are nice and fat, and then he will put you on a spit and cook you.”’

‘Well, to-morrow you can go to the window and say, “My father is feeding me up till I am nice and fat, but he does not mean to eat me. If I had one of your eyes I would use it for a mirror, and look at myself before and behind; and your girths should be loosened, and you should be blind—seven days and seven nights.”’

‘All right,’ replied the girl, and the next morning, when the ox spoke to her, she answered him as she had been told, and he fell down straight upon the ground, and lay there seven days and seven nights. But the flowers in the garden withered, for there was no one to water them.

When the prince came into his garden he found nothing but yellow stalks; in the midst of them the ox was lying. With a blow from his sword he killed the animal, and, turning to his attendants, he said, ‘Go and fetch another ox!’ And they brought in a great beast, and he drew the water out of the well, and the flowers revived, and the grass grew green again. Then the prince called his attendants and went away.

The next morning the girl heard the noise of the waterwheel, and she opened the lattice and looked out of the window.

‘Good morning, O daughter of Buk Ettemsuch!’ said the new ox. ‘Your father is feeding you up till you are nice and fat, and then he will put you on a spit and cook you.’

And the maiden answered: ‘My father is feeding me up till I am nice and fat, but he does not mean to eat me. If I had one of your eyes I would use it for a mirror, and look at myself before and behind; and your girths should be loosened, and you should be blind—seven days and seven nights.’

Directly she uttered these words the ox fell to the ground and lay there, seven days and seven nights. Then he arose and began to draw the water from the well. He had only turned the wheel once or twice, when the prince took it into his head to visit his garden and see how the new ox was

getting on. When he entered the ox was working busily; but in spite of that the flowers and grass were dried up. And the prince drew his sword, and rushed at the ox to slay him, as he had done the other. But the ox fell on his knees and said:

‘My lord, only spare my life, and let me tell you how it happened.’

‘How what happened?’ asked the prince.

‘My lord, a girl looked out of that window and spoke a few words to me, and I fell to the ground. For seven days and seven nights I lay there, unable to move. But, O my lord, it is not given to us twice to behold beauty such as hers.’

‘It is a lie,’ said the prince. ‘An ogre dwells there. Is it likely that he keeps a maiden in his upper chamber?’

‘Why not?’ replied the ox. ‘But if you come here at dawn to-morrow, and hide behind that tree, you will see for yourself.’

‘So I will,’ said the prince; ‘and if I find that you have not spoken truth, I will kill you.’

The prince left the garden, and the ox went on with his work. Next morning the prince came early to the garden, and found the ox busy with the waterwheel.

‘Has the girl appeared yet?’ he asked.

‘Not yet; but she will not be long. Hide yourself in the branches of that tree, and you will soon see her.’

The prince did as he was told, and scarcely was he seated when the maiden threw open the lattice.

‘Good morning, O daughter of Buk Ettemsuch!’ said the ox. ‘Your father is feeding you up till you are nice and fat, and then he will put you on a spit and cook you.’

‘My father is feeding me up till I am nice and fat, but he does not mean to eat me. If I had one of your eyes I would use it for a mirror, and look at myself before and behind; and your girths should be loosened, and you should be blind—seven days and seven nights.’ And hardly had she spoken when the ox fell on the ground, and the maiden shut the lattice and went away. But the prince knew that what the ox had said was true, and that she had not her equal in the whole world. And he came down from the tree, his heart burning with love.

‘Why has the ogre not eaten her?’ thought he. ‘This night I will invite him to supper in my palace and question him about the maiden, and find out if she is his wife.’

So the prince ordered a great ox to be slain and roasted whole, and two huge tanks to be made, one filled with water and the other with wine. And towards evening he called his attendants and went to the ogre’s house to wait in the courtyard till he came back from hunting. The ogre was surprised to see so many people assembled in front of his house; but he bowed politely and said, ‘Good morning, dear neighbours! To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit? I have not offended you, I hope?’

‘Oh, certainly not!’ answered the prince.

‘Then,’ continued the ogre, ‘What has brought you to my house to-day for the first time?’

‘We should like to have supper with you,’ said the prince.

‘Well, supper is ready, and you are welcome,’ replied the ogre, leading the way into the house, for he had had a good day, and there was plenty of game in the bag over his shoulder.

A table was quickly prepared, and the prince had already taken his place, when he suddenly exclaimed, ‘After all, Buk Ettemsuch, suppose you come to supper with me?’

‘Where?’ asked the ogre.

‘In my house. I know it is all ready.’

‘But it is so far off—why not stay here?’

‘Oh, I will come another day; but this evening I must be your host.’

So the ogre accompanied the prince and his attendants back to the palace. After a while the prince turned to the ogre and said:

‘It is as a wooer that I appear before you. I seek a wife from an honourable family.’

‘But I have no daughter,’ replied the ogre.

‘Oh, yes you have, I saw her at the window.’

‘Well, you can marry her if you wish,’ said he.

So the prince’s heart was glad as he and his attendants rode back with the ogre to his house. And as they parted, the prince said to his guest, ‘You will not forget the bargain we have made?’

‘I am not a young man, and never break my promises,’ said the ogre, and went in and shut the door.

Upstairs he found the maiden, waiting till he returned to have her supper, for she did not like eating by herself.

‘I have had my supper,’ said the ogre, ‘for I have been spending the evening with the prince.’

‘Where did you meet him?’ asked the girl.

‘Oh, we are neighbours, and grew up together, and to-night I promised that you should be his wife.’

‘I don’t want to be any man’s wife,’ answered she; but this was only pretence, for her heart too was glad.

Next morning early came the prince, bringing with him bridal gifts, and splendid wedding garments, to carry the maiden back to his palace.

But before he let her go the ogre called her to him, and said, ‘Be careful, girl, never to speak to the prince; and when he speaks to you, you must be dumb, unless he swears “by the head of Buk Ettemsuch.” Then you may speak.’

‘Very well,’ answered the girl.

They set out; and when they reached the palace, the prince led his bride to the room he had prepared for her, and said ‘Speak to me, my wife,’ but she was silent; and by-and-by he left her, thinking that perhaps she was shy. The next day the same thing happened, and the next.

At last he said, ‘Well, if you won’t speak, I shall go and get another wife who will.’ And he did.

Now when the new wife was brought to the palace the daughter of Buk Ettemsuch rose, and spoke to the ladies who had come to attend on the second bride. ‘Go and sit down. I will make ready the feast.’ And the ladies sat down as they were told, and waited.

The maiden sat down too, and called out, ‘Come here, firewood,’ and the firewood came. ‘Come here, fire,’ and the fire came and kindled the wood. ‘Come here, pot.’ ‘Come here, oil;’ and the pot and the oil came. ‘Get into the pot, oil!’ said she, and the oil did it. When the oil was boiling, the maiden dipped all her fingers in it, and they became ten fried fishes. ‘Come here, oven,’ she cried next, and the oven came. ‘Fire, heat the oven.’ And the fire heated it. When it was hot enough, the maiden jumped in, just as she was, with her beautiful silver and gold dress, and all her jewels. In a minute or two she had turned into a snow-white loaf, that made your mouth water.

Said the loaf to the ladies, ‘You can eat now; do not stand so far off;’ but they only stared at each other, speechless with surprise.

‘What are you staring at?’ asked the new bride.

‘At all these wonders,’ replied the ladies.

‘Do you call these wonders?’ said she scornfully; ‘I can do that too,’ and she jumped straight into the oven, and was burnt up in a moment.

Then they ran to the prince and said: ‘Come quickly, your wife is dead!’

‘Bury her, then!’ returned he. ‘But why did she do it? I am sure I said nothing to make her throw herself into the oven.’

Accordingly the burnt woman was buried, but the prince would not go to the funeral as all his thoughts were still with the wife who would not speak to him. The next night he said to her, ‘Dear wife, are you afraid that something dreadful will happen if you speak to me? If you still persist in being dumb, I shall be forced to get another wife.’ The poor girl longed to speak, but dread of the ogre kept her silent, and the prince did as he had said, and brought a fresh bride into the palace. And when she and her ladies were seated in state, the maiden planted a sharp stake in the ground, and sat herself down comfortably on it, and began to spin.

‘What are you staring at so?’ said the new bride to her ladies. ‘Do you think that is anything wonderful? Why, I can do as much myself!’

‘I am sure you can’t,’ said they, much too surprised to be polite.

Then the maid sprang off the stake and left the room, and instantly the new wife took her place. But the sharp stake ran through, and she was dead in a moment. So they sent to the prince and said, ‘Come quickly, and bury your wife.’

‘Bury her yourselves,’ he answered. ‘What did she do it for? It was not by my orders that she impaled herself on the stake.’

So they buried her; and in the evening the prince came to the daughter of Buk Ettemsuch, and said to her, ‘Speak to me, or I shall have to take another wife.’ But she was afraid to speak to him.

The following day the prince hid himself in the room and watched. And soon the maiden woke, and said to the pitcher and to the water-jug, ‘Quick! go down to the spring and bring me some water; I am thirsty.’

And they went. But as they were filling themselves at the spring, the water-jug knocked against the pitcher and broke off its spout. And the

pitcher burst into tears, and ran to the maiden, and said: ‘Mistress, beat the water-jug, for he has broken my spout!’

‘By the head of Buk Ettemsuch, I implore you not to beat me!’

‘Ah,’ she replied, ‘if only my husband had sworn by that oath, I could have spoken to him from the beginning, and he need never have taken another wife. But now he will never say it, and he will have to go on marrying fresh ones.’

And the prince, from his hiding-place, heard her words, and he jumped up and ran to her and said, ‘By the head of Buk Ettemsuch, speak to me.’

So she spoke to him, and they lived happily to the end of their days, because the girl kept the promise she had made to the ogre.

[Märchen und Gedichte aus der Stadt Tripolis. Von Hans Stumme.]

LAUGHING EYE AND WEEPING EYE, OR THE LIMPING FOX

(Servian Story)

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Once upon a time there lived a man whose right eye always smiled, and whose left eye always cried; and this man had three sons, two of them very clever, and the third very stupid. Now these three sons were very curious about the peculiarity of their father's eyes, and as they could not puzzle out the reason for themselves, they determined to ask their father why he did not have eyes like other people.

So the eldest of the three went one day into his father's room and put the question straight out; but, instead of answering, the man flew into a fearful rage, and sprang at him with a knife. The young fellow ran away in a terrible fright, and took refuge with his brothers, who were awaiting anxiously the result of the interview.

'You had better go yourselves,' was all the reply they got, 'and see if you will fare any better.'

Upon hearing this, the second son entered his father's room, only to be treated in the same manner as his brother; and back he came telling the youngest, the fool of the family, that it was his turn to try his luck.

Then the youngest son marched boldly up to his father and said to him, 'My brothers would not let me know what answer you had given to their question. But now, do tell me why your right eye always laughs and your left eye always weeps.'

As before, the father grew purple with fury, and rushed forwards with his knife. But the simpleton did not stir a step; he knew that he had really nothing to fear from his father.

'Ah, now I see who is my true son,' exclaimed the old man; 'the others are mere cowards. And as you have shown me that you are brave, I will satisfy your curiosity. My right eye laughs because I am glad to have a son like you; my left eye weeps because a precious treasure has been stolen

from me. I had in my garden a vine that yielded a tun of wine every hour —someone has managed to steal it, so I weep its loss.'

The simpleton returned to his brothers and told them of their father's loss, and they all made up their minds to set out at once in search of the vine. They travelled together till they came to some cross roads, and there they parted, the two elder ones taking one road, and the simpleton the other.

'Thank goodness we have got rid of that idiot,' exclaimed the two elder. 'Now let us have some breakfast.' And they sat down by the roadside and began to eat.

They had only half finished, when a lame fox came out of a wood and begged them to give him something to eat. But they jumped up and chased him off with their sticks, and the poor fox limped away on his three pads. As he ran he reached the spot where the youngest son was getting out the food he had brought with him, and the fox asked him for a crust of bread. The simpleton had not very much for himself, but he gladly gave half of his meal to the hungry fox.

'Where are you going, brother?' said the fox, when he had finished his share of the bread; and the young man told him the story of his father and the wonderful vine.

'Dear me, how lucky!' said the fox. 'I know what has become of it. Follow me!' So they went on till they came to the gate of a large garden.

'You will find here the vine that you are seeking, but it will not be at all easy to get it. You must listen carefully to what I am going to say. Before you reach the vine you will have to pass twelve outposts, each consisting of two guards. If you see these guards looking straight at you, go on without fear, for they are asleep. But if their eyes are shut then beware, for they are wide awake. If you once get to the vine, you will find two shovels, one of wood and the other of iron. Be sure not to take the iron one; it will make a noise and rouse the guards, and then you are lost.'

The young man got safely through the garden without any adventures till he came to the vine which yielded a tun of wine an hour. But he thought he should find it impossible to dig the hard earth with only a wooden shovel, so picked up the iron one instead. The noise it made soon awakened the guards. They seized the poor simpleton and carried him to their master.

‘Why do you try to steal my vine?’ demanded he; ‘and how did you manage to get past the guards?’

‘The vine is not yours; it belongs to my father, and if you will not give it to me now, I will return and get it somehow.’

‘You shall have the vine if you will bring me in exchange an apple off the golden apple-tree that flowers every twenty-four hours, and bears fruit of gold.’ So saying, he gave orders that the simpleton should be released, and this done, the youth hurried off to consult the fox.

‘Now you see,’ observed the fox, ‘this comes of not following my advice. However, I will help you to get the golden apple. It grows in a garden that you will easily recognise from my description. Near the apple-tree are two poles, one of gold, the other of wood. Take the wooden pole, and you will be able to reach the apple.’

Master Simpleton listened carefully to all that was told him, and after crossing the garden, and escaping as before from the men who were watching it, soon arrived at the apple-tree. But he was so dazzled by the sight of the beautiful golden fruit, that he quite forgot all that the fox had said. He seized the golden pole, and struck the branch a sounding blow. The guards at once awoke, and conducted him to their master. Then the simpleton had to tell his story.

‘I will give you the golden apple,’ said the owner of the garden, ‘if you will bring me in exchange a horse which can go round the world in four-and-twenty hours.’ And the young man departed, and went to find the fox.

This time the fox was really angry, and no wonder.

‘If you had listened to me, you would have been home with your father by this time. However I am willing to help you once more. Go into the forest, and you will find the horse with two halters round his neck. One is of gold, the other of hemp. Lead him by the hempen halter, or else the horse will begin to neigh, and will waken the guards. Then all is over with you.’

So Master Simpleton searched till he found the horse, and was struck dumb at its beauty.

‘What!’ he said to himself, ‘put the hempen halter on an animal like that? Not I, indeed!’

Then the horse neighed loudly; the guards seized our young friend and conducted him before their master.

‘I will give you the golden horse,’ said he, ‘if you will bring me in exchange a golden maiden who has never yet seen either sun or moon.’

‘But if I am to bring you the golden maiden you must lend me first the golden steed with which to seek for her.’

‘Ah,’ replied the owner of the golden horse, ‘but who will undertake that you will ever come back?’

‘I swear on the head of my father,’ answered the young man, ‘that I will bring back either the maiden or the horse.’ And he went away to consult the fox.

Now, the fox who was always patient and charitable to other people’s faults, led him to the entrance of a deep grotto, where stood a maiden all of gold, and beautiful as the day. He placed her on his horse and prepared to mount.

‘Are you not sorry,’ said the fox, ‘to give such a lovely maiden in exchange for a horse? Yet you are bound to do it, for you have sworn by the head of your father. But perhaps I could manage to take her place.’ So saying, the fox transformed himself into another golden maiden, so like the first that hardly anyone could tell the difference between them.

The simpleton took her straight to the owner of the horse, who was enchanted with her.

And the young man got back his father’s vine and married the real golden maiden into the bargain.

[Contes Populaires Slaves. Traduits par Louis Léger.
Paris: Ernest Leroux, éditeur.]

THE UNLOOKED-FOR PRINCE

(Polish Story)

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A long time ago there lived a king and queen who had no children, although they both wished very much for a little son. They tried not to let each other see how unhappy they were, and pretended to take pleasure in hunting and hawking and all sorts of other sports; but at length the king could bear it no longer, and declared that he must go and visit the furthest corners of his kingdom, and that it would be many months before he should return to his capital.

By that time he hoped he would have so many things to think about that he would have forgotten to trouble about the little son who never came.

The country the king reigned over was very large, and full of high, stony mountains and sandy deserts, so that it was not at all easy to go from one place to another. One day the king had wandered out alone, meaning to go only a little distance, but everything looked so alike he could not make out the path by which he had come. He walked on and on for hours, the sun beating hotly on his head, and his legs trembling under him, and he might have died of thirst if he had not suddenly stumbled on a little well, which looked as if it had been newly dug. On the surface floated a silver cup with a golden handle, but as it bobbed about whenever the king tried to seize it, he was too thirsty to wait any longer and knelt down and drank his fill.

When he had finished he began to rise from his knees, but somehow his beard seemed to have stuck fast in the water, and with all his efforts he could not pull it out. After two or three jerks to his head, which only hurt him without doing any good, he called out angrily, ‘Let go at once! Who is holding me?’

‘It is I, the King Kostiei,’ said a voice from the well, and looking up through the water was a little man with green eyes and a big head. ‘You have drunk from my spring, and I shall not let you go until you promise to

give me the most precious thing your palace contains, which was not there when you left it.'

Now the only thing that the king much cared for in his palace was the queen herself, and as she was weeping bitterly on a pile of cushions in the great hall when he had ridden away, he knew that Kostiei's words could not apply to her. So he cheerfully gave the promise asked for by the ugly little man, and in the twinkling of an eye, man, spring, and cup had disappeared, and the king was left kneeling on the dry sand, wondering if it was all a dream. But as he felt much stronger and better he made up his mind that this strange adventure must really have happened, and he sprang on his horse and rode off with a light heart to look for his companions.

In a few weeks they began to set out on their return home, which they reached one hot day, eight months after they had all left. The king was greatly beloved by his people, and crowds lined the roads, shouting and waving their hats as the procession passed along. On the steps of the palace stood the queen, with a splendid golden cushion in her arms, and on the cushion the most beautiful boy that ever was seen, wrapped about in a cloud of lace. In a moment Kostiei's words rushed into the king's mind, and he began to weep bitterly, to the surprise of everybody, who had expected him nearly to die of joy at the sight of his son. But try as he would and work as hard as he might he could never forget his promise, and every time he let the baby out of his sight he thought that he had seen it for the last time.

However, years passed on and the prince grew first into a big boy, and then into a fine young man. Kostiei made no sign, and gradually even the anxious king thought less and less about him, and in the end forgot him altogether.

There was no family in the whole kingdom happier than the king and queen and prince, until one day when the youth met a little old man as he was hunting in a lonely part of the woods. 'How are you my unlooked-for Prince?' he said. 'You kept them waiting a good long time!'

'And who are you?' asked the prince.

'You will know soon enough. When you go home give my compliments to your father and tell him that I wish he would square accounts with me. If he neglects to pay his debts he will bitterly repent it.'

So saying the old man disappeared, and the prince returned to the palace and told his father what had happened.

The king turned pale and explained to his son the terrible story.

‘Do not grieve over it, father,’ answered the prince. ‘It is nothing so dreadful after all! I will find some way to force Kostiei to give up his rights over me. But if I do not come back in a year’s time, you must give up all hopes of ever seeing me.’

Then the prince began to prepare for his journey. His father gave him a complete suit of steel armour, a sword, and a horse, while his mother hung round his neck a cross of gold. So, kissing him tenderly, with many tears they let him go.

He rode steadily on for three days, and at sunset on the fourth day he found himself on the seashore. On the sand before him lay twelve white dresses, dazzling as the snow, yet as far as his eyes could reach there was no one in sight to whom they could belong. Curious to see what would happen, he took up one of the garments, and leaving his horse loose, to wander about the adjoining fields, he hid himself among some willows and waited. In a few minutes a flock of geese which had been paddling about in the sea approached the shore, and put on the dresses, struck the sand with their feet and were transformed in the twinkling of an eye into eleven beautiful young girls, who flew away as fast as they could. The twelfth and youngest remained in the water, stretching out her long white neck and looking about her anxiously. Suddenly, among the willows, she perceived the king’s son, and called out to him with a human voice:

‘Oh Prince, give me back my dress, and I shall be for ever grateful to you.’

The prince hastened to lay the dress on the sand, and walked away. When the maiden had thrown off the goose-skin and quickly put on her proper clothes, she came towards him and he saw that none had ever seen or told of such beauty as hers. She blushed and held out her hand, saying to him in a soft voice:

‘I thank you, noble Prince, for having granted my request. I am the youngest daughter of Kostiei the immortal, who has twelve daughters and rules over the kingdoms under the earth. Long time my father has waited for you, and great is his anger. But trouble not yourself and fear nothing, only do as I bid you. When you see the King Kostiei, fall straightway upon

your knees and heed neither his threats nor his cry, but draw near to him boldly. That which will happen after, you will know in time. Now let us go.'

At these words she struck the ground with her foot and a gulf opened, down which they went right into the heart of the earth. In a short time they reached Kostiei's palace, which gives light, with a light brighter than the sun, to the dark kingdoms below. And the prince, as he had been bidden, entered boldly into the hall.

Kostiei, with a shining crown upon his head, sat in the centre upon a golden throne. His green eyes glittered like glass, his hands were as the claws of a crab. When he caught sight of the prince he uttered piercing yells, which shook the walls of the palace. The prince took no notice, but continued his advance on his knees towards the throne. When he had almost reached it, the king broke out into a laugh and said:

'It has been very lucky for you that you have been able to make me laugh. Stay with us in our underground empire, only first you will have to do three things. To-night it is late. Go to sleep; to-morrow I will tell you.'

Early the following morning the prince received a message that Kostiei was ready to see him. He got up and dressed, and hastened to the presence chamber, where the little king was seated on his throne. When the prince appeared, bowing low before him, Kostiei began:

'Now, Prince, this is what you have to do. By to-night you must build me a marble palace, with windows of crystal and a roof of gold. It is to stand in the middle of a great park, full of streams and lakes. If you are able to build it you shall be my friend. If not, off with your head.'

The prince listened in silence to this startling speech, and then returning to his room set himself to think about the certain death that awaited him. He was quite absorbed in these thoughts, when suddenly a bee flew against the window and tapped, saying, 'Let me come in.' He rose and opened the window, and there stood before him the youngest princess.

'What are you dreaming about, Prince?'

'I was dreaming of your father, who has planned my death.'

'Fear nothing. You may sleep in peace, and to-morrow morning when you awake you will find the palace all ready.'

What she said, she did. The next morning when the prince left his room he saw before him a palace more beautiful than his fancy had ever

pictured. Kostiei for his part could hardly believe his eyes, and pondered deeply how it had got there.

‘Well, this time you have certainly won; but you are not going to be let off so easily. To-morrow all my twelve daughters shall stand in a row before you, and if you cannot tell me which of them is the youngest, off goes your head.’

‘What! Not recognise the youngest princess!’ said the Prince to himself, as he entered his room, ‘a likely story!’

‘It is such a difficult matter that you will never be able to do it without my help,’ replied the bee, who was buzzing about the ceiling. ‘We are all so exactly alike, that even our father scarcely knows the difference between us.’

‘Then what must I do?’

‘This. The youngest is she who will have a ladybird on her eyelid. Be very careful. Now good-bye.’

Next morning King Kostiei again sent for the prince. The young princesses were all drawn up in a row, dressed precisely in the same manner, and with their eyes all cast down. As the prince looked at them, he was amazed at their likeness. Twice he walked along the line, without being able to detect the sign agreed upon. The third time his heart beat fast at the sight of a tiny speck upon the eyelid of one of the girls.

‘This one is the youngest,’ he said.

‘How in the world did you guess?’ cried Kostiei in a fury. ‘There is some jugglery about it! But you are not going to escape me so easily. In three hours you shall come here and give me another proof of your cleverness. I shall set alight a handful of straw, and before it is burnt up you will have turned it into a pair of boots. If not, off goes your head.’

So the prince returned sadly into his room, but the bee was there before him.

‘Why do you look so melancholy, my handsome Prince?’

‘How can I help looking melancholy when your father has ordered me to make him a pair of boots? Does he take me for a shoemaker?’

‘What do you think of doing?’

‘Not of making boots, at any rate! I am not afraid of death. One can only die once after all.’

‘No, Prince, you shall not die. I will try to save you. And we will fly together or die together.’

As she spoke she spat upon the ground, and then drawing the prince after her out of the room, she locked the door behind her and threw away the key. Holding each other tight by the hand, they made their way up into the sunlight, and found themselves by the side of the same sea, while the prince’s horse was still quietly feeding in the neighbouring meadow. The moment he saw his master, the horse whinnied and galloped towards him. Without losing an instant the prince sprang into the saddle, swung the princess behind him, and away they went like an arrow from a bow.

When the hour arrived which Kostiei had fixed for the prince’s last trial, and there were no signs of him, the king sent to his room to ask why he delayed so long. The servants, finding the door locked, knocked loudly and received for answer, ‘In one moment.’ It was the spittle, which was imitating the voice of the prince.

The answer was taken back to Kostiei. He waited; still no prince. He sent the servants back again, and the same voice replied, ‘Immediately.’

‘He is making fun of me!’ shrieked Kostiei in a rage. ‘Break in the door, and bring him to me!’

The servants hurried to do his bidding. The door was broken open. Nobody inside; but just the spittle in fits of laughter! Kostiei was beside himself with rage, and commanded his guards to ride after the fugitives. If the guards returned without the fugitives, their heads should pay for it.

By this time the prince and princess had got a good start, and were feeling quite happy, when suddenly they heard the sound of a gallop far behind them. The prince sprang from the saddle, and laid his ear to the ground.

‘They are pursuing us,’ he said.

‘Then there is no time to be lost,’ answered the princess; and as she spoke she changed herself into a river, the prince into a bridge, the horse into a crow, and divided the wide road beyond the bridge into three little ones. When the soldiers came up to the bridge, they paused uncertainly. How were they to know which of the three roads the fugitives had taken? They gave it up in despair and returned in trembling to Kostiei.

‘Idiots!’ he exclaimed, in a passion. ‘They were the bridge and the river, of course! Do you mean to say you never thought of that? Go back at

once!’ and off they galloped like lightning.

But time had been lost, and the prince and princess were far on their way.

‘I hear a horse,’ cried the princess.

The prince jumped down and laid his ear to the ground.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘they are not far off now.’

In an instant prince, princess, and horse had all disappeared, and instead was a dense forest, crossed and recrossed by countless paths. Kostiei’s soldiers dashed hastily into the forest, believing they saw before them the flying horse with its double burden. They seemed close upon them, when suddenly horse, wood, everything disappeared, and they found themselves at the place where they started. There was nothing for it but to return to Kostiei, and tell him of this fresh disaster.

‘A horse! a horse!’ cried the king. ‘I will go after them myself. This time they shall not escape.’ And he galloped off, foaming with anger.

‘I think I hear someone pursuing us,’ said the princess

‘Yes, so do I.’

‘And this time it is Kostiei himself. But his power only reaches as far as the first church, and he can go no farther. Give me your golden cross.’ So the prince unfastened the cross which was his mother’s gift, and the princess hastily changed herself into a church, the prince into a priest, and the horse into a belfry.

It was hardly done when Kostiei came up.

‘Greeting, monk. Have you seen some travellers on horseback pass this way?’

‘Yes, the prince and Kostiei’s daughter have just gone by. They have entered the church, and told me to give you their greetings if I met you.’

Then Kostiei knew that he had been hopelessly beaten, and the prince and princess continued their journey without any more adventures.

[Contes Populaires Slaves. Traduits par Louis Léger. Paris: Leroux, éditeur.]

THE SIMPLETON

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There lived, once upon a time, a man who was as rich as he could be; but as no happiness in this world is ever quite complete, he had an only son who was such a simpleton that he could barely add two and two together. At last his father determined to put up with his stupidity no longer, and giving him a purse full of gold, he sent him off to seek his fortune in foreign lands, mindful of the adage:

How much a fool that's sent to roam
Excels a fool that stays at home.

Moscione, for this was the youth's name, mounted a horse, and set out for Venice, hoping to find a ship there that would take him to Cairo. After he had ridden for some time he saw a man standing at the foot of a poplar tree, and said to him: 'What's your name, my friend; where do you come from, and what can you do?'

The man replied, 'My name is Quick-as-Thought, I come from Fleet-town, and I can run like lightning.'

'I should like to see you,' returned Moscione.

'Just wait a minute, then,' said Quick-as-Thought, 'and I will soon show you that I am speaking the truth.'

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a young doe ran right across the field they were standing in.

Quick-as-Thought let her run on a short distance, in order to give her a start, and then pursued her so quickly and so lightly that you could not have tracked his footsteps if the field had been strewn with flour. In a very few springs he had overtaken the doe, and had so impressed Moscione with his fleetness of foot that he begged Quick-as-Thought to go with him, promising at the same time to reward him handsomely.

Quick-as-Thought agreed to his proposal, and they continued on their journey together. They had hardly gone a mile when they met a young

man, and Moscione stopped and asked him: ‘What’s your name, my friend; where do you come from, and what can you do?’

The man thus addressed answered promptly, ‘I am called Hare’s-ear, I come from Curiosity Valley, and if I lay my ear on the ground, without moving from the spot, I can hear everything that goes on in the world, the plots and intrigues of court and cottage, and all the plans of mice and men.’

‘If that’s the case,’ replied Moscione, ‘just tell me what’s going on in my own home at present.’

The youth laid his ear to the ground and at once reported: ‘An old man is saying to his wife, “Heaven be praised that we have got rid of Moscione, for perhaps, when he has been out in the world a little, he may gain some common sense, and return home less of a fool than when he set out.”’

‘Enough, enough,’ cried Moscione. ‘You speak the truth, and I believe you. Come with us, and your fortune’s made.’

The young man consented; and after they had gone about ten miles, they met a third man, to whom Moscione said: ‘What’s your name, my brave fellow; where were you born, and what can you do?’

The man replied, ‘I am called Hit-the-Point, I come from the city of Perfect-aim, and I draw my bow so exactly that I can shoot a pea off a stone.’

‘I should like to see you do it, if you’ve no objection,’ said Moscione.

The man at once placed a pea on a stone, and, drawing his bow, he shot it in the middle with the greatest possible ease.

When Moscione saw that he had spoken the truth, he immediately asked Hit-the-Point to join his party.

After they had all travelled together for some days, they came upon a number of people who were digging a trench in the blazing sun.

Moscione felt so sorry for them, that he said: ‘My dear friends, how can you endure working so hard in heat that would cook an egg in a minute?’

But one of the workmen answered: ‘We are as fresh as daisies, for we have a young man among us who blows on our backs like the west wind.’

‘Let me see him,’ said Moscione.

The youth was called, and Moscione asked him: ‘What’s your name; where do you come from, and what can you do?’

He answered: ‘I am called Blow-Blast, I come from Wind-town, and with my mouth I can make any winds you please. If you wish a west wind I can raise it for you in a second, but if you prefer a north wind I can blow these houses down before your eyes.’

‘Seeing is believing,’ returned the cautious Moscione.

Blow-Blast at once began to convince him of the truth of his assertion. First he blew so softly that it seemed like the gentle breeze at evening, and then he turned round and raised such a mighty storm, that he blew down a whole row of oak trees.

When Moscione saw this he was delighted, and begged Blow-Blast to join his company. And as they went on their way they met another man, whom Moscione addressed as usual: ‘What’s your name: where do you come from, and what can you do?’

‘I am called Strong-Back; I come from Power-borough, and I possess such strength that I can take a mountain on my back, and it seems a feather to me.’

‘If that’s the case,’ said Moscione, ‘you are a clever fellow; but I should like some proof of your strength.’

Then Strong-Back loaded himself with great boulders of rock and trunks of trees, so that a hundred waggons could not have taken away all that he carried on his back.

When Moscione saw this he prevailed on Strong-Back to join his troop, and they all continued their journey till they came to a country called Flower Vale. Here there reigned a king whose only daughter ran as quickly as the wind, and so lightly that she could run over a field of young oats without bending a single blade. The king had given out a proclamation that anyone who could beat the princess in a race should have her for a wife, but that all who failed in the competition should lose their head.

As soon as Moscione heard of the Royal Proclamation, he hastened to the king and challenged the princess to race with him. But on the morning appointed for the trial he sent word to the king that he was not feeling well, and that as he could not run himself he would supply someone to take his place.

‘It’s just the same to me,’ said Canetella, the princess; ‘let anyone come forward that likes, I am quite prepared to meet him.’

At the time appointed for the race the whole place was crowded with people anxious to see the contest, and, punctual to the moment, Quick-as-Thought, and Canetella dressed in a short skirt and very lightly shod, appeared at the starting-point.

Then a silver trumpet sounded, and the two rivals started on their race, looking for all the world like a greyhound chasing a hare.

But Quick-as-Thought, true to his name, outran the princess, and when the goal was reached the people all clapped their hands and shouted, ‘Long live the stranger!’

Canetella was much depressed by her defeat; but, as the race had to be run a second time, she determined she would not be beaten again. Accordingly she went home and sent Quick-as-Thought a magic ring, which prevented the person who wore it, not only from running, but even from walking, and begged that he would wear it for her sake.

Early next morning the crowd assembled on the race-course, and Canetella and Quick as-Thought began their trial afresh. The princess ran as quickly as ever, but poor Quick-as-Thought was like an overloaded donkey, and could not go a step.

Then Hit-the-Point, who had heard all about the princess’s deception from Hare’s-ear, when he saw the danger his friend was in, seized his bow and arrow and shot the stone out of the ring Quick-as-Thought was wearing. In a moment the youth’s legs became free again, and in five bounds he had overtaken Canetella and won the race.

The king was much disgusted when he saw that he must acknowledge Moscione as his future son-in-law, and summoned the wise men of his court to ask if there was no way out of the difficulty. The council at once decided that Canetella was far too dainty a morsel for the mouth of such a travelling tinker, and advised the king to offer Moscione a present of gold, which no doubt a beggar like him would prefer to all the wives in the world.

The king was delighted at this suggestion, and calling Moscione before him, he asked him what sum of money he would take instead of his promised bride.

Moscione first consulted with his friends, and then answered: ‘I demand as much gold and precious stones as my followers can carry away.’

The king thought he was being let off very easily, and produced coffers of gold, sacks of silver, and chests of precious stones; but the more Strong-Back was loaded with the treasure the straighter he stood.

At last the treasury was quite exhausted, and the king had to send his courtiers to his subjects to collect all the gold and silver they possessed. But nothing was of any avail, and Strong-Back only asked for more.

When the king's counsellors saw the unexpected result of their advice, they said it would be more than foolish to let some strolling thieves take so much treasure out of the country, and urged the king to send a troop of soldiers after them, to recover the gold and precious stones.

So the king sent a body of armed men on foot and horse, to take back the treasure Strong-Back was carrying away with him.

But Hare's-ear, who had heard what the counsellors had advised the king, told his companions just as the dust of their pursuers was visible on the horizon.

No sooner had Blow-Blast taken in their danger than he raised such a mighty wind that all the king's army was blown down like so many nine-pins, and as they were quite unable to get up again, Moscione and his companions proceeded on their way without further let or hindrance.

As soon as they reached his home, Moscione divided his spoil with his companions, at which they were much delighted. He, himself, stayed with his father, who was obliged at last to acknowledge that his son was not quite such a fool as he looked.

[From the Italian, Kletke.]

THE STREET MUSICIANS

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A man once possessed a donkey which had served him faithfully for many years, but at last the poor beast grew old and feeble, and every day his work became more of a burden. As he was no longer of any use, his master made up his mind to shoot him; but when the donkey learnt the fate that was in store for him, he determined not to die, but to run away to the nearest town and there to become a street musician.

When he had trotted along for some distance he came upon a greyhound lying on the road, and panting for dear life. ‘Well, brother,’ said the donkey, ‘what’s the matter with you? You look rather tired.’

‘So I am,’ replied the dog, ‘but because I am getting old and am growing weaker every day, and cannot go out hunting any longer, my master wanted to poison me; and, as life is still sweet, I have taken leave of him. But how I am to earn my own livelihood I haven’t a notion.’

‘Well,’ said the donkey, ‘I am on my way to the nearest big town, where I mean to become a street musician. Why don’t you take up music as a profession and come along with me? I’ll play the flute and you can play the kettle-drum.’

The greyhound was quite pleased at the idea, and the two set off together. When they had gone a short distance they met a cat with a face as long as three rainy days. ‘Now, what has happened to upset your happiness, friend puss?’ inquired the donkey.

‘It’s impossible to look cheerful when one feels depressed,’ answered the cat. ‘I am well up in years now, and have lost most of my teeth; consequently I prefer sitting in front of the fire to catching mice, and so my old mistress wanted to drown me. I have no wish to die yet, so I ran away from her; but good advice is expensive, and I don’t know where I am to go to, or what I am to do.’

‘Come to the nearest big town with us,’ said the donkey, ‘and try your fortune as a street musician. I know what sweet music you make at night, so you are sure to be a success.’

The cat was delighted with the donkey's proposal, and they all continued their journey together. In a short time they came to the courtyard of an inn, where they found a cock crowing lustily. 'What in the world is the matter with you?' asked the donkey. 'The noise you are making is enough to break the drums of our ears.'

'I am only prophesying good weather,' said the cock; 'for to-morrow is a feast day, and just because it is a holiday and a number of people are expected at the inn, the landlady has given orders for my neck to be wrung to-night, so that I may be made into soup for to-morrow's dinner.'

'I'll tell you what, redcap,' said the donkey; 'you had much better come with us to the nearest town. You have got a good voice, and could join a street band we are getting up.' The cock was much pleased with the idea, and the party proceeded on their way.

But the nearest big town was a long way off, and it took them more than a day to reach it. In the evening they came to a wood, and they made up their minds to go no further, but to spend the night there. The donkey and the greyhound lay down under a big tree, and the cat and the cock got up into the branches, the cock flying right up to the topmost twig, where he thought he would be safe from all danger. Before he went to sleep he looked round the four points of the compass, and saw a little spark burning in the distance. He called out to his companions that he was sure there must be a house not far off, for he could see a light shining.

When he heard this, the donkey said at, once: 'Then we must get up, and go and look for the house, for this is very poor shelter.' And the greyhound added: 'Yes; I feel I'd be all the better for a few bones and a scrap or two of meat.'

So they set out for the spot where the light was to be seen shining faintly in the distance, but the nearer they approached it the brighter it grew, till at last they came to a brilliantly lighted house. The donkey being the biggest of the party, went to the window and looked in.

'Well, greyhead, what do you see?' asked the cock.

'I see a well-covered table,' replied the donkey, 'with excellent food and drink, and several robbers are sitting round it, enjoying themselves highly.'

'I wish we were doing the same,' said the cock.

‘So do I,’ answered the donkey. ‘Can’t we think of some plan for turning out the robbers, and taking possession of the house ourselves?’

So they consulted together what they were to do, and at last they arranged that the donkey should stand at the window with his fore-feet on the sill, that the greyhound should get on his back, the cat on the dog’s shoulder, and the cock on the cat’s head. When they had grouped themselves in this way, at a given signal, they all began their different forms of music. The donkey brayed, the greyhound barked, the cat miawed, and the cock crew. Then they all scrambled through the window into the room, breaking the glass into a thousand pieces as they did so.

The robbers were all startled by the dreadful noise, and thinking that some evil spirits at the least were entering the house, they rushed out into the wood, their hair standing on end with terror. The four companions, delighted with the success of their trick, sat down at the table, and ate and drank all the food and wine that the robbers had left behind them.

When they had finished their meal they put out the lights, and each animal chose a suitable sleeping-place. The donkey lay down in the courtyard outside the house, the dog behind the door, the cat in front of the fire, and the cock flew up on to a high shelf, and, as they were all tired after their long day, they soon went to sleep.

Shortly after midnight, when the robbers saw that no light was burning in the house and that all seemed quiet, the captain of the band said: ‘We were fools to let ourselves be so easily frightened away;’ and, turning to one of his men, he ordered him to go and see if all was safe.

The man found everything in silence and darkness, and going into the kitchen he thought he had better strike a light. He took a match, and mistaking the fiery eyes of the cat for two glowing coals, he tried to light his match with them. But the cat didn’t see the joke, and sprang at his face, spitting and scratching him in the most vigorous manner. The man was terrified out of his life, and tried to run out by the back door; but he stumbled over the greyhound, which bit him in the leg. Yelling with pain he ran across the courtyard only to receive a kick from the donkey’s hind leg as he passed him. In the meantime the cock had been roused from his slumbers, and feeling very cheerful he called out, from the shelf where he was perched, ‘Kikeriki!’

Then the robber hastened back to his captain and said: ‘Sir, there is a dreadful witch in the house, who spat at me and scratched my face with her long fingers; and before the door there stands a man with a long knife, who cut my leg severely. In the courtyard outside lies a black monster, who fell upon me with a huge wooden club; and that is not all, for, sitting on the roof, is a judge, who called out: “Bring the rascal to me.” So I fled for dear life.’

After this the robbers dared not venture into the house again, and they abandoned it for ever. But the four street musicians were so delighted with their lodgings that they determined to take up their abode in the robbers’ house, and, for all I know to the contrary, they may be living there to this day.

[From the German, Kletke.]

THE TWIN BROTHERS

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Once there was a fisherman who had plenty of money but no children. One day an old woman came to his wife and said: ‘What use is all your prosperity to you when you have no children?’

‘It is God’s will,’ answered the fisherman’s wife.

‘Nay, my child, it is not God’s will, but the fault of your husband; for if he would but catch the little gold-fish you would surely have children. To-night, when he comes home, tell him he must go back and catch the little fish. He must then cut it in six pieces—one of these you must eat, and your husband the second, and soon after you will have two children. The third piece you must give to the dog, and she will have two puppies. The fourth piece give to the mare, and she will have two foals. The fifth piece bury on the right of the house door, and the sixth on the left, and two cypress trees will spring up there.’

When the fisherman came home at evening his wife told him all that the old woman had advised, and he promised to bring home the little gold-fish. Next morning, therefore, he went very early to the water, and caught the little fish. Then they did as the old woman had ordered, and in due time the fisherman’s wife had two sons, so like each other that no one could tell the difference. The dog had two puppies exactly alike, the mare had two foals, and on each side of the front door there sprang up two cypress trees precisely similar.

When the two boys were grown up, they were not content to remain at home, though they had wealth in plenty; but they wished to go out into the world, and make a name for themselves. Their father would not allow them both to go at once, as they were the only children he had. He said: ‘First one shall travel, and when he is come back then the other may go.’

So the one took his horse and his dog, and went, saying to his brother: ‘So long as the cypress trees are green, that is a sign that I am alive and well; but if one begins to wither, then make haste and come to me.’ So he went forth into the world.

One day he stopped at the house of an old woman, and as at evening he sat before the door, he perceived in front of him a castle standing on a hill. He asked the old woman to whom it belonged, and her answer was: ‘My son, it is the castle of the Fairest in the Land!’

‘And I am come here to woo her!’

‘That, my son, many have sought to do, and have lost their lives in the attempt; for she has cut off their heads and stuck them on the post you see standing there.’

‘And the same will she do to me, or else I shall be victor, for to-morrow I go there to court her.’

Then he took his zither and played upon it so beautifully that no one in all that land had ever heard the like, and the princess herself came to the window to listen.

The next morning the Fairest in the Land sent for the old woman and asked her, ‘Who is it that lives with you, and plays the zither so well?’

‘It is a stranger, princess, who arrived yesterday evening,’ answered the old woman.

And the princess then commanded that the stranger should be brought to her.

When he appeared before the princess she questioned him about his home and his family, and about this and that; and confessed at length that his zither-playing gave her great pleasure, and that she would take him for her husband. The stranger replied that it was with that intent he had come.

The princess then said: ‘You must now go to my father, and tell him you desire to have me to wife, and when he has put the three problems before you, then come back and tell me.’

The stranger then went straight to the king, and told him that he wished to wed his daughter.

And the king answered: ‘I shall be well pleased, provided you can do what I impose upon you; if not you will lose your head. Now, listen; out there on the ground, there lies a thick log, which measures more than two fathoms; if you can cleave it in two with one stroke of your sword, I will give you my daughter to wife. If you fail, then it will cost you your head.’

Then the stranger withdrew, and returned to the house of the old woman sore distressed, for he could believe nothing but that next day he

must atone to the king with his head. And so full was he of the idea of how to set about cleaving the log that he forgot even his zither.

In the evening came the princess to the window to listen to his playing, and behold all was still. Then she called to him: ‘Why are you so cast down this evening, that you do not play on your zither?’

And he told her his trouble.

But she laughed at it, and called to him: ‘And you grieve over that? Bring quickly your zither, and play something for my amusement, and early to-morrow come to me.’

Then the stranger took his zither and played the whole evening for the amusement of the princess.

Next morning she took a hair from her locks and gave it to him, saying: ‘Take this hair, and wind it round your sword, then you will be able to cleave the log in two.’

Then the stranger went forth, and with one blow cleft the log in two.

But the king said: ‘I will impose another task upon you, before you can wed my daughter.’

‘Speak on,’ said the stranger.

‘Listen, then,’ answered the king; ‘you must mount a horse and ride three miles at full gallop, holding in each hand a goblet full of water. If you spill no drop then I shall give you my daughter to wife, but should you not succeed then I will take your life.’

Then the stranger returned to the house of the old woman, and again he was so troubled as to forget his zither.

In the evening the princess came to the window as before to listen to the music, but again all was still; and she called to him: ‘What is the matter that you do not play on your zither?’

Then he related all that the king had ordered him to do, and the princess answered: ‘Do not let yourself be disturbed, only play now, and come to me to-morrow morning.’

Then next morning he went to her, and she gave him her ring, saying: ‘Throw this ring into the water and it will immediately freeze, so that you will not spill any.’

The stranger did as the princess bade him, and carried the water all the way.

Then the king said: ‘Now I will give you a third task, and this shall be the last. I have a negro who will fight with you to-morrow, and if you are the conqueror you shall wed my daughter.’

The stranger returned, full of joy, to the house of the old woman, and that evening was so merry that the princess called to him; ‘You seem very cheerful this evening; what has my father told you that makes you so glad?’

He answered: ‘Your father has told me that to-morrow I must fight with his negro. He is only another man like myself, and I hope to subdue him, and to gain the contest.’

But the princess answered: ‘This is the hardest of all. I myself am the black man, for I swallow a drink that changes me into a negro of unconquerable strength. Go to-morrow morning to the market, buy twelve buffalo hides and wrap them round your horse; fasten this cloth round you, and when I am let loose upon you to-morrow show it to me, that I may hold myself back and may not kill you. Then when you fight me you must try to hit my horse between the eyes, for when you have killed it you have conquered me.’

Next morning, therefore, he went to the market and bought the twelve buffalo hides which he wrapped round his horse. Then he began to fight with the black man, and when the combat had already lasted a long time, and eleven hides were torn, then the stranger hit the negro’s horse between the eyes, so that it fell dead, and the black man was defeated.

Then said the king: ‘Because you have solved the three problems I take you for my son-in-law.’

But the stranger answered: ‘I have some business to conclude first; in fourteen days I will return and bring the bride home.’

So he arose and went into another country, where he came to a great town, and alighted at the house of an old woman. When he had had supper he begged of her some water to drink, but she answered: ‘My son, I have no water; a giant has taken possession of the spring, and only lets us draw from it once a year, when we bring him a maiden. He eats her up, and then he lets us draw water; just now it is the lot of the king’s daughter, and to-morrow she will be led forth.’

The next day accordingly the princess was led forth to the spring, and bound there with a golden chain. After that all the people went away and

she was left alone.

When they had gone the stranger went to the maiden and asked her what ailed her that she lamented so much, and she answered that the reason was because the giant would come and eat her up. And the stranger promised that he would set her free if she would take him for her husband, and the princess joyfully consented.

When the giant appeared the stranger set his dog at him, and it took him by the throat and throttled him till he died; so the princess was set free.

Now when the king heard of it he gladly consented to the marriage, and the wedding took place with great rejoicings. The young bridegroom abode in the palace one hundred and one weeks. Then he began to find it too dull, and he desired to go out hunting. The king would fain have prevented it, but in this he could not succeed. Then he begged his son-in-law at least to take sufficient escort with him, but this, too, the young man evaded, and took only his horse and his dog.

He had ridden already a long way, when he saw in the distance a hut, and rode straight towards it in order to get some water to drink. There he found an old woman from whom he begged the water. She answered that first he should allow her to beat his dog with her little wand, that it might not bite her while she fetched the water. The hunter consented; and as soon as she had touched the dog with her wand it immediately turned to stone. Thereupon she touched the hunter and also his horse, and both turned to stone. As soon as that had happened, the cypress trees in front of his father's house began to wither. And when the other brother saw this, he immediately set out in search of his twin. He came first to the town where his brother had slain the giant, and there fate led him to the same old woman where his brother had lodged. When she saw him she took him for his twin brother, and said to him: 'Do not take it amiss of me, my son, that I did not come to wish you joy on your marriage with the king's daughter.'

The stranger perceived what mistake she had made, but only said: 'That does not matter, old woman,' and rode on, without further speech, to the king's palace, where the king and the princess both took him for his twin brother, and called out: 'Why have you tarried so long away? We thought something evil had befallen you.'

When night came and he slept with the princess, who still believed him to be her husband, he laid his sword between them, and when morning came he rose early and went out to hunt. Fate led him by the same way which his brother had taken, and from a distance he saw him and knew that he was turned to stone. Then he entered the hut and ordered the old woman to disenchant his brother. But she answered: ‘Let me first touch your dog with my wand, and then I will free your brother.’

He ordered the dog, however, to take hold of her, and bite her up to the knee, till she cried out: ‘Tell your dog to let me go and I will set your brother free!’

But he only answered: ‘Tell me the magic words that I may disenchant him myself;’ and as she would not, he ordered his dog to bite her up to the hip.

Then the old woman cried out: ‘I have two wands, with the green one I turn to stone, and with the red one I bring to life again.’

So the hunter took the red wand and disenchanted his brother, also his brother’s horse, and his dog, and ordered his own dog to eat the old woman up altogether.

While the brothers went on their way back to the castle of the king, the one brother related to the other how the cypress tree had all at once dried up and withered, how he had immediately set out in search of his twin, and how he had come to the castle of his father-in-law, and had claimed the princess as his wife. But the other brother became furious on hearing this, and smote him over the forehead till he died, and returned alone to the house of his father-in-law.

When night came and he was in bed the princess asked him: ‘What was the matter with you last night, that you never spoke a word to me?’

Then he cried out: ‘That was not me, but my brother, and I have slain him, because he told me by the way that he had claimed you for his wife!’

‘Do you know the place where you slew him?’ asked the princess, ‘and can you find the body?’

‘I know the place exactly.’

‘Then to-morrow we shall ride thither,’ said the princess. Next morning accordingly they set out together, and when they had come to the place, the princess drew forth a small bottle that she had brought with her,

and sprinkled the body with some drops of the water so that immediately he became alive again.

When he stood up, his brother said to him: ‘Forgive me, dear brother, that I slew you in my anger.’ Then they embraced and went together to the Fairest in the Land, whom the unmarried brother took to wife.

Then the brothers brought their parents to live with them, and all dwelt together in joy and happiness.

CANNETELLA

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There was once upon a time a king who reigned over a country called ‘Bello Puojo.’ He was very rich and powerful, and had everything in the world he could desire except a child. But at last, after he had been married for many years, and was quite an old man, his wife Renzolla presented him with a fine daughter, whom they called Cannetella.

She grew up into a beautiful girl, and was as tall and straight as a young fir-tree. When she was eighteen years old her father called her to him and said: ‘You are of an age now, my daughter, to marry and settle down; but as I love you more than anything else in the world, and desire nothing but your happiness, I am determined to leave the choice of a husband to yourself. Choose a man after your own heart, and you are sure to satisfy me.’ Cannetella thanked her father very much for his kindness and consideration, but told him that she had not the slightest wish to marry, and was quite determined to remain single.

The king, who felt himself growing old and feeble, and longed to see an heir to the throne before he died, was very unhappy at her words, and begged her earnestly not to disappoint him.

When Cannetella saw that the king had set his heart on her marriage, she said: ‘Very well, dear father, I will marry to please you, for I do not wish to appear ungrateful for all your love and kindness; but you must find me a husband handsomer, cleverer, and more charming than anyone else in the world.’

The king was overjoyed by her words, and from early in the morning till late at night he sat at the window and looked carefully at all the passers-by, in the hopes of finding a son-in-law among them.

One day, seeing a very good-looking man crossing the street, the king called his daughter and said: ‘Come quickly, dear Cannetella, and look at this man, for I think he might suit you as a husband.’

They called the young man into the palace, and set a sumptuous feast before him, with every sort of delicacy you can imagine. In the middle of

the meal the youth let an almond fall out of his mouth, which, however, he picked up again very quickly and hid under the table-cloth.

When the feast was over the stranger went away, and the king asked Cannetella: ‘Well, what did you think of the youth?’

‘I think he was a clumsy wretch,’ replied Cannetella. ‘Fancy a man of his age letting an almond fall out of his mouth!’

When the king heard her answer he returned to his watch at the window, and shortly afterwards a very handsome young man passed by. The king instantly called his daughter to come and see what she thought of the new comer.

‘Call him in,’ said Cannetella, ‘that we may see him close.’

Another splendid feast was prepared, and when the stranger had eaten and drunk as much as he was able, and had taken his departure, the king asked Cannetella how she liked him.

‘Not at all,’ replied his daughter; ‘what could you do with a man who requires at least two servants to help him on with his cloak, because he is too awkward to put it on properly himself?’

‘If that’s all you have against him,’ said the king, ‘I see how the land lies. You are determined not to have a husband at all; but marry someone you shall, for I do not mean my name and house to die out.’

‘Well, then, my dear parent,’ said Cannetella, ‘I must tell you at once that you had better not count upon me, for I never mean to marry unless I can find a man with a gold head and gold teeth.’

The king was very angry at finding his daughter so obstinate; but as he always gave the girl her own way in everything, he issued a proclamation to the effect that any man with a gold head and gold teeth might come forward and claim the princess as his bride, and the kingdom of Bello Puojo as a wedding gift.

Now the king had a deadly enemy called Scioravante, who was a very powerful magician. No sooner had this man heard of the proclamation than he summoned his attendant spirits and commanded them to gild his head and teeth. The spirits said, at first, that the task was beyond their powers, and suggested that a pair of golden horns attached to his forehead would both be easier to make and more comfortable to wear; but Scioravante would allow no compromise, and insisted on having a head and teeth made of the finest gold. When it was fixed on his shoulders he went for a stroll

in front of the palace. And the king, seeing the very man he was in search of, called his daughter, and said: ‘Just look out of the window, and you will find exactly what you want.’

Then, as Scioravante was hurrying past, the king shouted out to him: ‘Just stop a minute, brother, and don’t be in such desperate haste. If you will step in here you shall have my daughter for a wife, and I will send attendants with her, and as many horses and servants as you wish.’

‘A thousand thanks,’ returned Scioravante; ‘I shall be delighted to marry your daughter, but it is quite unnecessary to send anyone to accompany her. Give me a horse and I will carry off the princess in front of my saddle, and will bring her to my own kingdom, where there is no lack of courtiers or servants, or, indeed, of anything your daughter can desire.’

At first the king was very much against Cannetella’s departing in this fashion; but finally Scioravante got his way, and placing the princess before him on his horse, he set out for his own country.

Towards evening he dismounted, and entering a stable he placed Cannetella in the same stall as his horse, and said to her: ‘Now listen to what I have to say. I am going to my home now, and that is a seven years’ journey from here; you must wait for me in this stable, and never move from the spot, or let yourself be seen by a living soul. If you disobey my commands, it will be the worse for you.’

The princess answered meekly: ‘Sir, I am your servant, and will do exactly as you bid me; but I should like to know what I am to live on till you come back?’

‘You can take what the horses leave,’ was Scioravante’s reply.

When the magician had left her Cannetella felt very miserable, and bitterly cursed the day she was born. She spent all her time weeping and bemoaning the cruel fate that had driven her from a palace into a stable, from soft down cushions to a bed of straw, and from the dainties of her father’s table to the food that the horses left.

She led this wretched life for a few months, and during that time she never saw who fed and watered the horses, for it was all done by invisible hands.

One day, when she was more than usually unhappy, she perceived a little crack in the wall, through which she could see a beautiful garden,

with all manner of delicious fruits and flowers growing in it. The sight and smell of such delicacies were too much for poor Cannetella, and she said to herself, ‘I will slip quietly out, and pick a few oranges and grapes, and I don’t care what happens. Who is there to tell my husband what I do? and even if he should hear of my disobedience, he cannot make my life more miserable than it is already.’

So she slipped out and refreshed her poor, starved body with the fruit she plucked in the garden.

But a short time afterwards her husband returned unexpectedly, and one of the horses instantly told him that Cannetella had gone into the garden, in his absence, and had stolen some oranges and grapes.

Scioravante was furious when he heard this, and seizing a huge knife from his pocket he threatened to kill his wife for her disobedience. But Cannetella threw herself at his feet and implored him to spare her life, saying that hunger drove even the wolf from the wood. At last she succeeded in so far softening her husband’s heart that he said, ‘I will forgive you this time, and spare your life; but if you disobey me again, and I hear, on my return, that you have as much as moved out of the stall, I will certainly kill you. So, beware; for I am going away once more, and shall be absent for seven years.’

With these words he took his departure, and Cannetella burst into a flood of tears, and, wringing her hands, she moaned: ‘Why was I ever born to such a hard fate? Oh! father, how miserable you have made your poor daughter! But, why should I blame my father? for I have only myself to thank for all my sufferings. I got the cursed head of gold, and it has brought all this misery on me. I am indeed punished for not doing as my father wished!’

When a year had gone by, it chanced, one day, that the king’s cooper passed the stables where Cannetella was kept prisoner. She recognised the man, and called him to come in. At first he did not know the poor princess, and could not make out who it was that called him by name. But when he heard Cannetella’s tale of woe, he hid her in a big empty barrel he had with him, partly because he was sorry for the poor girl, and, even more, because he wished to gain the king’s favour. Then he slung the barrel on a mule’s back, and in this way the princess was carried to her own home. They arrived at the palace about four o’clock in the morning, and the

cooper knocked loudly at the door. When the servants came in haste and saw only the cooper standing at the gate, they were very indignant, and scolded him soundly for coming at such an hour and waking them all out of their sleep.

The king hearing the noise and the cause of it, sent for the cooper, for he felt certain the man must have some important business, to have come and disturbed the whole palace at such an early hour.

The cooper asked permission to unload his mule, and Cannetella crept out of the barrel. At first the king refused to believe that it was really his daughter, for she had changed so terribly in a few years, and had grown so thin and pale, that it was pitiful to see her. At last the princess showed her father a mole she had on her right arm, and then he saw that the poor girl was indeed his long-lost Cannetella. He kissed her a thousand times, and instantly had the choicest food and drink set before her.

After she had satisfied her hunger, the king said to her: ‘Who would have thought, my dear daughter, to have found you in such a state? What, may I ask, has brought you to this pass?’

Cannetella replied: ‘That wicked man with the gold head and teeth treated me worse than a dog, and many a time, since I left you, have I longed to die. But I couldn’t tell you all that I have suffered, for you would never believe me. It is enough that I am once more with you, and I shall never leave you again, for I would rather be a slave in your house than queen in any other.’

In the meantime Scioravante had returned to the stables, and one of the horses told him that Cannetella had been taken away by a cooper in a barrel.

When the wicked magician heard this he was beside himself with rage, and, hastening to the kingdom of Bello Puojo, he went straight to an old woman who lived exactly opposite the royal palace, and said to her: ‘If you will let me see the king’s daughter, I will give you whatever reward you like to ask for.’

The woman demanded a hundred ducats of gold, and Scioravante counted them out of his purse and gave them to her without a murmur. Then the old woman led him to the roof of the house, where he could see Cannetella combing out her long hair in a room in the top story of the palace.

The princess happened to look out of the window, and when she saw her husband gazing at her, she got such a fright that she flew downstairs to the king, and said: ‘My lord and father, unless you shut me up instantly in a room with seven iron doors, I am lost.’

‘If that’s all,’ said the king, ‘it shall be done at once.’ And he gave orders for the doors to be closed on the spot.

When Scioravante saw this he returned to the old woman, and said: ‘I will give you whatever you like if you will go into the palace, hide under the princess’s bed, and slip this little piece of paper beneath her pillow, saying, as you do so: “May everyone in the palace, except the princess, fall into a sound sleep.”’

The old woman demanded another hundred golden ducats, and then proceeded to carry out the magician’s wishes. No sooner had she slipped the piece of paper under Cannetella’s pillow, than all the people in the palace fell fast asleep, and only the princess remained awake.

Then Scioravante hurried to the seven doors and opened them one after the other. Cannetella screamed with terror when she saw her husband, but no one came to her help, for all in the palace lay as if they were dead. The magician seized her in the bed on which she lay, and was going to carry her off with him, when the little piece of paper which the old woman had placed under her pillow fell on the floor.

In an instant all the people in the palace woke up, and as Cannetella was still screaming for help, they rushed to her rescue. They seized Scioravante and put him to death; so he was caught in the trap which he had laid for the princess—and, as is so often the case in this world, the biter himself was bit.

[From the Italian, Kletke.]

THE OGRE

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There lived, once upon a time, in the land of Marigliano, a poor woman called Masella, who had six pretty daughters, all as upright as young fir-trees, and an only son called Antonio, who was so simple as to be almost an idiot. Hardly a day passed without his mother saying to him, ‘What are you doing, you useless creature? If you weren’t too stupid to look after yourself, I would order you to leave the house and never to let me see your face again.’

Every day the youth committed some fresh piece of folly, till at last Masella, losing all patience, gave him a good beating, which so startled Antonio that he took to his heels and never stopped running till it was dark and the stars were shining in the heavens. He wandered on for some time, not knowing where to go, and at last he came to a cave, at the mouth of which sat an ogre, uglier than anything you can conceive.

He had a huge head and wrinkled brow—eyebrows that met, squinting eyes, a flat broad nose, and a great gash of a mouth from which two huge tusks stuck out. His skin was hairy, his arms enormous, his legs like sword blades, and his feet as flat as ducks’. In short, he was the most hideous and laughable object in the world.

But Antonio, who, with all his faults, was no coward, and was moreover a very civil-spoken lad, took off his hat, and said: ‘Good-day, sir; I hope you are pretty well. Could you kindly tell me how far it is from here to the place where I wish to go?’

When the ogre heard this extraordinary question he burst out laughing, and as he liked the youth’s polite manners he said to him: ‘Will you enter my service?’

‘What wages do you give?’ replied Antonio.

‘If you serve me faithfully,’ returned the ogre, ‘I’ll be bound you’ll get enough wages to satisfy you.’

So the bargain was struck, and Antonio agreed to become the ogre’s servant. He was very well treated, in every way, and he had little or no

work to do, with the result that in a few days he became as fat as a quail, as round as a barrel, as red as a lobster, and as impudent as a bantam-cock.

But, after two years, the lad got weary of this idle life, and longed desperately to visit his home again. The ogre, who could see into his heart and knew how unhappy he was, said to him one day: ‘My dear Antonio, I know how much you long to see your mother and sisters again, and because I love you as the apple of my eye, I am willing to allow you to go home for a visit. Therefore, take this donkey, so that you may not have to go on foot; but see that you never say “Bricklebrit” to him, for if you do you’ll be sure to regret it.’

Antonio took the beast without as much as saying thank you, and jumping on its back he rode away in great haste; but he hadn’t gone two hundred yards when he dismounted and called out ‘Bricklebrit.’

No sooner had he pronounced the word than the donkey opened its mouth and poured forth rubies, emeralds, diamonds and pearls, as big as walnuts.

Antonio gazed in amazement at the sight of such wealth, and joyfully filling a huge sack with the precious stones, he mounted the donkey again and rode on till he came to an inn. Here he got down, and going straight to the landlord, he said to him: ‘My good man, I must ask you to stable this donkey for me. Be sure you give the poor beast plenty of oats and hay, but beware of saying the word “Bricklebrit” to him, for if you do I can promise you will regret it. Take this heavy sack, too, and put it carefully away for me.’

The landlord, who was no fool, on receiving this strange warning, and seeing the precious stones sparkling through the canvas of the sack, was most anxious to see what would happen if he used the forbidden word. So he gave Antonio an excellent dinner, with a bottle of fine old wine, and prepared a comfortable bed for him. As soon as he saw the poor simpleton close his eyes and had heard his lusty snores, he hurried to the stables and said to the donkey ‘Bricklebrit,’ and the animal as usual poured out any number of precious stones.

When the landlord saw all these treasures he longed to get possession of so valuable an animal, and determined to steal the donkey from his foolish guest. As soon as it was light next morning Antonio awoke, and having rubbed his eyes and stretched himself about a hundred times he

called the landlord and said to him: ‘Come here, my friend, and produce your bill, for short reckonings make long friends.’

When Antonio had paid his account he went to the stables and took out his donkey, as he thought, and fastening a sack of gravel, which the landlord had substituted for his precious stones, on the creature’s back, he set out for his home.

No sooner had he arrived there than he called out: ‘Mother, come quickly, and bring table-cloths and sheets with you, and spread them out on the ground, and you will soon see what wonderful treasures I have brought you.’

His mother hurried into the house, and opening the linen-chest where she kept her daughters’ wedding outfits, she took out table-cloths and sheets made of the finest linen, and spread them flat and smooth on the ground. Antonio placed the donkey on them, and called out ‘Bricklebrit.’ But this time he met with no success, for the donkey took no more notice of the magic word than he would have done if a lyre had been twanged in his ear. Two, three, and four times did Antonio pronounce ‘Bricklebrit,’ but all in vain, and he might as well have spoken to the wind.

Disgusted and furious with the poor creature, he seized a thick stick and began to beat it so hard that he nearly broke every bone in its body. The miserable donkey was so distracted at such treatment that, far from pouring out precious stones, it only tore and dirtied all the fine linen.

When poor Masella saw her table-cloths and sheets being destroyed, and that instead of becoming rich she had only been made a fool of, she seized another stick and belaboured Antonio so unmercifully with it, that he fled before her, and never stopped till he reached the ogre’s cave.

When his master saw the lad returning in such a sorry plight, he understood at once what had happened to him, and making no bones about the matter, he told Antonio what a fool he had been to allow himself to be so imposed upon by the landlord, and to let a worthless animal be palmed off on him instead of his magic donkey.

Antonio listened humbly to the ogre’s words, and vowed solemnly that he would never act so foolishly again. And so a year passed, and once more Antonio was overcome by a fit of home-sickness, and felt a great longing to see his own people again.

Now the ogre, although he was so hideous to look upon, had a very kind heart, and when he saw how restless and unhappy Antonio was, he at once gave him leave to go home on a visit. At parting he gave him a beautiful table-cloth, and said: ‘Give this to your mother; but see that you don’t lose it as you lost the donkey, and till you are safely in your own house beware of saying “Table-cloth, open,” and “Table-cloth, shut.” If you do, the misfortune be on your own head, for I have given you fair warning.’

Antonio set out on his journey, but hardly had he got out of sight of the cave than he laid the table-cloth on the ground and said, ‘Table-cloth, open.’ In an instant the table-cloth unfolded itself and disclosed a whole mass of precious stones and other treasures.

When Antonio perceived this he said, ‘Table-cloth, shut,’ and continued his journey. He came to the same inn again, and calling the landlord to him, he told him to put the table-cloth carefully away, and whatever he did not to say ‘Table-cloth, open,’ or ‘Table-cloth, shut,’ to it.

The landlord, who was a regular rogue, answered, ‘Just leave it to me, I will look after it as if it were my own.’

After he had given Antonio plenty to eat and drink, and had provided him with a comfortable bed, he went straight to the table-cloth and said, ‘Table-cloth, open.’ It opened at once, and displayed such costly treasures that the landlord made up his mind on the spot to steal it.

When Antonio awoke next morning, the host handed him over a table-cloth exactly like his own, and carrying it carefully over his arm, the foolish youth went straight to his mother’s house, and said: ‘Now we shall be rich beyond the dreams of avarice, and need never go about in rags again, or lack the best of food.’

With these words he spread the table-cloth on the ground and said, ‘Table-cloth, open.’

But he might repeat the injunction as often as he pleased, it was only waste of breath, for nothing happened. When Antonio saw this he turned to his mother and said: ‘That old scoundrel of a landlord has done me once more; but he will live to repent it, for if I ever enter his inn again, I will make him suffer for the loss of my donkey and the other treasures he has robbed me of.’

Masella was in such a rage over her fresh disappointment that she could not restrain her impatience, and, turning on Antonio, she abused him soundly, and told him to get out of her sight at once, for she would never acknowledge him as a son of hers again. The poor boy was very depressed by her words, and slunk back to his master like a dog with his tail between his legs. When the ogre saw him, he guessed at once what had happened. He gave Antonio a good scolding, and said, ‘I don’t know what prevents me smashing your head in, you useless ne’er-do-well! You blurt everything out, and your long tongue never ceases wagging for a moment. If you had remained silent in the inn this misfortune would never have overtaken you, so you have only yourself to blame for your present suffering.’

Antonio listened to his master’s words in silence, looking for all the world like a whipped dog. When he had been three more years in the ogre’s service he had another bad fit of home-sickness, and longed very much to see his mother and sisters again.

So he asked for permission to go home on a visit, and it was at once granted to him. Before he set out on his journey the ogre presented him with a beautifully carved stick and said, ‘Take this stick as a remembrance of me; but beware of saying, “Rise up, Stick,” and “Lie down, Stick,” for if you do, I can only say I wouldn’t be in your shoes for something.’

Antonio took the stick and said, ‘Don’t be in the least alarmed, I’m not such a fool as you think, and know better than most people what two and two make.’

‘I’m glad to hear it,’ replied the ogre, ‘but words are women, deeds are men. You have heard what I said, and forewarned is forearmed.’

This time Antonio thanked his master warmly for all his kindness, and started on his homeward journey in great spirits; but he had not gone half a mile when he said ‘Rise up, Stick.’

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the stick rose and began to rain down blows on poor Antonio’s back with such lightning-like rapidity that he had hardly strength to call out, ‘Lie down, Stick;’ but as soon as he uttered the words the stick lay down, and ceased beating his back black and blue.

Although he had learnt a lesson at some cost to himself, Antonio was full of joy, for he saw a way now of revenging himself on the wicked

landlord. Once more he arrived at the inn, and was received in the most friendly and hospitable manner by his host. Antonio greeted him cordially, and said: ‘My friend, will you kindly take care of this stick for me? But, whatever you do, don’t say “Rise up, Stick.” If you do, you will be sorry for it, and you needn’t expect any sympathy from me.’

The landlord, thinking he was coming in for a third piece of good fortune, gave Antonio an excellent supper; and after he had seen him comfortably to bed, he ran to the stick, and calling to his wife to come and see the fun, he lost no time in pronouncing the words ‘Rise up, Stick.’

The moment he spoke the stick jumped up and beat the landlord so unmercifully that he and his wife ran screaming to Antonio, and, waking him up, pleaded for mercy.

When Antonio saw how successful his trick had been, he said: ‘I refuse to help you, unless you give me all that you have stolen from me, otherwise you will be beaten to death.’

The landlord, who felt himself at death’s door already, cried out: ‘Take back your property, only release me from this terrible stick;’ and with these words he ordered the donkey, the table-cloth, and other treasures to be restored to their rightful owner.

As soon as Antonio had recovered his belongings he said ‘Stick, lie down,’ and it stopped beating the landlord at once.

Then he took his donkey and table-cloth and arrived safely at his home with them. This time the magic words had the desired effect, and the donkey and table-cloth provided the family with treasures untold. Antonio very soon married off his sister, made his mother rich for life, and they all lived happily for ever after.

[From the Italian, Kletke.]

A FAIRY'S BLUNDER

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Once upon a time there lived a fairy whose name was Dindonette. She was the best creature in the world, with the kindest heart; but she had not much sense, and was always doing things, to benefit people, which generally ended in causing pain and distress to everybody concerned. No one knew this better than the inhabitants of an island far off in the midst of the sea, which, according to the laws of fairyland, she had taken under her special protection, thinking day and night of what she could do to make the isle the pleasantest place in the whole world, as it was the most beautiful.

Now what happened was this:

As the fairy went about, unseen, from house to house, she heard everywhere children longing for the time when they would be 'grown-up,' and able, they thought, to do as they liked; and old people talking about the past, and sighing to be young again.

'Is there no way of satisfying these poor things?' she thought. And then one night an idea occurred to her. 'Oh, yes, of course! It has been tried before; but I will manage better than the rest, with their old Fountain of Youth, which, after all, only made people young again. I will enchant the spring that bubbles up in the middle of the orchard, and the children that drink of it shall at once become grown men and women, and the old people return to the days of their childhood.'

And without stopping to consult one single other fairy, who might have given her good advice, off rushed Dindonette, to cast her spell over the fountain.

It was the only spring of fresh water in the island, and at dawn was crowded with people of all ages, come to drink at its source. Delighted at her plan for making them all happy, the fairy hid herself behind a thicket of roses, and peeped out whenever footsteps came that way. It was not long before she had ample proof of the success of her enchantments. Almost before her eyes the children put on the size and strength of adults, while the old men and women instantly became helpless, tiny babies. Indeed, so

pleased was she with the result of her work, that she could no longer remain hidden, and went about telling everybody what she had done, and enjoying their gratitude and thanks.

But after the first outburst of delight at their wishes being granted, people began to be a little frightened at the rapid effects of the magic water. It was delicious to feel yourself at the height of your power and beauty, but you would wish to keep so always! Now this was exactly what the fairy had been in too much of a hurry to arrange, and no sooner had the children become grown up, and the men and women become babies, than they all rushed on to old age at an appalling rate! The fairy only found out her mistake when it was too late to set it right.

When the inhabitants of the island saw what had befallen them, they were filled with despair, and did everything they could think of to escape from such a dreadful fate. They dug wells in their places, so that they should no longer need to drink from the magic spring; but the sandy soil yielded no water, and the rainy season was already past. They stored up the dew that fell, and the juice of fruits and of herbs, but all this was as a drop in the ocean of their wants. Some threw themselves into the sea, trusting that the current might carry them to other shores—they had no boats—and a few, still more impatient, put themselves to death on the spot. The rest submitted blindly to their destiny.

Perhaps the worst part of the enchantment was, that the change from one age to another was so rapid that the person had no time to prepare himself for it. It would not have mattered so much if the man who stood up in the assembly of the nation, to give his advice as to peace or war, had looked like a baby, as long as he spoke with the knowledge and sense of a full-grown man. But, alas! with the outward form of an infant, he had taken on its helplessness and foolishness, and there was no one who could train him to better things. The end of it all was, that before a month had passed the population had died out, and the fairy Dindonette, ashamed and grieved at the effects of her folly, had left the island for ever.

Many centuries after, the fairy Selnozoura, who had fallen into bad health, was ordered by her doctors to make the tour of the world twice a week for change of air, and in one of these journeys she found herself at Fountain Island. Selnozoura never made these trips alone, but always took with her two children, of whom she was very fond—Cornichon, a boy of

fourteen, bought in his childhood at a slave-market, and Toupette, a few months younger, who had been entrusted to the care of the fairy by her guardian, the genius Kristopo. Cornichon and Toupette were intended by Selnozoura to become husband and wife, as soon as they were old enough. Meanwhile, they travelled with her in a little vessel, whose speed through the air was just a thousand nine hundred and fifty times greater than that of the swiftest of our ships.

Struck with the beauty of the island, Selnozoura ran the vessel to ground, and leaving it in the care of the dragon which lived in the hold during the voyage, stepped on shore with her two companions. Surprised at the sight of a large town whose streets and houses were absolutely desolate, the fairy resolved to put her magic arts in practice to find out the cause. While she was thus engaged, Cornichon and Toupette wandered away by themselves, and by-and-by arrived at the fountain, whose bubbling waters looked cool and delicious on such a hot day. Scarcely had they each drunk a deep draught, when the fairy, who by this time had discovered all she wished to know, hastened to the spot.

‘Oh, beware! beware!’ she cried, the moment she saw them. ‘If you drink that deadly poison you will be ruined for ever!’

‘Poison?’ answered Toupette. ‘It is the most refreshing water I have ever tasted, and Cornichon will say so too!’

‘Unhappy children, then I am too late! Why did you leave me? Listen, and I will tell you what has befallen the wretched inhabitants of this island, and what will befall you too. The power of fairies is great,’ she added, when she had finished her story, ‘but they cannot destroy the work of another fairy. Very shortly you will pass into the weakness and silliness of extreme old age, and all I can do for you is to make it as easy to you as possible, and to preserve you from the death that others have suffered, from having no one to look after them. But the charm is working already! Cornichon is taller and more manly than he was an hour ago, and Toupette no longer looks like a little girl.’

It was true; but this fact did not seem to render the young people as miserable as it did Selnozoura.

‘Do not pity us,’ said Cornichon. ‘If we are fated to grow old so soon, let us no longer delay our marriage. What matter if we anticipate our decay, if we only anticipate our happiness too?’

The fairy felt that Cornichon had reason on his side, and seeing by a glance at Toupette's face that there was no opposition to be feared from her, she answered, 'Let it be so, then. But not in this dreadful place. We will return at once to Bagota, and the festivities shall be the most brilliant ever seen.'

They all returned to the vessel, and in a few hours the four thousand five hundred miles that lay between the island and Bagota were passed. Everyone was surprised to see the change which the short absence had made in the young people, but as the fairy had promised absolute silence about the adventure, they were none the wiser, and busied themselves in preparing their dresses for the marriage, which was fixed for the next night.

Early on the following morning the genius Kristopo arrived at the Court, on one of the visits he was in the habit of paying his ward from time to time. Like the rest, he was astonished at the sudden improvement in the child. He had always been fond of her, and in a moment he fell violently in love. Hastily demanding an audience of the fairy, he laid his proposals before her, never doubting that she would give her consent to so brilliant a match. But Selnozoura refused to listen, and even hinted that in his own interest Kristopo had better turn his thoughts elsewhere. The genius pretended to agree, but, instead, he went straight to Toupette's room, and flew away with her through the window, at the very instant that the bridegroom was awaiting her below.

When the fairy discovered what had happened, she was furious, and sent messenger after messenger to the genius in his palace at Ratibouf, commanding him to restore Toupette without delay, and threatening to make war in case of refusal.

Kristopo gave no direct answer to the fairy's envoys, but kept Toupette closely guarded in a tower, where the poor girl used all her powers of persuasion to induce him to put off their marriage. All would, however, have been quite vain if, in the course of a few days, sorrow, joined to the spell of the magic water, had not altered her appearance so completely that Kristopo was quite alarmed, and declared that she needed amusement and fresh air, and that, as his presence seemed to distress her, she should be left her own mistress. But one thing he declined to do, and that was to send her back to Bagota.

In the meantime both sides had been busily collecting armies, and Kristopo had given the command of his to a famous general, while Selnozoura had placed Cornichon at the head of her forces. But before war was actually declared, Toupette's parents, who had been summoned by the genius, arrived at Ratibouf. They had never seen their daughter since they parted from her as a baby, but from time to time travellers to Bagota had brought back accounts of her beauty. What was their amazement, therefore, at finding, instead of a lovely girl, a middle-aged woman, handsome indeed, but quite faded—looking, in fact, older than themselves. Kristopo, hardly less astonished than they were at the sudden change, thought that it was a joke on the part of one of his courtiers, who had hidden Toupette away, and put this elderly lady in her place. Bursting with rage, he sent instantly for all the servants and guards of the town, and inquired who had the insolence to play him such a trick, and what had become of their prisoner. They replied that since Toupette had been in their charge she had never left her rooms unveiled, and that during her walks in the surrounding gardens, her food had been brought in and placed on her table; as she preferred to eat alone no one had ever seen her face, or knew what she was like.

The servants were clearly speaking the truth, and Kristopo was obliged to believe them. 'But,' thought he, 'if they have not had a hand in this, it must be the work of the fairy,' and in his anger he ordered the army to be ready to march.

On her side, Selnozoura of course knew what the genius had to expect, but was deeply offended when she heard of the base trick which she was believed to have invented. Her first desire was to give battle to Kristopo at once, but with great difficulty her ministers induced her to pause, and to send an ambassador to Kristopo to try to arrange matters.

So the Prince Zeprady departed for the court of Ratibouf, and on his way he met Cornichon, who was encamped with his army just outside the gates of Bagota. The prince showed him the fairy's written order that for the present peace must still be kept, and Cornichon, filled with longing to see Toupette once more, begged to be allowed to accompany Zeprady on his mission to Ratibouf.

By this time the genius's passion for Toupette, which had caused all these troubles, had died out, and he willingly accepted the terms of peace

offered by Zeprady, though he informed the prince that he still believed the fairy to be guilty of the dreadful change in the girl. To this the prince only replied that on that point he had a witness who could prove, better than anyone else, if it was Toupette or not, and desired that Cornichon should be sent for.

When Toupette was told that she was to see her old lover again, her heart leapt with joy; but soon the recollection came to her of all that had happened, and she remembered that Cornichon would be changed as well as she. The moment of their meeting was not all happiness, especially on the part of Toupette, who could not forget her lost beauty, and the genius, who was present, was at last convinced that he had not been deceived, and went out to sign the treaty of peace, followed by his attendants.

‘Ah, Toupette: my dear Toupette!’ cried Cornichon, as soon as they were left alone; ‘now that we are once more united, let our past troubles be forgotten.’

‘Our past troubles!’ answered she, ‘and what do you call our lost beauty and the dreadful future before us? You are looking fifty years older than when I saw you last, and I know too well that fate has treated me no better!’

‘Ah, do not say that,’ replied Cornichon, clasping her hand. ‘You are different, it is true; but every age has its graces, and surely no woman of sixty was ever handsomer than you! If your eyes had been as bright as of yore they would have matched badly with your faded skin. The wrinkles which I notice on your forehead explain the increased fulness of your cheeks, and your throat in withering is elegant in decay. Thus the harmony shown by your features, even as they grow old, is the best proof of their former beauty.’

‘Oh, monster!’ cried Toupette, bursting into tears, ‘is that all the comfort you can give me?’

‘But, Toupette,’ answered Cornichon, ‘you used to declare that you did not care for beauty, as long as you had my heart.’

‘Yes, I know,’ said she, ‘but how can you go on caring for a person who is as old and plain as I?’

‘Toupette, Toupette,’ replied Cornichon, ‘you are only talking nonsense. My heart is as much yours as ever it was, and nothing in the world can make any difference.’

At this point of the conversation the Prince Zeprady entered the room, with the news that the genius, full of regret for his behaviour, had given Cornichon full permission to depart for Bagota as soon as he liked, and to take Toupette with him; adding that, though he begged they would excuse his taking leave of them before they went, he hoped, before long, to visit them at Bagota.

Neither of the lovers slept that night—Cornichon from joy at returning home, Toupette from dread of the blow to her vanity which awaited her at Bagota. It was hopeless for Cornichon to try to console her during the journey with the reasons he had given the day before. She only grew worse and worse, and when they reached the palace went straight to her old apartments, entreating the fairy to allow both herself and Cornichon to remain concealed, and to see no one.

For some time after their arrival the fairy was taken up with the preparations for the rejoicings which were to celebrate the peace, and with the reception of the genius, who was determined to do all in his power to regain Selnozoura's lost friendship. Cornichon and Toupette were therefore left entirely to themselves, and though this was only what they wanted, still, they began to feel a little neglected.

At length, one morning, they saw from the windows that the fairy and the genius were approaching, in state, with all their courtiers in attendance. Toupette instantly hid herself in the darkest corner of the room, but Cornichon, forgetting that he was now no longer a boy of fourteen, ran to meet them. In so doing he tripped and fell, bruising one of his eyes severely. At the sight of her lover lying helpless on the floor, Toupette hastened to his side; but her feeble legs gave way under her, and she fell almost on top of him, knocking out three of her loosened teeth against his forehead. The fairy, who entered the room at this moment, burst into tears, and listened in silence to the genius, who hinted that by-and-by everything would be put right.

'At the last assembly of the fairies,' he said, 'when the doings of each fairy were examined and discussed, a proposal was made to lessen, as far as possible, the mischief caused by Dindonette by enchanting the fountain. And it was decided that, as she had meant nothing but kindness, she should have the power of undoing one half of the spell. Of course she might always have destroyed the fatal fountain, which would have been best of

all; but this she never thought of. Yet, in spite of this, her heart is so good, that I am sure that the moment she hears that she is wanted she will fly to help. Only, before she comes, it is for you, Madam, to make up your mind which of the two shall regain their former strength and beauty.'

At these words the fairy's soul sank. Both Cornichon and Toupette were equally dear to her, and how could she favour one at the cost of the other? As to the courtiers, none of the men were able to understand why she hesitated a second to declare for Toupette; while the ladies were equally strong on the side of Cornichon.

But, however undecided the fairy might be, it was quite different with Cornichon and Toupette.

'Ah, my love,' exclaimed Cornichon, 'at length I shall be able to give you the best proof of my devotion by showing you how I value the beauties of your mind above those of your body! While the most charming women of the court will fall victims to my youth and strength, I shall think of nothing but how to lay them at your feet, and pay heart-felt homage to your age and wrinkles.'

'Not so fast,' interrupted Toupette, 'I don't see why you should have it all. Why do you heap such humiliations upon me? But I will trust to the justice of the fairy, who will not treat me so.'

Then she entered her own rooms, and refused to leave them, in spite of the prayers of Cornichon, who begged her to let him explain.

No one at the court thought or spoke of any other subject during the few days before the arrival of Dindonette, whom everybody expected to set things right in a moment. But, alas! she had no idea herself what was best to be done, and always adopted the opinion of the person she was talking to. At length a thought struck her, which seemed the only way of satisfying both parties, and she asked the fairy to call together all the court and the people to hear her decision.

'Happy is he,' she began, 'who can repair the evil he has caused, but happier he who has never caused any.'

As nobody contradicted this remark, she continued:

'To me it is only allowed to undo one half of the mischief I have wrought. I could restore you your youth,' she said to Cornichon, 'or your beauty,' turning to Toupette. 'I will do both; and I will do neither.'

A murmur of curiosity arose from the crowd, while Cornichon and Toupette trembled with astonishment.

‘No,’ went on Dindonette, ‘never should I have the cruelty to leave one of you to decay, while the other enjoys the glory of youth. And as I cannot restore you both at once to what you were, one half of each of your bodies shall become young again, while the other half goes on its way to decay. I will leave it to you to choose which half it shall be—if I shall draw a line round the waist, or a line straight down the middle of the body.’

She looked about her proudly, expecting applause for her clever idea. But Cornichon and Toupette were shaking with rage and disappointment, and everyone else broke into shouts of laughter. In pity for the unhappy lovers, Selnozoura came forward.

‘Do you not think,’ she said, ‘that instead of what you propose, it would be better to let them take it in turns to enjoy their former youth and beauty for a fixed time? I am sure you could easily manage that.’

‘What an excellent notion!’ cried Dindonette. ‘Oh, yes, of course that is best! Which of you shall I touch first?’

‘Touch her,’ replied Cornichon, who was always ready to give way to Toupette. ‘I know her heart too well to fear any change.’

So the fairy bent forward and touched her with her magic ring, and in one instant the old woman was a girl again. The whole court wept with joy at the sight, and Toupette ran up to Cornichon, who had fallen down in his surprise, promising to pay him long visits, and tell him of all her balls and water parties.

The two fairies went to their own apartments, where the genius followed them to take his leave.

‘Oh, dear!’ suddenly cried Dindonette, breaking in to the farewell speech of the genius. ‘I quite forgot to fix the time when Cornichon should in his turn grow young. How stupid of me! And now I fear it is too late, for I ought to have declared it before I touched Toupette with the ring. Oh, dear! oh, dear! why did nobody warn me?’

‘You were so quick,’ replied Selnozoura, who had long been aware of the mischief the fairy had again done, ‘and we can only wait now till Cornichon shall have reached the utmost limits of his decay, when he will drink of the water, and become a baby once more, so that Toupette will have to spend her life as a nurse, a wife, and a caretaker.’

After the anxiety of mind and the weakness of body to which for so long Toupette had been a prey, it seemed as if she could not amuse herself enough, and it was seldom indeed that she found time to visit poor Cornichon, though she did not cease to be fond of him, or to be kind to him. Still, she was perfectly happy without him, and this the poor man did not fail to see, almost blind and deaf from age though he was.

But it was left to Kristopo to undo at last the work of Dindonette, and give Cornichon back the youth he had lost, and this the genius did all the more gladly, as he discovered, quite by accident, that Cornichon was in fact his son. It was on this plea that he attended the great yearly meeting of the fairies, and prayed that, in consideration of his services to so many of the members, this one boon might be granted him. Such a request had never before been heard in fairyland, and was objected to by some of the older fairies; but both Kristopo and Selnozoura were held in such high honour that the murmurs of disgust were set aside, and the latest victim to the enchanted fountain was pronounced to be free of the spell. All that the genius asked in return was that he might accompany the fairy back to Bagota, and be present when his son assumed his proper shape.

They made up their minds they would just tell Toupette that they had found a husband for her, and give her a pleasant surprise at her wedding, which was fixed for the following night. She heard the news with astonishment, and many pangs for the grief which Cornichon would certainly feel at his place being taken by another; but she did not dream of disobeying the fairy, and spent the whole day wondering who the bridegroom could be.

At the appointed hour, a large crowd assembled at the fairy's palace, which was decorated with the sweetest flowers, known only to fairyland. Toupette had taken her place, but where was the bridegroom?

'Fetch Cornichon!' said the fairy to her chamberlain.

But Toupette interposed: 'Oh, Madam, spare him, I entreat you, this bitter pain, and let him remain hidden and in peace.'

'It is necessary that he should be here,' answered the fairy, 'and he will not regret it.'

And, as she spoke, Cornichon was led in, smiling with the foolishness of extreme old age at the sight of the gay crowd.

‘Bring him here,’ commanded the fairy, waving her hand towards Toupette, who started back from surprise and horror.

Selnozoura then took the hand of the poor old man, and the genius came forward and touched him three times with his ring, when Cornichon was transformed into a handsome young man.

‘May you live long,’ the genius said, ‘to enjoy happiness with your wife, and to love your father.’

And that was the end of the mischief wrought by the fairy Dindonette!

[Cabinet des Fées.]

LONG, BROAD, AND QUICKEYE

(A Bohemian Story)

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Once upon a time there lived a king who had an only son whom he loved dearly. Now one day the king sent for his son and said to him:

‘My dearest child, my hair is grey and I am old, and soon I shall feel no more the warmth of the sun, or look upon the trees and flowers. But before I die I should like to see you with a good wife; therefore marry, my son, as speedily as possible.’

‘My father,’ replied the prince, ‘now and always, I ask nothing better than to do your bidding, but I know of no daughter-in-law that I could give you.’

On hearing these words the old king drew from his pocket a key of gold, and gave it to his son, saying:

‘Go up the staircase, right up to the top of the tower. Look carefully round you, and then come and tell me which you like best of all that you see.’

So the young man went up. He had never before been in the tower, and had no idea what it might contain.

The staircase wound round and round and round, till the prince was almost giddy, and every now and then he caught sight of a large room that opened out from the side. But he had been told to go to the top, and to the top he went. Then he found himself in a hall, which had an iron door at one end. This door he unlocked with his golden key, and he passed through into a vast chamber which had a roof of blue sprinkled with golden stars, and a carpet of green silk soft as turf. Twelve windows framed in gold let in the light of the sun, and on every window was painted the figure of a young girl, each more beautiful than the last. While the prince gazed at them in surprise, not knowing which he liked best, the girls began to lift their eyes and smile at him. He waited, expecting them to speak, but no sound came.

Suddenly he noticed that one of the windows was covered by a curtain of white silk.

He lifted it, and saw before him the image of a maiden beautiful as the day and sad as the tomb, clothed in a white robe, having a girdle of silver and a crown of pearls. The prince stood and gazed at her, as if he had been turned into stone, but as he looked the sadness which, was on her face seemed to pass into his heart, and he cried out:

‘This one shall be my wife. This one and no other.’

As he said the words the young girl blushed and hung her head, and all the other figures vanished.

The young prince went quickly back to his father, and told him all he had seen and which wife he had chosen. The old man listened to him full of sorrow, and then he spoke:

‘You have done ill, my son, to search out that which was hidden, and you are running to meet a great danger. This young girl has fallen into the power of a wicked sorcerer, who lives in an iron castle. Many young men have tried to deliver her, and none have ever come back. But what is done is done! You have given your word, and it cannot be broken. Go, dare your fate, and return to me safe and sound.’

So the prince embraced his father, mounted his horse, and set forth to seek his bride. He rode on gaily for several hours, till he found himself in a wood where he had never been before, and soon lost his way among its winding paths and deep valleys. He tried in vain to see where he was: the thick trees shut out the sun, and he could not tell which was north and which was south, so that he might know what direction to make for. He felt in despair, and had quite given up all hope of getting out of this horrible place, when he heard a voice calling to him.

‘Hey! hey! stop a minute!’

The prince turned round and saw behind him a very tall man, running as fast as his legs would carry him.

‘Wait for me,’ he panted, ‘and take me into your service. If you do, you will never be sorry.’

‘Who are you?’ asked the prince, ‘and what can you do?’

‘Long is my name, and I can lengthen my body at will. Do you see that nest up there on the top of that pine-tree? Well, I can get it for you without taking the trouble of climbing the tree,’ and Long stretched himself up and up and up, till he was very soon as tall as the pine itself. He put the nest in

his pocket, and before you could wink your eyelid he had made himself small again, and stood before the prince.

‘Yes; you know your business,’ said he, ‘but birds’ nests are no use to me. I am too old for them. Now if you were only able to get me out of this wood, you would indeed be good for something.’

‘Oh, there’s no difficulty about that,’ replied Long, and he stretched himself up and up and up till he was three times as tall as the tallest tree in the forest. Then he looked all round and said, ‘We must go in this direction in order to get out of the wood,’ and shortening himself again, he took the prince’s horse by the bridle, and led him along. Very soon they got clear of the forest, and saw before them a wide plain ending in a pile of high rocks, covered here and there with trees, and very much like the fortifications of a town.

As they left the wood behind, Long turned to the prince and said, ‘My lord, here comes my comrade. You should take him into your service too, as you will find him a great help.’

‘Well, call him then, so that I can see what sort of a man he is.’

‘He is a little too far off for that,’ replied Long. ‘He would hardly hear my voice, and he couldn’t be here for some time yet, as he has so much to carry. I think I had better go and bring him myself,’ and this time he stretched himself to such a height that his head was lost in the clouds. He made two or three strides, took his friend on his back, and set him down before the prince. The new-comer was a very fat man, and as round as a barrel.

‘Who are you?’ asked the prince, ‘and what can you do?’

‘Your worship, Broad is my name, and I can make myself as wide as I please.’

‘Let me see how you manage it.’

‘Run, my lord, as fast as you can, and hide yourself in the wood,’ cried Broad, and he began to swell himself out.

The prince did not understand why he should run to the wood, but when he saw Long flying towards it, he thought he had better follow his example. He was only just in time, for Broad had so suddenly inflated himself that he very nearly knocked over the prince and his horse too. He covered all the space for acres round. You would have thought he was a mountain!

At length Broad ceased to expand, drew a deep breath that made the whole forest tremble, and shrank into his usual size.

‘You have made me run away,’ said the prince. ‘But it is not every day one meets with a man of your sort. I will take you into my service.’

So the three companions continued their journey, and when they were drawing near the rocks they met a man whose eyes were covered by a bandage.

‘Your excellency,’ said Long, ‘this is our third comrade. You will do well to take him into your service, and, I assure you, you will find him worth his salt.’

‘Who are you?’ asked the prince. ‘And why are your eyes bandaged? You can never see your way!’

‘It is just the contrary, my lord! It is because I see only too well that I am forced to bandage my eyes. Even so I see as well as people who have no bandage. When I take it off my eyes pierce through everything. Everything I look at catches fire, or, if it cannot catch fire, it falls into a thousand pieces. They call me Quickeye.’

And so saying he took off his bandage and turned towards the rock. As he fixed his eyes upon it a crack was heard, and in a few moments it was nothing but a heap of sand. In the sand something might be detected glittering brightly. Quickeye picked it up and brought it to the prince. It turned out to be a lump of pure gold.

‘You are a wonderful creature,’ said the prince, ‘and I should be a fool not to take you into my service. But since your eyes are so good, tell me if I am very far from the Iron Castle, and what is happening there just now.’

‘If you were travelling alone,’ replied Quickeye, ‘it would take you at least a year to get to it; but as we are with you, we shall arrive there to-night. Just now they are preparing supper.’

‘There is a princess in the castle. Do you see her?’

‘A wizard keeps her in a high tower, guarded by iron bars.’

‘Ah, help me to deliver her!’ cried the prince.

And they promised they would.

Then they all set out through the grey rocks, by the breach made by the eyes of Quickeye, and passed over great mountains and through deep woods. And every time they met with any obstacle the three friends contrived somehow to put it aside. As the sun was setting, the prince

beheld the towers of the Iron Castle, and before it sank beneath the horizon he was crossing the iron bridge which led to the gates. He was only just in time, for no sooner had the sun disappeared altogether, than the bridge drew itself up and the gates shut themselves.

There was no turning back now!

The prince put up his horse in the stable, where everything looked as if a guest was expected, and then the whole party marched straight up to the castle. In the court, in the stables, and all over the great halls, they saw a number of men richly dressed, but every one turned into stone. They crossed an endless set of rooms, all opening into each other, till they reached the dining-hall. It was brilliantly lighted; the table was covered with wine and fruit, and was laid for four. They waited a few minutes expecting someone to come, but as nobody did, they sat down and began to eat and drink, for they were very hungry.

When they had done their supper they looked about for some place to sleep. But suddenly the door burst open, and the wizard entered the hall. He was old and hump-backed, with a bald head and a grey beard that fell to his knees. He wore a black robe, and instead of a belt three iron circlets clasped his waist. He led by the hand a lady of wonderful beauty, dressed in white, with a girdle of silver and a crown of pearls, but her face was pale and sad as death itself.

The prince knew her in an instant, and moved eagerly forward; but the wizard gave him no time to speak, and said:

‘I know why you are here. Very good; you may have her if for three nights following you can prevent her making her escape. If you fail in this, you and your servants will all be turned into stone, like those who have come before you.’ And offering the princess a chair, he left the hall.

The prince could not take his eyes from the princess, she was so lovely! He began to talk to her, but she neither answered nor smiled, and sat as if she were made of marble. He seated himself by her, and determined not to close his eyes that night, for fear she should escape him. And in order that she should be doubly guarded, Long stretched himself like a strap all round the room, Broad took his stand by the door and puffed himself out, so that not even a mouse could slip by, and Quickeye leant against a pillar which stood in the middle of the floor and supported

the roof. But in half a second they were all sound asleep, and they slept sound the whole night long.

In the morning, at the first peep of dawn, the prince awoke with a start. But the princess was gone. He aroused his servants and implored them to tell him what he must do.

‘Calm yourself, my lord,’ said Quickeye. ‘I have found her already. A hundred miles from here there is a forest. In the middle of the forest, an old oak, and on the top of the oak, an acorn. This acorn is the princess. If Long will take me on his shoulders, we shall soon bring her back.’ And sure enough, in less time than it takes to walk round a cottage, they had returned from the forest, and Long presented the acorn to the prince.

‘Now, your excellency, throw it on the ground.’

The prince obeyed, and was enchanted to see the princess appear at his side. But when the sun peeped for the first time over the mountains, the door burst open as before, and the wizard entered with a loud laugh. Suddenly he caught sight of the princess; his face darkened, he uttered a low growl, and one of the iron circlets gave way with a crash. He seized the young girl by the hand and bore her away with him.

All that day the prince wandered about the castle, studying the curious treasures it contained, but everything looked as if life had suddenly come to a standstill. In one place he saw a prince who had been turned into stone in the act of brandishing a sword round which his two hands were clasped. In another, the same doom had fallen upon a knight in the act of running away. In a third, a serving man was standing eternally trying to convey a piece of beef to his mouth, and all around them were others, still preserving for evermore the attitudes they were in when the wizard had commanded ‘From henceforth be turned into marble.’ In the castle, and round the castle all was dismal and desolate. Trees there were, but without leaves; fields there were, but no grass grew on them. There was one river, but it never flowed and no fish lived in it. No flowers blossomed, and no birds sang.

Three times during the day food appeared, as if by magic, for the prince and his servants. And it was not until supper was ended that the wizard appeared, as on the previous evening, and delivered the princess into the care of the prince.

All four determined that this time they would keep awake at any cost. But it was no use. Off they went as they had done before, and when the prince awoke the next morning the room was again empty.

With a pang of shame, he rushed to find Quickeye. ‘Awake! Awake! Quickeye! Do you know what has become of the princess?’

Quickeye rubbed his eyes and answered: ‘Yes, I see her. Two hundred miles from here there is a mountain. In this mountain is a rock. In the rock, a precious stone. This stone is the princess. Long shall take me there, and we will be back before you can turn round.’

So Long took him on his shoulders and they set out. At every stride they covered twenty miles, and as they drew near Quickeye fixed his burning eyes on the mountain; in an instant it split into a thousand pieces, and in one of these sparkled the precious stone. They picked it up and brought it to the prince, who flung it hastily down, and as the stone touched the floor the princess stood before him. When the wizard came, his eyes shot forth flames of fury. Cric-crac was heard, and another of his iron bands broke and fell. He seized the princess by the hand and led her off, growling louder than ever.

All that day things went on exactly as they had done the day before. After supper the wizard brought back the princess, and looking him straight in the eyes he said, ‘We shall see which of us two will gain the prize after all!’

That night they struggled their very hardest to keep awake, and even walked about instead of sitting down. But it was quite useless. One after another they had to give in, and for the third time the princess slipped through their fingers.

When morning came, it was as usual the prince who awoke the first, and as usual, the princess being gone, he rushed to Quickeye.

‘Get up, get up, Quickeye, and tell me where is the princess?’

Quickeye looked about for some time without answering. ‘Oh, my lord, she is far, very far. Three hundred miles away there lies a black sea. In the middle of this sea there is a little shell, and in the middle of the shell is fixed a gold ring. That gold ring is the princess. But do not vex your soul; we will get her. Only to-day, Long must take Broad with him. He will be wanted badly.’

So Long took Quickeye on one shoulder, and Broad on the other, and they set out. At each stride they left thirty miles behind them. When they reached the black sea, Quickeye showed them the spot where they must seek the shell. But though Long stretched down his hand as far as it would go, he could not find the shell, for it lay at the bottom of the sea.

‘Wait a moment, comrades, it will be all right. I will help you,’ said Broad.

Then he swelled himself out so that you would have thought the world could hardly have held him, and stooping down he drank. He drank so much at every mouthful, that only a minute or so passed before the water had sunk enough for Long to put his hand to the bottom. He soon found the shell, and pulled the ring out. But time had been lost, and Long had a double burden to carry. The dawn was breaking fast before they got back to the castle, where the prince was waiting for them in an agony of fear.

Soon the first rays of the sun were seen peeping over the tops of the mountains. The door burst open, and finding the prince standing alone the wizard broke into peals of wicked laughter. But as he laughed a loud crash was heard, the window fell into a thousand pieces, a gold ring glittered in the air, and the princess stood before the enchanter. For Quickeye, who was watching from afar, had told Long of the terrible danger now threatening the prince, and Long, summoning all his strength for one gigantic effort, had thrown the ring right through the window.

The wizard shrieked and howled with rage, till the whole castle trembled to its foundations. Then a crash was heard, the third band split in two, and a crow flew out of the window.

Then the princess at length broke the enchanted silence, and blushing like a rose, gave the prince her thanks for her unlooked-for deliverance.

But it was not only the princess who was restored to life by the flight of the wicked black crow. The marble figures became men once more, and took up their occupations just as they had left them off. The horses neighed in the stables, the flowers blossomed in the garden, the birds flew in the air, the fish darted in the water. Everywhere you looked, all was life, all was joy!

And the knights who had been turned into stone came in a body to offer their homage to the prince who had set them free.

‘Do not thank me,’ he said, ‘for I have done nothing. Without my faithful servants, Long, Broad, and Quickeye, I should even have been as one of you.’

With these words he bade them farewell, and departed with the princess and his faithful companions for the kingdom of his father.

The old king, who had long since given up all hope, wept for joy at the sight of his son, and insisted that the wedding should take place as soon as possible.

All the knights who had been enchanted in the Iron Castle were invited to the ceremony, and after it had taken place, Long, Broad, and Quickeye took leave of the young couple, saying that they were going to look for more work.

The prince offered them all their hearts could desire if they would only remain with him, but they replied that an idle life would not please them, and that they could never be happy unless they were busy, so they went away to seek their fortunes, and for all I know are seeking still.

[Contes populaires. Traduits par Louis Léger. Paris: Leroux, éditeur.]

PRUNELLA

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There was once upon a time a woman who had an only daughter. When the child was about seven years old she used to pass every day, on her way to school, an orchard where there was a wild plum tree, with delicious ripe plums hanging from the branches. Each morning the child would pick one, and put it into her pocket to eat at school. For this reason she was called Prunella. Now, the orchard belonged to a witch. One day the witch noticed the child gathering a plum, as she passed along the road. Prunella did it quite innocently, not knowing that she was doing wrong in taking the fruit that hung close to the roadside. But the witch was furious, and next day hid herself behind the hedge, and when Prunella came past, and put out her hand to pluck the fruit, she jumped out and seized her by the arm.

‘Ah! you little thief!’ she exclaimed. ‘I have caught you at last. Now you will have to pay for your misdeeds.’

The poor child, half dead with fright, implored the old woman to forgive her, assuring her that she did not know she had done wrong, and promising never to do it again. But the witch had no pity, and she dragged Prunella into her house, where she kept her till the time should come when she could have her revenge.

As the years passed Prunella grew up into a very beautiful girl. Now her beauty and goodness, instead of softening the witch’s heart, aroused her hatred and jealousy.

One day she called Prunella to her, and said: ‘Take this basket, go to the well, and bring it back to me filled with water. If you don’t I will kill you.’

The girl took the basket, went and let it down into the well again and again. But her work was lost labour. Each time, as she drew up the basket, the water streamed out of it. At last, in despair, she gave it up, and leaning against the well she began to cry bitterly, when suddenly she heard a voice at her side saying ‘Prunella, why are you crying?’

Turning round she beheld a handsome youth, who looked kindly at her, as if he were sorry for her trouble.

‘Who are you,’ she asked, ‘and how do you know my name?’

‘I am the son of the witch,’ he replied, ‘and my name is Bensiabel. I know that she is determined that you shall die, but I promise you that she shall not carry out her wicked plan. Will you give me a kiss, if I fill your basket?’

‘No,’ said Prunella, ‘I will not give you a kiss, because you are the son of a witch.’

‘Very well,’ replied the youth sadly. ‘Give me your basket and I will fill it for you.’ And he dipped it into the well, and the water stayed in it. Then the girl returned to the house, carrying the basket filled with water. When the witch saw it, she became white with rage, and exclaimed ‘Bensiabel must have helped you.’ And Prunella looked down, and said nothing.

‘Well, we shall see who will win in the end,’ said the witch, in a great rage.

The following day she called the girl to her and said: ‘Take this sack of wheat. I am going out for a little; by the time I return I shall expect you to have made it into bread. If you have not done it I will kill you.’ Having said this she left the room, closing and locking the door behind her.

Poor Prunella did not know what to do. It was impossible for her to grind the wheat, prepare the dough, and bake the bread, all in the short time that the witch would be away. At first she set to work bravely, but when she saw how hopeless her task was, she threw herself on a chair, and began to weep bitterly. She was roused from her despair by hearing Bensiabel’s voice at her side saying: ‘Prunella, Prunella, do not weep like that. If you will give me a kiss I will make the bread, and you will be saved.’

‘I will not kiss the son of a witch,’ replied Prunella.

But Bensiabel took the wheat from her, and ground it, and made the dough, and when the witch returned the bread was ready baked in the oven.

Turning to the girl, with fury in her voice, she said: ‘Bensiabel must have been here and helped you;’ and Prunella looked down, and said nothing.

‘We shall see who will win in the end,’ said the witch, and her eyes blazed with anger.

Next day she called the girl to her and said: ‘Go to my sister, who lives across the mountains. She will give you a casket, which you must bring back to me.’ This she said knowing that her sister, who was a still more cruel and wicked witch than herself, would never allow the girl to return, but would imprison her and starve her to death. But Prunella did not suspect anything, and set out quite cheerfully. On the way she met Bensiabel.

‘Where are you going, Prunella?’ he asked.

‘I am going to the sister of my mistress, from whom I am to fetch a casket.’

‘Oh poor, poor girl!’ said Bensiabel. ‘You are being sent straight to your death. Give me a kiss, and I will save you.’

But again Prunella answered as before, ‘I will not kiss the son of a witch.’

‘Nevertheless, I will save your life,’ said Bensiabel, ‘for I love you better than myself. Take this flagon of oil, this loaf of bread, this piece of rope, and this broom. When you reach the witch’s house, oil the hinges of the door with the contents of the flagon, and throw the loaf of bread to the great fierce mastiff, who will come to meet you. When you have passed the dog, you will see in the courtyard a miserable woman trying in vain to let down a bucket into the well with her plaited hair. You must give her the rope. In the kitchen you will find a still more miserable woman trying to clean the hearth with her tongue; to her you must give the broom. You will see the casket on the top of a cupboard, take it as quickly as you can, and leave the house without a moment’s delay. If you do all this exactly as I have told you, you will not be killed.’

So Prunella, having listened carefully to his instructions, did just what he had told her. She reached the house, oiled the hinges of the door, threw the loaf to the dog, gave the poor woman at the well the rope, and the woman in the kitchen the broom, caught up the casket from the top of the cupboard, and fled with it out of the house. But the witch heard her as she ran away, and rushing to the window called out to the woman in the kitchen: ‘Kill that thief, I tell you!’

But the woman replied: ‘I will not kill her, for she has given me a broom, whereas you forced me to clean the hearth with my tongue.’

Then the witch called out in fury to the woman at the well: ‘Take the girl, I tell you, and fling her into the water, and drown her!’

But the woman answered: ‘No, I will not drown her, for she gave me this rope, whereas you forced me to use my hair to let down the bucket to draw water.’

Then the witch shouted to the dog to seize the girl and hold her fast; but the dog answered: ‘No, I will not seize her, for she gave me a loaf of bread, whereas you let me starve with hunger.’

The witch was so angry that she nearly choked, as she called out: ‘Door, bang upon her, and keep her a prisoner.’

But the door answered: ‘I won’t, for she has oiled my hinges, so that they move quite easily, whereas you left them all rough and rusty.’

And so Prunella escaped, and, with the casket under her arm, reached the house of her mistress, who, as you may believe, was as angry as she was surprised to see the girl standing before her, looking more beautiful than ever. Her eyes flashed, as in furious tones she asked her, ‘Did you meet Bensiabel?’

But Prunella looked down, and said nothing.

‘We shall see,’ said the witch, ‘who will win in the end. Listen, there are three cocks in the hen-house; one is yellow, one black, and the third is white. If one of them crows during the night you must tell me which one it is. Woe to you if you make a mistake. I will gobble you up in one mouthful.’

Now Bensiabel was in the room next to the one where Prunella slept. At midnight she awoke hearing a cock crow.

‘Which one was that?’ shouted the witch.

Then, trembling, Prunella knocked on the wall and whispered: ‘Bensiabel, Bensiabel, tell me, which cock crowed?’

‘Will you give me a kiss if I tell you?’ he whispered back through the wall.

But she answered ‘No.’

Then he whispered back to her: ‘Nevertheless, I will tell you. It was the yellow cock that crowed.’

The witch, who had noticed the delay in Prunella's answer, approached her door calling angrily: 'Answer at once, or I will kill you.'

So Prunella answered: 'It was the yellow cock that crowed.'

And the witch stamped her foot and gnashed her teeth.

Soon after another cock crowed. 'Tell me now which one it is,' called the witch. And, prompted by Bensiabel, Prunella answered: 'That is the black cock.'

A few minutes after the crowing was heard again, and the voice of the witch demanding 'Which one was that?'

And again Prunella implored Bensiabel to help her. But this time he hesitated, for he hoped that Prunella might forget that he was a witch's son, and promise to give him a kiss. And as he hesitated he heard an agonised cry from the girl: 'Bensiabel, Bensiabel, save me! The witch is coming, she is close to me, I hear the gnashing of her teeth!'

With a bound Bensiabel opened his door and flung himself against the witch. He pulled her back with such force that she stumbled, and falling headlong, dropped down dead at the foot of the stairs.

Then, at last, Prunella was touched by Bensiabel's goodness and kindness to her, and she became his wife, and they lived happily ever after.

THE VIOLET FAIRY BOOK

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PREFACE

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The Editor takes this opportunity to repeat what he has often said before, that he is not the author of the stories in the Fairy Books; that he did not invent them ‘out of his own head.’ He is accustomed to being asked, by ladies, ‘Have you written anything else except the Fairy Books?’ He is then obliged to explain that he has NOT written the Fairy Books, but, save these, has written almost everything else, except hymns, sermons, and dramatic works.

The stories in this Violet Fairy Book, as in all the others of the series, have been translated out of the popular traditional tales in a number of different languages. These stories are as old as anything that men have invented. They are narrated by naked savage women to naked savage children. They have been inherited by our earliest civilised ancestors, who really believed that beasts and trees and stones can talk if they choose, and behave kindly or unkindly. The stories are full of the oldest ideas of ages when science did not exist, and magic took the place of science. Anybody who has the curiosity to read the ‘Legendary Australian Tales,’ which Mrs. Langloh Parker has collected from the lips of the Australian savages, will find that these tales are closely akin to our own. Who were the first authors of them nobody knows—probably the first men and women. Eve may have told these tales to amuse Cain and Abel. As people grew more civilised and had kings and queens, princes and princesses, these exalted persons generally were chosen as heroes and heroines. But originally the characters were just ‘a man,’ and ‘a woman,’ and ‘a boy,’ and ‘a girl,’ with crowds of beasts, birds, and fishes, all behaving like human beings. When the nobles and other people became rich and educated, they forgot the old stories, but the country people did not, and handed them down, with changes at pleasure, from generation to generation. Then learned men collected and printed the country people’s stories, and these we have translated, to amuse children. Their tastes remain like the tastes of their naked ancestors, thousands of years ago, and they seem to like fairy tales

better than history, poetry, geography, or arithmetic, just as grown-up people like novels better than anything else.

This is the whole truth of the matter. I have said so before, and I say so again. But nothing will prevent children from thinking that I invented the stories, or some ladies from being of the same opinion. But who really invented the stories nobody knows; it is all so long ago, long before reading and writing were invented. The first of the stories actually written down, were written in Egyptian hieroglyphs, or on Babylonian cakes of clay, three or four thousand years before our time.

Of the stories in this book, Miss Blackley translated ‘Dwarf Long Nose,’ ‘The Wonderful Beggars,’ ‘The Lute Player,’ ‘Two in a Sack,’ and ‘The Fish that swam in the Air.’ Mr. W. A. Craigie translated from the Scandinavian, ‘Jasper who herded the Hares.’ Mrs. Lang did the rest.

Some of the most interesting are from the Roumanion, and three were previously published in the late Dr. Steere’s ‘Swahili Tales.’ By the permission of his representatives these three African stories have here been abridged and simplified for children.

A TALE OF THE TONTLAWALD

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Long, long ago there stood in the midst of a country covered with lakes a vast stretch of moorland called the Tontlawald, on which no man ever dared set foot. From time to time a few bold spirits had been drawn by curiosity to its borders, and on their return had reported that they had caught a glimpse of a ruined house in a grove of thick trees, and round about it were a crowd of beings resembling men, swarming over the grass like bees. The men were as dirty and ragged as gipsies, and there were besides a quantity of old women and half-naked children.

One night a peasant who was returning home from a feast wandered a little farther into the Tontlawald, and came back with the same story. A countless number of women and children were gathered round a huge fire, and some were seated on the ground, while others danced strange dances on the smooth grass. One old crone had a broad iron ladle in her hand, with which every now and then she stirred the fire, but the moment she touched the glowing ashes the children rushed away, shrieking like night owls, and it was a long while before they ventured to steal back. And besides all this there had once or twice been seen a little old man with a long beard creeping out of the forest, carrying a sack bigger than himself. The women and children ran by his side, weeping and trying to drag the sack from off his back, but he shook them off, and went on his way. There was also a tale of a magnificent black cat as large as a foal, but men could not believe all the wonders told by the peasant, and it was difficult to make out what was true and what was false in his story. However, the fact remained that strange things did happen there, and the King of Sweden, to whom this part of the country belonged, more than once gave orders to cut down the haunted wood, but there was no one with courage enough to obey his commands. At length one man, bolder than the rest, struck his axe into a tree, but his blow was followed by a stream of blood and shrieks as of a human creature in pain. The terrified woodcutter fled as fast as his legs

would carry him, and after that neither orders nor threats would drive anybody to the enchanted moor.

A few miles from the Tontlawald was a large village, where dwelt a peasant who had recently married a young wife. As not uncommonly happens in such cases, she turned the whole house upside down, and the two quarrelled and fought all day long.

By his first wife the peasant had a daughter called Elsa, a good quiet girl, who only wanted to live in peace, but this her stepmother would not allow. She beat and cuffed the poor child from morning till night, but as the stepmother had the whip-hand of her husband there was no remedy.

For two years Elsa suffered all this ill-treatment, when one day she went out with the other village children to pluck strawberries. Carelessly they wandered on, till at last they reached the edge of the Tontlawald, where the finest strawberries grew, making the grass red with their colour. The children flung themselves down on the ground, and, after eating as many as they wanted, began to pile up their baskets, when suddenly a cry arose from one of the older boys:

‘Run, run as fast as you can! We are in the Tontlawald!’

Quicker than lightning they sprang to their feet, and rushed madly away, all except Elsa, who had strayed farther than the rest, and had found a bed of the finest strawberries right under the trees. Like the others, she heard the boy’s cry, but could not make up her mind to leave the strawberries.

‘After all, what does it matter?’ thought she. ‘The dwellers in the Tontlawald cannot be worse than my stepmother’; and looking up she saw a little black dog with a silver bell on its neck come barking towards her, followed by a maiden clad all in silk.

‘Be quiet,’ said she; then turning to Elsa she added: ‘I am so glad you did not run away with the other children. Stay here with me and be my friend, and we will play delightful games together, and every day we will go and gather strawberries. Nobody will dare to beat you if I tell them not. Come, let us go to my mother’; and taking Elsa’s hand she led her deeper into the wood, the little black dog jumping up beside them and barking with pleasure.

Oh! what wonders and splendours unfolded themselves before Elsa’s astonished eyes! She thought she really must be in Heaven. Fruit trees and

bushes loaded with fruit stood before them, while birds gayer than the brightest butterfly sat in their branches and filled the air with their song. And the birds were not shy, but let the girls take them in their hands, and stroke their gold and silver feathers. In the centre of the garden was the dwelling-house, shining with glass and precious stones, and in the doorway sat a woman in rich garments, who turned to Elsa's companion and asked:

'What sort of a guest are you bringing to me?'

'I found her alone in the wood,' replied her daughter, 'and brought her back with me for a companion. You will let her stay?'

The mother laughed, but said nothing, only she looked Elsa up and down sharply. Then she told the girl to come near, and stroked her cheeks and spoke kindly to her, asking if her parents were alive, and if she really would like to stay with them. Elsa stooped and kissed her hand, then, kneeling down, buried her face in the woman's lap, and sobbed out:

'My mother has lain for many years under the ground. My father is still alive, but I am nothing to him, and my stepmother beats me all the day long. I can do nothing right, so let me, I pray you, stay with you. I will look after the flocks or do any work you tell me; I will obey your lightest word; only do not, I entreat you, send me back to her. She will half kill me for not having come back with the other children.'

And the woman smiled and answered, 'Well, we will see what we can do with you,' and, rising, went into the house.

Then the daughter said to Elsa, 'Fear nothing, my mother will be your friend. I saw by the way she looked that she would grant your request when she had thought over it,' and, telling Elsa to wait, she entered the house to seek her mother. Elsa meanwhile was tossed about between hope and fear, and felt as if the girl would never come.

At last Elsa saw her crossing the grass with a box in her hand.

'My mother says we may play together to-day, as she wants to make up her mind what to do about you. But I hope you will stay here always, as I can't bear you to go away. Have you ever been on the sea?'

'The sea?' asked Elsa, staring; 'what is that? I've never heard of such a thing!'

'Oh, I'll soon show you,' answered the girl, taking the lid from the box, and at the very bottom lay a scrap of a cloak, a mussel shell, and two

fish scales. Two drops of water were glistening on the cloak, and these the girl shook on the ground. In an instant the garden and lawn and everything else had vanished utterly, as if the earth had opened and swallowed them up, and as far as the eye could reach you could see nothing but water, which seemed at last to touch heaven itself. Only under their feet was a tiny dry spot. Then the girl placed the mussel shell on the water and took the fish scales in her hand. The mussel shell grew bigger and bigger, and turned into a pretty little boat, which would have held a dozen children. The girls stepped in, Elsa very cautiously, for which she was much laughed at by her friend, who used the fish scales for a rudder. The waves rocked the girls softly, as if they were lying in a cradle, and they floated on till they met other boats filled with men, singing and making merry.

‘We must sing you a song in return,’ said the girl, but as Elsa did not know any songs, she had to sing by herself. Elsa could not understand any of the men’s songs, but one word, she noticed, came over and over again, and that was ‘Kisika.’ Elsa asked what it meant, and the girl replied that it was her name.

It was all so pleasant that they might have stayed there for ever had not a voice cried out to them, ‘Children, it is time for you to come home!’

So Kisika took the little box out of her pocket, with the piece of cloth lying in it, and dipped the cloth in the water, and lo! they were standing close to a splendid house in the middle of the garden. Everything round them was dry and firm, and there was no water anywhere. The mussel shell and the fish scales were put back in the box, and the girls went in.

They entered a large hall, where four and twenty richly dressed women were sitting round a table, looking as if they were about to attend a wedding. At the head of the table sat the lady of the house in a golden chair.

Elsa did not know which way to look, for everything that met her eyes was more beautiful than she could have dreamed possible. But she sat down with the rest, and ate some delicious fruit, and thought she must be in heaven. The guests talked softly, but their speech was strange to Elsa, and she understood nothing of what was said. Then the hostess turned round and whispered something to a maid behind her chair, and the maid left the hall, and when she came back she brought a little old man with her,

who had a beard longer than himself. He bowed low to the lady and then stood quietly near the door.

‘Do you see this girl?’ said the lady of the house, pointing to Elsa. ‘I wish to adopt her for my daughter. Make me a copy of her, which we can send to her native village instead of herself.’

The old man looked Elsa all up and down, as if he was taking her measure, bowed again to the lady, and left the hall. After dinner the lady said kindly to Elsa, ‘Kisika has begged me to let you stay with her, and you have told her you would like to live here. Is that so?’

At these words Elsa fell on her knees, and kissed the lady’s hands and feet in gratitude for her escape from her cruel stepmother; but her hostess raised her from the ground and patted her head, saying, ‘All will go well as long as you are a good, obedient child, and I will take care of you and see that you want for nothing till you are grown up and can look after yourself. My waiting-maid, who teaches Kisika all sorts of fine handiwork, shall teach you too.’

Not long after the old man came back with a mould full of clay on his shoulders, and a little covered basket in his left hand. He put down his mould and his basket on the ground, took up a handful of clay, and made a doll as large as life. When it was finished he bored a hole in the doll’s breast and put a bit of bread inside; then, drawing a snake out of the basket, forced it to enter the hollow body.

‘Now,’ he said to the lady, ‘all we want is a drop of the maiden’s blood.’

When she heard this Elsa grew white with horror, for she thought she was selling her soul to the evil one.

‘Do not be afraid!’ the lady hastened to say; ‘we do not want your blood for any bad purpose, but rather to give you freedom and happiness.’

Then she took a tiny golden needle, pricked Elsa in the arm, and gave the needle to the old man, who stuck it into the heart of the doll. When this was done he placed the figure in the basket, promising that the next day they should all see what a beautiful piece of work he had finished.

When Elsa awoke the next morning in her silken bed, with its soft white pillows, she saw a beautiful dress lying over the back of a chair, ready for her to put on. A maid came in to comb out her long hair, and brought the finest linen for her use; but nothing gave Elsa so much joy as

the little pair of embroidered shoes that she held in her hand, for the girl had hitherto been forced to run about barefoot by her cruel stepmother. In her excitement she never gave a thought to the rough clothes she had worn the day before, which had disappeared as if by magic during the night. Who could have taken them? Well, she was to know that by-and-by. But WE can guess that the doll had been dressed in them, which was to go back to the village in her stead. By the time the sun rose the doll had attained her full size, and no one could have told one girl from the other. Elsa started back when she met herself as she looked only yesterday.

‘You must not be frightened,’ said the lady, when she noticed her terror; ‘this clay figure can do you no harm. It is for your stepmother, that she may beat it instead of you. Let her flog it as hard as she will, it can never feel any pain. And if the wicked woman does not come one day to a better mind your double will be able at last to give her the punishment she deserves.’

From this moment Elsa’s life was that of the ordinary happy child, who has been rocked to sleep in her babyhood in a lovely golden cradle. She had no cares or troubles of any sort, and every day her tasks became easier, and the years that had gone before seemed more and more like a bad dream. But the happier she grew the deeper was her wonder at everything around her, and the more firmly she was persuaded that some great unknown power must be at the bottom of it all.

In the courtyard stood a huge granite block about twenty steps from the house, and when meal times came round the old man with the long beard went to the block, drew out a small silver staff, and struck the stone with it three times, so that the sound could be heard a long way off. At the third blow, out sprang a large golden cock, and stood upon the stone. Whenever he crowed and flapped his wings the rock opened and something came out of it. First a long table covered with dishes ready laid for the number of persons who would be seated round it, and this flew into the house all by itself.

When the cock crowed for the second time, a number of chairs appeared, and flew after the table; then wine, apples, and other fruit, all without trouble to anybody. After everybody had had enough, the old man struck the rock again. The golden cock crowed afresh, and back went dishes, table, chairs, and plates into the middle of the block.

When, however, it came to the turn of the thirteenth dish, which nobody ever wanted to eat, a huge black cat ran up, and stood on the rock close to the cock, while the dish was on his other side.

There they all remained, till they were joined by the old man.

He picked up the dish in one hand, tucked the cat under his arm, told the cock to get on his shoulder, and all four vanished into the rock. And this wonderful stone contained not only food, but clothes and everything you could possibly want in the house.

At first a language was often spoken at meals which was strange to Elsa, but by the help of the lady and her daughter she began slowly to understand it, though it was years before she was able to speak it herself.

One day she asked Kisika why the thirteenth dish came daily to the table and was sent daily away untouched, but Kisika knew no more about it than she did. The girl must, however, have told her mother what Elsa had said, for a few days later she spoke to Elsa seriously:

‘Do not worry yourself with useless wondering. You wish to know why we never eat of the thirteenth dish? That, dear child, is the dish of hidden blessings, and we cannot taste of it without bringing our happy life here to an end. And the world would be a great deal better if men, in their greed, did not seek to snatch every thing for themselves, instead of leaving something as a thankoffering to the giver of the blessings. Greed is man’s worst fault.’

The years passed like the wind for Elsa, and she grew into a lovely woman, with a knowledge of many things that she would never have learned in her native village; but Kisika was still the same young girl that she had been on the day of her first meeting with Elsa. Each morning they both worked for an hour at reading and writing, as they had always done, and Elsa was anxious to learn all she could, but Kisika much preferred childish games to anything else. If the humour seized her, she would fling aside her tasks, take her treasure box, and go off to play in the sea, where no harm ever came to her.

‘What a pity,’ she would often say to Elsa, ‘that you have grown so big, you cannot play with me any more.’

Nine years slipped away in this manner, when one day the lady called Elsa into her room. Elsa was surprised at the summons, for it was unusual, and her heart sank, for she feared some evil threatened her. As she crossed

the threshold, she saw that the lady's cheeks were flushed, and her eyes full of tears, which she dried hastily, as if she would conceal them from the girl. 'Dearest child,' she began, 'the time has come when we must part.'

'Part?' cried Elsa, burying her head in the lady's lap. 'No, dear lady, that can never be till death parts us. You once opened your arms to me; you cannot thrust me away now.'

'Ah, be quiet, child,' replied the lady; 'you do not know what I would do to make you happy. Now you are a woman, and I have no right to keep you here. You must return to the world of men, where joy awaits you.'

'Dear lady,' entreated Elsa again. 'Do not, I beseech you, send me from you. I want no other happiness but to live and die beside you. Make me your waiting maid, or set me to any work you choose, but do not cast me forth into the world. It would have been better if you had left me with my stepmother, than first to have brought me to heaven and then send me back to a worse place.'

'Do not talk like that, dear child,' replied the lady; 'you do not know all that must be done to secure your happiness, however much it costs me. But it has to be. You are only a common mortal, who will have to die one day, and you cannot stay here any longer. Though we have the bodies of men, we are not men at all, though it is not easy for you to understand why. Some day or other you will find a husband who has been made expressly for you, and will live happily with him till death separates you. It will be very hard for me to part from you, but it has to be, and you must make up your mind to it.' Then she drew her golden comb gently through Elsa's hair, and bade her go to bed; but little sleep had the poor girl! Life seemed to stretch before her like a dark starless night.

Now let us look back a moment, and see what had been going on in Elsa's native village all these years, and how her double had fared. It is a well-known fact that a bad woman seldom becomes better as she grows older, and Elsa's stepmother was no exception to the rule; but as the figure that had taken the girl's place could feel no pain, the blows that were showered on her night and day made no difference. If the father ever tried to come to his daughter's help, his wife turned upon him, and things were rather worse than before.

One day the stepmother had given the girl a frightful beating, and then threatened to kill her outright. Mad with rage, she seized the figure by the throat with both hands, when out came a black snake from her mouth and stung the woman's tongue, and she fell dead without a sound. At night, when the husband came home, he found his wife lying dead upon the ground, her body all swollen and disfigured, but the girl was nowhere to be seen. His screams brought the neighbours from their cottages, but they were unable to explain how it had all come about. It was true, they said, that about mid-day they had heard a great noise, but as that was a matter of daily occurrence they did not think much of it. The rest of the day all was still, but no one had seen anything of the daughter. The body of the dead woman was then prepared for burial, and her tired husband went to bed, rejoicing in his heart that he had been delivered from the firebrand who had made his home unpleasant. On the table he saw a slice of bread lying, and, being hungry, he ate it before going to sleep.

In the morning he too was found dead, and as swollen as his wife, for the bread had been placed in the body of the figure by the old man who made it. A few days later he was placed in the grave beside his wife, but nothing more was ever heard of their daughter.

All night long after her talk with the lady Elsa had wept and wailed her hard fate in being cast out from her home which she loved.

Next morning, when she got up, the lady placed a gold seal ring on her finger, strung a little golden box on a ribbon, and placed it round her neck; then she called the old man, and, forcing back her tears, took leave of Elsa. The girl tried to speak, but before she could sob out her thanks the old man had touched her softly on the head three times with his silver staff. In an instant Elsa knew that she was turning into a bird: wings sprang from beneath her arms; her feet were the feet of eagles, with long claws; her nose curved itself into a sharp beak, and feathers covered her body. Then she soared high in the air, and floated up towards the clouds, as if she had really been hatched an eagle.

For several days she flew steadily south, resting from time to time when her wings grew tired, for hunger she never felt. And so it happened that one day she was flying over a dense forest, and below hounds were barking fiercely, because, not having wings themselves, she was out of

their reach. Suddenly a sharp pain quivered through her body, and she fell to the ground, pierced by an arrow.

When Elsa recovered her senses, she found herself lying under a bush in her own proper form. What had befallen her, and how she got there, lay behind her like a bad dream.

As she was wondering what she should do next the king's son came riding by, and, seeing Elsa, sprang from his horse, and took her by the hand, sawing, 'Ah! it was a happy chance that brought me here this morning. Every night, for half a year, have I dreamed, dear lady, that I should one day find you in this wood. And although I have passed through it hundreds of times in vain, I have never given up hope. To-day I was going in search of a large eagle that I had shot, and instead of the eagle I have found—you.' Then he took Elsa on his horse, and rode with her to the town, where the old king received her graciously.

A few days later the wedding took place, and as Elsa was arranging the veil upon her hair fifty carts arrived laden with beautiful things which the lady of the Tontlawald had sent to Elsa. And after the king's death Elsa became queen, and when she was old she told this story. But that was the last that was ever heard of the Tontlawald.

(From Ehstnische Marchen.)

THE FINEST LIAR IN THE WORLD

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At the edge of a wood there lived an old man who had only one son, and one day he called the boy to him and said he wanted some corn ground, but the youth must be sure never to enter any mill where the miller was beardless.

The boy took the corn and set out, and before he had gone very far he saw a large mill in front of him, with a beardless man standing in the doorway.

‘Good greeting, beardless one!’ cried he.

‘Good greeting, sonny,’ replied the man.

‘Could I grind something here?’

‘Yes, certainly! I will finish what I am doing and then you can grind as long as you like.’

But suddenly the boy remembered what his father had told him, and bade farewell to the man, and went further down the river, till he came to another mill, not knowing that as soon as his back was turned the beardless man had picked up a bag of corn and run hastily to the same mill before him. When the boy reached the second mill, and saw a second beardless man sitting there, he did not stop, and walked on till he came to a third mill. But this time also the beardless man had been too clever for him, and had arrived first by another road. When it happened a fourth time the boy grew cross, and said to himself, ‘It is no good going on; there seems to be a beardless man in every mill’; and he took his sack from his back, and made up his mind to grind his corn where he was.

The beardless man finished grinding his own corn, and when he had done he said to the boy, who was beginning to grind his, ‘Suppose, sonny, we make a cake of what you have there.’

Now the boy had been rather uneasy when he recollected his father’s words, but he thought to himself, ‘What is done cannot be undone,’ and answered, ‘Very well, so let it be.’

Then the beardless one got up, threw the flour into the tub, and made a hole in the middle, telling the boy to fetch some water from the river in his two hands, to mix the cake. When the cake was ready for baking they put it on the fire, and covered it with hot ashes, till it was cooked through. Then they leaned it up against the wall, for it was too big to go into a cupboard, and the beardless one said to the boy:

‘Look here, sonny: if we share this cake we shall neither of us have enough. Let us see who can tell the biggest lie, and the one who lies the best shall have the whole cake.’

The boy, not knowing what else to do, answered, ‘All right; you begin.’

So the beardless one began to lie with all his might, and when he was tired of inventing new lies the boy said to him, ‘My good fellow, if THAT is all you can do it is not much! Listen to me, and I will tell you a true story.

‘In my youth, when I was an old man, we had a quantity of beehives. Every morning when I got up I counted them over, and it was quite easy to number the bees, but I never could reckon the hives properly. One day, as I was counting the bees, I discovered that my best bee was missing, and without losing a moment I saddled a cock and went out to look for him. I traced him as far as the shore, and knew that he had crossed the sea, and that I must follow. When I had reached the other side I found a man had harnessed my bee to a plough, and with his help was sowing millet seed.

‘“That is my bee!” I shouted. “Where did you get him from?”’ “Brother,” replied the man, “if he is yours, take him.” And he not only gave me back my bee, but a sack of millet seed into the bargain, because he had made use of my bee. Then I put the bag on my shoulders, took the saddle from the cock, and placed it on the back of the bee, which I mounted, leading the cock by a string, so that he should have a rest. As we were flying home over the sea one of the strings that held the bag of millet broke in two, and the sack dropped straight into the ocean. It was quite lost, of course, and there was no use thinking about it, and by the time we were safe back again night had come. I then got down from my bee, and let him loose, that he might get his supper, gave the cock some hay, and went to sleep myself. But when I awoke with the sun what a scene met my eyes! During the night wolves had come and had eaten my bee. And honey lay

ankle-deep in the valley and knee-deep on the hills. Then I began to consider how I could best collect some, to take home with me.

‘Now it happened that I had with me a small hatchet, and this I took to the wood, hoping to meet some animal which I could kill, whose skin I might turn into a bag. As I entered the forest I saw two roe-deer hopping on one foot, so I slew them with a single blow, and made three bags from their skins, all of which I filled with honey and placed on the back of the cock. At length I reached home, where I was told that my father had just been born, and that I must go at once to fetch some holy water to sprinkle him with. As I went I turned over in my mind if there was no way for me to get back my millet seed, which had dropped into the sea, and when I arrived at the place with the holy water I saw the seed had fallen on fruitful soil, and was growing before my eyes. And more than that, it was even cut by an invisible hand, and made into a cake.

‘So I took the cake as well as the holy water, and was flying back with them over the sea, when there fell a great rain, and the sea was swollen, and swept away my millet cake. Ah, how vexed I was at its loss when I was safe on earth again.

‘Suddenly I remembered that my hair was very long. If I stood it touched the ground, although if I was sitting it only reached my ears. I seized a knife and cut off a large lock, which I plaited together, and when night came tied it into a knot, and prepared to use it for a pillow. But what was I to do for a fire? A tinder box I had, but no wood. Then it occurred to me that I had stuck a needle in my clothes, so I took the needle and split it in pieces, and lit it, then laid myself down by the fire and went to sleep. But ill-luck still pursued me. While I was sleeping a spark from the fire lighted on the hair, which was burnt up in a moment. In despair I threw myself on the ground, and instantly sank in it as far as my waist. I struggled to get out, but only fell in further; so I ran to the house, seized a spade, dug myself out, and took home the holy water. On the way I noticed that the ripe fields were full of reapers, and suddenly the air became so frightfully hot that the men dropped down in a faint. Then I called to them, “Why don’t you bring out our mare, which is as tall as two days, and as broad as half a day, and make a shade for yourselves?” My father heard what I said and jumped quickly on the mare, and the reapers worked with a will in the shadow, while I snatched up a wooden pail to bring them some

water to drink. When I got to the well everything was frozen hard, so in order to draw some water I had to take off my head and break the ice with it. As I drew near them, carrying the water, the reapers all cried out, “Why, what has become of your head?” I put up my hand and discovered that I really had no head, and that I must have left it in the well. I ran back to look for it, but found that meanwhile a fox which was passing by had pulled my head out of the water, and was tearing at my brains. I stole cautiously up to him, and gave him such a kick that he uttered a loud scream, and let fall a parchment on which was written, “The cake is mine, and the beardless one goes empty-handed.”’

With these words the boy rose, took the cake, and went home, while the beardless one remained behind to swallow his disappointment.

(Volksmarchen der Serben.)

THE STORY OF THREE WONDERFUL BEGGARS

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There once lived a merchant whose name was Mark, and whom people called ‘Mark the Rich.’ He was a very hard-hearted man, for he could not bear poor people, and if he caught sight of a beggar anywhere near his house, he would order the servants to drive him away, or would set the dogs at him.

One day three very poor old men came begging to the door, and just as he was going to let the fierce dogs loose on them, his little daughter, Anastasia, crept close up to him and said:

‘Dear daddy, let the poor old men sleep here to-night, do—to please me.’

Her father could not bear to refuse her, and the three beggars were allowed to sleep in a loft, and at night, when everyone in the house was fast asleep, little Anastasia got up, climbed up to the loft, and peeped in.

The three old men stood in the middle of the loft, leaning on their sticks, with their long grey beards flowing down over their hands, and were talking together in low voices.

‘What news is there?’ asked the eldest.

‘In the next village the peasant Ivan has just had his seventh son. What shall we name him, and what fortune shall we give him?’ said the second.

The third whispered, ‘Call him Vassili, and give him all the property of the hard-hearted man in whose loft we stand, and who wanted to drive us from his door.’

After a little more talk the three made themselves ready and crept softly away.

Anastasia, who had heard every word, ran straight to her father, and told him all.

Mark was very much surprised; he thought, and thought, and in the morning he drove to the next village to try and find out if such a child

really had been born. He went first to the priest, and asked him about the children in his parish.

‘Yesterday,’ said the priest, ‘a boy was born in the poorest house in the village. I named the unlucky little thing “Vassili.” He is the seventh son, and the eldest is only seven years old, and they hardly have a mouthful amongst them all. Who can be got to stand godfather to such a little beggar boy?’

The merchant’s heart beat fast, and his mind was full of bad thoughts about that poor little baby. He would be godfather himself, he said, and he ordered a fine christening feast; so the child was brought and christened, and Mark was very friendly to its father. After the ceremony was over he took Ivan aside and said:

‘Look here, my friend, you are a poor man. How can you afford to bring up the boy? Give him to me and I’ll make something of him, and I’ll give you a present of a thousand crowns. Is that a bargain?’

Ivan scratched his head, and thought, and thought, and then he agreed. Mark counted out the money, wrapped the baby up in a fox skin, laid it in the sledge beside him, and drove back towards home. When he had driven some miles he drew up, carried the child to the edge of a steep precipice and threw it over, muttering, ‘There, now try to take my property!’

Very soon after this some foreign merchants travelled along that same road on the way to see Mark and to pay the twelve thousand crowns which they owed him.

As they were passing near the precipice they heard a sound of crying, and on looking over they saw a little green meadow wedged in between two great heaps of snow, and on the meadow lay a baby amongst the flowers.

The merchants picked up the child, wrapped it up carefully, and drove on. When they saw Mark they told him what a strange thing they had found. Mark guessed at once that the child must be his godson, asked to see him, and said:

‘That’s a nice little fellow; I should like to keep him. If you will make him over to me, I will let you off your debt.’

The merchants were very pleased to make so good a bargain, left the child with Mark, and drove off.

At night Mark took the child, put it in a barrel, fastened the lid tight down, and threw it into the sea. The barrel floated away to a great distance, and at last it floated close up to a monastery. The monks were just spreading out their nets to dry on the shore, when they heard the sound of crying. It seemed to come from the barrel which was bobbing about near the water's edge. They drew it to land and opened it, and there was a little child! When the abbot heard the news, he decided to bring up the boy, and named him 'Vassili.'

The boy lived on with the monks, and grew up to be a clever, gentle, and handsome young man. No one could read, write, or sing better than he, and he did everything so well that the abbot made him wardrobe keeper.

Now, it happened about this time that the merchant, Mark, came to the monastery in the course of a journey. The monks were very polite to him and showed him their house and church and all they had. When he went into the church the choir was singing, and one voice was so clear and beautiful, that he asked who it belonged to. Then the abbot told him of the wonderful way in which Vassili had come to them, and Mark saw clearly that this must be his godson whom he had twice tried to kill.

He said to the abbot: 'I can't tell you how much I enjoy that young man's singing. If he could only come to me I would make him overseer of all my business. As you say, he is so good and clever. Do spare him to me. I will make his fortune, and will present your monastery with twenty thousand crowns.'

The abbot hesitated a good deal, but he consulted all the other monks, and at last they decided that they ought not to stand in the way of Vassili's good fortune.

Then Mark wrote a letter to his wife and gave it to Vassili to take to her, and this was what was in the letter: 'When the bearer of this arrives, take him into the soap factory, and when you pass near the great boiler, push him in. If you don't obey my orders I shall be very angry, for this young man is a bad fellow who is sure to ruin us all if he lives.'

Vassili had a good voyage, and on landing set off on foot for Mark's home. On the way he met three beggars, who asked him: 'Where are you going, Vassili?'

'I am going to the house of Mark the Merchant, and have a letter for his wife,' replied Vassili.

‘Show us the letter.’

Vassili handed them the letter. They blew on it and gave it back to him, saying: ‘Now go and give the letter to Mark’s wife. You will not be forsaken.’

Vassili reached the house and gave the letter. When the mistress read it she could hardly believe her eyes and called for her daughter. In the letter was written, quite plainly: ‘When you receive this letter, get ready for a wedding, and let the bearer be married next day to my daughter, Anastasia. If you don’t obey my orders I shall be very angry.’

Anastasia saw the bearer of the letter and he pleased her very much. They dressed Vassili in fine clothes and next day he was married to Anastasia.

In due time, Mark returned from his travels. His wife, daughter, and son-in-law all went out to meet him. When Mark saw Vassili he flew into a terrible rage with his wife. ‘How dared you marry my daughter without my consent?’ he asked.

‘I only carried out your orders,’ said she. ‘Here is your letter.’

Mark read it. It certainly was his handwriting, but by no means his wishes.

‘Well,’ thought he, ‘you’ve escaped me three times, but I think I shall get the better of you now.’ And he waited a month and was very kind and pleasant to his daughter and her husband.

At the end of that time he said to Vassili one day, ‘I want you to go for me to my friend the Serpent King, in his beautiful country at the world’s end. Twelve years ago he built a castle on some land of mine. I want you to ask for the rent for those twelve years and also to find out from him what has become of my twelve ships which sailed for his country three years ago.’

Vassili dared not disobey. He said good-bye to his young wife, who cried bitterly at parting, hung a bag of biscuits over his shoulders, and set out.

I really cannot tell you whether the journey was long or short. As he tramped along he suddenly heard a voice saying: ‘Vassili! where are you going?’

Vassili looked about him, and, seeing no one, called out: ‘Who spoke to me?’

‘I did; this old wide-spreading oak. Tell me where you are going.’

‘I am going to the Serpent King to receive twelve years’ rent from him.’

‘When the time comes, remember me and ask the king: “Rotten to the roots, half dead but still green, stands the old oak. Is it to stand much longer on the earth?”’

Vassili went on further. He came to a river and got into the ferryboat. The old ferryman asked: ‘Are you going far, my friend?’

‘I am going to the Serpent King.’

‘Then think of me and say to the king: “For thirty years the ferryman has rowed to and fro. Will the tired old man have to row much longer?”’

‘Very well,’ said Vassili; ‘I’ll ask him.’

And he walked on. In time he came to a narrow strait of the sea and across it lay a great whale over whose back people walked and drove as if it had been a bridge or a road. As he stepped on it the whale said, ‘Do tell me where you are going.’

‘I am going to the Serpent King.’

And the whale begged: ‘Think of me and say to the king: “The poor whale has been lying three years across the strait, and men and horses have nearly trampled his back into his ribs. Is he to lie there much longer?”’

‘I will remember,’ said Vassili, and he went on.

He walked, and walked, and walked, till he came to a great green meadow. In the meadow stood a large and splendid castle. Its white marble walls sparkled in the light, the roof was covered with mother o’ pearl, which shone like a rainbow, and the sun glowed like fire on the crystal windows. Vassili walked in, and went from one room to another astonished at all the splendour he saw.

When he reached the last room of all, he found a beautiful girl sitting on a bed.

As soon as she saw him she said: ‘Oh, Vassili, what brings you to this accursed place?’

Vassili told her why he had come, and all he had seen and heard on the way.

The girl said: ‘You have not been sent here to collect rents, but for your own destruction, and that the serpent may devour you.’

She had not time to say more, when the whole castle shook, and a rustling, hissing, groaning sound was heard. The girl quickly pushed Vassili into a chest under the bed, locked it and whispered: ‘Listen to what the serpent and I talk about.’

Then she rose up to receive the Serpent King.

The monster rushed into the room, and threw itself panting on the bed, crying: ‘I’ve flown half over the world. I’m tired, VERY tired, and want to sleep—scratch my head.’

The beautiful girl sat down near him, stroking his hideous head, and said in a sweet coaxing voice: ‘You know everything in the world. After you left, I had such a wonderful dream. Will you tell me what it means?’

‘Out with it then, quick! What was it?’

‘I dreamt I was walking on a wide road, and an oak tree said to me: “Ask the king this: Rotten at the roots, half dead, and yet green stands the old oak. Is it to stand much longer on the earth?” ’

‘It must stand till some one comes and pushes it down with his foot. Then it will fall, and under its roots will be found more gold and silver than even Mark the Rich has got.’

‘Then I dreamt I came to a river, and the old ferryman said to me: “For thirty year’s the ferryman has rowed to and fro. Will the tired old man have to row much longer?” ’

‘That depends on himself. If some one gets into the boat to be ferried across, the old man has only to push the boat off, and go his way without looking back. The man in the boat will then have to take his place.’

‘And at last I dreamt that I was walking over a bridge made of a whale’s back, and the living bridge spoke to me and said: “Here have I been stretched out these three years, and men and horses have trampled my back down into my ribs. Must I lie here much longer?” ’

‘He will have to lie there till he has thrown up the twelve ships of Mark the Rich which he swallowed. Then he may plunge back into the sea and heal his back.’

And the Serpent King closed his eyes, turned round on his other side, and began to snore so loud that the windows rattled.

In all haste the lovely girl helped Vassili out of the chest, and showed him part of his way back. He thanked her very politely, and hurried off.

When he reached the strait the whale asked: ‘Have you thought of me?’

‘Yes, as soon as I am on the other side I will tell you what you want to know.’

When he was on the other side Vassili said to the whale: ‘Throw up those twelve ships of Mark’s which you swallowed three years ago.’

The great fish heaved itself up and threw up all the twelve ships and their crews. Then he shook himself for joy, and plunged into the sea.

Vassili went on further till he reached the ferry, where the old man asked: ‘Did you think of me?’

‘Yes, and as soon as you have ferried me across I will tell you what you want to know.’

When they had crossed over, Vassili said: ‘Let the next man who comes stay in the boat, but do you step on shore, push the boat off, and you will be free, and the other man must take your place.

Then Vassili went on further still, and soon came to the old oak tree, pushed it with his foot, and it fell over. There, at the roots, was more gold and silver than even Mark the Rich had.

And now the twelve ships which the whale had thrown up came sailing along and anchored close by. On the deck of the first ship stood the three beggars whom Vassili had met formerly, and they said: ‘Heaven has blessed you, Vassili.’ Then they vanished away and he never saw them again.

The sailors carried all the gold and silver into the ship, and then they set sail for home with Vassili on board.

Mark was more furious than ever. He had his horses harnessed and drove off himself to see the Serpent King and to complain of the way in which he had been betrayed. When he reached the river he sprang into the ferryboat. The ferryman, however, did not get in but pushed the boat off.…

Vassili led a good and happy life with his dear wife, and his kind mother-in-law lived with them. He helped the poor and fed and clothed the hungry and naked and all Mark’s riches became his.

For many years Mark has been ferrying people across the river. His face is wrinkled, his hair and beard are snow white, and his eyes are dim; but still he rows on.

(From the Serbian.)

SCHIPPEITARO

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It was the custom in old times that as soon as a Japanese boy reached manhood he should leave his home and roam through the land in search of adventures. Sometimes he would meet with a young man bent on the same business as himself, and then they would fight in a friendly manner, merely to prove which was the stronger, but on other occasions the enemy would turn out to be a robber, who had become the terror of the neighbourhood, and then the battle was in deadly earnest.

One day a youth started off from his native village, resolved never to come back till he had done some great deed that would make his name famous. But adventures did not seem very plentiful just then, and he wandered about for a long time without meeting either with fierce giants or distressed damsels. At last he saw in the distance a wild mountain, half covered with a dense forest, and thinking that this promised well at once took the road that led to it. The difficulties he met with—huge rocks to be climbed, deep rivers to be crossed, and thorny tracts to be avoided—only served to make his heart beat quicker, for he was really brave all through, and not merely when he could not help himself, like a great many people. But in spite of all his efforts he could not find his way out of the forest, and he began to think he should have to pass the night there. Once more he strained his eyes to see if there was no place in which he could take shelter, and this time he caught sight of a small chapel in a little clearing. He hastened quickly towards it, and curling himself up in a warm corner soon fell asleep.

Not a sound was heard through the whole forest for some hours, but at midnight there suddenly arose such a clamour that the young man, tired as he was, started broad awake in an instant. Peeping cautiously between the wooden pillars of the chapel, he saw a troop of hideous cats, dancing furiously, making the night horrible with their yells. The full moon lighted up the weird scene, and the young warrior gazed with astonishment, taking great care to keep still, lest he should be discovered. After some time he

thought that in the midst of all their shrieks he could make out the words, ‘Do not tell Schippeitaro! Keep it hidden and secret! Do not tell Schippeitaro!’ Then, the midnight hour having passed, they all vanished, and the youth was left alone. Exhausted by all that had been going on round him, he flung himself on the ground and slept till the sun rose.

The moment he woke he felt very hungry, and began to think how he could get something to eat. So he got up and walked on, and before he had gone very far was lucky enough to find a little side-path, where he could trace men’s footsteps. He followed the track, and by-and-by came on some scattered huts, beyond which lay a village. Delighted at this discovery, he was about to hasten to the village when he heard a woman’s voice weeping and lamenting, and calling on the men to take pity on her and help her. The sound of her distress made him forget he was hungry, and he strode into the hut to find out for himself what was wrong. But the men whom he asked only shook their heads and told him it was not a matter in which he could give any help, for all this sorrow was caused by the Spirit of the Mountain, to whom every year they were bound to furnish a maiden for him to eat.

‘To-morrow night,’ said they, ‘the horrible creature will come for his dinner, and the cries you have heard were uttered by the girl before you, upon whom the lot has fallen.’

And when the young man asked if the girl was carried off straight from her home, they answered no, but that a large cask was set in the forest chapel, and into this she was fastened.

As he listened to this story, the young man was filled with a great longing to rescue the maiden from her dreadful fate. The mention of the chapel set him thinking of the scene of the previous night, and he went over all the details again in his mind. ‘Who is Schippeitaro?’ he suddenly asked; ‘can any of you tell me?’

‘Schippeitaro is the great dog that belongs to the overseer of our prince,’ said they; ‘and he lives not far away.’ And they began to laugh at the question, which seemed to them so odd and useless.

The young man did not laugh with them, but instead left the hut and went straight to the owner of the dog, whom he begged to lend him the animal just for one night. Schippeitaro’s master was not at all willing to give him in charge to a man of whom he knew nothing, but in the end he

consented, and the youth led the dog away, promising faithfully to return him next day to his master. He next hurried to the hut where the maiden lived, and entreated her parents to shut her up safely in a closet, after which he took Schippeitaro to the cask, and fastened him into it. In the evening he knew that the cask would be placed in the chapel, so he hid himself there and waited.

At midnight, when the full moon appeared above the top of the mountain, the cats again filled the chapel and shrieked and yelled and danced as before. But this time they had in their midst a huge black cat who seemed to be their king, and whom the young man guessed to be the Spirit of the Mountain. The monster looked eagerly about him, and his eyes sparkled with joy when he saw the cask. He bounded high into the air with delight and uttered cries of pleasure; then he drew near and undid the bolts.

But instead of fastening his teeth in the neck of a beautiful maiden, Schippeitaro's teeth were fastened in HIM, and the youth ran up and cut off his head with his sword. The other cats were so astonished at the turn things had taken that they forgot to run away, and the young man and Schippeitaro between them killed several more before they thought of escaping.

At sunrise the brave dog was taken back to his master, and from that time the mountain girls were safe, and every year a feast was held in memory of the young warrior and the dog Schippeitaro.

(Japanische Marchen.)

THE THREE PRINCES AND THEIR BEASTS (LITHUANIAN FAIRY TALE)

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Once on a time there were three princes, who had a step-sister. One day they all set out hunting together. When they had gone some way through a thick wood they came on a great grey wolf with three cubs. Just as they were going to shoot, the wolf spoke and said, ‘Do not shoot me, and I will give each of you one of my young ones. It will be a faithful friend to you.’

So the princes went on their way, and a little wolf followed each of them.

Soon after they came on a lioness with three cubs. And she too begged them not to shoot her, and she would give each of them a cub. And so it happened with a fox, a hare, a boar, and a bear, till each prince had quite a following of young beasts padding along behind him.

Towards evening they came to a clearing in the wood, where three birches grew at the crossing of three roads. The eldest prince took an arrow, and shot it into the trunk of one of the birch trees. Turning to his brothers he said:

‘Let each of us mark one of these trees before we part on different ways. When any one of us comes back to this place, he must walk round the trees of the other two, and if he sees blood flowing from the mark in the tree he will know that that brother is dead, but if milk flows he will know that his brother is alive.’

So each of the princes did as the eldest brother had said, and when the three birches were marked by their arrows they turned to their step-sister and asked her with which of them she meant to live.

‘With the eldest,’ she answered. Then the brothers separated from each other, and each of them set out down a different road, followed by their beasts. And the step-sister went with the eldest prince.

After they had gone a little way along the road they came into a forest, and in one of the deepest glades they suddenly found themselves opposite a castle in which there lived a band of robbers. The prince walked up to the

door and knocked. The moment it was opened the beasts rushed in, and each seized on a robber, killed him, and dragged the body down to the cellar. Now, one of the robbers was not really killed, only badly wounded, but he lay quite still and pretended to be dead like the others. Then the prince and his step-sister entered the castle and took up their abode in it.

The next morning the prince went out hunting. Before leaving he told his step-sister that she might go into every room in the house except into the cave where the dead robbers lay. But as soon as his back was turned she forgot what he had said, and having wandered through all the other rooms she went down to the cellar and opened the door. As soon as she looked in the robber who had only pretended to be dead sat up and said to her:

'Don't be afraid. Do what I tell you, and I will be your friend.

If you marry me you will be much happier with me than with your brother. But you must first go into the sitting-room and look in the cupboard. There you will find three bottles. In one of them there is a healing ointment which you must put on my chin to heal the wound; then if I drink the contents of the second bottle it will make me well, and the third bottle will make me stronger than I ever was before. Then, when your brother comes back from the wood with his beasts you must go to him and say, "Brother, you are very strong. If I were to fasten your thumbs behind your back with a stout silk cord, could you wrench yourself free?" And when you see that he cannot do it, call me.'

When the brother came home, the step-sister did as the robber had told her, and fastened her brother's thumbs behind his back. But with one wrench he set himself free, and said to her, 'Sister, that cord is not strong enough for me.'

The next day he went back to the wood with his beasts, and the robber told her that she must take a much stouter cord to bind his thumbs with. But again he freed himself, though not so easily as the first time, and he said to his sister:

'Even that cord is not strong enough.'

The third day, on his return from the wood he consented to have his strength tested for the last time. So she took a very strong cord of silk, which she had prepared by the robber's advice, and this time, though the prince pulled and tugged with all his might, he could not break the cord.

So he called to her and said: ‘Sister, this time the cord is so strong I cannot break it. Come and unfasten it for me.’

But instead of coming she called to the robber, who rushed into the room brandishing a knife, with which he prepared to attack the prince.

But the prince spoke and said:

‘Have patience for one minute. I would like before I die to blow three blasts on my hunting horn—one in this room, one on the stairs, and one in the courtyard.’

So the robber consented, and the prince blew the horn. At the first blast, the fox, which was asleep in the cage in the courtyard, awoke, and knew that his master needed help. So he awoke the wolf by flicking him across the eyes with his brush. Then they awoke the lion, who sprang against the door of the cage with might and main, so that it fell in splinters on the ground, and the beasts were free. Rushing through the court to their master’s aid, the fox gnawed the cord in two that bound the prince’s thumbs behind his back, and the lion flung himself on the robber, and when he had killed him and torn him in pieces each of the beasts carried off a bone.

Then the prince turned to the step-sister and said:

‘I will not kill you, but I will leave you here to repent.’ And he fastened her with a chain to the wall, and put a great bowl in front of her and said, ‘I will not see you again till you have filled this bowl with your tears.’

So saying, he called his beasts, and set out on his travels. When he had gone a little way he came to an inn. Everyone in the inn seemed so sad that he asked them what was the matter.

‘Ah,’ replied they, ‘to-day our king’s daughter is to die. She is to be handed over to a dreadful nine-headed dragon.’

Then the prince said: ‘Why should she die? I am very strong, I will save her.’

And he set out to the sea-shore, where the dragon was to meet the princess. And as he waited with his beasts round him a great procession came along, accompanying the unfortunate princess: and when the shore was reached all the people left her, and returned sadly to their houses. But the prince remained, and soon he saw a movement in the water a long way off. As it came nearer, he knew what it was, for skimming swiftly along

the waters came a monster dragon with nine heads. Then the prince took counsel with his beasts, and as the dragon approached the shore the fox drew his brush through the water and blinded the dragon by scattering the salt water in his eyes, while the bear and the lion threw up more water with their paws, so that the monster was bewildered and could see nothing. Then the prince rushed forward with his sword and killed the dragon, and the beasts tore the body in pieces.

Then the princess turned to the prince and thanked him for delivering her from the dragon, and she said to him:

‘Step into this carriage with me, and we will drive back to my father’s palace.’ And she gave him a ring and half of her handkerchief. But on the way back the coachman and footman spoke to one another and said:

‘Why should we drive this stranger back to the palace? Let us kill him, and then we can say to the king that we slew the dragon and saved the princess, and one of us shall marry her.’

So they killed the prince, and left him dead on the roadside. And the faithful beasts came round the dead body and wept, and wondered what they should do. Then suddenly the wolf had an idea, and he started off into the wood, where he found an ox, which he straightway killed. Then he called the fox, and told him to mount guard over the dead ox, and if a bird came past and tried to peck at the flesh he was to catch it and bring it to the lion. Soon after a crow flew past, and began to peck at the dead ox. In a moment the fox had caught it and brought it to the lion. Then the lion said to the crow:

‘We will not kill you if you will promise to fly to the town where there are three wells of healing and to bring back water from them in your beak to make this dead man alive.’

So the crow flew away, and she filled her beak at the well of healing, the well of strength, and the well of swiftness, and she flew back to the dead prince and dropped the water from her beak upon his lips, and he was healed, and could sit up and walk.

Then he set out for the town, accompanied by his faithful beasts.

And when they reached the king’s palace they found that preparations for a great feast were being made, for the princess was to marry the coachman.

So the prince walked into the palace, and went straight up to the coachman and said: ‘What token have you got that you killed the dragon and won the hand of the princess? I have her token here—this ring and half her handkerchief.’

And when the king saw these tokens he knew that the prince was speaking the truth. So the coachman was bound in chains and thrown into prison, and the prince was married to the princess and rewarded with half the kingdom.

One day, soon after his marriage, the prince was walking through the woods in the evening, followed by his faithful beasts. Darkness came on, and he lost his way, and wandered about among the trees looking for the path that would lead him back to the palace. As he walked he saw the light of a fire, and making his way to it he found an old woman raking sticks and dried leaves together, and burning them in a glade of the wood.

As he was very tired, and the night was very dark, the prince determined not to wander further. So he asked the old woman if he might spend the night beside her fire.

‘Of course you may,’ she answered. ‘But I am afraid of your beasts. Let me hit them with my rod, and then I shall not be afraid of them.’

‘Very well,’ said the prince, ‘I don’t mind’; and she stretched out her rod and hit the beasts, and in one moment they were turned into stone, and so was the prince.

Now soon after this the prince’s youngest brother came to the cross-roads with the three birches, where the brothers had parted from each other when they set out on their wanderings. Remembering what they had agreed to do, he walked round the two trees, and when he saw that blood oozed from the cut in the eldest prince’s tree he knew that his brother must be dead. So he set out, followed by his beasts, and came to the town over which his brother had ruled, and where the princess he had married lived. And when he came into the town all the people were in great sorrow because their prince had disappeared.

But when they saw his youngest brother, and the beasts following him, they thought it was their own prince, and they rejoiced greatly, and told him how they had sought him everywhere. Then they led him to the king, and he too thought that it was his son-in-law. But the princess knew that he

was not her husband, and she begged him to go out into the woods with his beasts, and to look for his brother till he found him.

So the youngest prince set out to look for his brother, and he too lost his way in the wood and night overtook him. Then he came to the clearing among the trees, where the fire was burning and where the old woman was raking sticks and leaves into the flames. And he asked her if he might spend the night beside her fire, as it was too late and too dark to go back to the town.

And she answered: ‘Certainly you may. But I am afraid of your beasts. May I give them a stroke with my rod, then I shall not be afraid of them.’

And he said she might, for he did not know that she was a witch. So she stretched out her rod, and in a moment the beasts and their master were turned into stone.

It happened soon after that the second brother returned from his wanderings and came to the cross-roads where the three birches grew. As he went round the trees he saw that blood poured from the cuts in the bark of two of the trees. Then he wept and said:

‘Alas! both my brothers are dead.’ And he too set out towards the town in which his brother had ruled, and his faithful beasts followed him. When he entered the town, all the people thought it was their own prince come back to them, and they gathered round him, as they had gathered round his youngest brother, and asked him where he had been and why he had not returned. And they led him to the king’s palace, but the princess knew that he was not her husband. So when they were alone together she besought him to go and seek for his brother and bring him home. Calling his beasts round him, he set out and wandered through the woods. And he put his ear down to the earth, to listen if he could hear the sound of his brother’s beasts. And it seemed to him as if he heard a faint sound far off, but he did not know from what direction it came. So he blew on his hunting horn and listened again. And again he heard the sound, and this time it seemed to come from the direction of a fire burning in the wood. So he went towards the fire, and there the old woman was raking sticks and leaves into the embers. And he asked her if he might spend the night beside her fire. But she told him she was afraid of his beasts, and he must first allow her to give each of them a stroke with her rod.

But he answered her:

‘Certainly not. I am their master, and no one shall strike them but I myself. Give me the rod’; and he touched the fox with it, and in a moment it was turned into stone. Then he knew that the old woman was a witch, and he turned to her and said:

‘Unless you restore my brothers and their beasts back to life at once, my lion will tear you in pieces.’

Then the witch was terrified, and taking a young oak tree she burnt it into white ashes, and sprinkled the ashes on the stones that stood around. And in a moment the two princes stood before their brother, and their beasts stood round them.

Then the three princes set off together to the town. And the king did not know which was his son-in-law, but the princess knew which was her husband, and there were great rejoicings throughout the land.

THE GOAT'S EARS OF THE EMPEROR TROJAN

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Once upon a time there lived an emperor whose name was Trojan, and he had ears like a goat. Every morning, when he was shaved, he asked if the man saw anything odd about him, and as each fresh barber always replied that the emperor had goat's ears, he was at once ordered to be put to death.

Now after this state of things had lasted a good while, there was hardly a barber left in the town that could shave the emperor, and it came to be the turn of the Master of the Company of Barbers to go up to the palace. But, unluckily, at the very moment that he should have set out, the master fell suddenly ill, and told one of his apprentices that he must go in his stead.

When the youth was taken to the emperor's bedroom, he was asked why he had come and not his master. The young man replied that the master was ill, and there was no one but himself who could be trusted with the honour. The emperor was satisfied with the answer, and sat down, and let a sheet of fine linen be put round him. Directly the young barber began his work, he, like the rest, remarked the goat's ears of the emperor, but when he had finished and the emperor asked his usual question as to whether the youth had noticed anything odd about him, the young man replied calmly, 'No, nothing at all.' This pleased the emperor so much that he gave him twelve ducats, and said, 'Henceforth you shall come every day to shave me.'

So when the apprentice returned home, and the master inquired how he had got on with the emperor, the young man answered, 'Oh, very well, and he says I am to shave him every day, and he has given me these twelve ducats'; but he said nothing about the goat's ears of the emperor.

From this time the apprentice went regularly up to the palace, receiving each morning twelve ducats in payment. But after a while, his secret, which he had carefully kept, burnt within him, and he longed to tell it to somebody. His master saw there was something on his mind, and

asked what it was. The youth replied that he had been tormenting himself for some months, and should never feel easy until some one shared his secret.

‘Well, trust me,’ said the master, ‘I will keep it to myself; or, if you do not like to do that, confess it to your pastor, or go into some field outside the town and dig a hole, and, after you have dug it, kneel down and whisper your secret three times into the hole. Then put back the earth and come away.’

The apprentice thought that this seemed the best plan, and that very afternoon went to a meadow outside the town, dug a deep hole, then knelt and whispered to it three times over, ‘The Emperor Trojan has goat’s ears.’ And as he said so a great burden seemed to roll off him, and he shovelled the earth carefully back and ran lightly home.

Weeks passed away, and there sprang up in the hole an elder tree which had three stems, all as straight as poplars. Some shepherds, tending their flocks near by, noticed the tree growing there, and one of them cut down a stem to make flutes of; but, directly he began to play, the flute would do nothing but sing: ‘The Emperor Trojan has goat’s ears.’ Of course, it was not long before the whole town knew of this wonderful flute and what it said; and, at last, the news reached the emperor in his palace. He instantly sent for the apprentice and said to him:

‘What have you been saying about me to all my people?’

The culprit tried to defend himself by saying that he had never told anyone what he had noticed; but the emperor, instead of listening, only drew his sword from its sheath, which so frightened the poor fellow that he confessed exactly what he had done, and how he had whispered the truth three times to the earth, and how in that very place an elder tree had sprung up, and flutes had been cut from it, which would only repeat the words he had said. Then the emperor commanded his coach to be made ready, and he took the youth with him, and they drove to the spot, for he wished to see for himself whether the young man’s confession was true; but when they reached the place only one stem was left. So the emperor desired his attendants to cut him a flute from the remaining stem, and, when it was ready, he ordered his chamberlain to play on it. But no tune could the chamberlain play, though he was the best flute player about the court—nothing came but the words, ‘The Emperor Trojan has goat’s ears.’

Then the emperor knew that even the earth gave up its secrets, and he granted the young man his life, but he never allowed him to be his barber any more.

(Volksmarchen der Serben.)

THE NINE PEA-HENS AND THE GOLDEN APPLES

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Once upon a time there stood before the palace of an emperor a golden apple tree, which blossomed and bore fruit each night. But every morning the fruit was gone, and the boughs were bare of blossom, without anyone being able to discover who was the thief.

At last the emperor said to his eldest son, ‘If only I could prevent those robbers from stealing my fruit, how happy I should be!’

And his son replied, ‘I will sit up to-night and watch the tree, and I shall soon see who it is!’

So directly it grew dark the young man went and hid himself near the apple tree to begin his watch, but the apples had scarcely begun to ripen before he fell asleep, and when he awoke at sunrise the apples were gone. He felt very much ashamed of himself, and went with lagging feet to tell his father!

Of course, though the eldest son had failed, the second made sure that he would do better, and set out gaily at nightfall to watch the apple tree. But no sooner had he lain himself down than his eyes grew heavy, and when the sunbeams roused him from his slumbers there was not an apple left on the tree.

Next came the turn of the youngest son, who made himself a comfortable bed under the apple tree, and prepared himself to sleep. Towards midnight he awoke, and sat up to look at the tree. And behold! the apples were beginning to ripen, and lit up the whole palace with their brightness. At the same moment nine golden pea-hens flew swiftly through the air, and while eight alighted upon the boughs laden with fruit, the ninth fluttered to the ground where the prince lay, and instantly was changed into a beautiful maiden, more beautiful far than any lady in the emperor’s court. The prince at once fell in love with her, and they talked together for some time, till the maiden said her sisters had finished plucking the apples, and now they must all go home again. The prince,

however, begged her so hard to leave him a little of the fruit that the maiden gave him two apples, one for himself and one for his father. Then she changed herself back into a pea-hen, and the whole nine flew away.

As soon as the sun rose the prince entered the palace, and held out the apple to his father, who was rejoiced to see it, and praised his youngest son heartily for his cleverness. That evening the prince returned to the apple tree, and everything passed as before, and so it happened for several nights. At length the other brothers grew angry at seeing that he never came back without bringing two golden apples with him, and they went to consult an old witch, who promised to spy after him, and discover how he managed to get the apples. So, when the evening came, the old woman hid herself under the tree and waited for the prince. Before long he arrived and laid down on his bed, and was soon fast asleep. Towards midnight there was a rush of wings, and the eight pea-hens settled on the tree, while the ninth became a maiden, and ran to greet the prince. Then the witch stretched out her hand, and cut off a lock of the maiden's hair, and in an instant the girl sprang up, a pea-hen once more, spread her wings and flew away, while her sisters, who were busily stripping the boughs, flew after her.

When he had recovered from his surprise at the unexpected disappearance of the maiden, the prince exclaimed, 'What can be the matter?' and, looking about him, discovered the old witch hidden under the bed. He dragged her out, and in his fury called his guards, and ordered them to put her to death as fast as possible. But that did no good as far as the pea-hens went. They never came back any more, though the prince returned to the tree every night, and wept his heart out for his lost love. This went on for some time, till the prince could bear it no longer, and made up his mind he would search the world through for her. In vain his father tried to persuade him that his task was hopeless, and that other girls were to be found as beautiful as this one. The prince would listen to nothing, and, accompanied by only one servant, set out on his quest.

After travelling for many days, he arrived at length before a large gate, and through the bars he could see the streets of a town, and even the palace. The prince tried to pass in, but the way was barred by the keeper of the gate, who wanted to know who he was, why he was there, and how he had learnt the way, and he was not allowed to enter unless the empress

herself came and gave him leave. A message was sent to her, and when she stood at the gate the prince thought he had lost his wits, for there was the maiden he had left his home to seek. And she hastened to him, and took his hand, and drew him into the palace. In a few days they were married, and the prince forgot his father and his brothers, and made up his mind that he would live and die in the castle.

One morning the empress told him that she was going to take a walk by herself, and that she would leave the keys of twelve cellars to his care. ‘If you wish to enter the first eleven cellars,’ said she, ‘you can; but beware of even unlocking the door of the twelfth, or it will be the worse for you.’

The prince, who was left alone in the castle, soon got tired of being by himself, and began to look about for something to amuse him.

‘What CAN there be in that twelfth cellar,’ he thought to himself, ‘which I must not see?’ And he went downstairs and unlocked the doors, one after the other. When he got to the twelfth he paused, but his curiosity was too much for him, and in another instant the key was turned and the cellar lay open before him. It was empty, save for a large cask, bound with iron hoops, and out of the cask a voice was saying entreatingly, ‘For goodness’ sake, brother, fetch me some water; I am dying of thirst!’

The prince, who was very tender-hearted, brought some water at once, and pushed it through a hole in the barrel; and as he did so one of the iron hoops burst.

He was turning away, when a voice cried the second time, ‘Brother, for pity’s sake fetch me some water; I’m dying of thirst!’

So the prince went back, and brought some more water, and again a hoop sprang.

And for the third time the voice still called for water; and when water was given it the last hoop was rent, the cask fell in pieces, and out flew a dragon, who snatched up the empress just as she was returning from her walk, and carried her off. Some servants who saw what had happened came rushing to the prince, and the poor young man went nearly mad when he heard the result of his own folly, and could only cry out that he would follow the dragon to the ends of the earth, until he got his wife again.

For months and months he wandered about, first in this direction and then in that, without finding any traces of the dragon or his captive. At last

he came to a stream, and as he stopped for a moment to look at it he noticed a little fish lying on the bank, beating its tail convulsively, in a vain effort to get back into the water.

‘Oh, for pity’s sake, my brother,’ shrieked the little creature, ‘help me, and put me back into the river, and I will repay you some day. Take one of my scales, and when you are in danger twist it in your fingers, and I will come!’

The prince picked up the fish and threw it into the water; then he took off one of its scales, as he had been told, and put it in his pocket, carefully wrapped in a cloth. Then he went on his way till, some miles further down the road, he found a fox caught in a trap.

‘Oh! be a brother to me!’ called the fox, ‘and free me from this trap, and I will help you when you are in need. Pull out one of my hairs, and when you are in danger twist it in your fingers, and I will come.’

So the prince unfastened the trap, pulled out one of the fox’s hairs, and continued his journey. And as he was going over the mountain he passed a wolf entangled in a snare, who begged to be set at liberty.

‘Only deliver me from death,’ he said, ‘and you will never be sorry for it. Take a lock of my fur, and when you need me twist it in your fingers.’ And the prince undid the snare and let the wolf go.

For a long time he walked on, without having any more adventures, till at length he met a man travelling on the same road.

‘Oh, brother!’ asked the prince, ‘tell me, if you can, where the dragon-emperor lives?’

The man told him where he would find the palace, and how long it would take him to get there, and the prince thanked him, and followed his directions, till that same evening he reached the town where the dragon-emperor lived. When he entered the palace, to his great joy he found his wife sitting alone in a vast hall, and they began hastily to invent plans for her escape.

There was no time to waste, as the dragon might return directly, so they took two horses out of the stable, and rode away at lightning speed. Hardly were they out of sight of the palace than the dragon came home and found that his prisoner had flown. He sent at once for his talking horse, and said to him:

‘Give me your advice; what shall I do—have my supper as usual, or set out in pursuit of them?’

‘Eat your supper with a free mind first,’ answered the horse, ‘and follow them afterwards.’

So the dragon ate till it was past mid-day, and when he could eat no more he mounted his horse and set out after the fugitives. In a short time he had come up with them, and as he snatched the empress out of her saddle he said to the prince:

‘This time I will forgive you, because you brought me the water when I was in the cask; but beware how you return here, or you will pay for it with your life.’

Half mad with grief, the prince rode sadly on a little further, hardly knowing what he was doing. Then he could bear it no longer and turned back to the palace, in spite of the dragon’s threats. Again the empress was sitting alone, and once more they began to think of a scheme by which they could escape the dragon’s power.

‘Ask the dragon when he comes home,’ said the prince, ‘where he got that wonderful horse from, and then you can tell me, and I will try to find another like it.’

Then, fearing to meet his enemy, he stole out of the castle.

Soon after the dragon came home, and the empress sat down near him, and began to coax and flatter him into a good humour, and at last she said:

‘But tell me about that wonderful horse you were riding yesterday. There cannot be another like it in the whole world. Where did you get it from?’

And he answered:

‘The way I got it is a way which no one else can take. On the top of a high mountain dwells an old woman, who has in her stables twelve horses, each one more beautiful than the other. And in one corner is a thin, wretched-looking animal whom no one would glance at a second time, but he is in reality the best of the lot. He is twin brother to my own horse, and can fly as high as the clouds themselves. But no one can ever get this horse without first serving the old woman for three whole days. And besides the horses she has a foal and its mother, and the man who serves her must look after them for three whole days, and if he does not let them run away he will in the end get the choice of any horse as a present from the old

woman. But if he fails to keep the foal and its mother safe on any one of the three nights his head will pay.’

The next day the prince watched till the dragon left the house, and then he crept in to the empress, who told him all she had learnt from her gaoler. The prince at once determined to seek the old woman on the top of the mountain, and lost no time in setting out. It was a long and steep climb, but at last he found her, and with a low bow he began:

‘Good greeting to you, little mother!’

‘Good greeting to you, my son! What are you doing here?’

‘I wish to become your servant,’ answered he.

‘So you shall,’ said the old woman. ‘If you can take care of my mare for three days I will give you a horse for wages, but if you let her stray you will lose your head’; and as she spoke she led him into a courtyard surrounded with palings, and on every post a man’s head was stuck. One post only was empty, and as they passed it cried out:

‘Woman, give me the head I am waiting for!’

The old woman made no answer, but turned to the prince and said:

‘Look! all those men took service with me, on the same conditions as you, but not one was able to guard the mare!’

But the prince did not waver, and declared he would abide by his words.

When evening came he led the mare out of the stable and mounted her, and the colt ran behind. He managed to keep his seat for a long time, in spite of all her efforts to throw him, but at length he grew so weary that he fell fast asleep, and when he woke he found himself sitting on a log, with the halter in his hands. He jumped up in terror, but the mare was nowhere to be seen, and he started with a beating heart in search of her. He had gone some way without a single trace to guide him, when he came to a little river. The sight of the water brought back to his mind the fish whom he had saved from death, and he hastily drew the scale from his pocket. It had hardly touched his fingers when the fish appeared in the stream beside him.

‘What is it, my brother?’ asked the fish anxiously.

‘The old woman’s mare strayed last night, and I don’t know where to look for her.’

‘Oh, I can tell you that: she has changed herself into a big fish, and her foal into a little one. But strike the water with the halter and say, “Come here, O mare of the mountain witch!” and she will come.’

The prince did as he was bid, and the mare and her foal stood before him. Then he put the halter round her neck, and rode her home, the foal always trotting behind them. The old woman was at the door to receive them, and gave the prince some food while she led the mare back to the stable.

‘You should have gone among the fishes,’ cried the old woman, striking the animal with a stick.

‘I did go among the fishes,’ replied the mare; ‘but they are no friends of mine, for they betrayed me at once.’

‘Well, go among the foxes this time,’ said she, and returned to the house, not knowing that the prince had overheard her.

So when it began to grow dark the prince mounted the mare for the second time and rode into the meadows, and the foal trotted behind its mother. Again he managed to stick on till midnight: then a sleep overtook him that he could not battle against, and when he woke up he found himself, as before, sitting on the log, with the halter in his hands. He gave a shriek of dismay, and sprang up in search of the wanderers. As he went he suddenly remembered the words that the old woman had said to the mare, and he drew out the fox hair and twisted it in his fingers.

‘What is it, my brother?’ asked the fox, who instantly appeared before him.

‘The old witch’s mare has run away from me, and I do not know where to look for her.’

‘She is with us,’ replied the fox, ‘and has changed herself into a big fox, and her foal into a little one, but strike the ground with a halter and say, “Come here, O mare of the mountain witch!” ’

The prince did so, and in a moment the fox became a mare and stood before him, with the little foal at her heels. He mounted and rode back, and the old woman placed food on the table, and led the mare back to the stable.

‘You should have gone to the foxes, as I told you,’ said she, striking the mare with a stick.

‘I did go to the foxes,’ replied the mare, ‘but they are no friends of mine and betrayed me.’

‘Well, this time you had better go to the wolves,’ said she, not knowing that the prince had heard all she had been saying.

The third night the prince mounted the mare and rode her out to the meadows, with the foal trotting after. He tried hard to keep awake, but it was of no use, and in the morning there he was again on the log, grasping the halter. He started to his feet, and then stopped, for he remembered what the old woman had said, and pulled out the wolf’s grey lock.

‘What is it, my brother?’ asked the wolf as it stood before him.

‘The old witch’s mare has run away from me,’ replied the prince, ‘and I don’t know where to find her.’

‘Oh, she is with us,’ answered the wolf, ‘and she has changed herself into a she-wolf, and the foal into a cub; but strike the earth here with the halter, and cry, “Come to me, O mare of the mountain witch.” ’

The prince did as he was bid, and as the hair touched his fingers the wolf changed back into a mare, with the foal beside her. And when he had mounted and ridden her home the old woman was on the steps to receive them, and she set some food before the prince, but led the mare back to her stable.

‘You should have gone among the wolves,’ said she, striking her with a stick.

‘So I did,’ replied the mare, ‘but they are no friends of mine and betrayed me.’

The old woman made no answer, and left the stable, but the prince was at the door waiting for her.

‘I have served you well,’ said he, ‘and now for my reward.’

‘What I promised that will I perform,’ answered she. ‘Choose one of these twelve horses; you can have which you like.’

‘Give me, instead, that half-starved creature in the corner,’ asked the prince. ‘I prefer him to all those beautiful animals.’

‘You can’t really mean what you say?’ replied the woman.

‘Yes, I do,’ said the prince, and the old woman was forced to let him have his way. So he took leave of her, and put the halter round his horse’s neck and led him into the forest, where he rubbed him down till his skin was shining like gold. Then he mounted, and they flew straight through the

air to the dragon’s palace. The empress had been looking for him night and day, and stole out to meet him, and he swung her on to his saddle, and the horse flew off again.

Not long after the dragon came home, and when he found the empress was missing he said to his horse, ‘What shall we do? Shall we eat and drink, or shall we follow the runaways?’ and the horse replied, ‘Whether you eat or don’t eat, drink or don’t drink, follow them or stay at home, matters nothing now, for you can never, never catch them.’

But the dragon made no reply to the horse’s words, but sprang on his back and set off in chase of the fugitives. And when they saw him coming they were frightened, and urged the prince’s horse faster and faster, till he said, ‘Fear nothing; no harm can happen to us,’ and their hearts grew calm, for they trusted his wisdom.

Soon the dragon’s horse was heard panting behind, and he cried out, ‘Oh, my brother, do not go so fast! I shall sink to the earth if I try to keep up with you.’

And the prince’s horse answered, ‘Why do you serve a monster like that? Kick him off, and let him break in pieces on the ground, and come and join us.’

And the dragon’s horse plunged and reared, and the dragon fell on a rock, which broke him in pieces. Then the empress mounted his horse, and rode back with her husband to her kingdom, over which they ruled for many years.

(Volksmarchen der Serben.)

THE LUTE PLAYER

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Once upon a time there was a king and queen who lived happily and comfortably together. They were very fond of each other and had nothing to worry them, but at last the king grew restless. He longed to go out into the world, to try his strength in battle against some enemy and to win all kinds of honour and glory.

So he called his army together and gave orders to start for a distant country where a heathen king ruled who ill-treated or tormented everyone he could lay his hands on. The king then gave his parting orders and wise advice to his ministers, took a tender leave of his wife, and set off with his army across the seas.

I cannot say whether the voyage was short or long; but at last he reached the country of the heathen king and marched on, defeating all who came in his way. But this did not last long, for in time he came to a mountain pass, where a large army was waiting for him, who put his soldiers to flight, and took the king himself prisoner.

He was carried off to the prison where the heathen king kept his captives, and now our poor friend had a very bad time indeed. All night long the prisoners were chained up, and in the morning they were yoked together like oxen and had to plough the land till it grew dark.

This state of things went on for three years before the king found any means of sending news of himself to his dear queen, but at last he contrived to send this letter: ‘Sell all our castles and palaces, and put all our treasures in pawn and come and deliver me out of this horrible prison.’

The queen received the letter, read it, and wept bitterly as she said to herself, ‘How can I deliver my dearest husband? If I go myself and the heathen king sees me he will just take me to be one of his wives. If I were to send one of the ministers!—but I hardly know if I can depend on them.’

She thought, and thought, and at last an idea came into her head.

She cut off all her beautiful long brown hair and dressed herself in boy’s clothes. Then she took her lute and, without saying anything to

anyone, she went forth into the wide world.

She travelled through many lands and saw many cities, and went through many hardships before she got to the town where the heathen king lived. When she got there she walked all round the palace and at the back she saw the prison. Then she went into the great court in front of the palace, and taking her lute in her hand, she began to play so beautifully that one felt as though one could never hear enough.

After she had played for some time she began to sing, and her voice was sweeter than the lark's:

‘I come from my own country far
Into this foreign land,
Of all I own I take alone
My sweet lute in my hand.

‘Oh! who will thank me for my song,
Reward my simple lay?
Like lover's sighs it still shall rise
To greet thee day by day.

‘I sing of blooming flowers
Made sweet by sun and rain;
Of all the bliss of love's first kiss,
And parting's cruel pain.

‘Of the sad captive's longing
Within his prison wall,
Of hearts that sigh when none are nigh
To answer to their call.

‘My song begs for your pity,
And gifts from out your store,
And as I play my gentle lay
I linger near your door.

‘And if you hear my singing

Within your palace, sire,
Oh! give, I pray, this happy day,
To me my heart’s desire.’

No sooner had the heathen king heard this touching song sung by such a lovely voice, than he had the singer brought before him.

‘Welcome, O lute player,’ said he. ‘Where do you come from?’

‘My country, sire, is far away across many seas. For years I have been wandering about the world and gaining my living by my music.’

‘Stay here then a few days, and when you wish to leave I will give you what you ask for in your song—your heart’s desire.’

So the lute player stayed on in the palace and sang and played almost all day long to the king, who could never tire of listening and almost forgot to eat or drink or to torment people.

He cared for nothing but the music, and nodded his head as he declared, ‘That’s something like playing and singing. It makes me feel as if some gentle hand had lifted every care and sorrow from me.’

After three days the lute player came to take leave of the king.

‘Well,’ said the king, ‘what do you desire as your reward?’

‘Sire, give me one of your prisoners. You have so many in your prison, and I should be glad of a companion on my journeys. When I hear his happy voice as I travel along I shall think of you and thank you.’

‘Come along then,’ said the king, ‘choose whom you will.’ And he took the lute player through the prison himself.

The queen walked about amongst the prisoners, and at length she picked out her husband and took him with her on her journey. They were long on their way, but he never found out who she was, and she led him nearer and nearer to his own country.

When they reached the frontier the prisoner said:

‘Let me go now, kind lad; I am no common prisoner, but the king of this country. Let me go free and ask what you will as your reward.’

‘Do not speak of reward,’ answered the lute player. ‘Go in peace.’

‘Then come with me, dear boy, and be my guest.’

‘When the proper time comes I shall be at your palace,’ was the reply, and so they parted.

The queen took a short way home, got there before the king and changed her dress.

An hour later all the people in the palace were running to and fro and crying out: ‘Our king has come back! Our king has returned to us.’

The king greeted every one very kindly, but he would not so much as look at the queen.

Then he called all his council and ministers together and said to them:

‘See what sort of a wife I have. Here she is falling on my neck, but when I was pining in prison and sent her word of it she did nothing to help me.’

And his council answered with one voice, ‘Sire, when news was brought from you the queen disappeared and no one knew where she went. She only returned to-day.’

Then the king was very angry and cried, ‘Judge my faithless wife!

Never would you have seen your king again, if a young lute player had not delivered him. I shall remember him with love and gratitude as long as I live.’

Whilst the king was sitting with his council, the queen found time to disguise herself. She took her lute, and slipping into the court in front of the palace she sang, clear and sweet:

‘I sing the captive’s longing
Within his prison wall,
Of hearts that sigh when none are nigh
To answer to their call.

‘My song begs for your pity,
And gifts from out your store,
And as I play my gentle lay
I linger near your door.

‘And if you hear my singing
Within your palace, sire,
Oh! give, I pray, this happy day,
To me my heart’s desire.’

As soon as the king heard this song he ran out to meet the lute player, took him by the hand and led him into the palace.

‘Here,’ he cried, ‘is the boy who released me from my prison. And now, my true friend, I will indeed give you your heart’s desire.’

‘I am sure you will not be less generous than the heathen king was, sire. I ask of you what I asked and obtained from him. But this time I don’t mean to give up what I get. I want YOU—yourself!’

And as she spoke she threw off her long cloak and everyone saw it was the queen.

Who can tell how happy the king was? In the joy of his heart he gave a great feast to the whole world, and the whole world came and rejoiced with him for a whole week.

I was there too, and ate and drank many good things. I sha’n’t forget that feast as long as I live.

(From the Russian.)

THE GRATEFUL PRINCE

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Once upon a time the king of the Goldland lost himself in a forest, and try as he would he could not find the way out. As he was wandering down one path which had looked at first more hopeful than the rest he saw a man coming towards him.

‘What are you doing here, friend?’ asked the stranger; ‘darkness is falling fast, and soon the wild beasts will come from their lairs to seek for food.’

‘I have lost myself,’ answered the king, ‘and am trying to get home.’

‘Then promise me that you will give me the first thing that comes out of your house, and I will show you the way,’ said the stranger.

The king did not answer directly, but after awhile he spoke: ‘Why should I give away my BEST sporting dog. I can surely find my way out of the forest as well as this man.’

So the stranger left him, but the king followed path after path for three whole days, with no better success than before. He was almost in despair, when the stranger suddenly appeared, blocking up his way.

‘Promise you will give me the first thing that comes out of your house to meet you?’

But still the king was stiff-necked and would promise nothing.

For some days longer he wandered up and down the forest, trying first one path, then another, but his courage at last gave way, and he sank wearily on the ground under a tree, feeling sure his last hour had come. Then for the third time the stranger stood before the king, and said:

‘Why are you such a fool? What can a dog be to you, that you should give your life for him like this? Just promise me the reward I want, and I will guide you out of the forest.’

‘Well, my life is worth more than a thousand dogs,’ answered the king, ‘the welfare of my kingdom depends on me. I accept your terms, so take me to my palace.’ Scarcely had he uttered the words than he found himself at the edge of the wood, with the palace in the dim distance. He made all

the haste he could, and just as he reached the great gates out came the nurse with the royal baby, who stretched out his arms to his father. The king shrank back, and ordered the nurse to take the baby away at once.

Then his great boarhound bounded up to him, but his caresses were only answered by a violent push.

When the king's anger was spent, and he was able to think what was best to be done, he exchanged his baby, a beautiful boy, for the daughter of a peasant, and the prince lived roughly as the son of poor people, while the little girl slept in a golden cradle, under silken sheets. At the end of a year, the stranger arrived to claim his property, and took away the little girl, believing her to be the true child of the king. The king was so delighted with the success of his plan that he ordered a great feast to be got ready, and gave splendid presents to the foster parents of his son, so that he might lack nothing. But he did not dare to bring back the baby, lest the trick should be found out. The peasants were quite contented with this arrangement, which gave them food and money in abundance.

By-and-by the boy grew big and tall, and seemed to lead a happy life in the house of his foster parents. But a shadow hung over him which really poisoned most of his pleasure, and that was the thought of the poor innocent girl who had suffered in his stead, for his foster father had told him in secret, that he was the king's son. And the prince determined that when he grew old enough he would travel all over the world, and never rest till he had set her free. To become king at the cost of a maiden's life was too heavy a price to pay. So one day he put on the dress of a farm servant, threw a sack of peas on his back, and marched straight into the forest where eighteen years before his father had lost himself. After he had walked some way he began to cry loudly: 'Oh, how unlucky I am! Where can I be? Is there no one to show me the way out of the wood?'

Then appeared a strange man with a long grey beard, with a leather bag hanging from his girdle. He nodded cheerfully to the prince, and said: 'I know this place well, and can lead you out of it, if you will promise me a good reward.'

'What can a beggar such as I promise you?' answered the prince. 'I have nothing to give you save my life; even the coat on my back belongs to my master, whom I serve for my keep and my clothes.'

The stranger looked at the sack of peas, and said, ‘But you must possess something; you are carrying this sack, which seems to be very heavy.’

‘It is full of peas,’ was the reply. ‘My old aunt died last night, without leaving money enough to buy peas to give the watchers, as is the custom throughout the country. I have borrowed these peas from my master, and thought to take a short cut across the forest; but I have lost myself, as you see.’

‘Then you are an orphan?’ asked the stranger. ‘Why should you not enter my service? I want a sharp fellow in the house, and you please me.’

‘Why not, indeed, if we can strike a bargain?’ said the other. ‘I was born a peasant, and strange bread is always bitter, so it is the same to me whom I serve! What wages will you give me?’

‘Every day fresh food, meat twice a week, butter and vegetables, your summer and winter clothes, and a portion of land for your own use.’

‘I shall be satisfied with that,’ said the youth. ‘Somebody else will have to bury my aunt. I will go with you!’

Now this bargain seemed to please the old fellow so much that he spun round like a top, and sang so loud that the whole wood rang with his voice. Then he set out with his companion, and chattered so fast that he never noticed that his new servant kept dropping peas out of the sack. At night they slept under a fig tree, and when the sun rose started on their way. About noon they came to a large stone, and here the old fellow stopped, looked carefully round, gave a sharp whistle, and stamped three times on the ground with his left foot. Suddenly there appeared under the stone a secret door, which led to what looked like the mouth of a cave. The old fellow seized the youth by the arm, and said roughly, ‘Follow me!’

Thick darkness surrounded them, yet it seemed to the prince as if their path led into still deeper depths. After a long while he thought he saw a glimmer of light, but the light was neither that of the sun nor of the moon. He looked eagerly at it, but found it was only a kind of pale cloud, which was all the light this strange underworld could boast. Earth and water, trees and plants, birds and beasts, each was different from those he had seen before; but what most struck terror into his heart was the absolute stillness that reigned everywhere. Not a rustle or a sound could be heard. Here and there he noticed a bird sitting on a branch, with head erect and

swelling throat, but his ear caught nothing. The dogs opened their mouths as if to bark, the toiling oxen seemed about to bellow, but neither bark nor bellow reached the prince. The water flowed noiselessly over the pebbles, the wind bowed the tops of the trees, flies and chafers darted about, without breaking the silence. The old greybeard uttered no word, and when his companion tried to ask him the meaning of it all he felt that his voice died in his throat.

How long this fearful stillness lasted I do not know, but the prince gradually felt his heart turning to ice, his hair stood up like bristles, and a cold chill was creeping down his spine, when at last—oh, ecstasy!—a faint noise broke on his straining ears, and this life of shadows suddenly became real. It sounded as if a troop of horses were ploughing their way over a moor.

Then the greybeard opened his mouth, and said: ‘The kettle is boiling; we are expected at home.’

They walked on a little further, till the prince thought he heard the grinding of a saw-mill, as if dozens of saws were working together, but his guide observed, ‘The grandmother is sleeping soundly; listen how she snores.’

When they had climbed a hill which lay before them the prince saw in the distance the house of his master, but it was so surrounded with buildings of all kinds that the place looked more like a village or even a small town. They reached it at last, and found an empty kennel standing in front of the gate. ‘Creep inside this,’ said the master, ‘and wait while I go in and see my grandmother. Like all very old people, she is very obstinate, and cannot bear fresh faces about her.’

The prince crept tremblingly into the kennel, and began to regret the daring which had brought him into this scrape.

By-and-by the master came back, and called him from his hiding-place. Something had put out his temper, for with a frown he said, ‘Watch carefully our ways in the house, and beware of making any mistake, or it will go ill with you. Keep your eyes and ears open, and your mouth shut, obey without questions. Be grateful if you will, but never speak unless you are spoken to.’

When the prince stepped over the threshold he caught sight of a maiden of wonderful beauty, with brown eyes and fair curly hair. ‘Well!’

the young man said to himself, ‘if the old fellow has many daughters like that I should not mind being his son-in-law. This one is just what I admire’; and he watched her lay the table, bring in the food, and take her seat by the fire as if she had never noticed that a strange man was present. Then she took out a needle and thread, and began to darn her stockings. The master sat at table alone, and invited neither his new servant nor the maid to eat with him. Neither was the old grandmother anywhere to be seen. His appetite was tremendous: he soon cleared all the dishes, and ate enough to satisfy a dozen men. When at last he could eat no more he said to the girl, ‘Now you can pick up the pieces, and take what is left in the iron pot for your own dinner, but give the bones to the dog.’

The prince did not at all like the idea of dining off scraps, which he helped the girl to pick up, but, after all, he found that there was plenty to eat, and that the food was very good. During the meal he stole many glances at the maiden, and would even have spoken to her, but she gave him no encouragement. Every time he opened his mouth for the purpose she looked at him sternly, as if to say, ‘Silence,’ so he could only let his eyes speak for him. Besides, the master was stretched on a bench by the oven after his huge meal, and would have heard everything.

After supper that night, the old man said to the prince, ‘For two days you may rest from the fatigues of the journey, and look about the house. But the day after to-morrow you must come with me, and I will point out the work you have to do. The maid will show you where you are to sleep.’

The prince thought, from this, he had leave to speak, but his master turned on him with a face of thunder and exclaimed:

‘You dog of a servant! If you disobey the laws of the house you will soon find yourself a head shorter! Hold your tongue, and leave me in peace.’

The girl made a sign to him to follow her, and, throwing open a door, nodded to him to go in. He would have lingered a moment, for he thought she looked sad, but dared not do so, for fear of the old man’s anger.

‘It is impossible that she can be his daughter!’ he said to himself, ‘for she has a kind heart. I am quite sure she must be the same girl who was brought here instead of me, so I am bound to risk my head in this mad adventure.’ He got into bed, but it was long before he fell asleep, and even

then his dreams gave him no rest. He seemed to be surrounded by dangers, and it was only the power of the maiden who helped him through it all.

When he woke his first thoughts were for the girl, whom he found hard at work. He drew water from the well and carried it to the house for her, kindled the fire under the iron pot, and, in fact, did everything that came into his head that could be of any use to her. In the afternoon he went out, in order to learn something of his new home, and wondered greatly not to come across the old grandmother. In his rambles he came to the farmyard, where a beautiful white horse had a stall to itself; in another was a black cow with two white-faced calves, while the clucking of geese, ducks, and hens reached him from a distance.

Breakfast, dinner, and supper were as savoury as before, and the prince would have been quite content with his quarters had it not been for the difficulty of keeping silence in the presence of the maiden. On the evening of the second day he went, as he had been told, to receive his orders for the following morning.

‘I am going to set you something very easy to do to-morrow,’ said the old man when his servant entered. ‘Take this scythe and cut as much grass as the white horse will want for its day’s feed, and clean out its stall. If I come back and find the manger empty it will go ill with you. So beware!’

The prince left the room, rejoicing in his heart, and saying to himself, ‘Well, I shall soon get through that! If I have never yet handled either the plough or the scythe, at least I have often watched the country people work them, and know how easy it is.’

He was just going to open his door, when the maiden glided softly past and whispered in his ear: ‘What task has he set you?’

‘For to-morrow,’ answered the prince, ‘it is really nothing at all! Just to cut hay for the horse, and to clean out his stall!’

‘Oh, luckless being!’ sighed the girl; ‘how will you ever get through with it. The white horse, who is our master’s grandmother, is always hungry: it takes twenty men always mowing to keep it in food for one day, and another twenty to clean out its stall. How, then, do you expect to do it all by yourself? But listen to me, and do what I tell you. It is your only chance. When you have filled the manger as full as it will hold you must weave a strong plait of the rushes which grow among the meadow hay, and cut a thick peg of stout wood, and be sure that the horse sees what you are

doing. Then it will ask you what it is for, and you will say, ‘With this plait I intend to bind up your mouth so that you cannot eat any more, and with this peg I am going to keep you still in one spot, so that you cannot scatter your corn and water all over the place!’ After these words the maiden went away as softly as she had come.

Early the next morning he set to work. His scythe danced through the grass much more easily than he had hoped, and soon he had enough to fill the manger. He put it in the crib, and returned with a second supply, when to his horror he found the crib empty.

Then he knew that without the maiden’s advice he would certainly have been lost, and began to put it into practice. He took out the rushes which had somehow got mixed up with the hay, and plaited them quickly.

‘My son, what are you doing?’ asked the horse wonderingly.

‘Oh, nothing!’ replied he. ‘Just weaving a chin strap to bind your jaws together, in case you might wish to eat any more!’

The white horse sighed deeply when it heard this, and made up its mind to be content with what it had eaten.

The youth next began to clean out the stall, and the horse knew it had found a master; and by mid-day there was still fodder in the manger, and the place was as clean as a new pin. He had barely finished when in walked the old man, who stood astonished at the door.

‘Is it really you who have been clever enough to do that?’ he asked. ‘Or has some one else given you a hint?’

‘Oh, I have had no help,’ replied the prince, ‘except what my poor weak head could give me.’

The old man frowned, and went away, and the prince rejoiced that everything had turned out so well.

In the evening his master said, ‘To-morrow I have no special task to set you, but as the girl has a great deal to do in the house you must milk the black cow for her. But take care you milk her dry, or it may be the worse for you.’

‘Well,’ thought the prince as he went away, ‘unless there is some trick behind, this does not sound very hard. I have never milked a cow before, but I have good strong fingers.’

He was very sleepy, and was just going toward his room, when the maiden came to him and asked: ‘What is your task to-morrow?’

‘I am to help you,’ he answered, ‘and have nothing to do all day, except to milk the black cow dry.’

‘Oh, you are unlucky,’ cried she. ‘If you were to try from morning till night you couldn’t do it. There is only one way of escaping the danger, and that is, when you go to milk her, take with you a pan of burning coals and a pair of tongs. Place the pan on the floor of the stall, and the tongs on the fire, and blow with all your might, till the coals burn brightly. The black cow will ask you what is the meaning of all this, and you must answer what I will whisper to you.’ And she stood on tip-toe and whispered something in his ear, and then went away.

The dawn had scarcely reddened the sky when the prince jumped out of bed, and, with the pan of coals in one hand and the milk pail in the other, went straight to the cow’s stall, and began to do exactly as the maiden had told him the evening before.

The black cow watched him with surprise for some time, and then said: ‘What are you doing, sonny?’

‘Oh, nothing,’ answered he; ‘I am only heating a pair of tongs in case you may not feel inclined to give as much milk as I want.’

The cow sighed deeply, and looked at the milkman with fear, but he took no notice, and milked briskly into the pail, till the cow ran dry.

Just at that moment the old man entered the stable, and sat down to milk the cow himself, but not a drop of milk could he get. ‘Have you really managed it all yourself, or did somebody help you?’

‘I have nobody to help me,’ answered the prince, ‘but my own poor head.’ The old man got up from his seat and went away.

That night, when the prince went to his master to hear what his next day’s work was to be, the old man said: ‘I have a little hay-stack out in the meadow which must be brought in to dry. To-morrow you will have to stack it all in the shed, and, as you value your life, be careful not to leave the smallest strand behind.’ The prince was overjoyed to hear he had nothing worse to do.

‘To carry a little hay-rick requires no great skill,’ thought he, ‘and it will give me no trouble, for the horse will have to draw it in. I am certainly not going to spare the old grandmother.’

By-and-by the maiden stole up to ask what task he had for the next day.

The young man laughed, and said: ‘It appears that I have got to learn all kinds of farmer’s work. To-morrow I have to carry a hay-rick, and leave not a stalk in the meadow, and that is my whole day’s work!’

‘Oh, you unlucky creature!’ cried she; ‘and how do you think you are to do it. If you had all the men in the world to help you, you could not clear off this one little hay-rick in a week. The instant you have thrown down the hay at the top, it will take root again from below. But listen to what I say. You must steal out at daybreak to-morrow and bring out the white horse and some good strong ropes. Then get on the hay-stack, put the ropes round it, and harness the horse to the ropes. When you are ready, climb up the hay-stack and begin to count one, two, three.

The horse will ask you what you are counting, and you must be sure to answer what I whisper to you.’

So the maiden whispered something in his ear, and left the room. And the prince knew nothing better to do than to get into bed.

He slept soundly, and it was still almost dark when he got up and proceeded to carry out the instructions given him by the girl. First he chose some stout ropes, and then he led the horse out of the stable and rode it to the hay-stack, which was made up of fifty cartloads, so that it could hardly be called ‘a little one.’ The prince did all that the maiden had told him, and when at last he was seated on top of the rick, and had counted up to twenty, he heard the horse ask in amazement: ‘What are you counting up there, my son?’

‘Oh, nothing,’ said he, ‘I was just amusing myself with counting the packs of wolves in the forest, but there are really so many of them that I don’t think I should ever be done.’

The word ‘wolf’ was hardly out of his mouth than the white horse was off like the wind, so that in the twinkling of an eye it had reached the shed, dragging the hay-stack behind it. The master was dumb with surprise as he came in after breakfast and found his man’s day’s work quite done.

‘Was it really you who were so clever?’ asked he. ‘Or did some one give you good advice?’

‘Oh, I have only myself to take counsel with,’ said the prince, and the old man went away, shaking his head.

Late in the evening the prince went to his master to learn what he was to do next day.

‘To-morrow,’ said the old man, ‘you must bring the white-headed calf to the meadow, and, as you value your life, take care it does not escape from you.’

The prince answered nothing, but thought, ‘Well, most peasants of nineteen have got a whole herd to look after, so surely I can manage one.’ And he went towards his room, where the maiden met him.

‘To morrow I have got an idiot’s work,’ said he; ‘nothing but to take the white-headed calf to the meadow.’

‘Oh, you unlucky being!’ sighed she. ‘Do you know that this calf is so swift that in a single day he can run three times round the world? Take heed to what I tell you. Bind one end of this silk thread to the left fore-leg of the calf, and the other end to the little toe of your left foot, so that the calf will never be able to leave your side, whether you walk, stand, or lie.’ After this the prince went to bed and slept soundly.

The next morning he did exactly what the maiden had told him, and led the calf with the silken thread to the meadow, where it stuck to his side like a faithful dog.

By sunset, it was back again in its stall, and then came the master and said, with a frown, ‘Were you really so clever yourself, or did somebody tell you what to do?’

‘Oh, I have only my own poor head,’ answered the prince, and the old man went away growling, ‘I don’t believe a word of it! I am sure you have found some clever friend!’

In the evening he called the prince and said: ‘To-morrow I have no work for you, but when I wake you must come before my bed, and give me your hand in greeting.’

The young man wondered at this strange freak, and went laughing in search of the maiden.

‘Ah, it is no laughing matter,’ sighed she. ‘He means to eat you, and there is only one way in which I can help you. You must heat an iron shovel red hot, and hold it out to him instead of your hand.’

So next morning he wakened very early, and had heated the shovel before the old man was awake. At length he heard him calling, ‘You lazy fellow, where are you? Come and wish me good morning.’

But when the prince entered with the red-hot shovel his master only said, ‘I am very ill to-day, and too weak even to touch your hand. You must

return this evening, when I may be better.’

The prince loitered about all day, and in the evening went back to the old man’s room. He was received in the most; friendly manner, and, to his surprise, his master exclaimed, ‘I am very well satisfied with you. Come to me at dawn and bring the maiden with you. I know you have long loved each other, and I wish to make you man and wife.’

The young man nearly jumped into the air for joy, but, remembering the rules of the house, he managed to keep still. When he told the maiden, he saw to his astonishment that she had become as white as a sheet, and she was quite dumb.

‘The old man has found out who was your counsellor,’ she said when she could speak, ‘and he means to destroy us both.’ We must escape somehow, or else we shall be lost. Take an axe, and cut off the head of the calf with one blow. With a second, split its head in two, and in its brain you will see a bright red ball. Bring that to me. Meanwhile, I will do what is needful here.

And the prince thought to himself, ‘Better kill the calf than be killed ourselves. If we can once escape, we will go back home. The peas which I strewed about must have sprouted, so that we shall not miss the way.’

Then he went into the stall, and with one blow of the axe killed the calf, and with the second split its brain. In an instant the place was filled with light, as the red ball fell from the brain of the calf. The prince picked it up, and, wrapping it round with a thick cloth, hid it in his bosom. Mercifully, the cow slept through it all, or by her cries she would have awakened the master.

He looked round, and at the door stood the maiden, holding a little bundle in her arms.

‘Where is the ball?’ she asked.

‘Here,’ answered he.

‘We must lose no time in escaping,’ she went on, and uncovered a tiny bit of the shining ball, to light them on their way.

As the prince had expected the peas had taken root, and grown into a little hedge, so that they were sure they would not lose the path. As they fled, the girl told him that she had overheard a conversation between the old man and his grandmother, saying that she was a king’s daughter, whom the old fellow had obtained by cunning from her parents. The prince, who

knew all about the affair, was silent, though he was glad from his heart that it had fallen to his lot to set her free. So they went on till the day began to dawn.

The old man slept very late that morning, and rubbed his eyes till he was properly awake. Then he remembered that very soon the couple were to present themselves before him. After waiting and waiting till quite a long time had passed, he said to himself, with a grin, ‘Well, they are not in much hurry to be married,’ and waited again.

At last he grew a little uneasy, and cried loudly, ‘Man and maid! what has become of you?’

After repeating this many times, he became quite frightened, but, call as he would, neither man nor maid appeared. At last he jumped angrily out of bed to go in search of the culprits, but only found an empty house, and beds that had never been slept in.

Then he went straight to the stable, where the sight of the dead calf told him all. Swearing loudly, he opened the door of the third stall quickly, and cried to his goblin servants to go and chase the fugitives. ‘Bring them to me, however you may find them, for have them I must!’ he said. So spake the old man, and the servants fled like the wind.

The runaways were crossing a great plain, when the maiden stopped. ‘Something has happened!’ she said. ‘The ball moves in my hand, and I’m sure we are being followed!’ and behind them they saw a black cloud flying before the wind. Then the maiden turned the ball thrice in her hand, and cried,

‘Listen to me, my ball, my ball.
Be quick and change me into a brook,
And my lover into a little fish.’

And in an instant there was a brook with a fish swimming in it. The goblins arrived just after, but, seeing nobody, waited for a little, then hurried home, leaving the brook and the fish undisturbed. When they were quite out of sight, the brook and the fish returned to their usual shapes and proceeded on their journey.

When the goblins, tired and with empty hands, returned, their master inquired what they had seen, and if nothing strange had befallen them.

‘Nothing,’ said they; ‘the plain was quite empty, save for a brook and a fish swimming in it.’

‘Idiots!’ roared the master; ‘of course it was they!’ And dashing open the door of the fifth stall, he told the goblins inside that they must go and drink up the brook, and catch the fish. And the goblins jumped up, and flew like the wind.

The young pair had almost reached the edge of the wood, when the maiden stopped again. ‘Something has happened,’ said she. ‘The ball is moving in my hand,’ and looking round she beheld a cloud flying towards them, large and blacker than the first, and striped with red. ‘Those are our pursuers,’ cried she, and turning the ball three times in her hand she spoke to it thus:

‘Listen to me, my ball, my ball.
Be quick and change us both.
Me into a wild rose bush,
And him into a rose on my stem.’

And in the twinkling of an eye it was done. Only just in time too, for the goblins were close at hand, and looked round eagerly for the stream and the fish. But neither stream nor fish was to be seen; nothing but a rose bush. So they went sorrowing home, and when they were out of sight the rose bush and rose returned to their proper shapes and walked all the faster for the little rest they had had.

‘Well, did you find them?’ asked the old man when his goblins came back.

‘No,’ replied the leader of the goblins, ‘we found neither brook nor fish in the desert.’

‘And did you find nothing else at all?’

‘Oh, nothing but a rose tree on the edge of a wood, with a rose hanging on it.’

‘Idiots!’ cried he. ‘Why, that was they.’ And he threw open the door of the seventh stall, where his mightiest goblins were locked in. ‘Bring them to me, however you find them, dead or alive!’ thundered he, ‘for I will have them! Tear up the rose tree and the roots too, and don’t leave anything behind, however strange it may be!’

The fugitives were resting in the shade of a wood, and were refreshing themselves with food and drink. Suddenly the maiden looked up. ‘Something has happened,’ said she. ‘The ball has nearly jumped out of my bosom! Some one is certainly following us, and the danger is near, but the trees hide our enemies from us.’

As she spoke she took the ball in her hand, and said:

‘Listen to me, my ball, my ball.
Be quick and change me into a breeze,
And make my lover into a midge.’

An instant, and the girl was dissolved into thin air, while the prince darted about like a midge. The next moment a crowd of goblins rushed up, and looked about in search of something strange, for neither a rose bush nor anything else was to be seen. But they had hardly turned their backs to go home empty-handed when the prince and the maiden stood on the earth again.

‘We must make all the haste we can,’ said she, ‘before the old man himself comes to seek us, for he will know us under any disguise.’

They ran on till they reached such a dark part of the forest that, if it had not been for the light shed by the ball, they could not have made their way at all. Worn out and breathless, they came at length to a large stone, and here the ball began to move restlessly. The maiden, seeing this, exclaimed:

‘Listen to me, my ball, my ball.
Roll the stone quickly to one side,
That we may find a door.’

And in a moment the stone had rolled away, and they had passed through the door to the world again.

‘Now we are safe,’ cried she. ‘Here the old wizard has no more power over us, and we can guard ourselves from his spells. But, my friend, we have to part! You will return to your parents, and I must go in search of mine.’

‘No! no!’ exclaimed the prince. ‘I will never part from you. You must come with me and be my wife. We have gone through many troubles together, and now we will share our joys. The maiden resisted his words for some time, but at last she went with him.

In the forest they met a woodcutter, who told them that in the palace, as well as in all the land, there had been great sorrow over the loss of the prince, and many years had now passed away during which they had found no traces of him. So, by the help of the magic ball, the maiden managed that he should put on the same clothes that he had been wearing at the time he had vanished, so that his father might know him more quickly. She herself stayed behind in a peasant’s hut, so that father and son might meet alone.

But the father was no longer there, for the loss of his son had killed him; and on his deathbed he confessed to his people how he had contrived that the old wizard should carry away a peasant’s child instead of the prince, wherefore this punishment had fallen upon him.

The prince wept bitterly when he heard this news, for he had loved his father well, and for three days he ate and drank nothing. But on the fourth day he stood in the presence of his people as their new king, and, calling his councillors, he told them all the strange things that had befallen him, and how the maiden had borne him safe through all.

And the councillors cried with one voice, ‘Let her be your wife, and our liege lady.’

And that is the end of the story.

(Ehstnische Marchen.)

THE CHILD WHO CAME FROM AN EGG

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Once upon a time there lived a queen whose heart was sore because she had no children. She was sad enough when her husband was at home with her, but when he was away she would see nobody, but sat and wept all day long.

Now it happened that a war broke out with the king of a neighbouring country, and the queen was left in the palace alone.

She was so unhappy that she felt as if the walls would stifle her, so she wandered out into the garden, and threw herself down on a grassy bank, under the shade of a lime tree. She had been there for some time, when a rustle among the leaves caused her to look up, and she saw an old woman limping on her crutches towards the stream that flowed through the grounds.

When she had quenched her thirst, she came straight up to the queen, and said to her: ‘Do not take it evil, noble lady, that I dare to speak to you, and do not be afraid of me, for it may be that I shall bring you good luck.’

The queen looked at her doubtfully, and answered: ‘You do not seem as if you had been very lucky yourself, or to have much good fortune to spare for anyone else.’

‘Under rough bark lies smooth wood and sweet kernel,’ replied the old woman. ‘Let me see your hand, that I may read the future.’

The queen held out her hand, and the old woman examined its lines closely. Then she said, ‘Your heart is heavy with two sorrows, one old and one new. The new sorrow is for your husband, who is fighting far away from you; but, believe me, he is well, and will soon bring you joyful news. But your other sorrow is much older than this. Your happiness is spoilt because you have no children.’ At these words the queen became scarlet, and tried to draw away her hand, but the old woman said:

‘Have a little patience, for there are some things I want to see more clearly.’

‘But who are you?’ asked the queen, ‘for you seem to be able to read my heart.’

‘Never mind my name,’ answered she, ‘but rejoice that it is permitted to me to show you a way to lessen your grief. You must, however, promise to do exactly what I tell you, if any good is to come of it.’

‘Oh, I will obey you exactly,’ cried the queen, ‘and if you can help me you shall have in return anything you ask for.’

The old woman stood thinking for a little: then she drew something from the folds of her dress, and, undoing a number of wrappings, brought out a tiny basket made of birch-bark. She held it out to the queen, saying, ‘In the basket you will find a bird’s egg. This you must be careful to keep in a warm place for three months, when it will turn into a doll. Lay the doll in a basket lined with soft wool, and leave it alone, for it will not need any food, and by-and-by you will find it has grown to be the size of a baby. Then you will have a baby of your own, and you must put it by the side of the other child, and bring your husband to see his son and daughter. The boy you will bring up yourself, but you must entrust the little girl to a nurse. When the time comes to have them christened you will invite me to be godmother to the princess, and this is how you must send the invitation. Hidden in the cradle, you will find a goose’s wing: throw this out of the window, and I will be with you directly; but be sure you tell no one of all the things that have befallen you.’

The queen was about to reply, but the old woman was already limping away, and before she had gone two steps she had turned into a young girl, who moved so quickly that she seemed rather to fly than to walk. The queen, watching this transformation, could hardly believe her eyes, and would have taken it all for a dream, had it not been for the basket which she held in her hand. Feeling a different being from the poor sad woman who had wandered into the garden so short a time before, she hastened to her room, and felt carefully in the basket for the egg. There it was, a tiny thing of soft blue with little green spots, and she took it out and kept it in her bosom, which was the warmest place she could think of.

A fortnight after the old woman had paid her visit, the king came home, having conquered his enemies. At this proof that the old woman had spoken truth, the queen’s heart bounded, for she now had fresh hopes that the rest of the prophecy might be fulfilled.

She cherished the basket and the egg as her chiefest treasures, and had a golden case made for the basket, so that when the time came to lay the egg in it, it might not risk any harm.

Three months passed, and, as the old woman had bidden her, the queen took the egg from her bosom, and laid it snugly amidst the warm woollen folds. The next morning she went to look at it, and the first thing she saw was the broken eggshell, and a little doll lying among the pieces. Then she felt happy at last, and leaving the doll in peace to grow, waited, as she had been told, for a baby of her own to lay beside it.

In course of time, this came also, and the queen took the little girl out of the basket, and placed it with her son in a golden cradle which glittered with precious stones. Next she sent for the king, who nearly went mad with joy at the sight of the children.

Soon there came a day when the whole court was ordered to be present at the christening of the royal babies, and when all was ready the queen softly opened the window a little, and let the goose wing fly out. The guests were coming thick and fast, when suddenly there drove up a splendid coach drawn by six cream-coloured horses, and out of it stepped a young lady dressed in garments that shone like the sun. Her face could not be seen, for a veil covered her head, but as she came up to the place where the queen was standing with the babies she drew the veil aside, and everyone was dazzled with her beauty. She took the little girl in her arms, and holding it up before the assembled company announced that henceforward it would be known by the name of Dotterine—a name which no one understood but the queen, who knew that the baby had come from the yolk of an egg. The boy was called Willem.

After the feast was over and the guests were going away, the godmother laid the baby in the cradle, and said to the queen, ‘Whenever the baby goes to sleep, be sure you lay the basket beside her, and leave the eggshells in it. As long as you do that, no evil can come to her; so guard this treasure as the apple of your eye, and teach your daughter to do so likewise.’ Then, kissing the baby three times, she mounted her coach and drove away.

The children throve well, and Dotterine’s nurse loved her as if she were the baby’s real mother. Every day the little girl seemed to grow prettier, and people used to say she would soon be as beautiful as her

godmother, but no one knew, except the nurse, that at night, when the child slept, a strange and lovely lady bent over her. At length she told the queen what she had seen, but they determined to keep it as a secret between themselves.

The twins were by this time nearly two years old, when the queen was taken suddenly ill. All the best doctors in the country were sent for, but it was no use, for there is no cure for death. The queen knew she was dying, and sent for Dotterine and her nurse, who had now become her lady-in-waiting. To her, as her most faithful servant, she gave the lucky basket in charge, and besought her to treasure it carefully. ‘When my daughter,’ said the queen, ‘is ten years old, you are to hand it over to her, but warn her solemnly that her whole future happiness depends on the way she guards it. About my son, I have no fears. He is the heir of the kingdom, and his father will look after him.’ The lady-in-waiting promised to carry out the queen’s directions, and above all to keep the affair a secret. And that same morning the queen died.

After some years the king married again, but he did not love his second wife as he had done his first, and had only married her for reasons of ambition. She hated her step-children, and the king, seeing this, kept them out of the way, under the care of Dotterine’s old nurse. But if they ever strayed across the path of the queen, she would kick them out of her sight like dogs.

On Dotterine’s tenth birthday her nurse handed her over the cradle, and repeated to her her mother’s dying words; but the child was too young to understand the value of such a gift, and at first thought little about it.

Two more years slipped by, when one day during the king’s absence the stepmother found Dotterine sitting under a lime tree. She fell as usual into a passion, and beat the child so badly that Dotterine went staggering to her own room. Her nurse was not there, but suddenly, as she stood weeping, her eyes fell upon the golden case in which lay the precious basket. She thought it might contain something to amuse her, and looked eagerly inside, but nothing was there save a handful of wool and two empty eggshells. Very much disappointed, she lifted the wool, and there lay the goose’s wing. ‘What old rubbish,’ said the child to herself, and, turning, threw the wing out of the open window.

In a moment a beautiful lady stood beside her. ‘Do not be afraid,’ said the lady, stroking Dotterine’s head. ‘I am your godmother, and have come to pay you a visit. Your red eyes tell me that you are unhappy. I know that your stepmother is very unkind to you, but be brave and patient, and better days will come. She will have no power over you when you are grown up, and no one else can hurt you either, if only you are careful never to part from your basket, or to lose the eggshells that are in it. Make a silken case for the little basket, and hide it away in your dress night and day and you will be safe from your stepmother and anyone that tries to harm you. But if you should happen to find yourself in any difficulty, and cannot tell what to do, take the goose’s wing from the basket, and throw it out of the window, and in a moment I will come to help you. Now come into the garden, that I may talk to you under the lime trees, where no one can hear us.’

They had so much to say to each other, that the sun was already setting when the godmother had ended all the good advice she wished to give the child, and saw it was time for her to be going. ‘Hand me the basket,’ said she, ‘for you must have some supper. I cannot let you go hungry to bed.’

Then, bending over the basket, she whispered some magic words, and instantly a table covered with fruits and cakes stood on the ground before them. When they had finished eating, the godmother led the child back, and on the way taught her the words she must say to the basket when she wanted it to give her something.

In a few years more, Dotterine was a grown-up young lady, and those who saw her thought that the world did not contain so lovely a girl.

About this time a terrible war broke out, and the king and his army were beaten back and back, till at length they had to retire into the town, and make ready for a siege. It lasted so long that food began to fail, and even in the palace there was not enough to eat.

So one morning Dotterine, who had had neither supper nor breakfast, and was feeling very hungry, let her wing fly away. She was so weak and miserable, that directly her godmother appeared she burst into tears, and could not speak for some time.

‘Do not cry so, dear child,’ said the godmother. ‘I will carry you away from all this, but the others I must leave to take their chance.’ Then, bidding Dotterine follow her, she passed through the gates of the town, and

through the army outside, and nobody stopped them, or seemed to see them.

The next day the town surrendered, and the king and all his courtiers were taken prisoners, but in the confusion his son managed to make his escape. The queen had already met her death from a spear carelessly thrown.

As soon as Dotterine and her godmother were clear of the enemy, Dotterine took off her own clothes, and put on those of a peasant, and in order to disguise her better her godmother changed her face completely. ‘When better times come,’ her protectress said cheerfully, ‘and you want to look like yourself again, you have only to whisper the words I have taught you into the basket, and say you would like to have your own face once more, and it will be all right in a moment. But you will have to endure a little longer yet.’ Then, warning her once more to take care of the basket, the lady bade the girl farewell.

For many days Dotterine wandered from one place to another without finding shelter, and though the food which she got from the basket prevented her from starving, she was glad enough to take service in a peasant’s house till brighter days dawned. At first the work she had to do seemed very difficult, but either she was wonderfully quick in learning, or else the basket may have secretly helped her. Anyhow at the end of three days she could do everything as well as if she had cleaned pots and swept rooms all her life.

One morning Dotterine was busy scouring a wooden tub, when a noble lady happened to pass through the village. The girl’s bright face as she stood in the front of the door with her tub attracted the lady, and she stopped and called the girl to come and speak to her.

‘Would you not like to come and enter my service?’ she asked.

‘Very much,’ replied Dotterine, ‘if my present mistress will allow me.’

‘Oh, I will settle that,’ answered the lady; and so she did, and the same day they set out for the lady’s house, Dotterine sitting beside the coachman.

Six months went by, and then came the joyful news that the king’s son had collected an army and had defeated the usurper who had taken his father’s place, but at the same moment Dotterine learned that the old king

had died in captivity. The girl wept bitterly for his loss, but in secrecy, as she had told her mistress nothing about her past life.

At the end of a year of mourning, the young king let it be known that he intended to marry, and commanded all the maidens in the kingdom to come to a feast, so that he might choose a wife from among them. For weeks all the mothers and all the daughters in the land were busy preparing beautiful dresses and trying new ways of putting up their hair, and the three lovely daughters of Dotterine's mistress were as much excited as the rest. The girl was clever with her fingers, and was occupied all day with getting ready their smart clothes, but at night when she went to bed she always dreamed that her godmother bent over her and said, 'Dress your young ladies for the feast, and when they have started follow them yourself. Nobody will be so fine as you.'

When the great day came, Dotterine could hardly contain herself, and when she had dressed her young mistresses and seen them depart with their mother she flung herself on her bed, and burst into tears. Then she seemed to hear a voice whisper to her, 'Look in your basket, and you will find in it everything that you need.'

Dotterine did not want to be told twice! Up she jumped, seized her basket, and repeated the magic words, and behold! there lay a dress on the bed, shining as a star. She put it on with fingers that trembled with joy, and, looking in the glass, was struck dumb at her own beauty. She went downstairs, and in front of the door stood a fine carriage, into which she stepped and was driven away like the wind.

The king's palace was a long way off, yet it seemed only a few minutes before Dotterine drew up at the great gates. She was just going to alight, when she suddenly remembered she had left her basket behind her. What was she to do? Go back and fetch it, lest some ill-fortune should befall her, or enter the palace and trust to chance that nothing evil would happen? But before she could decide, a little swallow flew up with the basket in its beak, and the girl was happy again.

The feast was already at its height, and the hall was brilliant with youth and beauty, when the door was flung wide and Dotterine entered, making all the other maidens look pale and dim beside her. Their hopes faded as they gazed, but their mothers whispered together, saying, 'Surely this is our lost princess!'

The young king did not know her again, but he never left her side nor took his eyes from her. And at midnight a strange thing happened. A thick cloud suddenly filled the hall, so that for a moment all was dark. Then the mist suddenly grew bright, and Dotterine's godmother was seen standing there.

'This,' she said, turning to the king, 'is the girl whom you have always believed to be your sister, and who vanished during the siege. She is not your sister at all, but the daughter of the king of a neighbouring country, who was given to your mother to bring up, to save her from the hands of a wizard.'

Then she vanished, and was never seen again, nor the wonder-working basket either; but now that Dotterine's troubles were over she could get on without them, and she and the young king lived happily together till the end of their days.

(Ehstnische Marchen.)

STAN BOLOVAN

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Once upon a time what happened did happen, and if it had not happened this story would never have been told.

On the outskirts of a village just where the oxen were turned out to pasture, and the pigs roamed about burrowing with their noses among the roots of the trees, there stood a small house. In the house lived a man who had a wife, and the wife was sad all day long.

‘Dear wife, what is wrong with you that you hang your head like a drooping rosebud?’ asked her husband one morning. ‘You have everything you want; why cannot you be merry like other women?’

‘Leave me alone, and do not seek to know the reason,’ replied she, bursting into tears, and the man thought that it was no time to question her, and went away to his work.

He could not, however, forget all about it, and a few days after he inquired again the reason of her sadness, but only got the same reply. At length he felt he could bear it no longer, and tried a third time, and then his wife turned and answered him.

‘Good gracious!’ cried she, ‘why cannot you let things be as they are? If I were to tell you, you would become just as wretched as myself. If you would only believe, it is far better for you to know nothing.’

But no man yet was ever content with such an answer. The more you beg him not to inquire, the greater is his curiosity to learn the whole.

‘Well, if you MUST know,’ said the wife at last, ‘I will tell you. There is no luck in this house—no luck at all!’

‘Is not your cow the best milker in all the village? Are not your trees as full of fruit as your hives are full of bees? Has anyone cornfields like ours? Really you talk nonsense when you say things like that!’

‘Yes, all that you say is true, but we have no children.’

Then Stan understood, and when a man once understands and has his eyes opened it is no longer well with him. From that day the little house in the outskirts contained an unhappy man as well as an unhappy woman.

And at the sight of her husband's misery the woman became more wretched than ever.

And so matters went on for some time.

Some weeks had passed, and Stan thought he would consult a wise man who lived a day's journey from his own house. The wise man was sitting before his door when he came up, and Stan fell on his knees before him. 'Give me children, my lord, give me children.'

'Take care what you are asking,' replied the wise man. 'Will not children be a burden to you? Are you rich enough to feed and clothe them?'

'Only give them to me, my lord, and I will manage somehow!' and at a sign from the wise man Stan went his way.

He reached home that evening tired and dusty, but with hope in his heart. As he drew near his house a sound of voices struck upon his ear, and he looked up to see the whole place full of children. Children in the garden, children in the yard, children looking out of every window—it seemed to the man as if all the children in the world must be gathered there. And none was bigger than the other, but each was smaller than the other, and every one was more noisy and more impudent and more daring than the rest, and Stan gazed and grew cold with horror as he realised that they all belonged to him.

'Good gracious! how many there are! how many!' he muttered to himself.

'Oh, but not one too many,' smiled his wife, coming up with a crowd more children clinging to her skirts.

But even she found that it was not so easy to look after a hundred children, and when a few days had passed and they had eaten up all the food there was in the house, they began to cry, 'Father! I am hungry—I am hungry,' till Stan scratched his head and wondered what he was to do next. It was not that he thought there were too many children, for his life had seemed more full of joy since they appeared, but now it came to the point he did not know how he was to feed them. The cow had ceased to give milk, and it was too early for the fruit trees to ripen.

'Do you know, old woman!' said he one day to his wife, 'I must go out into the world and try to bring back food somehow, though I cannot tell where it is to come from.'

To the hungry man any road is long, and then there was always the thought that he had to satisfy a hundred greedy children as well as himself.

Stan wandered, and wandered, and wandered, till he reached to the end of the world, where that which is, is mingled with that which is not, and there he saw, a little way off, a sheepfold, with seven sheep in it. In the shadow of some trees lay the rest of the flock.

Stan crept up, hoping that he might manage to decoy some of them away quietly, and drive them home for food for his family, but he soon found this could not be. For at midnight he heard a rushing noise, and through the air flew a dragon, who drove apart a ram, a sheep, and a lamb, and three fine cattle that were lying down close by. And besides these he took the milk of seventy-seven sheep, and carried it home to his old mother, that she might bathe in it and grow young again. And this happened every night.

The shepherd bewailed himself in vain: the dragon only laughed, and Stan saw that this was not the place to get food for his family.

But though he quite understood that it was almost hopeless to fight against such a powerful monster, yet the thought of the hungry children at home clung to him like a burr, and would not be shaken off, and at last he said to the shepherd, ‘What will you give me if I rid you of the dragon?’

‘One of every three rams, one of every three sheep, one of every three lambs,’ answered the herd.

‘It is a bargain,’ replied Stan, though at the moment he did not know how, supposing he DID come off the victor, he would ever be able to drive so large a flock home.

However, that matter could be settled later. At present night was not far off, and he must consider how best to fight with the dragon.

Just at midnight, a horrible feeling that was new and strange to him came over Stan—a feeling that he could not put into words even to himself, but which almost forced him to give up the battle and take the shortest road home again. He half turned; then he remembered the children, and turned back.

‘You or I,’ said Stan to himself, and took up his position on the edge of the flock.

‘Stop!’ he suddenly cried, as the air was filled with a rushing noise, and the dragon came dashing past.

‘Dear me!’ exclaimed the dragon, looking round. ‘Who are you, and where do you come from?’

‘I am Stan Bolovan, who eats rocks all night, and in the day feeds on the flowers of the mountain; and if you meddle with those sheep I will carve a cross on your back.’

When the dragon heard these words he stood quite still in the middle of the road, for he knew he had met with his match.

‘But you will have to fight me first,’ he said in a trembling voice, for when you faced him properly he was not brave at all.

‘I fight you?’ replied Stan, ‘why I could slay you with one breath!’ Then, stooping to pick up a large cheese which lay at his feet, he added, ‘Go and get a stone like this out of the river, so that we may lose no time in seeing who is the best man.’

The dragon did as Stan bade him, and brought back a stone out of the brook.

‘Can you get buttermilk out of your stone?’ asked Stan.

The dragon picked up his stone with one hand, and squeezed it till it fell into powder, but no buttermilk flowed from it. ‘Of course I can’t!’ he said, half angrily.

‘Well, if you can’t, I can,’ answered Stan, and he pressed the cheese till buttermilk flowed through his fingers.

When the dragon saw that, he thought it was time he made the best of his way home again, but Stan stood in his path.

‘We have still some accounts to settle,’ said he, ‘about what you have been doing here,’ and the poor dragon was too frightened to stir, lest Stan should slay him at one breath and bury him among the flowers in the mountain pastures.

‘Listen to me,’ he said at last. ‘I see you are a very useful person, and my mother has need of a fellow like you. Suppose you enter her service for three days, which are as long as one of your years, and she will pay you each day seven sacks full of ducats.’

Three times seven sacks full of ducats! The offer was very tempting, and Stan could not resist it. He did not waste words, but nodded to the dragon, and they started along the road.

It was a long, long way, but when they came to the end they found the dragon’s mother, who was as old as time itself, expecting them. Stan saw

her eyes shining like lamps from afar, and when they entered the house they beheld a huge kettle standing on the fire, filled with milk. When the old mother found that her son had arrived empty-handed she grew very angry, and fire and flame darted from her nostrils, but before she could speak the dragon turned to Stan.

‘Stay here,’ said he, ‘and wait for me; I am going to explain things to my mother.’

Stan was already repenting bitterly that he had ever come to such a place, but, since he was there, there was nothing for it but to take everything quietly, and not show that he was afraid.

‘Listen, mother,’ said the dragon as soon as they were alone, ‘I have brought this man in order to get rid of him. He is a terrific fellow who eats rocks, and can press buttermilk out of a stone,’ and he told her all that had happened the night before.

‘Oh, just leave him to me!’ she said. ‘I have never yet let a man slip through my fingers.’ So Stan had to stay and do the old mother service.

The next day she told him that he and her son should try which was the strongest, and she took down a huge club, bound seven times with iron.

The dragon picked it up as if it had been a feather, and, after whirling it round his head, flung it lightly three miles away, telling Stan to beat that if he could.

They walked to the spot where the club lay. Stan stooped and felt it; then a great fear came over him, for he knew that he and all his children together would never lift that club from the ground.

‘What are you doing?’ asked the dragon.

‘I was thinking what a beautiful club it was, and what a pity it is that it should cause your death.’

‘How do you mean—my death?’ asked the dragon.

‘Only that I am afraid that if I throw it you will never see another dawn. You don’t know how strong I am!’

‘Oh, never mind that be quick and throw.’

‘If you are really in earnest, let us go and feast for three days: that will at any rate give you three extra days of life.’

Stan spoke so calmly that this time the dragon began to get a little frightened, though he did not quite believe that things would be as bad as Stan said.

They returned to the house, took all the food that could be found in the old mother's larder, and carried it back to the place where the club was lying. Then Stan seated himself on the sack of provisions, and remained quietly watching the setting moon.

'What are you doing?' asked the dragon.

'Waiting till the moon gets out of my way.'

'What do you mean? I don't understand.'

'Don't you see that the moon is exactly in my way? But of course, if you like, I will throw the club into the moon.'

At these words the dragon grew uncomfortable for the second time.

He prized the club, which had been left him by his grandfather, very highly, and had no desire that it should be lost in the moon.

'I'll tell you what,' he said, after thinking a little. 'Don't throw the club at all. I will throw it a second time, and that will do just as well.'

'No, certainly not!' replied Stan. 'Just wait till the moon sets.'

But the dragon, in dread lest Stan should fulfil his threats, tried what bribes could do, and in the end had to promise Stan seven sacks of ducats before he was suffered to throw back the club himself.

'Oh, dear me, that is indeed a strong man,' said the dragon, turning to his mother. 'Would you believe that I have had the greatest difficulty in preventing him from throwing the club into the moon?'

Then the old woman grew uncomfortable too! Only to think of it! It was no joke to throw things into the moon! So no more was heard of the club, and the next day they had all something else to think about.

'Go and fetch me water!' said the mother, when the morning broke, and gave them twelve buffalo skins with the order to keep filling them till night.

They set out at once for the brook, and in the twinkling of an eye the dragon had filled the whole twelve, carried them into the house, and brought them back to Stan. Stan was tired: he could scarcely lift the buckets when they were empty, and he shuddered to think of what would happen when they were full. But he only took an old knife out of his pocket and began to scratch up the earth near the brook.

'What are you doing there? How are you going to carry the water into the house?' asked the dragon.

'How? Dear me, that is easy enough! I shall just take the brook!'

At these words the dragon's jaw dropped. This was the last thing that had ever entered his head, for the brook had been as it was since the days of his grandfather.

'I'll tell you what!' he said. 'Let me carry your skins for you.'

'Most certainly not,' answered Stan, going on with his digging, and the dragon, in dread lest he should fulfil his threat, tried what bribes would do, and in the end had again to promise seven sacks of ducats before Stan would agree to leave the brook alone and let him carry the water into the house.

On the third day the old mother sent Stan into the forest for wood, and, as usual, the dragon went with him.

Before you could count three he had pulled up more trees than Stan could have cut down in a lifetime, and had arranged them neatly in rows. When the dragon had finished, Stan began to look about him, and, choosing the biggest of the trees, he climbed up it, and, breaking off a long rope of wild vine, bound the top of the tree to the one next it. And so he did to a whole line of trees.

'What are you doing there?' asked the dragon.

'You can see for yourself,' answered Stan, going quietly on with his work.

'Why are you tying the trees together?'

'Not to give myself unnecessary work; when I pull up one, all the others will come up too.'

'But how will you carry them home?'

'Dear me! don't you understand that I am going to take the whole forest back with me?' said Stan, tying two other trees as he spoke.

'I'll tell you what,' cried the dragon, trembling with fear at the thought of such a thing; 'let me carry the wood for you, and you shall have seven times seven sacks full of ducats.'

'You are a good fellow, and I agree to your proposal,' answered Stan, and the dragon carried the wood.

Now the three days' service which were to be reckoned as a year were over, and the only thing that disturbed Stan was, how to get all those ducats back to his home!

In the evening the dragon and his mother had a long talk, but Stan heard every word through a crack in the ceiling.

‘Woe be to us, mother,’ said the dragon; ‘this man will soon get us into his power. Give him his money, and let us be rid of him.’

But the old mother was fond of money, and did not like this.

‘Listen to me,’ said she; ‘you must murder him this very night.’

‘I am afraid,’ answered he.

‘There is nothing to fear,’ replied the old mother. ‘When he is asleep take the club, and hit him on the head with it. It is easily done.’

And so it would have been, had not Stan heard all about it. And when the dragon and his mother had put out their lights, he took the pigs’ trough and filled it with earth, and placed it in his bed, and covered it with clothes. Then he hid himself underneath, and began to snore loudly.

Very soon the dragon stole softly into the room, and gave a tremendous blow on the spot where Stan’s head should have been. Stan groaned loudly from under the bed, and the dragon went away as softly as he had come. Directly he had closed the door, Stan lifted out the pigs’ trough, and lay down himself, after making everything clean and tidy, but he was wise enough not to shut his eyes that night.

The next morning he came into the room when the dragon and his mother were having their breakfast.

‘Good morning,’ said he.

‘Good morning. How did you sleep?’

‘Oh, very well, but I dreamed that a flea had bitten me, and I seem to feel it still.’

The dragon and his mother looked at each other. ‘Do you hear that?’ whispered he. ‘He talks of a flea. I broke my club on his head.’

This time the mother grew as frightened as her son. There was nothing to be done with a man like this, and she made all haste to fill the sacks with ducats, so as to get rid of Stan as soon as possible. But on his side Stan was trembling like an aspen, as he could not lift even one sack from the ground. So he stood still and looked at them.

‘What are you standing there for?’ asked the dragon.

‘Oh, I was standing here because it has just occurred to me that I should like to stay in your service for another year. I am ashamed that when I get home they should see I have brought back so little. I know that they will cry out, “Just look at Stan Bolovan, who in one year has grown as weak as a dragon.” ’

Here a shriek of dismay was heard both from the dragon and his mother, who declared they would give him seven or even seven times seven the number of sacks if he would only go away.

‘I’ll tell you what!’ said Stan at last. ‘I see you don’t want me to stay, and I should be very sorry to make myself disagreeable. I will go at once, but only on condition that you shall carry the money home yourself, so that I may not be put to shame before my friends.’

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the dragon had snatched up the sacks and piled them on his back. Then he and Stan set forth.

The way, though really not far, was yet too long for Stan, but at length he heard his children’s voices, and stopped short. He did not wish the dragon to know where he lived, lest some day he should come to take back his treasure. Was there nothing he could say to get rid of the monster? Suddenly an idea came into Stan’s head, and he turned round.

‘I hardly know what to do,’ said he. ‘I have a hundred children, and I am afraid they may do you harm, as they are always ready for a fight. However, I will do my best to protect you.’

A hundred children! That was indeed no joke! The dragon let fall the sacks from terror, and then picked them up again. But the children, who had had nothing to eat since their father had left them, came rushing towards him, waving knives in their right hands and forks in their left, and crying, ‘Give us dragon’s flesh; we will have dragon’s flesh.’

At this dreadful sight the dragon waited no longer: he flung down his sacks where he stood and took flight as fast as he could, so terrified at the fate that awaited him that from that day he has never dared to show his face in the world again.

(Adapted from Rumanische Marchen.)

THE TWO FROGS

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Once upon a time in the country of Japan there lived two frogs, one of whom made his home in a ditch near the town of Osaka, on the sea coast, while the other dwelt in a clear little stream which ran through the city of Kioto. At such a great distance apart, they had never even heard of each other; but, funnily enough, the idea came into both their heads at once that they should like to see a little of the world, and the frog who lived at Kioto wanted to visit Osaka, and the frog who lived at Osaka wished to go to Kioto, where the great Mikado had his palace.

So one fine morning in the spring they both set out along the road that led from Kioto to Osaka, one from one end and the other from the other. The journey was more tiring than they expected, for they did not know much about travelling, and half way between the two towns there arose a mountain which had to be climbed. It took them a long time and a great many hops to reach the top, but there they were at last, and what was the surprise of each to see another frog before him! They looked at each other for a moment without speaking, and then fell into conversation, explaining the cause of their meeting so far from their homes. It was delightful to find that they both felt the same wish—to learn a little more of their native country—and as there was no sort of hurry they stretched themselves out in a cool, damp place, and agreed that they would have a good rest before they parted to go their ways.

‘What a pity we are not bigger,’ said the Osaka frog; ‘for then we could see both towns from here, and tell if it is worth our while going on.’

‘Oh, that is easily managed,’ returned the Kioto frog. ‘We have only got to stand up on our hind legs, and hold on to each other, and then we can each look at the town he is travelling to.’

This idea pleased the Osaka frog so much that he at once jumped up and put his front paws on the shoulders of his friend, who had risen also. There they both stood, stretching themselves as high as they could, and holding each other tightly, so that they might not fall down. The Kioto frog

turned his nose towards Osaka, and the Osaka frog turned his nose towards Kioto; but the foolish things forgot that when they stood up their great eyes lay in the backs of their heads, and that though their noses might point to the places to which they wanted to go their eyes beheld the places from which they had come.

‘Dear me!’ cried the Osaka frog, ‘Kioto is exactly like Osaka. It is certainly not worth such a long journey. I shall go home!’

‘If I had had any idea that Osaka was only a copy of Kioto I should never have travelled all this way,’ exclaimed the frog from Kioto, and as he spoke he took his hands from his friend’s shoulders, and they both fell down on the grass. Then they took a polite farewell of each other, and set off for home again, and to the end of their lives they believed that Osaka and Kioto, which are as different to look at as two towns can be, were as like as two peas.

(Japanische Marchen.)

THE STORY OF A GAZELLE

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Once upon a time there lived a man who wasted all his money, and grew so poor that his only food was a few grains of corn, which he scratched like a fowl from out of a dust-heap.

One day he was scratching as usual among a dust-heap in the street, hoping to find something for breakfast, when his eye fell upon a small silver coin, called an eighth, which he greedily snatched up. ‘Now I can have a proper meal,’ he thought, and after drinking some water at a well he lay down and slept so long that it was sunrise before he woke again. Then he jumped up and returned to the dust-heap. ‘For who knows,’ he said to himself, ‘whether I may not have some good luck again.’

As he was walking down the road, he saw a man coming towards him, carrying a cage made of twigs. ‘Hi! you fellow!’ called he, ‘what have you got inside there?’

‘Gazelles,’ replied the man.

‘Bring them here, for I should like to see them.’

As he spoke, some men who were standing by began to laugh, saying to the man with the cage: ‘You had better take care how you bargain with him, for he has nothing at all except what he picks up from a dust-heap, and if he can’t feed himself, will he be able to feed a gazelle?’

But the man with the cage made answer: ‘Since I started from my home in the country, fifty people at the least have called me to show them my gazelles, and was there one among them who cared to buy? It is the custom for a trader in merchandise to be summoned hither and thither, and who knows where one may find a buyer?’ And he took up his cage and went towards the scratcher of dust-heaps, and the men went with him.

‘What do you ask for your gazelles?’ said the beggar. ‘Will you let me have one for an eighth?’

And the man with the cage took out a gazelle, and held it out, saying, ‘Take this one, master!’

And the beggar took it and carried it to the dust-heap, where he scratched carefully till he found a few grains of corn, which he divided with his gazelle. This he did night and morning, till five days went by.

Then, as he slept, the gazelle woke him, saying, ‘Master.’

And the man answered, ‘How is it that I see a wonder?’

‘What wonder?’ asked the gazelle.

‘Why, that you, a gazelle, should be able to speak, for, from the beginning, my father and mother and all the people that are in the world have never told me of a talking gazelle.’

‘Never mind that,’ said the gazelle, ‘but listen to what I say! First, I took you for my master. Second, you gave for me all you had in the world. I cannot run away from you, but give me, I pray you, leave to go every morning and seek food for myself, and every evening I will come back to you. What you find in the dust-heaps is not enough for both of us.’

‘Go, then,’ answered the master; and the gazelle went.

When the sun had set, the gazelle came back, and the poor man was very glad, and they lay down and slept side by side.

In the morning it said to him, ‘I am going away to feed.’

And the man replied, ‘Go, my son,’ but he felt very lonely without his gazelle, and set out sooner than usual for the dust-heap where he generally found most corn. And glad he was when the evening came, and he could return home. He lay on the grass chewing tobacco, when the gazelle trotted up.

‘Good evening, my master; how have you fared all day? I have been resting in the shade in a place where there is sweet grass when I am hungry, and fresh water when I am thirsty, and a soft breeze to fan me in the heat. It is far away in the forest, and no one knows of it but me, and to-morrow I shall go again.’

So for five days the gazelle set off at daybreak for this cool spot, but on the fifth day it came to a place where the grass was bitter, and it did not like it, and scratched, hoping to tear away the bad blades. But, instead, it saw something lying in the earth, which turned out to be a diamond, very large and bright. ‘Oh, ho!’ said the gazelle to itself, ‘perhaps now I can do something for my master who bought me with all the money he had; but I must be careful or they will say he has stolen it. I had better take it myself to some great rich man, and see what it will do for me.’

Directly the gazelle had come to this conclusion, it picked up the diamond in its mouth, and went on and on and on through the forest, but found no place where a rich man was likely to dwell. For two more days it ran, from dawn to dark, till at last early one morning it caught sight of a large town, which gave it fresh courage.

The people were standing about the streets doing their marketing, when the gazelle bounded past, the diamond flashing as it ran. They called after it, but it took no notice till it reached the palace, where the sultan was sitting, enjoying the cool air. And the gazelle galloped up to him, and laid the diamond at his feet.

The sultan looked first at the diamond and next at the gazelle; then he ordered his attendants to bring cushions and a carpet, that the gazelle might rest itself after its long journey. And he likewise ordered milk to be brought, and rice, that it might eat and drink and be refreshed.

And when the gazelle was rested, the sultan said to it: ‘Give me the news you have come with.’

And the gazelle answered: ‘I am come with this diamond, which is a pledge from my master the Sultan Darai. He has heard you have a daughter, and sends you this small token, and begs you will give her to him to wife.’

And the sultan said: ‘I am content. The wife is his wife, the family is his family, the slave is his slave. Let him come to me empty-handed, I am content.’

When the sultan had ended, the gazelle rose, and said: ‘Master, farewell; I go back to our town, and in eight days, or it may be in eleven days, we shall arrive as your guests.’

And the sultan answered: ‘So let it be.’

All this time the poor man far away had been mourning and weeping for his gazelle, which he thought had run away from him for ever.

And when it came in at the door he rushed to embrace it with such joy that he would not allow it a chance to speak.

‘Be still, master, and don’t cry,’ said the gazelle at last; ‘let us sleep now, and in the morning, when I go, follow me.’

With the first ray of dawn they got up and went into the forest, and on the fifth day, as they were resting near a stream, the gazelle gave its master a sound beating, and then bade him stay where he was till it returned. And

the gazelle ran off, and about ten o'clock it came near the sultan's palace, where the road was all lined with soldiers who were there to do honour to Sultan Darai. And directly they caught sight of the gazelle in the distance one of the soldiers ran on and said, 'Sultan Darai is coming: I have seen the gazelle.'

Then the sultan rose up, and called his whole court to follow him, and went out to meet the gazelle, who, bounding up to him, gave him greeting. The sultan answered politely, and inquired where it had left its master, whom it had promised to bring back.

'Alas!' replied the gazelle, 'he is lying in the forest, for on our way here we were met by robbers, who, after beating and robbing him, took away all his clothes. And he is now hiding under a bush, lest a passing stranger might see him.'

The sultan, on hearing what had happened to his future son-in-law, turned his horse and rode to the palace, and bade a groom to harness the best horse in the stable and order a woman slave to bring a bag of clothes, such as a man might want, out of the chest; and he chose out a tunic and a turban and a sash for the waist, and fetched himself a gold-hilted sword, and a dagger and a pair of sandals, and a stick of sweet-smelling wood.

'Now,' said he to the gazelle, 'take these things with the soldiers to the sultan, that he may be able to come.'

And the gazelle answered: 'Can I take those soldiers to go and put my master to shame as he lies there naked? I am enough by myself, my lord.'

'How will you be enough,' asked the sultan, 'to manage this horse and all these clothes?'

'Oh, that is easily done,' replied the gazelle. 'Fasten the horse to my neck and tie the clothes to the back of the horse, and be sure they are fixed firmly, as I shall go faster than he does.'

Everything was carried out as the gazelle had ordered, and when all was ready it said to the sultan: 'Farewell, my lord, I am going.'

'Farewell, gazelle,' answered the sultan; 'when shall we see you again?'

'To-morrow about five,' replied the gazelle, and, giving a tug to the horse's rein, they set off at a gallop.

The sultan watched them till they were out of sight: then he said to his attendants, 'That gazelle comes from gentle hands, from the house of a

sultan, and that is what makes it so different from other gazelles.' And in the eyes of the sultan the gazelle became a person of consequence.

Meanwhile the gazelle ran on till it came to the place where its master was seated, and his heart laughed when he saw the gazelle.

And the gazelle said to him, 'Get up, my master, and bathe in the stream!' and when the man had bathed it said again, 'Now rub yourself well with earth, and rub your teeth well with sand to make them bright and shining.' And when this was done it said, 'The sun has gone down behind the hills; it is time for us to go': so it went and brought the clothes from the back of the horse, and the man put them on and was well pleased.

'Master!' said the gazelle when the man was ready, 'be sure that where we are going you keep silence, except for giving greetings and asking for news. Leave all the talking to me. I have provided you with a wife, and have made her presents of clothes and turbans and rare and precious things, so it is needless for you to speak.'

'Very good, I will be silent,' replied the man as he mounted the horse. 'You have given all this; it is you who are the master, and I who am the slave, and I will obey you in all things.'

'So they went their way, and they went and went till the gazelle saw in the distance the palace of the sultan. Then it said, 'Master, that is the house we are going to, and you are not a poor man any longer: even your name is new.'

'What IS my name, eh, my father?' asked the man.

'Sultan Darai,' said the gazelle.

Very soon some soldiers came to meet them, while others ran off to tell the sultan of their approach. And the sultan set off at once, and the viziers and the emirs, and the judges, and the rich men of the city, all followed him.

Directly the gazelle saw them coming, it said to its master: 'Your father-in-law is coming to meet you; that is he in the middle, wearing a mantle of sky-blue. Get off your horse and go to greet him.'

And Sultan Darai leapt from his horse, and so did the other sultan, and they gave their hands to one another and kissed each other, and went together into the palace.

The next morning the gazelle went to the rooms of the sultan, and said to him: 'My lord, we want you to marry us our wife, for the soul of Sultan

Darai is eager.'

'The wife is ready, so call the priest,' answered he, and when the ceremony was over a cannon was fired and music was played, and within the palace there was feasting.

'Master,' said the gazelle the following morning, 'I am setting out on a journey, and I shall not be back for seven days, and perhaps not then. But be careful not to leave the house till I come.'

And the master answered, 'I will not leave the house.'

And it went to the sultan of the country and said to him: 'My lord, Sultan Darai has sent me to his town to get the house in order. It will take me seven days, and if I am not back in seven days he will not leave the palace till I return.'

'Very good,' said the sultan.

And it went and it went through the forest and wilderness, till it arrived at a town full of fine houses. At the end of the chief road was a great house, beautiful exceedingly, built of sapphire and turquoise and marbles. 'That,' thought the gazelle, 'is the house for my master, and I will call up my courage and go and look at the people who are in it, if any people there are. For in this town have I as yet seen no people. If I die, I die, and if I live, I live. Here can I think of no plan, so if anything is to kill me, it will kill me.'

Then it knocked twice at the door, and cried 'Open,' but no one answered. And it cried again, and a voice replied:

'Who are you that are crying "Open"?'

And the gazelle said, 'It is I, great mistress, your grandchild.'

'If you are my grandchild,' returned the voice, 'go back whence you came. Don't come and die here, and bring me to my death as well.'

'Open, mistress, I entreat, I have something to say to you.'

'Grandchild,' replied she, 'I fear to put your life in danger, and my own too.'

'Oh, mistress, my life will not be lost, nor yours either; open, I pray you.' So she opened the door.

'What is the news where you come from, my grandson,' asked she.

'Great lady, where I come from it is well, and with you it is well.'

'Ah, my son, here it is not well at all. If you seek a way to die, or if you have not yet seen death, then is to-day the day for you to know what

dying is.’

‘If I am to know it, I shall know it,’ replied the gazelle; ‘but tell me, who is the lord of this house?’

And she said: ‘Ah, father! in this house is much wealth, and much people, and much food, and many horses. And the lord of it all is an exceeding great and wonderful snake.’

‘Oh!’ cried the gazelle when he heard this; ‘tell me how I can get at the snake to kill him?’

‘My son,’ returned the old woman, ‘do not say words like these; you risk both our lives. He has put me here all by myself, and I have to cook his food. When the great snake is coming there springs up a wind, and blows the dust about, and this goes on till the great snake glides into the courtyard and calls for his dinner, which must always be ready for him in those big pots. He eats till he has had enough, and then drinks a whole tankful of water. After that he goes away. Every second day he comes, when the sun is over the house. And he has seven heads. How then can you be a match for him, my son?’

‘Mind your own business, mother,’ answered the gazelle, ‘and don’t mind other people’s! Has this snake a sword?’

‘He has a sword, and a sharp one too. It cuts like a dash of lightning.’

‘Give it to me, mother!’ said the gazelle, and she unhooked the sword from the wall, as she was bidden. ‘You must be quick,’ she said, ‘for he may be here at any moment. Hark! is not that the wind rising? He has come!’

They were silent, but the old woman peeped from behind a curtain, and saw the snake busy at the pots which she had placed ready for him in the courtyard. And after he had done eating and drinking he came to the door:

‘You old body!’ he cried; ‘what smell is that I smell inside that is not the smell of every day?’

‘Oh, master!’ answered she, ‘I am alone, as I always am! But to-day, after many days, I have sprinkled fresh scent all over me, and it is that which you smell. What else could it be, master?’

All this time the gazelle had been standing close to the door, holding the sword in one of its front paws. And as the snake put one of his heads through the hole that he had made so as to get in and out comfortably, it cut it of so clean that the snake really did not feel it. The second blow was

not quite so straight, for the snake said to himself, ‘Who is that who is trying to scratch me?’ and stretched out his third head to see; but no sooner was the neck through the hole than the head went rolling to join the rest.

When six of his heads were gone the snake lashed his tail with such fury that the gazelle and the old woman could not see each other for the dust he made. And the gazelle said to him, ‘You have climbed all sorts of trees, but this you can’t climb,’ and as the seventh head came darting through it went rolling to join the rest.

Then the sword fell rattling on the ground, for the gazelle had fainted.

The old woman shrieked with delight when she saw her enemy was dead, and ran to bring water to the gazelle, and fanned it, and put it where the wind could blow on it, till it grew better and gave a sneeze. And the heart of the old woman was glad, and she gave it more water, till by-and-by the gazelle got up.

‘Show me this house,’ it said, ‘from beginning to end, from top to bottom, from inside to out.’

So she arose and showed the gazelle rooms full of gold and precious things, and other rooms full of slaves. ‘They are all yours, goods and slaves,’ said she.

But the gazelle answered, ‘You must keep them safe till I call my master.’

For two days it lay and rested in the house, and fed on milk and rice, and on the third day it bade the old woman farewell and started back to its master.

And when he heard that the gazelle was at the door he felt like a man who has found the time when all prayers are granted, and he rose and kissed it, saying: ‘My father, you have been a long time; you have left sorrow with me. I cannot eat, I cannot drink, I cannot laugh; my heart felt no smile at anything, because of thinking of you.’

And the gazelle answered: ‘I am well, and where I come from it is well, and I wish that after four days you would take your wife and go home.’

And he said: ‘It is for you to speak. Where you go, I will follow.’

‘Then I shall go to your father-in-law and tell him this news.’

‘Go, my son.’

So the gazelle went to the father-in-law and said: ‘I am sent by my master to come and tell you that after four days he will go away with his wife to his own home.’

‘Must he really go so quickly? We have not yet sat much together, I and Sultan Darai, nor have we yet talked much together, nor have we yet ridden out together, nor have we eaten together; yet it is fourteen days since he came.’

But the gazelle replied: ‘My lord, you cannot help it, for he wishes to go home, and nothing will stop him.’

‘Very good,’ said the sultan, and he called all the people who were in the town, and commanded that the day his daughter left the palace ladies and guards were to attend her on her way.

And at the end of four days a great company of ladies and slaves and horses went forth to escort the wife of Sultan Darai to her new home. They rode all day, and when the sun sank behind the hills they rested, and ate of the food the gazelle gave them, and lay down to sleep. And they journeyed on for many days, and they all, nobles and slaves, loved the gazelle with a great love—more than they loved the Sultan Darai.

At last one day signs of houses appeared, far, far off. And those who saw cried out, ‘Gazelle!’

And it answered, ‘Ah, my mistresses, that is the house of Sultan Darai.’

At this news the women rejoiced much, and the slaves rejoiced much, and in the space of two hours they came to the gates, and the gazelle bade them all stay behind, and it went on to the house with Sultan Darai.

When the old woman saw them coming through the courtyard she jumped and shouted for joy, and as the gazelle drew near she seized it in her arms, and kissed it. The gazelle did not like this, and said to her: ‘Old woman, leave me alone; the one to be carried is my master, and the one to be kissed is my master.’

And she answered, ‘Forgive me, my son. I did not know this was our master,’ and she threw open all the doors so that the master might see everything that the rooms and storehouses contained. Sultan Darai looked about him, and at length he said:

‘Unfasten those horses that are tied up, and let loose those people that are bound. And let some sweep, and some spread the beds, and some cook,

and some draw water, and some come out and receive the mistress.'

And when the sultana and her ladies and her slaves entered the house, and saw the rich stuffs it was hung with, and the beautiful rice that was prepared for them to eat, they cried: 'Ah, you gazelle, we have seen great houses, we have seen people, we have heard of things. But this house, and you, such as you are, we have never seen or heard of.'

After a few days, the ladies said they wished to go home again. The gazelle begged them hard to stay, but finding they would not, it brought many gifts, and gave some to the ladies and some to their slaves. And they all thought the gazelle greater a thousand times than its master, Sultan Darai.

The gazelle and its master remained in the house many weeks, and one day it said to the old woman, 'I came with my master to this place, and I have done many things for my master, good things, and till to-day he has never asked me: "Well, my gazelle, how did you get this house? Who is the owner of it? And this town, were there no people in it?" All good things I have done for the master, and he has not one day done me any good thing. But people say, "If you want to do any one good, don't do him good only, do him evil also, and there will be peace between you." So, mother, I have done: I want to see the favours I have done to my master, that he may do me the like.'

'Good,' replied the old woman, and they went to bed.

In the morning, when light came, the gazelle was sick in its stomach and feverish, and its legs ached. And it said 'Mother!'

And she answered, 'Here, my son?'

And it said, 'Go and tell my master upstairs the gazelle is very ill.'

'Very good, my son; and if he should ask me what is the matter, what am I to say?'

'Tell him all my body aches badly; I have no single part without pain.'

The old woman went upstairs, and she found the mistress and master sitting on a couch of marble spread with soft cushions, and they asked her, 'Well, old woman, what do you want?'

'To tell the master the gazelle is ill,' said she.

'What is the matter?' asked the wife.

'All its body pains; there is no part without pain.'

'Well, what can I do? Make some gruel of red millet, and give to it.'

But his wife stared and said: ‘Oh, master, do you tell her to make the gazelle gruel out of red millet, which a horse would not eat? Eh, master, that is not well.’

But he answered, ‘Oh, you are mad! Rice is only kept for people.’

‘Eh, master, this is not like a gazelle. It is the apple of your eye. If sand got into that, it would trouble you.’

‘My wife, your tongue is long,’ and he left the room.

The old woman saw she had spoken vainly, and went back weeping to the gazelle. And when the gazelle saw her it said, ‘Mother, what is it, and why do you cry? If it be good, give me the answer; and if it be bad, give me the answer.’

But still the old woman would not speak, and the gazelle prayed her to let it know the words of the master. At last she said: ‘I went upstairs and found the mistress and the master sitting on a couch, and he asked me what I wanted, and I told him that you, his slave, were ill. And his wife asked what was the matter, and I told her that there was not a part of your body without pain. And the master told me to take some red millet and make you gruel, but the mistress said, ‘Eh, master, the gazelle is the apple of your eye; you have no child, this gazelle is like your child; so this gazelle is not one to be done evil to. This is a gazelle in form, but not a gazelle in heart; he is in all things better than a gentleman, be he who he may.’

And he answered her, ‘Silly chatterer, your words are many. I know its price; I bought it for an eighth. What loss will it be to me?’

The gazelle kept silence for a few moments. Then it said, ‘The elders said, “One that does good like a mother,” and I have done him good, and I have got this that the elders said. But go up again to the master, and tell him the gazelle is very ill, and it has not drunk the gruel of red millet.’

So the old woman returned, and found the master and the mistress drinking coffee. And when he heard what the gazelle had said, he cried: ‘Hold your peace, old woman, and stay your feet and close your eyes, and stop your ears with wax; and if the gazelle bids you come to me, say your legs are bent, and you cannot walk; and if it begs you to listen, say your ears are stopped with wax; and if it wishes to talk, reply that your tongue has got a hook in it.’

The heart of the old woman wept as she heard such words, because she saw that when the gazelle first came to that town it was ready to sell its life to buy wealth for its master. Then it happened to get both life and wealth, but now it had no honour with its master.

And tears sprung likewise to the eyes of the sultan's wife, and she said, 'I am sorry for you, my husband, that you should deal so wickedly with that gazelle'; but he only answered, 'Old woman, pay no heed to the talk of the mistress: tell it to perish out of the way. I cannot sleep, I cannot eat, I cannot drink, for the worry of that gazelle. Shall a creature that I bought for an eighth trouble me from morning till night? Not so, old woman!'

The old woman went downstairs, and there lay the gazelle, blood flowing from its nostrils. And she took it in her arms and said, 'My son, the good you did is lost; there remains only patience.'

And it said, 'Mother, I shall die, for my soul is full of anger and bitterness. My face is ashamed, that I should have done good to my master, and that he should repay me with evil.' It paused for a moment, and then went on, 'Mother, of the goods that are in this house, what do I eat? I might have every day half a basinful, and would my master be any the poorer? But did not the elders say, "He that does good like a mother!"'

And it said, 'Go and tell my master that the gazelle is nearer death than life.'

So she went, and spoke as the gazelle had bidden her; but he answered, 'I have told you to trouble me no more.'

But his wife's heart was sore, and she said to him: 'Ah, master, what has the gazelle done to you? How has he failed you? The things you do to him are not good, and you will draw on yourself the hatred of the people. For this gazelle is loved by all, by small and great, by women and men. Ah, my husband! I thought you had great wisdom, and you have not even a little!'

But he answered, 'You are mad, my wife.'

The old woman stayed no longer, and went back to the gazelle, followed secretly by the mistress, who called a maidservant and bade her take some milk and rice and cook it for the gazelle.

'Take also this cloth,' she said, 'to cover it with, and this pillow for its head. And if the gazelle wants more, let it ask me, and not its master. And

if it will, I will send it in a litter to my father, and he will nurse it till it is well.'

And the maidservant did as her mistress bade her, and said what her mistress had told her to say, but the gazelle made no answer, but turned over on its side and died quietly.

When the news spread abroad, there was much weeping among the people, and Sultan Darai arose in wrath, and cried, 'You weep for that gazelle as if you wept for me! And, after all, what is it but a gazelle, that I bought for an eighth?'

But his wife answered, 'Master, we looked upon that gazelle as we looked upon you. It was the gazelle who came to ask me of my father, it was the gazelle who brought me from my father, and I was given in charge to the gazelle by my father.'

And when the people heard her they lifted up their voices and spoke:

'We never saw you, we saw the gazelle. It was the gazelle who met with trouble here, it was the gazelle who met with rest here.

So, then, when such an one departs from this world we weep for ourselves, we do not weep for the gazelle.'

And they said furthermore:

'The gazelle did you much good, and if anyone says he could have done more for you he is a liar! Therefore, to us who have done you no good, what treatment will you give? The gazelle has died from bitterness of soul, and you ordered your slaves to throw it into the well. Ah! leave us alone that we may weep.'

But Sultan Darai would not heed their words, and the dead gazelle was thrown into the well.

When the mistress heard of it, she sent three slaves, mounted on donkeys, with a letter to her father the sultan, and when the sultan had read the letter he bowed his head and wept, like a man who had lost his mother. And he commanded horses to be saddled, and called the governor and the judges and all the rich men, and said:

'Come now with me; let us go and bury it.'

Night and day they travelled, till the sultan came to the well where the gazelle had been thrown. And it was a large well, built round a rock, with room for many people; and the sultan entered, and the judges and the rich

men followed him. And when he saw the gazelle lying there he wept afresh, and took it in his arms and carried it away.

When the three slaves went and told their mistress what the sultan had done, and how all the people were weeping, she answered:

‘I too have eaten no food, neither have I drunk water, since the day the gazelle died. I have not spoken, and I have not laughed.’

The sultan took the gazelle and buried it, and ordered the people to wear mourning for it, so there was great mourning throughout the city.

Now after the days of mourning were at an end, the wife was sleeping at her husband’s side, and in her sleep she dreamed that she was once more in her father’s house, and when she woke up it was no dream.

And the man dreamed that he was on the dust-heap, scratching. And when he woke, behold! that also was no dream, but the truth.

(Swahili Tales.)

HOW A FISH SWAM IN THE AIR AND A HARE IN THE WATER.

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Once upon a time an old man and his wife lived together in a little village. They might have been happy if only the old woman had had the sense to hold her tongue at proper times. But anything which might happen indoors, or any bit of news which her husband might bring in when he had been anywhere, had to be told at once to the whole village, and these tales were repeated and altered till it often happened that much mischief was made, and the old man's back paid for it.

One day, he drove to the forest. When he reached the edge of it he got out of his cart and walked beside it. Suddenly he stepped on such a soft spot that his foot sank in the earth.

'What can this be?' thought he. 'I'll dig a bit and see.'

So he dug and dug, and at last he came on a little pot full of gold and silver.

'Oh, what luck! Now, if only I knew how I could take this treasure home with me——but I can never hope to hide it from my wife, and once she knows of it she'll tell all the world, and then I shall get into trouble.'

He sat down and thought over the matter a long time, and at last he made a plan. He covered up the pot again with earth and twigs, and drove on into the town, where he bought a live pike and a live hare in the market.

Then he drove back to the forest and hung the pike up at the very top of a tree, and tied up the hare in a fishing net and fastened it on the edge of a little stream, not troubling himself to think how unpleasant such a wet spot was likely to be to the hare.

Then he got into his cart and trotted merrily home.

'Wife!' cried he, the moment he got indoors. 'You can't think what a piece of good luck has come our way.'

'What, what, dear husband? Do tell me all about it at once.'

'No, no, you'll just go off and tell everyone.'

‘No, indeed! How can you think such things! For shame! If you like I will swear never to——’

‘Oh, well! if you are really in earnest then, listen.’

And he whispered in her ear: ‘I’ve found a pot full of gold and silver in the forest! Hush!——’

‘And why didn’t you bring it back?’

‘Because we’ll drive there together and bring it carefully back between us.’

So the man and his wife drove to the forest.

As they were driving along the man said:

‘What strange things one hears, wife! I was told only the other day that fish will now live and thrive in the tree tops and that some wild animals spend their time in the water. Well! well! times are certainly changed.’

‘Why, you must be crazy, husband! Dear, dear, what nonsense people do talk sometimes.’

‘Nonsense, indeed! Why, just look. Bless my soul, if there isn’t a fish, a real pike I do believe, up in that tree.’

‘Gracious!’ cried his wife. ‘How did a pike get there? It IS a pike—you needn’t attempt to say it’s not. Can people have said true——’

But the man only shook his head and shrugged his shoulders and opened his mouth and gaped as if he really could not believe his own eyes.

‘What are you standing staring at there, stupid?’ said his wife. ‘Climb up the tree quick and catch the pike, and we’ll cook it for dinner.’

The man climbed up the tree and brought down the pike, and they drove on.

When they got near the stream he drew up.

‘What are you staring at again?’ asked his wife impatiently. ‘Drive on, can’t you?’

‘Why, I seem to see something moving in that net I set. I must just go and see what it is.’

He ran to it, and when he had looked in it he called to his wife:

‘Just look! Here is actually a four-footed creature caught in the net. I do believe it’s a hare.’

‘Good heavens!’ cried his wife. ‘How did the hare get into your net? It IS a hare, so you needn’t say it isn’t. After all, people must have said the truth——’

But her husband only shook his head and shrugged his shoulders as if he could not believe his own eyes.

‘Now what are you standing there for, stupid?’ cried his wife. ‘Take up the hare. A nice fat hare is a dinner for a feast day.’

The old man caught up the hare, and they drove on to the place where the treasure was buried. They swept the twigs away, dug up the earth, took out the pot, and drove home again with it.

And now the old couple had plenty of money and were cheery and comfortable. But the wife was very foolish. Every day she asked a lot of people to dinner and feasted them, till her husband grew quite impatient. He tried to reason with her, but she would not listen.

‘You’ve got no right to lecture me!’ said she. ‘We found the treasure together, and together we will spend it.’

Her husband took patience, but at length he said to her: ‘You may do as you please, but I sha’n’t give you another penny.’

The old woman was very angry. ‘Oh, what a good-for-nothing fellow to want to spend all the money himself! But just wait a bit and see what I shall do.’

Off she went to the governor to complain of her husband.

‘Oh, my lord, protect me from my husband! Ever since he found the treasure there is no bearing him. He only eats and drinks, and won’t work, and he keeps all the money to himself.’

The governor took pity on the woman, and ordered his chief secretary to look into the matter.

The secretary called the elders of the village together, and went with them to the man’s house.

‘The governor,’ said he, ‘desires you to give all that treasure you found into my care.’

The man shrugged his shoulders and said: ‘What treasure? I know nothing about a treasure.’

‘How? You know nothing? Why your wife has complained of you. Don’t attempt to tell lies. If you don’t hand over all the money at once you will be tried for daring to raise treasure without giving due notice to the governor about it.’

‘Pardon me, your excellency, but what sort of treasure was it supposed to have been? My wife must have dreamt of it, and you gentlemen have

listened to her nonsense.’

‘Nonsense, indeed,’ broke in his wife. ‘A kettle full of gold and silver, do you call that nonsense?’

‘You are not in your right mind, dear wife. Sir, I beg your pardon. Ask her how it all happened, and if she convinces you I’ll pay for it with my life.’

‘This is how it all happened, Mr. Secretary,’ cried the wife. ‘We were driving through the forest, and we saw a pike up in the top of a tree——’

‘What, a PIKE?’ shouted the secretary. ‘Do you think you may joke with me, pray?’

‘Indeed, I’m not joking, Mr. Secretary! I’m speaking the bare truth.’

‘Now you see, gentlemen,’ said her husband, ‘how far you can trust her, when she chatters like this.’

‘Chatter, indeed? I!! Perhaps you have forgotten, too, how we found a live hare in the river?’

Everyone roared with laughter; even the secretary smiled and stroked his beard, and the man said:

‘Come, come, wife, everyone is laughing at you. You see for yourself, gentlemen, how far you can believe her.’

‘Yes, indeed,’ said the village elders, ‘it is certainly the first time we have heard that hares thrive in the water or fish among the tree tops.’

The secretary could make nothing of it all, and drove back to the town. The old woman was so laughed at that she had to hold her tongue and obey her husband ever after, and the man bought wares with part of the treasure and moved into the town, where he opened a shop, and prospered, and spent the rest of his days in peace.

TWO IN A SACK

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What a life that poor man led with his wife, to be sure! Not a day passed without her scolding him and calling him names, and indeed sometimes she would take the broom from behind the stove and beat him with it. He had no peace or comfort at all, and really hardly knew how to bear it.

One day, when his wife had been particularly unkind and had beaten him black and blue, he strolled slowly into the fields, and as he could not endure to be idle he spread out his nets.

What kind of bird do you think he caught in his net? He caught a crane, and the crane said, ‘Let me go free, and I’ll show myself grateful.’

The man answered, ‘No, my dear fellow. I shall take you home, and then perhaps my wife won’t scold me so much.’

Said the crane: ‘You had better come with me to my house,’ and so they went to the crane’s house.

When they got there, what do you think the crane took from the wall? He took down a sack, and he said:

‘Two out of a sack!’

Instantly two pretty lads sprang out of the sack. They brought in oak tables, which they spread with silken covers, and placed all sorts of delicious dishes and refreshing drinks on them. The man had never seen anything so beautiful in his life, and he was delighted.

Then the crane said to him, ‘Now take this sack to your wife.’

The man thanked him warmly, took the sack, and set out.

His home was a good long way off, and as it was growing dark, and he was feeling tired, he stopped to rest at his cousin’s house by the way.

The cousin had three daughters, who laid out a tempting supper, but the man would eat nothing, and said to his cousin, ‘Your supper is bad.’

‘Oh, make the best of it,’ said she, but the man only said: ‘Clear away!’ and taking out his sack he cried, as the crane had taught him:

‘Two out of the sack!’

And out came the two pretty boys, who quickly brought in the oak tables, spread the silken covers, and laid out all sorts of delicious dishes and refreshing drinks.

Never in their lives had the cousin and her daughters seen such a supper, and they were delighted and astonished at it. But the cousin quietly made up her mind to steal the sack, so she called to her daughters: ‘Go quickly and heat the bathroom: I am sure our dear guest would like to have a bath before he goes to bed.’

When the man was safe in the bathroom she told her daughters to make a sack exactly like his, as quickly as possible. Then she changed the two sacks, and hid the man’s sack away.

The man enjoyed his bath, slept soundly, and set off early next morning, taking what he believed to be the sack the crane had given him.

All the way home he felt in such good spirits that he sang and whistled as he walked through the wood, and never noticed how the birds were twittering and laughing at him.

As soon as he saw his house he began to shout from a distance, ‘Hallo! old woman! Come out and meet me!’

His wife screamed back: ‘You come here, and I’ll give you a good thrashing with the poker!’

The man walked into the house, hung his sack on a nail, and said, as the crane had taught him:

‘Two out of the sack!’

But not a soul came out of the sack.

Then he said again, exactly as the crane had taught him:

‘Two out of the sack!’

His wife, hearing him chattering goodness knows what, took up her wet broom and swept the ground all about him.

The man took flight and rushed oft into the field, and there he found the crane marching proudly about, and to him he told his tale.

‘Come back to my house,’ said the crane, and so they went to the crane’s house, and as soon as they got there, what did the crane take down from the wall? Why, he took down a sack, and he said:

‘Two out of the sack!’

And instantly two pretty lads sprang out of the sack, brought in oak tables, on which they laid silken covers, and spread all sorts of delicious

dishes and refreshing drinks on them.

‘Take this sack,’ said the crane.

The man thanked him heartily, took the sack, and went. He had a long way to walk, and as he presently got hungry, he said to the sack, as the crane had taught him:

‘Two out of the sack!’

And instantly two rough men with thick sticks crept out of the bag and began to beat him well, crying as they did so:

‘Don’t boast to your cousins of what you have got,
One—two—
Or you’ll find you will catch it uncommonly hot,
One—two—’

And they beat on till the man panted out:

‘Two into the sack.’

The words were hardly out of his mouth, when the two crept back into the sack.

Then the man shouldered the sack, and went off straight to his cousin’s house. He hung the sack up on a nail, and said: ‘Please have the bathroom heated, cousin.’

The cousin heated the bathroom, and the man went into it, but he neither washed nor rubbed himself, he just sat there and waited.

Meantime his cousin felt hungry, so she called her daughters, and all four sat down to table. Then the mother said:

‘Two out of the sack.’

Instantly two rough men crept out of the sack, and began to beat the cousin as they cried:

‘Greedy pack! Thievish pack!
One—two—
Give the peasant back his sack!
One—two—’

And they went on beating till the woman called to her eldest daughter: ‘Go and fetch your cousin from the bathroom. Tell him these two ruffians

are beating me black and blue.’

‘I’ve not finished rubbing myself yet,’ said the peasant.

And the two ruffians kept on beating as they sang:

‘Greedy pack! Thievish pack!
One—two—Give the peasant back his sack!

One—two—’

Then the woman sent her second daughter and said: ‘Quick, quick, get him to come to me.’

‘I’m just washing my head,’ said the man.

Then she sent the youngest girl, and he said: ‘I’ve not done drying myself.’

At last the woman could hold out no longer, and sent him the sack she had stolen.

NOW he had quite finished his bath, and as he left the bathroom he cried:

‘Two into the sack.’

And the two crept back at once into the sack.

Then the man took both sacks, the good and the bad one, and went away home.

When he was near the house he shouted: ‘Hallo, old woman, come and meet me!’

His wife only screamed out:

‘You broomstick, come here! Your back shall pay for this.’

The man went into the cottage, hung his sack on a nail, and said, as the crane had taught him:

‘Two out of the sack.’

Instantly two pretty lads sprang out of the sack, brought in oak tables, laid silken covers on them, and spread them with all sorts of delicious dishes and refreshing drinks.

The woman ate and drank, and praised her husband.

‘Well, now, old man, I won’t beat you any more,’ said she.

When they had done eating, the man carried off the good sack, and put it away in his store-room, but hung the bad sack up on the nail. Then he

lounged up and down in the yard.

Meantime his wife became thirsty. She looked with longing eyes at the sack, and at last she said, as her husband had done:

‘Two out of the sack.’

And at once the two rogues with their big sticks crept out of the sack, and began to belabour her as they sang:

‘Would you beat your husband true?

Don’t cry so!
Now we’ll beat you black and blue!
Oh! Oh!’

The woman screamed out: ‘Old man, old man! Come here, quick! Here are two ruffians pommelling me fit to break my bones.’

Her husband only strolled up and down and laughed, as he said: ‘Yes, they’ll beat you well, old lady.’

And the two thumped away and sang again:

‘Blows will hurt, remember, crone,
We mean you well, we mean you well;
In future leave the stick alone,
For how it hurts, you now can tell,
One—two—’

At last her husband took pity on her, and cried:

‘Two into the sack.’

He had hardly said the words before they were back in the sack again.

From this time the man and his wife lived so happily together that it was a pleasure to see them, and so the story has an end.

(From Russiche Marchen.)

THE ENVIOUS NEIGHBOUR

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Long, long ago an old couple lived in a village, and, as they had no children to love and care for, they gave all their affection to a little dog. He was a pretty little creature, and instead of growing spoilt and disagreeable at not getting everything he wanted, as even children will do sometimes, the dog was grateful to them for their kindness, and never left their side, whether they were in the house or out of it.

One day the old man was working in his garden, with his dog, as usual, close by. The morning was hot, and at last he put down his spade and wiped his wet forehead, noticing, as he did so, that the animal was snuffling and scratching at a spot a little way off. There was nothing very strange in this, as all dogs are fond of scratching, and he went on quietly with his digging, when the dog ran up to his master, barking loudly, and back again to the place where he had been scratching. This he did several times, till the old man wondered what could be the matter, and, picking up the spade, followed where the dog led him. The dog was so delighted at his success that he jumped round, barking loudly, till the noise brought the old woman out of the house.

Curious to know if the dog had really found anything, the husband began to dig, and very soon the spade struck against something. He stooped down and pulled out a large box, filled quite full with shining gold pieces. The box was so heavy that the old woman had to help to carry it home, and you may guess what a supper the dog had that night! Now that he had made them rich, they gave him every day all that a dog likes best to eat, and the cushions on which he lay were fit for a prince.

The story of the dog and his treasure soon became known, and a neighbour whose garden was next the old people’s grew so envious of their good luck that he could neither eat nor sleep. As the dog had discovered a treasure once, this foolish man thought he must be able to discover one always, and begged the old couple to lend him their pet for a little while, so that he might be made rich also.

‘How can you ask such a thing?’ answered the old man indignantly.

‘You know how much we love him, and that he is never out of our sight for five minutes.’

But the envious neighbour would not heed his words, and came daily with the same request, till at last the old people, who could not bear to say no to anyone, promised to lend the dog, just for a night or two. No sooner did the man get hold of the dog than he turned him into the garden, but the dog did nothing but race about, and the man was forced to wait with what patience he could.

The next morning the man opened the house door, and the dog bounded joyfully into the garden, and, running up to the foot of a tree, began to scratch wildly. The man called loudly to his wife to bring a spade, and followed the dog, as he longed to catch the first glimpse of the expected treasure. But when he had dug up the ground, what did he find? Why, nothing but a parcel of old bones, which smelt so badly that he could not stay there a moment longer. And his heart was filled with rage against the dog who had played him this trick, and he seized a pickaxe and killed it on the spot, before he knew what he was doing. When he remembered that he would have to go with his story to the old man and his wife he was rather frightened, but there was nothing to be gained by putting it off, so he pulled a very long face and went to his neighbour’s garden.

‘Your dog,’ said he, pretending to weep, ‘has suddenly fallen down dead, though I took every care of him, and gave him everything he could wish for. And I thought I had better come straight and tell you.’

Weeping bitterly, the old man went to fetch the body of his favourite, and brought it home and buried it under the fig-tree where he had found the treasure. From morning till night he and his wife mourned over their loss, and nothing could comfort them.

At length, one night when he was asleep, he dreamt that the dog appeared to him and told him to cut down the fig-tree over his grave, and out of its wood to make a mortar. But when the old man woke and thought of his dream he did not feel at all inclined to cut down the tree, which bore well every year, and consulted his wife about it. The woman did not hesitate a moment, and said that after what had happened before, the dog’s advice must certainly be obeyed, so the tree was felled, and a beautiful mortar made from it. And when the season came for the rice crop to be

gathered the mortar was taken down from its shelf, and the grains placed in it for pounding, when, lo and behold! in a twinkling of an eye, they all turned into gold pieces. At the sight of all this gold the hearts of the old people were glad, and once more they blessed their faithful dog.

But it was not long before this story also came to the ears of their envious neighbour, and he lost no time in going to the old people and asking if they happened to have a mortar which they could lend him. The old man did not at all like parting with his precious treasure, but he never could say no, so the neighbour went off with the mortar under his arm.

The moment he got into his own house he took a great handful of rice, and began to shell off the husks, with the help of his wife. But, instead of the gold pieces for which they looked, the rice turned into berries with such a horrible smell that they were obliged to run away, after smashing the mortar in a rage and setting fire to the bits.

The old people next door were naturally very much put out when they learned the fate of their mortar, and were not at all comforted by the explanations and excuses made by their neighbour. But that night the dog again appeared in a dream to his master, and told him that he must go and collect the ashes of the burnt mortar and bring them home. Then, when he heard that the Daimio, or great lord to whom this part of the country belonged, was expected at the capital, he was to carry the ashes to the high road, through which the procession would have to pass. And as soon as it was in sight he was to climb up all the cherry-trees and sprinkle the ashes on them, and they would soon blossom as they had never blossomed before.

This time the old man did not wait to consult his wife as to whether he was to do what his dog had told him, but directly he got up he went to his neighbour’s house and collected the ashes of the burnt mortar. He put them carefully in a china vase, and carried it to the high road, Sitting down on a seat till the Daimio should pass. The cherry-trees were bare, for it was the season when small pots of them were sold to rich people, who kept them in hot places, so that they might blossom early and decorate their rooms. As to the trees in the open air, no one would ever think of looking for the tiniest bud for more than a month yet. The old man had not been waiting very long before he saw a cloud of dust in the far distance, and knew that it must be the procession of the Daimio. On they came, every man dressed in

his finest clothes, and the crowd that was lining the road bowed their faces to the ground as they went by. Only the old man did not bow himself, and the great lord saw this, and bade one of his courtiers, in anger, go and inquire why he had disobeyed the ancient customs. But before the messenger could reach him the old man had climbed the nearest tree and scattered his ashes far and wide, and in an instant the white flowers had flashed into life, and the heart of the Daimio rejoiced, and he gave rich presents to the old man, whom he sent for to his castle.

We may be sure that in a very little while the envious neighbour had heard this also, and his bosom was filled with hate. He hastened to the place where he had burned the mortar, collected a few of the ashes which the old man had left behind, and took them to the road, hoping that his luck might be as good as the old man's, or perhaps even better. His heart beat with pleasure when he caught the first glimpses of the Daimio's train, and he held himself ready for the right moment. As the Daimio drew near he flung a great handful of ashes over the trees, but no buds or flowers followed the action: instead, the ashes were all blown back into the eyes of the Daimio and his warriors, till they cried out from pain. Then the prince ordered the evil-doer to be seized and bound and thrown into prison, where he was kept for many months. By the time he was set free everybody in his native village had found out his wickedness, and they would not let him live there any longer; and as he would not leave off his evil ways he soon went from bad to worse, and came to a miserable end.

(Japanische Marchen.)

THE FAIRY OF THE DAWN

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Once upon a time what should happen DID happen; and if it had not happened this tale would never have been told.

There was once an emperor, very great and mighty, and he ruled over an empire so large that no one knew where it began and where it ended. But if nobody could tell the exact extent of his sovereignty everybody was aware that the emperor's right eye laughed, while his left eye wept. One or two men of valour had the courage to go and ask him the reason of this strange fact, but he only laughed and said nothing; and the reason of the deadly enmity between his two eyes was a secret only known to the monarch himself.

And all the while the emperor's sons were growing up. And such sons! All three like the morning stars in the sky!

Florea, the eldest, was so tall and broad-shouldered that no man in the kingdom could approach him.

Costan, the second, was quite different. Small of stature, and slightly built, he had a strong arm and stronger wrist.

Petru, the third and youngest, was tall and thin, more like a girl than a boy. He spoke very little, but laughed and sang, sang and laughed, from morning till night. He was very seldom serious, but then he had a way when he was thinking of stroking his hair over his forehead, which made him look old enough to sit in his father's council!

'You are grown up, Florea,' said Petru one day to his eldest brother; 'do go and ask father why one eye laughs and the other weeps.'

But Florea would not go. He had learnt by experience that this question always put the emperor in a rage.

Petru next went to Costan, but did not succeed any better with him.

'Well, well, as everyone else is afraid, I suppose I must do it myself,' observed Petru at length. No sooner said than done; the boy went straight to his father and put his question.

‘May you go blind!’ exclaimed the emperor in wrath; ‘what business is it of yours?’ and boxed Petru’s ears soundly.

Petru returned to his brothers, and told them what had befallen him; but not long after it struck him that his father’s left eye seemed to weep less, and the right to laugh more.

‘I wonder if it has anything to do with my question,’ thought he.

‘I’ll try again! After all, what do two boxes on the ear matter?’

So he put his question for the second time, and had the same answer; but the left eye only wept now and then, while the right eye looked ten years younger.

‘It really MUST be true,’ thought Petru. ‘Now I know what I have to do. I shall have to go on putting that question, and getting boxes on the ear, till both eyes laugh together.’

No sooner said than done. Petru never, never forswore himself.

‘Petru, my dear boy,’ cried the emperor, both his eyes laughing together, ‘I see you have got this on the brain. Well, I will let you into the secret. My right eye laughs when I look at my three sons, and see how strong and handsome you all are, and the other eye weeps because I fear that after I die you will not be able to keep the empire together, and to protect it from its enemies. But if you can bring me water from the spring of the Fairy of the Dawn, to bathe my eyes, then they will laugh for evermore; for I shall know that my sons are brave enough to overcome any foe.’

Thus spoke the emperor, and Petru picked up his hat and went to find his brothers.

The three young men took counsel together, and talked the subject well over, as brothers should do. And the end of it was that Florea, as the eldest, went to the stables, chose the best and handsomest horse they contained, saddled him, and took leave of the court.

‘I am starting at once,’ said he to his brothers, ‘and if after a year, a month, a week, and a day I have not returned with the water from the spring of the Fairy of the Dawn, you, Costan, had better come after me.’ So saying he disappeared round a corner of the palace.

For three days and three nights he never drew rein. Like a spirit the horse flew over mountains and valleys till he came to the borders of the empire. Here was a deep, deep trench that girdled it the whole way round,

and there was only a single bridge by which the trench could be crossed. Florea made instantly for the bridge, and there pulled up to look around him once more, to take leave of his native land Then he turned, but before him was standing a dragon—oh! SUCH a dragon!—a dragon with three heads and three horrible faces, all with their mouths wide open, one jaw reaching to heaven and the other to earth.

At this awful sight Florea did not wait to give battle. He put spurs to his horse and dashed off, WHERE he neither knew nor cared.

The dragon heaved a sigh and vanished without leaving a trace behind him.

A week went by. Florea did not return home. Two passed; and nothing was heard of him. After a month Costan began to haunt the stables and to look out a horse for himself. And the moment the year, the month, the week, and the day were over Costan mounted his horse and took leave of his youngest brother.

‘If I fail, then you come,’ said he, and followed the path that Florea had taken.

The dragon on the bridge was more fearful and his three heads more terrible than before, and the young hero rode away still faster than his brother had done.

Nothing more was heard either of him or Florea; and Petru remained alone.

‘I must go after my brothers,’ said Petru one day to his father.

‘Go, then,’ said his father, ‘and may you have better luck than they’; and he bade farewell to Petru, who rode straight to the borders of the kingdom.

The dragon on the bridge was yet more dreadful than the one Florea and Costan had seen, for this one had seven heads instead of only three.

Petru stopped for a moment when he caught sight of this terrible creature. Then he found his voice.

‘Get out of the way!’ cried he. ‘Get out of the way!’ he repeated again, as the dragon did not move. ‘Get out of the way!’ and with this last summons he drew his sword and rushed upon him. In an instant the heavens seemed to darken round him and he was surrounded by fire—fire to right of him, fire to left of him, fire to front of him, fire to rear of him;

nothing but fire whichever way he looked, for the dragon's seven heads were vomiting flame.

The horse neighed and reared at the horrible sight, and Petru could not use the sword he had in readiness.

'Be quiet! this won't do!' he said, dismounting hastily, but holding the bridle firmly in his left hand and grasping his sword in his right.

But even so he got on no better, for he could see nothing but fire and smoke.

'There is no help for it; I must go back and get a better horse,' said he, and mounted again and rode homewards.

At the gate of the palace his nurse, old Birscha, was waiting for him eagerly.

'Ah, Petru, my son, I knew you would have to come back,' she cried. 'You did not set about the matter properly.'

'How ought I to have set about it?' asked Petru, half angrily, half sadly.

'Look here, my boy,' replied old Birscha. 'You can never reach the spring of the Fairy of the Dawn unless you ride the horse which your father, the emperor, rode in his youth. Go and ask where it is to be found, and then mount it and be off with you.'

Petru thanked her heartily for her advice, and went at once to make inquiries about the horse.

'By the light of my eyes!' exclaimed the emperor when Petru had put his question. 'Who has told you anything about that? It must have been that old witch of a Birscha? Have you lost your wits? Fifty years have passed since I was young, and who knows where the bones of my horse may be rotting, or whether a scrap of his reins still lie in his stall? I have forgotten all about him long ago.'

Petru turned away in anger, and went back to his old nurse.

'Do not be cast down,' she said with a smile; 'if that is how the affair stands all will go well. Go and fetch the scrap of the reins; I shall soon know what must be done.'

The place was full of saddles, bridles, and bits of leather. Petru picked out the oldest, and blackest, and most decayed pair of reins, and brought them to the old woman, who murmured something over them and sprinkled them with incense, and held them out to the young man.

‘Take the reins,’ said she, ‘and strike them violently against the pillars of the house.’

Petru did what he was told, and scarcely had the reins touched the pillars when something happened—HOW I have no idea—that made Petru stare with surprise. A horse stood before him—a horse whose equal in beauty the world had never seen; with a saddle on him of gold and precious stones, and with such a dazzling bridle you hardly dared to look at it, lest you should lose your sight. A splendid horse, a splendid saddle, and a splendid bridle, all ready for the splendid young prince!

‘Jump on the back of the brown horse,’ said the old woman, and she turned round and went into the house.

The moment Petru was seated on the horse he felt his arm three times as strong as before, and even his heart felt braver.

‘Sit firmly in the saddle, my lord, for we have a long way to go and no time to waste,’ said the brown horse, and Petru soon saw that they were riding as no man and horse had ever ridden before.

On the bridge stood a dragon, but not the same one as he had tried to fight with, for this dragon had twelve heads, each more hideous and shooting forth more terrible flames than the other. But, horrible though he was, he had met his match. Petru showed no fear, but rolled up his sleeves, that his arms might be free.

‘Get out of the way!’ he said when he had done, but the dragon’s heads only breathed forth more flames and smoke. Petru wasted no more words, but drew his sword and prepared to throw himself on the bridge.

‘Stop a moment; be careful, my lord,’ put in the horse, ‘and be sure you do what I tell you. Dig your spurs in my body up to the rowel, draw your sword, and keep yourself ready, for we shall have to leap over both bridge and dragon. When you see that we are right above the dragon cut off his biggest head, wipe the blood off the sword, and put it back clean in the sheath before we touch earth again.’

So Petru dug in his spurs, drew his sword, cut of the head, wiped the blood, and put the sword back in the sheath before the horse’s hoofs touched the ground again.

And in this fashion they passed the bridge.

‘But we have got to go further still,’ said Petru, after he had taken a farewell glance at his native land.

‘Yes, forwards,’ answered the horse; ‘but you must tell me, my lord, at what speed you wish to go. Like the wind? Like thought? Like desire? or like a curse?’

Petru looked about him, up at the heavens and down again to the earth. A desert lay spread out before him, whose aspect made his hair stand on end.

‘We will ride at different speeds,’ said he, ‘not so fast as to grow tired nor so slow as to waste time.’

And so they rode, one day like the wind, the next like thought, the third and fourth like desire and like a curse, till they reached the borders of the desert.

‘Now walk, so that I may look about, and see what I have never seen before,’ said Petru, rubbing his eyes like one who wakes from sleep, or like him who beholds something so strange that it seems as if… Before Petru lay a wood made of copper, with copper trees and copper leaves, with bushes and flowers of copper also.

Petru stood and stared as a man does when he sees something that he has never seen, and of which he has never heard.

Then he rode right into the wood. On each side of the way the rows of flowers began to praise Petru, and to try and persuade him to pick some of them and make himself a wreath.

‘Take me, for I am lovely, and can give strength to whoever plucks me,’ said one.

‘No, take me, for whoever wears me in his hat will be loved by the most beautiful woman in the world,’ pleaded the second; and then one after another bestirred itself, each more charming than the last, all promising, in soft sweet voices, wonderful things to Petru, if only he would pick them.

Petru was not deaf to their persuasion, and was just stooping to pick one when the horse sprang to one side.

‘Why don’t you stay still?’ asked Petru roughly.

‘Do not pick the flowers; it will bring you bad luck; answered the horse.

‘Why should it do that?’

‘These flowers are under a curse. Whoever plucks them must fight the Welwa[1] of the woods.’

‘What kind of a goblin is the Welwa?’

‘Oh, do leave me in peace! But listen. Look at the flowers as much as you like, but pick none,’ and the horse walked on slowly.

Petru knew by experience that he would do well to attend to the horse’s advice, so he made a great effort and tore his mind away from the flowers.

But in vain! If a man is fated to be unlucky, unlucky he will be, whatever he may do!

The flowers went on beseeching him, and his heart grew ever weaker and weaker.

‘What must come will come,’ said Petru at length; ‘at any rate I shall see the Welwa of the woods, what she is like, and which way I had best fight her. If she is ordained to be the cause of my death, well, then it will be so; but if not I shall conquer her though she were twelve hundred Welwas,’ and once more he stooped down to gather the flowers.

‘You have done very wrong,’ said the horse sadly. ‘But it can’t be helped now. Get yourself ready for battle, for here is the Welwa!’

Hardly had he done speaking, scarcely had Petru twisted his wreath, when a soft breeze arose on all sides at once. Out of the breeze came a storm wind, and the storm wind swelled and swelled till everything around was blotted out in darkness, and darkness covered them as with a thick cloak, while the earth swayed and shook under their feet.

‘Are you afraid?’ asked the horse, shaking his mane.

‘Not yet,’ replied Petru stoutly, though cold shivers were running down his back. ‘What must come will come, whatever it is.’

‘Don’t be afraid,’ said the horse. ‘I will help you. Take the bridle from my neck, and try to catch the Welwa with it.’

The words were hardly spoken, and Petru had no time even to unbuckle the bridle, when the Welwa herself stood before him; and Petru could not bear to look at her, so horrible was she.

She had not exactly a head, yet neither was she without one. She did not fly through the air, but neither did she walk upon the earth. She had a mane like a horse, horns like a deer, a face like a bear, eyes like a polecat; while her body had something of each. And that was the Welwa.

Petru planted himself firmly in his stirrups, and began to lay about him with his sword, but could feel nothing.

A day and a night went by, and the fight was still undecided, but at last the Welwa began to pant for breath.

‘Let us wait a little and rest,’ gasped she.

Petru stopped and lowered his sword.

‘You must not stop an instant,’ said the horse, and Petru gathered up all his strength, and laid about him harder than ever.

The Welwa gave a neigh like a horse and a howl like a wolf, and threw herself afresh on Petru. For another day and night the battle raged more furiously than before. And Petru grew so exhausted he could scarcely move his arm.

‘Let us wait a little and rest,’ cried the Welwa for the second time, ‘for I see you are as weary as I am.’

‘You must not stop an instant,’ said the horse.

And Petru went on fighting, though he barely had strength to move his arm. But the Welwa had ceased to throw herself upon him, and began to deliver her blows cautiously, as if she had no longer power to strike.

And on the third day they were still fighting, but as the morning sky began to redden Petru somehow managed—how I cannot tell—to throw the bridle over the head of the tired Welwa. In a moment, from the Welwa sprang a horse—the most beautiful horse in the world.

‘Sweet be your life, for you have delivered me from my enchantment,’ said he, and began to rub his nose against his brother’s. And he told Petru all his story, and how he had been bewitched for many years.

So Petru tied the Welwa to his own horse and rode on. Where did he ride? That I cannot tell you, but he rode on fast till he got out of the copper wood.

‘Stay still, and let me look about, and see what I never have seen before,’ said Petru again to his horse. For in front of him stretched a forest that was far more wonderful, as it was made of glistening trees and shining flowers. It was the silver wood.

As before, the flowers began to beg the young man to gather them.

‘Do not pluck them,’ warned the Welwa, trotting beside him, ‘for my brother is seven times stronger than I’; but though Petru knew by

experience what this meant, it was no use, and after a moment's hesitation he began to gather the flowers, and to twist himself a wreath.

Then the storm wind howled louder, the earth trembled more violently, and the night grew darker, than the first time, and the Welwa of the silver wood came rushing on with seven times the speed of the other. For three days and three nights they fought, but at last Petru cast the bridle over the head of the second Welwa.

'Sweet be your life, for you have delivered me from enchantment,' said the second Welwa, and they all journeyed on as before.

But soon they came to a gold wood more lovely far than the other two, and again Petru's companions pleaded with him to ride through it quickly, and to leave the flowers alone. But Petru turned a deaf ear to all they said, and before he had woven his golden crown he felt that something terrible, that he could not see, was coming near him right out of the earth. He drew his sword and made himself ready for the fight. 'I will die!' cried he, 'or he shall have my bridle over his head.'

He had hardly said the words when a thick fog wrapped itself around him, and so thick was it that he could not see his own hand, or hear the sound of his voice. For a day and a night he fought with his sword, without ever once seeing his enemy, then suddenly the fog began to lighten. By dawn of the second day it had vanished altogether, and the sun shone brightly in the heavens. It seemed to Petru that he had been born again.

And the Welwa? She had vanished.

'You had better take breath now you can, for the fight will have to begin all over again,' said the horse.

'What was it?' asked Petru.

'It was the Welwa,' replied the horse, 'changed into a fog 'Listen! She is coming!'

And Petru had hardly drawn a long breath when he felt something approaching from the side, though what he could not tell. A river, yet not a river, for it seemed not to flow over the earth, but to go where it liked, and to leave no trace of its passage.

'Woe be to me!' cried Petru, frightened at last.

'Beware, and never stand still,' called the brown horse, and more he could not say, for the water was choking him.

The battle began anew. For a day and a night Petru fought on, without knowing at whom or what he struck. At dawn on the second, he felt that both his feet were lame.

‘Now I am done for,’ thought he, and his blows fell thicker and harder in his desperation. And the sun came out and the water disappeared, without his knowing how or when.

‘Take breath,’ said the horse, ‘for you have no time to lose. The Welwa will return in a moment.’

Petru made no reply, only wondered how, exhausted as he was, he should ever be able to carry on the fight. But he settled himself in his saddle, grasped his sword, and waited.

And then something came to him—WHAT I cannot tell you. Perhaps, in his dreams, a man may see a creature which has what it has not got, and has not got what it has. At least, that was what the Welwa seemed like to Petru. She flew with her feet, and walked with her wings; her head was in her back, and her tail was on top of her body; her eyes were in her neck, and her neck in her forehead, and how to describe her further I do not know.

Petru felt for a moment as if he was wrapped in a garment of fear; then he shook himself and took heart, and fought as he had never yet fought before.

As the day wore on, his strength began to fail, and when darkness fell he could hardly keep his eyes open. By midnight he knew he was no longer on his horse, but standing on the ground, though he could not have told how he got there. When the grey light of morning came, he was past standing on his feet, but fought now upon his knees.

‘Make one more struggle; it is nearly over now,’ said the horse, seeing that Petru’s strength was waning fast.

Petru wiped the sweat from his brow with his gauntlet, and with a desperate effort rose to his feet.

‘Strike the Welwa on the mouth with the bridle,’ said the horse, and Petru did it.

The Welwa uttered a neigh so loud that Petru thought he would be deaf for life, and then, though she too was nearly spent, flung herself upon her enemy; but Petru was on the watch and threw the bridle over her head, as

she rushed on, so that when the day broke there were three horses trotting beside him.

‘May your wife be the most beautiful of women,’ said the Welwa, ‘for you have delivered me from my enchantment.’ So the four horses galloped fast, and by nightfall they were at the borders of the golden forest.

Then Petru began to think of the crowns that he wore, and what they had cost him.

‘After all, what do I want with so many? I will keep the best,’ he said to himself; and taking off first the copper crown and then the silver, he threw them away.

‘Stay!’ cried the horse, ‘do not throw them away! Perhaps we shall find them of use. Get down and pick them up.’ So Petru got down and picked them up, and they all went on.

In the evening, when the sun is getting low, and all the midges are beginning to bite, Peter saw a wide heath stretching before him.

At the same instant the horse stood still of itself.

‘What is the matter?’ asked Petru.

‘I am afraid that something evil will happen to us,’ answered the horse.

‘But why should it?’

‘We are going to enter the kingdom of the goddess Mittwoch,[2] and the further we ride into it the colder we shall get. But all along the road there are huge fires, and I dread lest you should stop and warm yourself at them.’

‘And why should I not warm myself?’

‘Something fearful will happen to you if you do,’ replied the horse sadly.

‘Well, forward!’ cried Petru lightly, ‘and if I have to bear cold, I must bear it!’

With every step they went into the kingdom of Mittwoch, the air grew colder and more icy, till even the marrow in their bones was frozen. But Petru was no coward; the fight he had gone through had strengthened his powers of endurance, and he stood the test bravely.

Along the road on each side were great fires, with men standing by them, who spoke pleasantly to Petru as he went by, and invited him to join

them. The breath froze in his mouth, but he took no notice, only bade his horse ride on the faster.

How long Petru may have waged battle silently with the cold one cannot tell, for everybody knows that the kingdom of Mittwoch is not to be crossed in a day, but he struggled on, though the frozen rocks burst around, and though his teeth chattered, and even his eyelids were frozen.

At length they reached the dwelling of Mittwoch herself, and, jumping from his horse, Petru threw the reins over his horse's neck and entered the hut.

'Good-day, little mother!' said he.

'Very well, thank you, my frozen friend!'

Petru laughed, and waited for her to speak.

'You have borne yourself bravely,' went on the goddess, tapping him on the shoulder. 'Now you shall have your reward,' and she opened an iron chest, out of which she took a little box.

'Look!' said she; 'this little box has been lying here for ages, waiting for the man who could win his way through the Ice Kingdom. Take it, and treasure it, for some day it may help you.

If you open it, it will tell you anything you want, and give you news of your fatherland.'

Petru thanked her gratefully for her gift, mounted his horse, and rode away.

When he was some distance from the hut, he opened the casket.

'What are your commands?' asked a voice inside.

'Give me news of my father,' he replied, rather nervously.

'He is sitting in council with his nobles,' answered the casket.

'Is he well?'

'Not particularly, for he is furiously angry.'

'What has angered him?'

'Your brothers Costan and Florea,' replied the casket. 'It seems to me they are trying to rule him and the kingdom as well, and the old man says they are not fit to do it.'

'Push on, good horse, for we have no time to lose!' cried Petru; then he shut up the box, and put it in his pocket.

They rushed on as fast as ghosts, as whirlwinds, as vampires when they hunt at midnight, and how long they rode no man can tell, for the way is

far.

‘Stop! I have some advice to give you,’ said the horse at last.

‘What is it?’ asked Petru.

‘You have known what it is to suffer cold; you will have to endure heat, such as you have never dreamed of. Be as brave now as you were then. Let no one tempt you to try to cool yourself, or evil will befall you.’

‘Forwards!’ answered Petru. ‘Do not worry yourself. If I have escaped without being frozen, there is no chance of my melting.’

‘Why not? This is a heat that will melt the marrow in your bones—a heat that is only to be felt in the kingdom of the Goddess of Thunder.‘[3]

And it WAS hot. The very iron of the horse’s shoes began to melt, but Petru gave no heed. The sweat ran down his face, but he dried it with his gauntlet. What heat could be he never knew before, and on the way, not a stone’s throw from the road, lay the most delicious valleys, full of shady trees and bubbling streams. When Petru looked at them his heart burned within him, and his mouth grew parched. And standing among the flowers were lovely maidens who called to him in soft voices, till he had to shut his eyes against their spells.

‘Come, my hero, come and rest; the heat will kill you,’ said they.

Petru shook his head and said nothing, for he had lost the power of speech.

Long he rode in this awful state, how long none can tell. Suddenly the heat seemed to become less, and, in the distance, he saw a little hut on a hill. This was the dwelling of the Goddess of Thunder, and when he drew rein at her door the goddess herself came out to meet him.

She welcomed him, and kindly invited him in, and bade him tell her all his adventures. So Petru told her all that had happened to him, and why he was there, and then took farewell of her, as he had no time to lose. ‘For,’ he said, ‘who knows how far the Fairy of the Dawn may yet be?’

‘Stay for one moment, for I have a word of advice to give you. You are about to enter the kingdom of Venus;[4] go and tell her, as a message from me, that I hope she will not tempt you to delay. On your way back, come to me again, and I will give you something that may be of use to you.’

So Petru mounted his horse, and had hardly ridden three steps when he found himself in a new country. Here it was neither hot nor cold, but the

air was warm and soft like spring, though the way ran through a heath covered with sand and thistles.

‘What can that be?’ asked Petru, when he saw a long, long way off, at the very end of the heath, something resembling a house.

‘That is the house of the goddess Venus,’ replied the horse, ‘and if we ride hard we may reach it before dark’; and he darted off like an arrow, so that as twilight fell they found themselves nearing the house. Petru’s heart leaped at the sight, for all the way along he had been followed by a crowd of shadowy figures who danced about him from right to left, and from back to front, and Petru, though a brave man, felt now and then a thrill of fear.

‘They won’t hurt you,’ said the horse; ‘they are just the daughters of the whirlwind amusing themselves while they are waiting for the ogre of the moon.’

Then he stopped in front of the house, and Petru jumped off and went to the door.

‘Do not be in such a hurry,’ cried the horse. ‘There are several things I must tell you first. You cannot enter the house of the goddess Venus like that. She is always watched and guarded by the whirlwind.’

‘What am I to do then?’

‘Take the copper wreath, and go with it to that little hill over there. When you reach it, say to yourself, “Were there ever such lovely maidens! such angels! such fairy souls!” Then hold the wreath high in the air and cry, “Oh! if I knew whether any one would accept this wreath from me… if I knew! if I knew!” and throw the wreath from you!’

‘And why should I do all this?’ said Petru.

‘Ask no questions, but go and do it,’ replied the horse. And Petru did.

Scarcely had he flung away the copper wreath than the whirlwind flung himself upon it, and tore it in pieces.

Then Petru turned once more to the horse.

‘Stop!’ cried the horse again. ‘I have other things to tell you.

Take the silver wreath and knock at the windows of the goddess Venus. When she says, “Who is there?” answer that you have come on foot and lost your way on the heath. She will then tell you to go your way back again; but take care not to stir from the spot. Instead, be sure you say to her, “No, indeed I shall do nothing of the sort, as from my childhood I

have heard stories of the beauty of the goddess Venus, and it was not for nothing that I had shoes made of leather with soles of steel, and have travelled for nine years and nine months, and have won in battle the silver wreath, which I hope you may allow me to give you, and have done and suffered everything to be where I now am." This is what you must say. What happens after is your affair.'

Petru asked no more, but went towards the house.

By this time it was pitch dark, and there was only the ray of light that streamed through the windows to guide him, and at the sound of his footsteps two dogs began to bark loudly.

'Which of those dogs is barking? Is he tired of life?' asked the goddess Venus.

'It is I, O goddess!' replied Petru, rather timidly. 'I have lost my way on the heath, and do not know where I am to sleep this night.'

'Where did you leave your horse?' asked the goddess sharply.

Petru did not answer. He was not sure if he was to lie, or whether he had better tell the truth.

'Go away, my son, there is no place for you here,' replied she, drawing back from the window.

Then Petru repeated hastily what the horse had told him to say, and no sooner had he done so than the goddess opened the window, and in gentle tones she asked him:

'Let me see this wreath, my son,' and Petru held it out to her.

'Come into the house,' went on the goddess; 'do not fear the dogs, they always know my will.' And so they did, for as the young man passed they wagged their tails to him.

'Good evening,' said Petru as he entered the house, and, seating himself near the fire, listened comfortably to whatever the goddess might choose to talk about, which was for the most part the wickedness of men, with whom she was evidently very angry. But Petru agreed with her in everything, as he had been taught was only polite.

But was anybody ever so old as she! I do not know why Petru devoured her so with his eyes, unless it was to count the wrinkles on her face; but if so he would have had to live seven lives, and each life seven times the length of an ordinary one, before he could have reckoned them up.

But Venus was joyful in her heart when she saw Petru's eyes fixed upon her.

'Nothing was that is, and the world was not a world when I was born,' said she. 'When I grew up and the world came into being, everyone thought I was the most beautiful girl that ever was seen, though many hated me for it. But every hundred years there came a wrinkle on my face. And now I am old.' Then she went on to tell Petru that she was the daughter of an emperor, and their nearest neighbour was the Fairy of the Dawn, with whom she had a violent quarrel, and with that she broke out into loud abuse of her.

Petru did not know what to do. He listened in silence for the most part, but now and then he would say, 'Yes, yes, you must have been badly treated,' just for politeness' sake; what more could he do?

'I will give you a task to perform, for you are brave, and will carry it through,' continued Venus, when she had talked a long time, and both of them were getting sleepy. 'Close to the Fairy's house is a well, and whoever drinks from it will blossom again like a rose. Bring me a flagon of it, and I will do anything to prove my gratitude. It is not easy! no one knows that better than I do! The kingdom is guarded on every side by wild beasts and horrible dragons; but I will tell you more about that, and I also have something to give you.' Then she rose and lifted the lid of an iron-bound chest, and took out of it a very tiny flute.

'Do you see this?' she asked. 'An old man gave it to me when I was young: whoever listens to this flute goes to sleep, and nothing can wake him. Take it and play on it as long as you remain in the kingdom of the Fairy of the Dawn, and you will be safe.

At this, Petru told her that he had another task to fulfil at the well of the Fairy of the Dawn, and Venus was still better pleased when she heard his tale.

So Petru bade her good-night, put the flute in its case, and laid himself down in the lowest chamber to sleep.

Before the dawn he was awake again, and his first care was to give to each of his horses as much corn as he could eat, and then to lead them to the well to water. Then he dressed himself and made ready to start.

'Stop,' cried Venus from her window, 'I have still a piece of advice to give you. Leave one of your horses here, and only take three. Ride slowly

till you get to the fairy's kingdom, then dismount and go on foot. When you return, see that all your three horses remain on the road, while you walk. But above all beware never to look the Fairy of the Dawn in the face, for she has eyes that will bewitch you, and glances that will befool you.

She is hideous, more hideous than anything you can imagine, with owl's eyes, foxy face, and cat's claws. Do you hear? do you hear? Be sure you never look at her.'

Petru thanked her, and managed to get off at last.

Far, far away, where the heavens touch the earth, where the stars kiss the flowers, a soft red light was seen, such as the sky sometimes has in spring, only lovelier, more wonderful.

That light was behind the palace of the Fairy of the Dawn, and it took Petru two days and nights through flowery meadows to reach it. And besides, it was neither hot nor cold, bright nor dark, but something of them all, and Petru did not find the way a step too long.

After some time Petru saw something white rise up out of the red of the sky, and when he drew nearer he saw it was a castle, and so splendid that his eyes were dazzled when they looked at it. He did not know there was such a beautiful castle in the world.

But no time was to be lost, so he shook himself, jumped down from his horse, and, leaving him on the dewy grass, began to play on his flute as he walked along.

He had hardly gone many steps when he stumbled over a huge giant, who had been lulled to sleep by the music. This was one of the guards of the castle! As he lay there on his back, he seemed so big that in spite of Petru's haste he stopped to measure him.

The further went Petru, the more strange and terrible were the sights he saw—lions, tigers, dragons with seven heads, all stretched out in the sun fast asleep. It is needless to say what the dragons were like, for nowadays everyone knows, and dragons are not things to joke about. Petru ran through them like the wind. Was it haste or fear that spurred him on?

At last he came to a river, but let nobody think for a moment that this river was like other rivers? Instead of water, there flowed milk, and the bottom was of precious stones and pearls, instead of sand and pebbles. And it ran neither fast nor slow, but both fast and slow together. And the river flowed round the castle, and on its banks slept lions with iron teeth

and claws; and beyond were gardens such as only the Fairy of the Dawn can have, and on the flowers slept a fairy! All this saw Petru from the other side.

But how was he to get over? To be sure there was a bridge, but, even if it had not been guarded by sleeping lions, it was plainly not meant for man to walk on. Who could tell what it was made of? It looked like soft little woolly clouds!

So he stood thinking what was to be done, for get across he must.

After a while, he determined to take the risk, and strode back to the sleeping giant. ‘Wake up, my brave man!’ he cried, giving him a shake.

The giant woke and stretched out his hand to pick up Petru, just as we should catch a fly. But Petru played on his flute, and the giant fell back again. Petru tried this three times, and when he was satisfied that the giant was really in his power he took out a handkerchief, bound the two little fingers of the giant together, drew his sword, and cried for the fourth time, ‘Wake up, my brave man.’

When the giant saw the trick which had been played on him he said to Petru. ‘Do you call this a fair fight? Fight according to rules, if you really are a hero!’

‘I will by-and-by, but first I want to ask you a question! Will you swear that you will carry me over the river if I fight honourably with you?’ And the giant swore.

When his hands were freed, the giant flung himself upon Petru, hoping to crush him by his weight. But he had met his match. It was not yesterday, nor the day before, that Petru had fought his first battle, and he bore himself bravely.

For three days and three nights the battle raged, and sometimes one had the upper hand, and sometimes the other, till at length they both lay struggling on the ground, but Petru was on top, with the point of his sword at the giant’s throat.

‘Let me go! let me go!’ shrieked he. ‘I own that I am beaten!’

‘Will you take me over the river?’ asked Petru.

‘I will,’ gasped the giant.

‘What shall I do to you if you break your word?’

‘Kill me, any way you like! But let me live now.’

‘Very well,’ said Petru, and he bound the giant’s left hand to his right foot, tied one handkerchief round his mouth to prevent him crying out, and another round his eyes, and led him to the river.

Once they had reached the bank he stretched one leg over to the other side, and, catching up Petru in the palm of his hand, set him down on the further shore.

‘That is all right,’ said Petru. Then he played a few notes on his flute, and the giant went to sleep again. Even the fairies who had been bathing a little lower down heard the music and fell asleep among the flowers on the bank. Petru saw them as he passed, and thought, ‘If they are so beautiful, why should the Fairy of the Dawn be so ugly?’ But he dared not linger, and pushed on.

And now he was in the wonderful gardens, which seemed more wonderful still than they had done from afar. But Petru could see no faded flowers, nor any birds, as he hastened through them to the castle. No one was there to bar his way, for all were asleep. Even the leaves had ceased to move.

He passed through the courtyard, and entered the castle itself.

What he beheld there need not be told, for all the world knows that the palace of the Fairy of the Dawn is no ordinary place. Gold and precious stones were as common as wood with us, and the stables where the horses of the sun were kept were more splendid than the palace of the greatest emperor in the world.

Petru went up the stairs and walked quickly through eight-and-forty rooms, hung with silken stuffs, and all empty. In the forty-ninth he found the Fairy of the Dawn herself.

In the middle of this room, which was as large as a church, Petru saw the celebrated well that he had come so far to seek. It was a well just like other wells, and it seemed strange that the Fairy of the Dawn should have it in her own chamber; yet anyone could tell it had been there for hundreds of years. And by the well slept the Fairy of the Dawn—the Fairy of the Dawn—herself!

And as Petru looked at her the magic flute dropped by his side, and he held his breath.

Near the well was a table, on which stood bread made with does’ milk, and a flagon of wine. It was the bread of strength and the wine of youth,

and Petru longed for them. He looked once at the bread and once at the wine, and then at the Fairy of the Dawn, still sleeping on her silken cushions.

As he looked a mist came over his senses. The fairy opened her eyes slowly and looked at Petru, who lost his head still further; but he just managed to remember his flute, and a few notes of it sent the Fairy to sleep again, and he kissed her thrice. Then he stooped and laid his golden wreath upon her forehead, ate a piece of the bread and drank a cupful of the wine of youth, and this he did three times over. Then he filled a flask with water from the well, and vanished swiftly.

As he passed through the garden it seemed quite different from what it was before. The flowers were lovelier, the streams ran quicker, the sunbeams shone brighter, and the fairies seemed gayer. And all this had been caused by the three kisses Petru had given the Fairy of the Dawn.

He passed everything safely by, and was soon seated in his saddle again. Faster than the wind, faster than thought, faster than longing, faster than hatred rode Petru. At length he dismounted, and, leaving his horses at the roadside, went on foot to the house of Venus.

The goddess Venus knew that he was coming, and went to meet him, bearing with her white bread and red wine.

‘Welcome back, my prince,’ said she.

‘Good day, and many thanks,’ replied the young man, holding out the flask containing the magic water. She received it with joy, and after a short rest Petru set forth, for he had no time to lose.

He stopped a few minutes, as he had promised, with the Goddess of Thunder, and was taking a hasty farewell of her, when she called him back.

‘Stay, I have a warning to give you,’ said she. ‘Beware of your life; make friends with no man; do not ride fast, or let the water go out of your hand; believe no one, and flee flattering tongues. Go, and take care, for the way is long, the world is bad, and you hold something very precious. But I will give you this cloth to help you. It is not much to look at, but it is enchanted, and whoever carries it will never be struck by lightning, pierced by a lance, or smitten with a sword, and the arrows will glance off his body.’

Petru thanked her and rode off, and, taking out his treasure box, inquired how matters were going at home. Not well, it said. The emperor

was blind altogether now, and Florea and Costan had besought him to give the government of the kingdom into their hands; but he would not, saying that he did not mean to resign the government till he had washed his eyes from the well of the Fairy of the Dawn. Then the brothers had gone to consult old Birscha, who told them that Petru was already on his way home bearing the water. They had set out to meet him, and would try to take the magic water from him, and then claim as their reward the government of the emperor.

‘You are lying!’ cried Petru angrily, throwing the box on the ground, where it broke into a thousand pieces.

It was not long before he began to catch glimpses of his native land, and he drew rein near a bridge, the better to look at it. He was still gazing, when he heard a sound in the distance as if some one was calling hit by his name.

‘You, Petru!’ it said.

‘On! on!’ cried the horse; ‘it will fare ill with you if you stop.’

‘No, let us stop, and see who and what it is!’ answered Petru, turning his horse round, and coming face to face with his two brothers. He had forgotten the warning given him by the Goddess of Thunder, and when Costan and Florea drew near with soft and flattering words he jumped straight off his horse, and rushed to embrace them. He had a thousand questions to ask, and a thousand things to tell. But his brown horse stood sadly hanging his head.

‘Petru, my dear brother,’ at length said Florea, ‘would it not be better if we carried the water for you? Some one might try to take it from you on the road, while no one would suspect us.’

‘So it would,’ added Costan. ‘Florea speaks well.’ But Petru shook his head, and told them what the Goddess of Thunder had said, and about the cloth she had given him. And both brothers understood there was only one way in which they could kill him.

At a stone’s throw from where they stood ran a rushing stream, with clear deep pools.

‘Don’t you feel thirsty, Costan?’ asked Florea, winking at him.

‘Yes,’ replied Costan, understanding directly what was wanted. ‘Come, Petru, let us drink now we have the chance, and then we will set out on our

way home. It is a good thing you have us with you, to protect you from harm.’

The horse neighed, and Petru knew what it meant, and did not go with his brothers.

No, he went home to his father, and cured his blindness; and as for his brothers, they never returned again.

(From Rumanische Marchen.)

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1. A goblin.
2. In German ‘Mittwoch,’ the feminine form of Mercury.
3. In the German ‘Donnerstag’—the day of the Thunder God, i.e. Jupiter.
4. ‘Vineri’ is Friday, and also ‘Venus.’

THE ENCHANTED KNIFE

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Once upon a time there lived a young man who vowed that he would never marry any girl who had not royal blood in her veins. One day he plucked up all his courage and went to the palace to ask the emperor for his daughter. The emperor was not much pleased at the thought of such a match for his only child, but being very polite, he only said:

‘Very well, my son, if you can win the princess you shall have her, and the conditions are these. In eight days you must manage to tame and bring to me three horses that have never felt a master. The first is pure white, the second a foxy-red with a black head, the third coal black with a white head and feet. And besides that, you must also bring as a present to the empress, my wife, as much gold as the three horses can carry.’

The young man listened in dismay to these words, but with an effort he thanked the emperor for his kindness and left the palace, wondering how he was to fulfil the task allotted to him. Luckily for him, the emperor’s daughter had overheard everything her father had said, and peeping through a curtain had seen the youth, and thought him handsomer than anyone she had ever beheld.

So returning hastily to her own room, she wrote him a letter which she gave to a trusty servant to deliver, begging her wooer to come to her rooms early the next day, and to undertake nothing without her advice, if he ever wished her to be his wife.

That night, when her father was asleep, she crept softly into his chamber and took out an enchanted knife from the chest where he kept his treasures, and hid it carefully in a safe place before she went to bed.

The sun had hardly risen the following morning when the princess’s nurse brought the young man to her apartments. Neither spoke for some minutes, but stood holding each other’s hands for joy, till at last they both cried out that nothing but death should part them. Then the maiden said:

‘Take my horse, and ride straight through the wood towards the sunset till you come to a hill with three peaks. When you get there, turn first to

the right and then to the left, and you will find yourself in a sun meadow, where many horses are feeding. Out of these you must pick out the three described to you by my father. If they prove shy, and refuse to let you get near them, draw out your knife, and let the sun shine on it so that the whole meadow is lit up by its rays, and the horses will then approach you of their own accord, and will let you lead them away. When you have them safely, look about till you see a cypress tree, whose roots are of brass, whose boughs are of silver, and whose leaves are of gold. Go to it, and cut away the roots with your knife, and you will come to countless bags of gold. Load the horses with all they can carry, and return to my father, and tell him that you have done your task, and can claim me for your wife.'

The princess had finished all she had to say, and now it depended on the young man to do his part. He hid the knife in the folds of his girdle, mounted his horse, and rode off in search of the meadow. This he found without much difficulty, but the horses were all so shy that they galloped away directly he approached them. Then he drew his knife, and held it up towards the sun, and directly there shone such a glory that the whole meadow was bathed in it. From all sides the horses rushed pressing round, and each one that passed him fell on its knees to do him honour.

But he only chose from them all the three that the emperor had described. These he secured by a silken rope to his own horse, and then looked about for the cypress tree. It was standing by itself in one corner, and in a moment he was beside it, tearing away the earth with his knife. Deeper and deeper he dug, till far down, below the roots of brass, his knife struck upon the buried treasure, which lay heaped up in bags all around. With a great effort he lifted them from their hiding place, and laid them one by one on his horses' backs, and when they could carry no more he led them back to the emperor. And when the emperor saw him, he wondered, but never guessed how it was the young man had been too clever for him, till the betrothal ceremony was over. Then he asked his newly made son-in-law what dowry he would require with his bride. To which the bridegroom made answer, 'Noble emperor! all I desire is that I may have your daughter for my wife, and enjoy for ever the use of your enchanted knife.'

(Volksmarchen der Serben.)

JESPER WHO HERDED THE HARES

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There was once a king who ruled over a kingdom somewhere between sunrise and sunset. It was as small as kingdoms usually were in old times, and when the king went up to the roof of his palace and took a look round he could see to the ends of it in every direction. But as it was all his own, he was very proud of it, and often wondered how it would get along without him. He had only one child, and that was a daughter, so he foresaw that she must be provided with a husband who would be fit to be king after him. Where to find one rich enough and clever enough to be a suitable match for the princess was what troubled him, and often kept him awake at night.

At last he devised a plan. He made a proclamation over all his kingdom (and asked his nearest neighbours to publish it in theirs as well) that whoever could bring him a dozen of the finest pearls the king had ever seen, and could perform certain tasks that would be set him, should have his daughter in marriage and in due time succeed to the throne. The pearls, he thought, could only be brought by a very wealthy man, and the tasks would require unusual talents to accomplish them.

There were plenty who tried to fulfil the terms which the king proposed. Rich merchants and foreign princes presented themselves one after the other, so that some days the number of them was quite annoying; but, though they could all produce magnificent pearls, not one of them could perform even the simplest of the tasks set them. Some turned up, too, who were mere adventurers, and tried to deceive the old king with imitation pearls; but he was not to be taken in so easily, and they were soon sent about their business. At the end of several weeks the stream of suitors began to fall off, and still there was no prospect of a suitable son-in-law.

Now it so happened that in a little corner of the king’s dominions, beside the sea, there lived a poor fisher, who had three sons, and their

names were Peter, Paul, and Jesper. Peter and Paul were grown men, while Jesper was just coming to manhood.

The two elder brothers were much bigger and stronger than the youngest, but Jesper was far the cleverest of the three, though neither Peter nor Paul would admit this. It was a fact, however, as we shall see in the course of our story.

One day the fisherman went out fishing, and among his catch for the day he brought home three dozen oysters. When these were opened, every shell was found to contain a large and beautiful pearl. Hereupon the three brothers, at one and the same moment, fell upon the idea of offering themselves as suitors for the princess. After some discussion, it was agreed that the pearls should be divided by lot, and that each should have his chance in the order of his age: of course, if the oldest was successful the other two would be saved the trouble of trying.

Next morning Peter put his pearls in a little basket, and set off for the king's palace. He had not gone far on his way when he came upon the King of the Ants and the King of the Beetles, who, with their armies behind them, were facing each other and preparing for battle.

'Come and help me,' said the King of the Ants; 'the beetles are too big for us. I may help you some day in return.'

'I have no time to waste on other people's affairs,' said Peter; 'just fight away as best you can;' and with that he walked off and left them.

A little further on the way he met an old woman.

'Good morning, young man,' said she; 'you are early astir. What have you got in your basket?'

'Cinders,' said Peter promptly, and walked on, adding to himself, 'Take that for being so inquisitive.'

'Very well, cinders be it,' the old woman called after him, but he pretended not to hear her.

Very soon he reached the palace, and was at once brought before the king. When he took the cover off the basket, the king and all his courtiers said with one voice that these were the finest pearls they had ever seen, and they could not take their eyes off them. But then a strange thing happened: the pearls began to lose their whiteness and grew quite dim in colour; then they grew blacker and blacker till at last they were just like so many cinders. Peter was so amazed that he could say nothing for himself,

but the king said quite enough for both, and Peter was glad to get away home again as fast as his legs would carry him. To his father and brothers, however, he gave no account of his attempt, except that it had been a failure.

Next day Paul set out to try his luck. He soon came upon the King of the Ants and the King of the Beetles, who with their armies had encamped on the field of battle all night, and were ready to begin the fight again.

‘Come and help me,’ said the King of the Ants; ‘we got the worst of it yesterday. I may help you some day in return.’

‘I don’t care though you get the worst of it to-day too,’ said Paul. ‘I have more important business on hand than mixing myself up in your quarrels.’

So he walked on, and presently the same old woman met him. ‘Good morning,’ said she; ‘what have YOU got in your basket?’

‘Cinders,’ said Paul, who was quite as insolent as his brother, and quite as anxious to teach other people good manners.

‘Very well, cinders be it,’ the old woman shouted after him, but Paul neither looked back nor answered her. He thought more of what she said, however, after his pearls also turned to cinders before the eyes of king and court: then he lost no time in getting home again, and was very sulky when asked how he had succeeded.

The third day came, and with it came Jesper’s turn to try his fortune. He got up and had his breakfast, while Peter and Paul lay in bed and made rude remarks, telling him that he would come back quicker than he went, for if they had failed it could not be supposed that he would succeed. Jesper made no reply, but put his pearls in the little basket and walked off.

The King of the Ants and the King of the Beetles were again marshalling their hosts, but the ants were greatly reduced in numbers, and had little hope of holding out that day.

‘Come and help us,’ said their king to Jesper, ‘or we shall be completely defeated. I may help you some day in return.’

Now Jesper had always heard the ants spoken of as clever and industrious little creatures, while he never heard anyone say a good word for the beetles, so he agreed to give the wished-for help. At the first charge he made, the ranks of the beetles broke and fled in dismay, and those escaped best that were nearest a hole, and could get into it before Jesper’s

boots came down upon them. In a few minutes the ants had the field all to themselves; and their king made quite an eloquent speech to Jesper, thanking him for the service he had done them, and promising to assist him in any difficulty.

‘Just call on me when you want me,’ he said, ‘where-ever you are. I’m never far away from anywhere, and if I can possibly help you, I shall not fail to do it.’

Jesper was inclined to laugh at this, but he kept a grave face, said he would remember the offer, and walked on. At a turn of the road he suddenly came upon the old woman. ‘Good morning,’ said she; ‘what have YOU got in your basket?’

‘Pearls,’ said Jesper; ‘I’m going to the palace to win the princess with them.’ And in case she might not believe him, he lifted the cover and let her see them.

‘Beautiful,’ said the old woman; ‘very beautiful indeed; but they will go a very little way towards winning the princess, unless you can also perform the tasks that are set you. However,’ she said, ‘I see you have brought something with you to eat. Won’t you give that to me: you are sure to get a good dinner at the palace.’

‘Yes, of course,’ said Jesper, ‘I hadn’t thought of that’; and he handed over the whole of his lunch to the old woman.

He had already taken a few steps on the way again, when the old woman called him back.

‘Here,’ she said; ‘take this whistle in return for your lunch. It isn’t much to look at, but if you blow it, anything that you have lost or that has been taken from you will find its way back to you in a moment.’

Jesper thanked her for the whistle, though he did not see of what use it was to be to him just then, and held on his way to the palace.

When Jesper presented his pearls to the king there were exclamations of wonder and delight from everyone who saw them. It was not pleasant, however, to discover that Jesper was a mere fisher-lad; that wasn’t the kind of son-in-law that the king had expected, and he said so to the queen.

‘Never mind,’ said she, ‘you can easily set him such tasks as he will never be able to perform: we shall soon get rid of him.’

‘Yes, of course,’ said the king; ‘really I forget things nowadays, with all the bustle we have had of late.’

That day Jesper dined with the king and queen and their nobles, and at night was put into a bedroom grander than anything of the kind he had ever seen. It was all so new to him that he could not sleep a wink, especially as he was always wondering what kind of tasks would be set him to do, and whether he would be able to perform them. In spite of the softness of the bed, he was very glad when morning came at last.

After breakfast was over, the king said to Jesper, ‘Just come with me, and I’ll show you what you must do first.’ He led him out to the barn, and there in the middle of the floor was a large pile of grain. ‘Here,’ said the king, ‘you have a mixed heap of wheat, barley, oats, and rye, a sackful of each. By an hour before sunset you must have these sorted out into four heaps, and if a single grain is found to be in a wrong heap you have no further chance of marrying my daughter. I shall lock the door, so that no one can get in to assist you, and I shall return at the appointed time to see how you have succeeded.’

The king walked off, and Jesper looked in despair at the task before him. Then he sat down and tried what he could do at it, but it was soon very clear that single-handed he could never hope to accomplish it in the time. Assistance was out of the question—unless, he suddenly thought—unless the King of the Ants could help. On him he began to call, and before many minutes had passed that royal personage made his appearance. Jesper explained the trouble he was in.

‘Is that all?’ said the ant; ‘we shall soon put that to rights.’ He gave the royal signal, and in a minute or two a stream of ants came pouring into the barn, who under the king’s orders set to work to separate the grain into the proper heaps.

Jesper watched them for a while, but through the continual movement of the little creatures, and his not having slept during the previous night, he soon fell sound asleep. When he woke again, the king had just come into the barn, and was amazed to find that not only was the task accomplished, but that Jesper had found time to take a nap as well.

‘Wonderful,’ said he; ‘I couldn’t have believed it possible. However, the hardest is yet to come, as you will see to-morrow.’

Jesper thought so too when the next day’s task was set before him. The king’s gamekeepers had caught a hundred live hares, which were to be let loose in a large meadow, and there Jesper must herd them all day, and

bring them safely home in the evening: if even one were missing, he must give up all thought of marrying the princess. Before he had quite grasped the fact that this was an impossible task, the keepers had opened the sacks in which the hares were brought to the field, and, with a whisk of the short tail and a flap of the long ears, each one of the hundred flew in a different direction.

‘Now,’ said the king, ‘as he walked away, ‘let’s see what your cleverness can do here.’

Jesper stared round him in bewilderment, and having nothing better to do with his hands, thrust them into his pockets, as he was in the habit of doing. Here he found something which turned out to be the whistle given to him by the old woman. He remembered what she had said about the virtues of the whistle, but was rather doubtful whether its powers would extend to a hundred hares, each of which had gone in a different direction and might be several miles distant by this time. However, he blew the whistle, and in a few minutes the hares came bounding through the hedge on all the four sides of the field, and before long were all sitting round him in a circle. After that, Jesper allowed them to run about as they pleased, so long as they stayed in the field.

The king had told one of the keepers to hang about for a little and see what became of Jesper, not doubting, however, that as soon as he saw the coast clear he would use his legs to the best advantage, and never show face at the palace again. It was therefore with great surprise and annoyance that he now learned of the mysterious return of the hares and the likelihood of Jesper carrying out his task with success.

‘One of them must be got out of his hands by hook or crook,’ said he. ‘I’ll go and see the queen about it; she’s good at devising plans.’

A little later, a girl in a shabby dress came into the field and walked up to Jesper.

‘Do give me one of those hares,’ she said; ‘we have just got visitors who are going to stay to dinner, and there’s nothing we can give them to eat.’

‘I can’t,’ said Jesper. ‘For one thing, they’re not mine; for another, a great deal depends on my having them all here in the evening.’

But the girl (and she was a very pretty girl, though so shabbily dressed) begged so hard for one of them that at last he said:

‘Very well; give me a kiss and you shall have one of them.’

He could see that she didn’t quite care for this, but she consented to the bargain, and gave him the kiss, and went away with a hare in her apron. Scarcely had she got outside the field, however, when Jesper blew his whistle, and immediately the hare wriggled out of its prison like an eel, and went back to its master at the top of its speed.

Not long after this the hare-herd had another visit. This time it was a stout old woman in the dress of a peasant, who also was after a hare to provide a dinner for unexpected visitors. Jesper again refused, but the old lady was so pressing, and would take no refusal, that at last he said:

‘Very well, you shall have a hare, and pay nothing for it either, if you will only walk round me on tiptoe, look up to the sky, and cackle like a hen.’

‘Fie,’ said she; ‘what a ridiculous thing to ask anyone to do; just think what the neighbours would say if they saw me. They would think I had taken leave of my senses.’

‘Just as you like,’ said Jesper; ‘you know best whether you want the hare or not.’

There was no help for it, and a pretty figure the old lady made in carrying out her task; the cackling wasn’t very well done, but Jesper said it would do, and gave her the hare. As soon as she had left the field, the whistle was sounded again, and back came long-legs-and-ears at a marvellous speed.

The next to appear on the same errand was a fat old fellow in the dress of a groom: it was the royal livery he wore, and he plainly thought a good deal of himself.

‘Young man,’ said he, ‘I want one of those hares; name your price, but I MUST have one of them.’

‘All right,’ said Jesper; ‘you can have one at an easy rate. Just stand on your head, whack your heels together, and cry “Hurrah,” and the hare is yours.’

‘Eh, what!’ said the old fellow; ‘ME stand on my head, what an idea!’

‘Oh, very well,’ said Jesper, ‘you needn’t unless you like, you know; but then you won’t get the hare.’

It went very much against the grain, one could see, but after some efforts the old fellow had his head on the grass and his heels in the air; the

whacking and the ‘Hurrah’ were rather feeble, but Jesper was not very exacting, and the hare was handed over. Of course, it wasn’t long in coming back again, like the others.

Evening came, and home came Jesper with the hundred hares behind him. Great was the wonder over all the palace, and the king and queen seemed very much put out, but it was noticed that the princess actually smiled to Jesper.

‘Well, well,’ said the king; ‘you have done that very well indeed. If you are as successful with a little task which I shall give you to-morrow we shall consider the matter settled, and you shall marry the princess.’

Next day it was announced that the task would be performed in the great hall of the palace, and everyone was invited to come and witness it. The king and queen sat on their thrones, with the princess beside them, and the lords and ladies were all round the hall. At a sign from the king, two servants carried in a large empty tub, which they set down in the open space before the throne, and Jesper was told to stand beside it.

‘Now,’ said the king, ‘you must tell us as many undoubted truths as will fill that tub, or you can’t have the princess.’

‘But how are we to know when the tub is full?’ said Jesper.

‘Don’t you trouble about that,’ said the king; ‘that’s my part of the business.’

This seemed to everybody present rather unfair, but no one liked to be the first to say so, and Jesper had to put the best face he could on the matter, and begin his story.

‘Yesterday,’ he said, ‘when I was herding the hares, there came to me a girl, in a shabby dress, and begged me to give her one of them. She got the hare, but she had to give me a kiss for it; AND THAT GIRL WAS THE PRINCESS. Isn’t that true?’ said he, looking at her.

The princess blushed and looked very uncomfortable, but had to admit that it was true.

‘That hasn’t filled much of the tub,’ said the king. ‘Go on again.’

‘After that,’ said Jesper, ‘a stout old woman, in a peasant’s dress, came and begged for a hare. Before she got it, she had to walk round me on tiptoe, turn up her eyes, and cackle like a hen; AND THAT OLD WOMAN WAS THE QUEEN. Isn’t that true, now?’

The queen turned very red and hot, but couldn’t deny it.

‘H-m,’ said the king; ‘that is something, but the tub isn’t full yet.’ To the queen he whispered, ‘I didn’t think you would be such a fool.’

‘What did YOU do?’ she whispered in return.

‘Do you suppose I would do anything for HIM?’ said the king, and then hurriedly ordered Jesper to go on.

‘In the next place,’ said Jesper, ‘there came a fat old fellow on the same errand. He was very proud and dignified, but in order to get the hare he actually stood on his head, whacked his heels together, and cried “Hurrah”; and that old fellow was the——’

‘Stop, stop,’ shouted the king; ‘you needn’t say another word; the tub is full.’ Then all the court applauded, and the king and queen accepted Jesper as their son-in-law, and the princess was very well pleased, for by this time she had quite fallen in love with him, because he was so handsome and so clever. When the old king got time to think over it, he was quite convinced that his kingdom would be safe in Jesper’s hands if he looked after the people as well as he herded the hares.

(Scandinavian.)

THE UNDERGROUND WORKERS

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On a bitter night somewhere between Christmas and the New Year, a man set out to walk to the neighbouring village. It was not many miles off, but the snow was so thick that there were no roads, or walls, or hedges left to guide him, and very soon he lost his way altogether, and was glad to get shelter from the wind behind a thick juniper tree. Here he resolved to spend the night, thinking that when the sun rose he would be able to see his path again.

So he tucked his legs snugly under him like a hedgehog, rolled himself up in his sheepskin, and went to sleep. How long he slept, I cannot tell you, but after awhile he became aware that some one was gently shaking him, while a stranger whispered, ‘My good man, get up! If you lie there any more, you will be buried in the snow, and no one will ever know what became of you.’

The sleeper slowly raised his head from his furs, and opened his heavy eyes. Near him stood a long thin man, holding in his hand a young fir tree taller than himself. ‘Come with me,’ said the man, ‘a little way off we have made a large fire, and you will rest far better there than out upon this moor.’ The sleeper did not wait to be asked twice, but rose at once and followed the stranger. The snow was falling so fast that he could not see three steps in front of him, till the stranger waved his staff, when the drifts parted before them. Very soon they reached a wood, and saw the friendly glow of a fire.

‘What is your name?’ asked the stranger, suddenly turning round.

‘I am called Hans, the son of Long Hans,’ said the peasant.

In front of the fire three men were sitting clothed in white, just as if it was summer, and for about thirty feet all round winter had been banished. The moss was dry and the plants green, while the grass seemed all alive with the hum of bees and cockchafers. But above the noise the son of Long Hans could hear the whistling of the wind and the crackling of the branches as they fell beneath the weight of the snow.

‘Well! you son of Long Hans, isn’t this more comfortable than your juniper bush?’ laughed the stranger, and for answer Hans replied he could not thank his friend enough for having brought him here, and, throwing off his sheepskin, rolled it up as a pillow. Then, after a hot drink which warmed both their hearts, they lay down on the ground. The stranger talked for a little to the other men in a language Hans did not understand, and after listening for a short time he once more fell asleep.

When he awoke, neither wood nor fire was to be seen, and he did not know where he was. He rubbed his eyes, and began to recall the events of the night, thinking he must have been dreaming; but for all that, he could not make out how he came to be in this place.

Suddenly a loud noise struck on his ear, and he felt the earth tremble beneath his feet. Hans listened for a moment, then resolved to go towards the place where the sound came from, hoping he might come across some human being. He found himself at length at the mouth of a rocky cave in which a fire seemed burning. He entered, and saw a huge forge, and a crowd of men in front of it, blowing bellows and wielding hammers, and to each anvil were seven men, and a set of more comical smiths could not be found if you searched all the world through! Their heads were bigger than their little bodies, and their hammers twice the size of themselves, but the strongest men on earth could not have handled their iron clubs more stoutly or given lustier blows.

The little blacksmiths were clad in leather aprons, which covered them from their necks to their feet in front, and left their backs naked. On a high stool against the wall sat the man with the pinewood staff, watching sharply the way the little fellows did their work, and near him stood a large can, from which every now and then the workers would come and take a drink. The master no longer wore the white garments of the day before, but a black jerkin, held in its place by a leathern girdle with huge clasps.

From time to time he would give his workmen a sign with his staff, for it was useless to speak amid such a noise.

If any of them had noticed that there was a stranger present they took no heed of him, but went on with what they were doing. After some hours’ hard labour came the time for rest, and they all flung their hammers to the ground and trooped out of the cave.

Then the master got down from his seat and said to Hans:

‘I saw you come in, but the work was pressing, and I could not stop to speak to you. To-day you must be my guest, and I will show you something of the way in which I live. Wait here for a moment, while I lay aside these dirty clothes.’ With these words he unlocked a door in the cave, and bade Hans pass in before him.

Oh, what riches and treasures met Hans’ astonished eyes! Gold and silver bars lay piled on the floor, and glittered so that you could not look at them! Hans thought he would count them for fun, and had already reached the five hundred and seventieth when his host returned and cried, laughing:

‘Do not try to count them, it would take too long; choose some of the bars from the heap, as I should like to make you a present of them.’

Hans did not wait to be asked twice, and stooped to pick up a bar of gold, but though he put forth all his strength he could not even move it with both hands, still less lift it off the ground.

‘Why, you have no more power than a flea,’ laughed the host; ‘you will have to content yourself with feasting your eyes upon them!’

So he bade Hans follow him through other rooms, till they entered one bigger than a church, filled, like the rest, with gold and silver. Hans wondered to see these vast riches, which might have bought all the kingdoms of the world, and lay buried, useless, he thought, to anyone.

‘What is the reason,’ he asked of his guide, ‘that you gather up these treasures here, where they can do good to nobody? If they fell into the hands of men, everyone would be rich, and none need work or suffer hunger.’

‘And it is exactly for that reason,’ answered he, ‘that I must keep these riches out of their way. The whole world would sink to idleness if men were not forced to earn their daily bread. It is only through work and care that man can ever hope to be good for anything.’

Hans stared at these words, and at last he begged that his host would tell him what use it was to anybody that this gold and silver should lie mouldering there, and the owner of it be continually trying to increase his treasure, which already overflowed his store rooms.

‘I am not really a man,’ replied his guide, ‘though I have the outward form of one, but one of those beings to whom is given the care of the

world. It is my task and that of my workmen to prepare under the earth the gold and silver, a small portion of which finds its way every year to the upper world, but only just enough to help them carry on their business. To none comes wealth without trouble: we must first dig out the gold and mix the grains with earth, clay, and sand. Then, after long and hard seeking, it will be found in this state, by those who have good luck or much patience. But, my friend, the hour of dinner is at hand. If you wish to remain in this place, and feast your eyes on this gold, then stay till I call you.'

In his absence Hans wandered from one treasure chamber to another, sometimes trying to break off a little lump of gold, but never able to do it. After awhile his host came back, but so changed that Hans could not believe it was really he. His silken clothes were of the brightest flame colour, richly trimmed with gold fringes and lace; a golden girdle was round his waist, while his head was encircled with a crown of gold, and precious stones twinkled about him like stars in a winter's night, and in place of his wooden stick he held a finely worked golden staff.

The lord of all this treasure locked the doors and put the keys in his pocket, then led Hans into another room, where dinner was laid for them. Table and seats were all of silver, while the dishes and plates were of solid gold. Directly they sat down, a dozen little servants appeared to wait on them, which they did so cleverly and so quickly that Hans could hardly believe they had no wings. As they did not reach as high as the table, they were often obliged to jump and hop right on to the top to get at the dishes. Everything was new to Hans, and though he was rather bewildered he enjoyed himself very much, especially when the man with the golden crown began to tell him many things he had never heard of before.

'Between Christmas and the New Year,' said he, 'I often amuse myself by wandering about the earth watching the doings of men and learning something about them. But as far as I have seen and heard I cannot speak well of them. The greater part of them are always quarrelling and complaining of each other's faults, while nobody thinks of his own.'

Hans tried to deny the truth of these words, but he could not do it, and sat silent, hardly listening to what his friend was saying. Then he went to sleep in his chair, and knew nothing of what was happening.

Wonderful dreams came to him during his sleep, where the bars of gold continually hovered before his eyes. He felt stronger than he had ever

felt during his waking moments, and lifted two bars quite easily on to his back. He did this so often that at length his strength seemed exhausted, and he sank almost breathless on the ground. Then he heard the sound of cheerful voices, and the song of the blacksmiths as they blew their bellows —he even felt as if he saw the sparks flashing before his eyes. Stretching himself, he awoke slowly, and here he was in the green forest, and instead of the glow of the fire in the underworld the sun was streaming on him, and he sat up wondering why he felt so strange.

At length his memory came back to him, and as he called to mind all the wonderful things he had seen he tried in vain to make them agree with those that happen every day. After thinking it over till he was nearly mad, he tried at last to believe that one night between Christmas and the New Year he had met a stranger in the forest, and had slept all night in his company before a big fire; the next day they had dined together, and had drunk a great deal more than was good for them—in short, he had spent two whole days revelling with another man. But here, with the full tide of summer around him, he could hardly accept his own explanation, and felt that he must have been the plaything or sport of some magician.

Near him, in the full sunlight, were the traces of a dead fire, and when he drew close to it he saw that what he had taken for ashes was really fine silver dust, and that the half burnt firewood was made of gold.

Oh, how lucky Hans thought himself; but where should he get a sack to carry his treasure home before anyone else found it? But necessity is the mother of invention: Hans threw off his fur coat, gathered up the silver ashes so carefully in it that none remained behind, laid the gold sticks on top, and tied up the bag thus made with his girdle, so that nothing should fall out. The load was not, in point of fact, very heavy, although it seemed so to his imagination, and he moved slowly along till he found a safe hiding-place for it.

In this way Hans suddenly became rich—rich enough to buy a property of his own. But being a prudent man, he finally decided that it would be best for him to leave his old neighbourhood and look for a home in a distant part of the country, where nobody knew anything about him. It did not take him long to find what he wanted, and after he had paid for it there was plenty of money left over. When he was settled, he married a pretty girl who lived near by, and had some children, to whom on his death-bed

he told the story of the lord of the underworld, and how he had made Hans rich.

(Ehstnische Marchen.)

THE HISTORY OF DWARF LONG NOSE

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It is a great mistake to think that fairies, witches, magicians, and such people lived only in Eastern countries and in such times as those of the Caliph Haroun Al-Raschid. Fairies and their like belong to every country and every age, and no doubt we should see plenty of them now—if we only knew how.

In a large town in Germany there lived, some couple of hundred years ago, a cobbler and his wife. They were poor and hard-working. The man sat all day in a little stall at the street corner and mended any shoes that were brought him. His wife sold the fruit and vegetables they grew in their garden in the Market Place, and as she was always neat and clean and her goods were temptingly spread out she had plenty of customers.

The couple had one boy called Jem. A handsome, pleasant-faced boy of twelve, and tall for his age. He used to sit by his mother in the market and would carry home what people bought from her, for which they often gave him a pretty flower, or a slice of cake, or even some small coin.

One day Jem and his mother sat as usual in the Market Place with plenty of nice herbs and vegetables spread out on the board, and in some smaller baskets early pears, apples, and apricots. Jem cried his wares at the top of his voice:

‘This way, gentlemen! See these lovely cabbages and these fresh herbs! Early apples, ladies; early pears and apricots, and all cheap. Come, buy, buy!’

As he cried an old woman came across the Market Place. She looked very torn and ragged, and had a small sharp face, all wrinkled, with red eyes, and a thin hooked nose which nearly met her chin. She leant on a tall stick and limped and shuffled and stumbled along as if she were going to fall on her nose at any moment.

In this fashion she came along till she got to the stall where Jem and his mother were, and there she stopped.

‘Are you Hannah the herb seller?’ she asked in a croaky voice as her head shook to and fro.

‘Yes, I am,’ was the answer. ‘Can I serve you?’

‘We’ll see; we’ll see! Let me look at those herbs. I wonder if you’ve got what I want,’ said the old woman as she thrust a pair of hideous brown hands into the herb basket, and began turning over all the neatly packed herbs with her skinny fingers, often holding them up to her nose and sniffing at them.

The cobbler’s wife felt much disgusted at seeing her wares treated like this, but she dared not speak. When the old hag had turned over the whole basket she muttered, ‘Bad stuff, bad stuff; much better fifty years ago—all bad.’

This made Jem very angry

‘You are a very rude old woman,’ he cried out. ‘First you mess all our nice herbs about with your horrid brown fingers and sniff at them with your long nose till no one else will care to buy them, and then you say it’s all bad stuff, though the duke’s cook himself buys all his herbs from us.’

The old woman looked sharply at the saucy boy, laughed unpleasantly, and said:

‘So you don’t like my long nose, sonny? Well, you shall have one yourself, right down to your chin.’

As she spoke she shuffled towards the hamper of cabbages, took up one after another, squeezed them hard, and threw them back, muttering again, ‘Bad stuff, bad stuff.’

‘Don’t waggle your head in that horrid way,’ begged Jem anxiously. ‘Your neck is as thin as a cabbage-stalk, and it might easily break and your head fall into the basket, and then who would buy anything?’

‘Don’t you like thin necks?’ laughed the old woman. ‘Then you sha’n’t have any, but a head stuck close between your shoulders so that it may be quite sure not to fall off.’

‘Don’t talk such nonsense to the child,’ said the mother at last.

‘If you wish to buy, please make haste, as you are keeping other customers away.’

‘Very well, I will do as you ask,’ said the old woman, with an angry look. ‘I will buy these six cabbages, but, as you see, I can only walk with

my stick and can carry nothing. Let your boy carry them home for me and I'll pay him for his trouble.'

The little fellow didn't like this, and began to cry, for he was afraid of the old woman, but his mother ordered him to go, for she thought it wrong not to help such a weakly old creature; so, still crying, he gathered the cabbages into a basket and followed the old woman across the Market Place.

It took her more than half an hour to get to a distant part of the little town, but at last she stopped in front of a small tumble-down house. She drew a rusty old hook from her pocket and stuck it into a little hole in the door, which suddenly flew open. How surprised Jem was when they went in! The house was splendidly furnished, the walls and ceiling of marble, the furniture of ebony inlaid with gold and precious stones, the floor of such smooth slippery glass that the little fellow tumbled down more than once.

The old woman took out a silver whistle and blew it till the sound rang through the house. Immediately a lot of guinea pigs came running down the stairs, but Jem thought it rather odd that they all walked on their hind legs, wore nutshells for shoes, and men's clothes, whilst even their hats were put on in the newest fashion.

'Where are my slippers, lazy crew?' cried the old woman, and hit about with her stick. 'How long am I to stand waiting here?'

They rushed upstairs again and returned with a pair of cocoa nuts lined with leather, which she put on her feet. Now all limping and shuffling was at an end. She threw away her stick and walked briskly across the glass floor, drawing little Jem after her. At last she paused in a room which looked almost like a kitchen, it was so full of pots and pans, but the tables were of mahogany and the sofas and chairs covered with the richest stuffs.

'Sit down,' said the old woman pleasantly, and she pushed Jem into a corner of a sofa and put a table close in front of him. 'Sit down, you've had a long walk and a heavy load to carry, and I must give you something for your trouble. Wait a bit, and I'll give you some nice soup, which you'll remember as long as you live.'

So saying, she whistled again. First came in guinea pigs in men's clothing. They had tied on large kitchen aprons, and in their belts were stuck carving knives and sauce ladles and such things. After them hopped

in a number of squirrels. They too walked on their hind legs, wore full Turkish trousers, and little green velvet caps on their heads. They seemed to be the scullions, for they clambered up the walls and brought down pots and pans, eggs, flour, butter, and herbs, which they carried to the stove. Here the old woman was bustling about, and Jem could see that she was cooking something very special for him. At last the broth began to bubble and boil, and she drew off the saucepan and poured its contents into a silver bowl, which she set before Jem.

‘There, my boy,’ said she, ‘eat this soup and then you’ll have everything which pleased you so much about me. And you shall be a clever cook too, but the real herb—no, the REAL herb you’ll never find. Why had your mother not got it in her basket?’

The child could not think what she was talking about, but he quite understood the soup, which tasted most delicious. His mother had often given him nice things, but nothing had ever seemed so good as this. The smell of the herbs and spices rose from the bowl, and the soup tasted both sweet and sharp at the same time, and was very strong. As he was finishing it the guinea pigs lit some Arabian incense, which gradually filled the room with clouds of blue vapour. They grew thicker and thicker and the scent nearly overpowered the boy. He reminded himself that he must get back to his mother, but whenever he tried to rouse himself to go he sank back again drowsily, and at last he fell sound asleep in the corner of the sofa.

Strange dreams came to him. He thought the old woman took off all his clothes and wrapped him up in a squirrel skin, and that he went about with the other squirrels and guinea pigs, who were all very pleasant and well mannered, and waited on the old woman.

First he learned to clean her cocoa-nut shoes with oil and to rub them up. Then he learnt to catch the little sun moths and rub them through the finest sieves, and the flour from them he made into soft bread for the toothless old woman.

In this way he passed from one kind of service to another, spending a year in each, till in the fourth year he was promoted to the kitchen. Here he worked his way up from under-scullion to head-pastrycook, and reached the greatest perfection. He could make all the most difficult dishes, and

two hundred different kinds of patties, soup flavoured with every sort of herb—he had learnt it all, and learnt it well and quickly.

When he had lived seven years with the old woman she ordered him one day, as she was going out, to kill and pluck a chicken, stuff it with herbs, and have it very nicely roasted by the time she got back. He did this quite according to rule. He wrung the chicken's neck, plunged it into boiling water, carefully plucked out all the feathers, and rubbed the skin nice and smooth. Then he went to fetch the herbs to stuff it with. In the store-room he noticed a half-opened cupboard which he did not remember having seen before. He peeped in and saw a lot of baskets from which came a strong and pleasant smell. He opened one and found a very uncommon herb in it. The stems and leaves were a bluish green, and above them was a little flower of a deep bright red, edged with yellow. He gazed at the flower, smelt it, and found it gave the same strong strange perfume which came from the soup the old woman had made him. But the smell was so sharp that he began to sneeze again and again, and at last—he woke up!

There he lay on the old woman's sofa and stared about him in surprise. 'Well, what odd dreams one does have to be sure!' he said to himself. 'Why, I could have sworn I had been a squirrel, a companion of guinea pigs and such creatures, and had become a great cook, too. How mother will laugh when I tell her! But won't she scold me, though, for sleeping away here in a strange house, instead of helping her at market!'

He jumped up and prepared to go: all his limbs still seemed quite stiff with his long sleep, especially his neck, for he could not move his head easily, and he laughed at his own stupidity at being still so drowsy that he kept knocking his nose against the wall or cupboards. The squirrels and guinea pigs ran whimpering after him, as though they would like to go too, and he begged them to come when he reached the door, but they all turned and ran quickly back into the house again.

The part of the town was out of the way, and Jem did not know the many narrow streets in it and was puzzled by their windings and by the crowd of people, who seemed excited about some show. From what he heard, he fancied they were going to see a dwarf, for he heard them call out: 'Just look at the ugly dwarf!' 'What a long nose he has, and see how his head is stuck in between his shoulders, and only look at his ugly brown

hands!’ If he had not been in such a hurry to get back to his mother, he would have gone too, for he loved shows with giants and dwarfs and the like.

He was quite puzzled when he reached the market-place. There sat his mother, with a good deal of fruit still in her baskets, so he felt he could not have slept so very long, but it struck him that she was sad, for she did not call to the passers-by, but sat with her head resting on her hand, and as he came nearer he thought she looked paler than usual.

He hesitated what to do, but at last he slipped behind her, laid a hand on her arm, and said: ‘Mammy, what’s the matter? Are you angry with me?’

She turned round quickly and jumped up with a cry of horror.

‘What do you want, you hideous dwarf?’ she cried; ‘get away; I can’t bear such tricks.’

‘But, mother dear, what’s the matter with you?’ repeated Jem, quite frightened. ‘You can’t be well. Why do you want to drive your son away?’

‘I have said already, get away,’ replied Hannah, quite angrily. ‘You won’t get anything out of me by your games, you monstrosity.’

‘Oh dear, oh dear! she must be wandering in her mind,’ murmured the lad to himself. ‘How can I manage to get her home? Dearest mother, do look at me close. Can’t you see I am your own son Jem?’

‘Well, did you ever hear such impudence?’ asked Hannah, turning to a neighbour. ‘Just see that frightful dwarf—would you believe that he wants me to think he is my son Jem?’

Then all the market women came round and talked all together and scolded as hard as they could, and said what a shame it was to make game of Mrs. Hannah, who had never got over the loss of her beautiful boy, who had been stolen from her seven years ago, and they threatened to fall upon Jem and scratch him well if he did not go away at once.

Poor Jem did not know what to make of it all. He was sure he had gone to market with his mother only that morning, had helped to set out the stall, had gone to the old woman’s house, where he had some soup and a little nap, and now, when he came back, they were all talking of seven years. And they called him a horrid dwarf! Why, what had happened to him? When he found that his mother would really have nothing to do with

him he turned away with tears in his eyes, and went sadly down the street towards his father's stall.

'Now I'll see whether he will know me,' thought he. 'I'll stand by the door and talk to him.'

When he got to the stall he stood in the doorway and looked in. The cobbler was so busy at work that he did not see him for some time, but, happening to look up, he caught sight of his visitor, and letting shoes, thread, and everything fall to the ground, he cried with horror: 'Good heavens! what is that?'

'Good evening, master,' said the boy, as he stepped in. 'How do you do?'

'Very ill, little sir, replied the father, to Jem's surprise, for he did not seem to know him. 'Business does not go well. I am all alone, and am getting old, and a workman is costly.'

'But haven't you a son who could learn your trade by degrees?' asked Jem.

'I had one: he was called Jem, and would have been a tall sturdy lad of twenty by this time, and able to help me well. Why, when he was only twelve he was quite sharp and quick, and had learnt many little things, and a good-looking boy too, and pleasant, so that customers were taken by him. Well, well! so goes the world!'

'But where is your son?' asked Jem, with a trembling voice.

'Heaven only knows!' replied the man; 'seven years ago he was stolen from the market-place, and we have heard no more of him.'

'SEVEN YEARS AGO!' cried Jem, with horror.

'Yes, indeed, seven years ago, though it seems but yesterday that my wife came back howling and crying, and saying the child had not come back all day. I always thought and said that something of the kind would happen. Jem was a beautiful boy, and everyone made much of him, and my wife was so proud of him, and liked him to carry the vegetables and things to grand folks' houses, where he was petted and made much of. But I used to say, "Take care—the town is large, there are plenty of bad people in it—keep a sharp eye on Jem." And so it happened; for one day an old woman came and bought a lot of things—more than she could carry; so my wife, being a kindly soul, lent her the boy, and—we have never seen him since.'

'And that was seven years ago, you say?'

‘Yes, seven years: we had him cried—we went from house to house. Many knew the pretty boy, and were fond of him, but it was all in vain. No one seemed to know the old woman who bought the vegetables either; only one old woman, who is ninety years old, said it might have been the fairy Herbaline, who came into the town once in every fifty years to buy things.’

As his father spoke, things grew clearer to Jem’s mind, and he saw now that he had not been dreaming, but had really served the old woman seven years in the shape of a squirrel. As he thought it over rage filled his heart. Seven years of his youth had been stolen from him, and what had he got in return? To learn to rub up cocoa nuts, and to polish glass floors, and to be taught cooking by guinea pigs! He stood there thinking, till at last his father asked him:

‘Is there anything I can do for you, young gentleman? Shall I make you a pair of slippers, or perhaps’ with a smile—‘a case for your nose?’

‘What have you to do with my nose?’ asked Jem. ‘And why should I want a case for it?’

‘Well, everyone to his taste,’ replied the cobbler; ‘but I must say if I had such a nose I would have a nice red leather cover made for it. Here is a nice piece; and think what a protection it would be to you. As it is, you must be constantly knocking up against things.’

The lad was dumb with fright. He felt his nose. It was thick, and quite two hands long. So, then, the old woman had changed his shape, and that was why his own mother did not know him, and called him a horrid dwarf!

‘Master,’ said he, ‘have you got a glass that I could see myself in?’

‘Young gentleman,’ was the answer, ‘your appearance is hardly one to be vain of, and there is no need to waste your time looking in a glass. Besides, I have none here, and if you must have one you had better ask Urban the barber, who lives over the way, to lend you his. Good morning.’

So saying, he gently pushed Jem into the street, shut the door, and went back to his work.

Jem stepped across to the barber, whom he had known in old days.

‘Good morning, Urban,’ said he; ‘may I look at myself in your glass for a moment?’

‘With pleasure,’ said the barber, laughing, and all the people in his shop fell to laughing also. ‘You are a pretty youth, with your swan-like

neck and white hands and small nose. No wonder you are rather vain; but look as long as you like at yourself.’

So spoke the barber, and a titter ran round the room. Meantime Jem had stepped up to the mirror, and stood gazing sadly at his reflection. Tears came to his eyes.

‘No wonder you did not know your child again, dear mother,’ thought he; ‘he wasn’t like this when you were so proud of his looks.’

His eyes had grown quite small, like pigs’ eyes, his nose was huge and hung down over his mouth and chin, his throat seemed to have disappeared altogether, and his head was fixed stiffly between his shoulders. He was no taller than he had been seven years ago, when he was not much more than twelve years old, but he made up in breadth, and his back and chest had grown into lumps like two great sacks. His legs were small and spindly, but his arms were as large as those of a well-grown man, with large brown hands, and long skinny fingers.

Then he remembered the morning when he had first seen the old woman, and her threats to him, and without saying a word he left the barber’s shop.

He determined to go again to his mother, and found her still in the market-place. He begged her to listen quietly to him, and he reminded her of the day when he went away with the old woman, and of many things in his childhood, and told her how the fairy had bewitched him, and he had served her seven years. Hannah did not know what to think—the story was so strange; and it seemed impossible to think her pretty boy and this hideous dwarf were the same. At last she decided to go and talk to her husband about it. She gathered up her baskets, told Jem to follow her, and went straight to the cobbler’s stall.

‘Look here,’ said she, ‘this creature says he is our lost son. He has been telling me how he was stolen seven years ago, and bewitched by a fairy.’

‘Indeed!’ interrupted the cobbler angrily. ‘Did he tell you this? Wait a minute, you rascal! Why I told him all about it myself only an hour ago, and then he goes off to humbug you. So you were bewitched, my son were you? Wait a bit, and I’ll bewitch you!’

So saying, he caught up a bundle of straps, and hit out at Jem so hard that he ran off crying.

The poor little dwarf roamed about all the rest of the day without food or drink, and at night was glad to lie down and sleep on the steps of a church. He woke next morning with the first rays of light, and began to think what he could do to earn a living. Suddenly he remembered that he was an excellent cook, and he determined to look out for a place.

As soon as it was quite daylight he set out for the palace, for he knew that the grand duke who reigned over the country was fond of good things.

When he reached the palace all the servants crowded about him, and made fun of him, and at last their shouts and laughter grew so loud that the head steward rushed out, crying, ‘For goodness sake, be quiet, can’t you. Don’t you know his highness is still asleep?’

Some of the servants ran off at once, and others pointed out Jem.

Indeed, the steward found it hard to keep himself from laughing at the comic sight, but he ordered the servants off and led the dwarf into his own room.

When he heard him ask for a place as cook, he said: ‘You make some mistake, my lad. I think you want to be the grand duke’s dwarf, don’t you?’

‘No, sir,’ replied Jem. ‘I am an experienced cook, and if you will kindly take me to the head cook he may find me of some use.’

‘Well, as you will; but believe me, you would have an easier place as the grand ducal dwarf.’

So saying, the head steward led him to the head cook’s room.

‘Sir,’ asked Jem, as he bowed till his nose nearly touched the floor, ‘do you want an experienced cook?’

The head cook looked him over from head to foot, and burst out laughing.

‘You a cook! Do you suppose our cooking stoves are so low that you can look into any saucepan on them? Oh, my dear little fellow, whoever sent you to me wanted to make fun of you.’

But the dwarf was not to be put off.

‘What matters an extra egg or two, or a little butter or flour and spice more or less, in such a house as this?’ said he. ‘Name any dish you wish to have cooked, and give me the materials I ask for, and you shall see.’

He said much more, and at last persuaded the head cook to give him a trial.

They went into the kitchen—a huge place with at least twenty fireplaces, always alight. A little stream of clear water ran through the room, and live fish were kept at one end of it. Everything in the kitchen was of the best and most beautiful kind, and swarms of cooks and scullions were busy preparing dishes.

When the head cook came in with Jem everyone stood quite still.

‘What has his highness ordered for luncheon?’ asked the head cook.

‘Sir, his highness has graciously ordered a Danish soup and red Hamburg dumplings.’

‘Good,’ said the head cook. ‘Have you heard, and do you feel equal to making these dishes? Not that you will be able to make the dumplings, for they are a secret receipt.’

‘Is that all!’ said Jem, who had often made both dishes. ‘Nothing easier. Let me have some eggs, a piece of wild boar, and such and such roots and herbs for the soup; and as for the dumplings,’ he added in a low voice to the head cook, ‘I shall want four different kinds of meat, some wine, a duck’s marrow, some ginger, and a herb called heal-well.’

‘Why,’ cried the astonished cook, ‘where did you learn cooking? Yes, those are the exact materials, but we never used the herb heal-well, which, I am sure, must be an improvement.’

And now Jem was allowed to try his hand. He could not nearly reach up to the kitchen range, but by putting a wide plank on two chairs he managed very well. All the cooks stood round to look on, and could not help admiring the quick, clever way in which he set to work. At last, when all was ready, Jem ordered the two dishes to be put on the fire till he gave the word. Then he began to count: ‘One, two, three,’ till he got to five hundred when he cried, ‘Now!’ The saucepans were taken off, and he invited the head cook to taste.

The first cook took a golden spoon, washed and wiped it, and handed it to the head cook, who solemnly approached, tasted the dishes, and smacked his lips over them. ‘First rate, indeed!’ he exclaimed. ‘You certainly are a master of the art, little fellow, and the herb heal-well gives a particular relish.’

As he was speaking, the duke’s valet came to say that his highness was ready for luncheon, and it was served at once in silver dishes. The head cook took Jem to his own room, but had hardly had time to question him

before he was ordered to go at once to the grand duke. He hurried on his best clothes and followed the messenger.

The grand duke was looking much pleased. He had emptied the dishes, and was wiping his mouth as the head cook came in. ‘Who cooked my luncheon to-day?’ asked he. ‘I must say your dumplings are always very good; but I don’t think I ever tasted anything so delicious as they were to-day. Who made them?’

‘It is a strange story, your highness,’ said the cook, and told him the whole matter, which surprised the duke so much that he sent for the dwarf and asked him many questions. Of course, Jem could not say he had been turned into a squirrel, but he said he was without parents and had been taught cooking by an old woman.

‘If you will stay with me,’ said the grand duke, ‘you shall have fifty ducats a year, besides a new coat and a couple of pairs of trousers. You must undertake to cook my luncheon yourself and to direct what I shall have for dinner, and you shall be called assistant head cook.’

Jem bowed to the ground, and promised to obey his new master in all things.

He lost no time in setting to work, and everyone rejoiced at having him in the kitchen, for the duke was not a patient man, and had been known to throw plates and dishes at his cooks and servants if the things served were not quite to his taste. Now all was changed. He never even grumbled at anything, had five meals instead of three, thought everything delicious, and grew fatter daily.

And so Jem lived on for two years, much respected and considered, and only saddened when he thought of his parents. One day passed much like another till the following incident happened.

Dwarf Long Nose—as he was always called—made a practice of doing his marketing as much as possible himself, and whenever time allowed went to the market to buy his poultry and fruit. One morning he was in the goose market, looking for some nice fat geese. No one thought of laughing at his appearance now; he was known as the duke’s special body cook, and every goose-woman felt honoured if his nose turned her way.

He noticed one woman sitting apart with a number of geese, but not crying or praising them like the rest. He went up to her, felt and weighed

her geese, and, finding them very good, bought three and the cage to put them in, hoisted them on his broad shoulders, and set off on his way back.

As he went, it struck him that two of the geese were gobbling and screaming as geese do, but the third sat quite still, only heaving a deep sigh now and then, like a human being. ‘That goose is ill,’ said he; ‘I must make haste to kill and dress her.’

But the goose answered him quite distinctly:

‘Squeeze too tight
And I’ll bite,
If my neck a twist you gave
I’d bring you to an early grave.’

Quite frightened, the dwarf set down the cage, and the goose gazed at him with sad wise-looking eyes and sighed again.

‘Good gracious!’ said Long Nose. ‘So you can speak, Mistress Goose. I never should have thought it! Well, don’t be anxious. I know better than to hurt so rare a bird. But I could bet you were not always in this plumage—wasn’t I a squirrel myself for a time?’

‘You are right,’ said the goose, ‘in supposing I was not born in this horrid shape. Ah! no one ever thought that Mimi, the daughter of the great Weatherbold, would be killed for the ducal table.’

‘Be quite easy, Mistress Mimi,’ comforted Jem. ‘As sure as I’m an honest man and assistant head cook to his highness, no one shall harm you. I will make a hutch for you in my own rooms, and you shall be well fed, and I’ll come and talk to you as much as I can. I’ll tell all the other cooks that I am fattening up a goose on very special food for the grand duke, and at the first good opportunity I will set you free.’

The goose thanked him with tears in her eyes, and the dwarf kept his word. He killed the other two geese for dinner, but built a little shed for Mimi in one of his rooms, under the pretence of fattening her under his own eye. He spent all his spare time talking to her and comforting her, and fed her on all the daintiest dishes. They confided their histories to each other, and Jem learnt that the goose was the daughter of the wizard Weatherbold, who lived on the island of Gothland. He fell out with an old fairy, who got the better of him by cunning and treachery, and to revenge

herself turned his daughter into a goose and carried her off to this distant place. When Long Nose told her his story she said:

‘I know a little of these matters, and what you say shows me that you are under a herb enchantment—that is to say, that if you can find the herb whose smell woke you up the spell would be broken.’

This was but small comfort for Jem, for how and where was he to find the herb?

About this time the grand duke had a visit from a neighbouring prince, a friend of his. He sent for Long Nose and said to him:

‘Now is the time to show what you can really do. This prince who is staying with me has better dinners than any one except myself, and is a great judge of cooking. As long as he is here you must take care that my table shall be served in a manner to surprise him constantly. At the same time, on pain of my displeasure, take care that no dish shall appear twice. Get everything you wish and spare nothing. If you want to melt down gold and precious stones, do so. I would rather be a poor man than have to blush before him.’

The dwarf bowed and answered:

‘Your highness shall be obeyed. I will do all in my power to please you and the prince.’

From this time the little cook was hardly seen except in the kitchen, where, surrounded by his helpers, he gave orders, baked, stewed, flavoured and dished up all manner of dishes.

The prince had been a fortnight with the grand duke, and enjoyed himself mightily. They ate five times a day, and the duke had every reason to be content with the dwarf’s talents, for he saw how pleased his guest looked. On the fifteenth day the duke sent for the dwarf and presented him to the prince.

‘You are a wonderful cook,’ said the prince, ‘and you certainly know what is good. All the time I have been here you have never repeated a dish, and all were excellent. But tell me why you have never served the queen of all dishes, a Suzeraine Pasty?’

The dwarf felt frightened, for he had never heard of this Queen of Pasties before. But he did not lose his presence of mind, and replied:

‘I have waited, hoping that your highness’ visit here would last some time, for I proposed to celebrate the last day of your stay with this truly

royal dish.’

‘Indeed,’ laughed the grand duke; ‘then I suppose you would have waited for the day of my death to treat me to it, for you have never sent it up to me yet. However, you will have to invent some other farewell dish, for the pasty must be on my table to-morrow.’

‘As your highness pleases,’ said the dwarf, and took leave.

But it did not please HIM at all. The moment of disgrace seemed at hand, for he had no idea how to make this pasty. He went to his rooms very sad. As he sat there lost in thought the goose Mimi, who was left free to walk about, came up to him and asked what was the matter? When she heard she said:

‘Cheer up, my friend. I know the dish quite well: we often had it at home, and I can guess pretty well how it was made.’ Then she told him what to put in, adding: ‘I think that will be all right, and if some trifle is left out perhaps they won’t find it out.’

Sure enough, next day a magnificent pasty all wreathed round with flowers was placed on the table. Jem himself put on his best clothes and went into the dining hall. As he entered the head carver was in the act of cutting up the pie and helping the duke and his guests. The grand duke took a large mouthful and threw up his eyes as he swallowed it.

‘Oh! oh! this may well be called the Queen of Pasties, and at the same time my dwarf must be called the king of cooks. Don’t you think so, dear friend?’

The prince took several small pieces, tasted and examined carefully, and then said with a mysterious and sarcastic smile:

‘The dish is very nicely made, but the Suzeraine is not quite complete —as I expected.’

The grand duke flew into a rage.

‘Dog of a cook,’ he shouted; ‘how dare you serve me so? I’ve a good mind to chop off your great head as a punishment.’

‘For mercy’s sake, don’t, your highness! I made the pasty according to the best rules; nothing has been left out. Ask the prince what else I should have put in.’

The prince laughed. ‘I was sure you could not make this dish as well as my cook, friend Long Nose. Know, then, that a herb is wanting called Relish, which is not known in this country, but which gives the pasty its

peculiar flavour, and without which your master will never taste it to perfection.'

The grand duke was more furious than ever.

'But I WILL taste it to perfection,' he roared. 'Either the pasty must be made properly to-morrow or this rascal's head shall come off. Go, scoundrel, I give you twenty-four hours respite.'

The poor dwarf hurried back to his room, and poured out his grief to the goose.

'Oh, is that all,' said she, 'then I can help you, for my father taught me to know all plants and herbs. Luckily this is a new moon just now, for the herb only springs up at such times. But tell me, are there chestnut trees near the palace?'

'Oh, yes!' cried Long Nose, much relieved; 'near the lake—only a couple of hundred yards from the palace—is a large clump of them. But why do you ask?'

'Because the herb only grows near the roots of chestnut trees,' replied Mimi; 'so let us lose no time in finding it. Take me under your arm and put me down out of doors, and I'll hunt for it.'

He did as she bade, and as soon as they were in the garden put her on the ground, when she waddled off as fast as she could towards the lake, Jem hurrying after her with an anxious heart, for he knew that his life depended on her success. The goose hunted everywhere, but in vain. She searched under each chestnut tree, turning every blade of grass with her bill—nothing to be seen, and evening was drawing on!

Suddenly the dwarf noticed a big old tree standing alone on the other side of the lake. 'Look,' cried he, 'let us try our luck there.'

The goose fluttered and skipped in front, and he ran after as fast as his little legs could carry him. The tree cast a wide shadow, and it was almost dark beneath it, but suddenly the goose stood still, flapped her wings with joy, and plucked something, which she held out to her astonished friend, saying: 'There it is, and there is more growing here, so you will have no lack of it.'

The dwarf stood gazing at the plant. It gave out a strong sweet scent, which reminded him of the day of his enchantment. The stems and leaves were a bluish green, and it bore a dark, bright red flower with a yellow edge.

‘What a wonder!’ cried Long Nose. ‘I do believe this is the very herb which changed me from a squirrel into my present miserable form. Shall I try an experiment?’

‘Not yet,’ said the goose. ‘Take a good handful of the herb with you, and let us go to your rooms. We will collect all your money and clothes together, and then we will test the powers of the herb.’

So they went back to Jem’s rooms, and here he gathered together some fifty ducats he had saved, his clothes and shoes, and tied them all up in a bundle. Then he plunged his face into the bunch of herbs, and drew in their perfume.

As he did so, all his limbs began to crack and stretch; he felt his head rising above his shoulders; he glanced down at his nose, and saw it grow smaller and smaller; his chest and back grew flat, and his legs grew long.

The goose looked on in amazement. ‘Oh, how big and how beautiful you are!’ she cried. ‘Thank heaven, you are quite changed.’

Jem folded his hands in thanks, as his heart swelled with gratitude. But his joy did not make him forget all he owed to his friend Mimi.

‘I owe you my life and my release,’ he said, ‘for without you I should never have regained my natural shape, and, indeed, would soon have been beheaded. I will now take you back to your father, who will certainly know how to disenchant you.’

The goose accepted his offer with joy, and they managed to slip out of the palace unnoticed by anyone.

They got through the journey without accident, and the wizard soon released his daughter, and loaded Jem with thanks and valuable presents. He lost no time in hastening back to his native town, and his parents were very ready to recognise the handsome, well-made young man as their long-lost son. With the money given him by the wizard he opened a shop, which prospered well, and he lived long and happily.

I must not forget to mention that much disturbance was caused in the palace by Jem’s sudden disappearance, for when the grand duke sent orders next day to behead the dwarf, if he had not found the necessary herbs, the dwarf was not to be found. The prince hinted that the duke had allowed his cook to escape, and had therefore broken his word. The matter ended in a great war between the two princes, which was known in history as the ‘Herb War.’ After many battles and much loss of life, a peace was at

last concluded, and this peace became known as the ‘Pasty Peace,’ because at the banquet given in its honour the prince’s cook dished up the Queen of Pasties—the Suzeraine—and the grand duke declared it to be quite excellent.

THE NUNDA, EATER OF PEOPLE

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Once upon a time there lived a sultan who loved his garden dearly, and planted it with trees and flowers and fruits from all parts of the world. He went to see them three times every day: first at seven o'clock, when he got up, then at three, and lastly at half-past five. There was no plant and no vegetable which escaped his eye, but he lingered longest of all before his one date tree.

Now the sultan had seven sons. Six of them he was proud of, for they were strong and manly, but the youngest he disliked, for he spent all his time among the women of the house. The sultan had talked to him, and he paid no heed; and he had beaten him, and he paid no heed; and he had tied him up, and he paid no heed, till at last his father grew tired of trying to make him change his ways, and let him alone.

Time passed, and one day the sultan, to his great joy, saw signs of fruit on his date tree. And he told his vizir, 'My date tree is bearing;' and he told the officers, 'My date tree is bearing;' and he told the judges, 'My date tree is bearing;' and he told all the rich men of the town.

He waited patiently for some days till the dates were nearly ripe, and then he called his six sons, and said: 'One of you must watch the date tree till the dates are ripe, for if it is not watched the slaves will steal them, and I shall not have any for another year.'

And the eldest son answered, 'I will go, father,' and he went.

The first thing the youth did was to summon his slaves, and bid them beat drums all night under the date tree, for he feared to fall asleep. So the slaves beat the drums, and the young man danced till four o'clock, and then it grew so cold he could dance no longer, and one of the slaves said to him: 'It is getting light; the tree is safe; lie down, master, and go to sleep.'

So he lay down and slept, and his slaves slept likewise.

A few minutes went by, and a bird flew down from a neighbouring thicket, and ate all the dates, without leaving a single one. And when the tree was stripped bare, the bird went as it had come. Soon after, one of the

slaves woke up and looked for the dates, but there were no dates to see. Then he ran to the young man and shook him, saying:

‘Your father set you to watch the tree, and you have not watched, and the dates have all been eaten by a bird.’

The lad jumped up and ran to the tree to see for himself, but there was not a date anywhere. And he cried aloud, ‘What am I to say to my father? Shall I tell him that the dates have been stolen, or that a great rain fell and a great storm blew? But he will send me to gather them up and bring them to him, and there are none to bring! Shall I tell him that Bedouins drove me away, and when I returned there were no dates? And he will answer, “You had slaves, did they not fight with the Bedouins?” It is the truth that will be best, and that will I tell him.’

Then he went straight to his father, and found him sitting in his verandah with his five sons round him; and the lad bowed his head.

‘Give me the news from the garden,’ said the sultan.

And the youth answered, ‘The dates have all been eaten by some bird: there is not one left.’

The sultan was silent for a moment: then he asked, ‘Where were you when the bird came?’

The lad answered: ‘I watched the date tree till the cocks were crowing and it was getting light; then I lay down for a little, and I slept. When I woke a slave was standing over me, and he said, “There is not one date left on the tree!” And I went to the date tree, and saw it was true; and that is what I have to tell you.’

And the sultan replied, ‘A son like you is only good for eating and sleeping. I have no use for you. Go your way, and when my date tree bears again, I will send another son; perhaps he will watch better.’

So he waited many months, till the tree was covered with more dates than any tree had ever borne before. When they were near ripening he sent one of his sons to the garden: saying, ‘My son, I am longing to taste those dates: go and watch over them, for to-day’s sun will bring them to perfection.’

And the lad answered: ‘My father, I am going now, and to-morrow, when the sun has passed the hour of seven, bid a slave come and gather the dates.’

‘Good,’ said the sultan.

The youth went to the tree, and lay down and slept. And about midnight he arose to look at the tree, and the dates were all there—beautiful dates, swinging in bunches.

‘Ah, my father will have a feast, indeed,’ thought he. ‘What a fool my brother was not to take more heed! Now he is in disgrace, and we know him no more. Well, I will watch till the bird comes. I should like to see what manner of bird it is.’

And he sat and read till the cocks crew and it grew light, and the dates were still on the tree.

‘Oh my father will have his dates; they are all safe now,’ he thought to himself. ‘I will make myself comfortable against this tree,’ and he leaned against the trunk, and sleep came on him, and the bird flew down and ate all the dates.

When the sun rose, the head-man came and looked for the dates, and there were no dates. And he woke the young man, and said to him, ‘Look at the tree.’

And the young man looked, and there were no dates. And his ears were stopped, and his legs trembled, and his tongue grew heavy at the thought of the sultan. His slave became frightened as he looked at him, and asked, ‘My master, what is it?’

He answered, ‘I have no pain anywhere, but I am ill everywhere. My whole body is well, and my whole body is sick I fear my father, for did I not say to him, “To-morrow at seven you shall taste the dates”? And he will drive me away, as he drove away my brother! I will go away myself, before he sends me.’

Then he got up and took a road that led straight past the palace, but he had not walked many steps before he met a man carrying a large silver dish, covered with a white cloth to cover the dates.

And the young man said, ‘The dates are not ripe yet; you must return to-morrow.’

And the slave went with him to the palace, where the sultan was sitting with his four sons.

‘Good greeting, master!’ said the youth.

And the sultan answered, ‘Have you seen the man I sent?’

‘I have, master; but the dates are not yet ripe.’

But the sultan did not believe his words, and said; ‘This second year I have eaten no dates, because of my sons. Go your ways, you are my son no longer!’

And the sultan looked at the four sons that were left him, and promised rich gifts to whichever of them would bring him the dates from the tree. But year by year passed, and he never got them. One son tried to keep himself awake with playing cards; another mounted a horse and rode round and round the tree, while the two others, whom their father as a last hope sent together, lit bonfires. But whatever they did, the result was always the same. Towards dawn they fell asleep, and the bird ate the dates on the tree.

The sixth year had come, and the dates on the tree were thicker than ever. And the head-man went to the palace and told the sultan what he had seen. But the sultan only shook his head, and said sadly, ‘What is that to me? I have had seven sons, yet for five years a bird has devoured my dates; and this year it will be the same as ever.’

Now the youngest son was sitting in the kitchen, as was his custom, when he heard his father say those words. And he rose up, and went to his father, and knelt before him. ‘Father, this year you shall eat dates,’ cried he. ‘And on the tree are five great bunches, and each bunch I will give to a separate nation, for the nations in the town are five. This time, I will watch the date tree myself.’ But his father and his mother laughed heartily, and thought his words idle talk.

One day, news was brought to the sultan that the dates were ripe, and he ordered one of his men to go and watch the tree. His son, who happened to be standing by, heard the order, and he said:

‘How is it that you have bidden a man to watch the tree, when I, your son, am left?’

And his father answered, ‘Ah, six were of no use, and where they failed, will you succeed?’

But the boy replied: ‘Have patience to-day, and let me go, and to-morrow you shall see whether I bring you dates or not.’

‘Let the child go, Master,’ said his wife; ‘perhaps we shall eat the dates —or perhaps we shall not—but let him go.’

And the sultan answered: ‘I do not refuse to let him go, but my heart distrusts him. His brothers all promised fair, and what did they do?’

But the boy entreated, saying, ‘Father, if you and I and mother be alive to-morrow, you shall eat the dates.’

‘Go then,’ said his father.

When the boy reached the garden, he told the slaves to leave him, and to return home themselves and sleep. When he was alone, he laid himself down and slept fast till one o’clock, when he arose, and sat opposite the date tree. Then he took some Indian corn out of one fold of his dress, and some sandy grit out of another.

And he chewed the corn till he felt he was growing sleepy, and then he put some grit into his mouth, and that kept him awake till the bird came.

It looked about at first without seeing him, and whispering to itself, ‘There is no one here,’ fluttered lightly on to the tree and stretched out his beak for the dates. Then the boy stole softly up, and caught it by the wing.

The bird turned and flew quickly away, but the boy never let go, not even when they soared high into the air.

‘Son of Adam,’ the bird said when the tops of the mountains looked small below them, ‘if you fall, you will be dead long before you reach the ground, so go your way, and let me go mine.’

But the boy answered, ‘Wherever you go, I will go with you. You cannot get rid of me.’

‘I did not eat your dates,’ persisted the bird, ‘and the day is dawning. Leave me to go my way.’

But again the boy answered him: ‘My six brothers are hateful to my father because you came and stole the dates, and to-day my father shall see you, and my brothers shall see you, and all the people of the town, great and small, shall see you. And my father’s heart will rejoice.’

‘Well, if you will not leave me, I will throw you off,’ said the bird.

So it flew up higher still—so high that the earth shone like one of the other stars.

‘How much of you will be left if you fall from here?’ asked the bird.

‘If I die, I die,’ said the boy, ‘but I will not leave you.’

And the bird saw it was no use talking, and went down to the earth again.

‘Here you are at home, so let me go my way,’ it begged once more; ‘or at least make a covenant with me.’

‘What covenant?’ said the boy.

‘Save me from the sun,’ replied the bird, ‘and I will save you from rain.’

‘How can you do that, and how can I tell if I can trust you?’

‘Pull a feather from my tail, and put it in the fire, and if you want me I will come to you, wherever I am.’

And the boy answered, ‘Well, I agree; go your way.’

‘Farewell, my friend. When you call me, if it is from the depths of the sea, I will come.’

The lad watched the bird out of sight; then he went straight to the date tree. And when he saw the dates his heart was glad, and his body felt stronger and his eyes brighter than before. And he laughed out loud with joy, and said to himself, ‘This is MY luck, mine, Sit-in-the-kitchen! Farewell, date tree, I am going to lie down. What ate you will eat you no more.’

The sun was high in the sky before the head-man, whose business it was, came to look at the date tree, expecting to find it stripped of all its fruit, but when he saw the dates so thick that they almost hid the leaves he ran back to his house, and beat a big drum till everybody came running, and even the little children wanted to know what had happened.

‘What is it? What is it, head-man?’ cried they.

‘Ah, it is not a son that the master has, but a lion! This day Sit-in-the-kitchen has uncovered his face before his father!’

‘But how, head-man?’

‘To day the people may eat the dates.’

‘Is it true, head-man?’

‘Oh yes, it is true, but let him sleep till each man has brought forth a present. He who has fowls, let him take fowls; he who has a goat, let him take a goat; he who has rice, let him take rice.’ And the people did as he had said.

Then they took the drum, and went to the tree where the boy lay sleeping.

And they picked him up, and carried him away, with horns and clarionets and drums, with clappings of hands and shrieks of joy, straight to his father’s house.

When his father heard the noise and saw the baskets made of green leaves, brimming over with dates, and his son borne high on the necks of

slaves, his heart leaped, and he said to himself ‘To-day at last I shall eat dates.’ And he called his wife to see what her son had done, and ordered his soldiers to take the boy and bring him to his father.

‘What news, my son?’ said he.

‘News? I have no news, except that if you will open your mouth you shall see what dates taste like.’ And he plucked a date, and put it into his father’s mouth.

‘Ah! You are indeed my son,’ cried the sultan. ‘You do not take after those fools, those good-for-nothings. But, tell me, what did you do with the bird, for it was you, and you only who watched for it?’

‘Yes, it was I who watched for it and who saw it. And it will not come again, neither for its life, nor for your life, nor for the lives of your children.’

‘Oh, once I had six sons, and now I have only one. It is you, whom I called a fool, who have given me the dates: as for the others, I want none of them.’

But his wife rose up and went to him, and said, ‘Master, do not, I pray you, reject them,’ and she entreated long, till the sultan granted her prayer, for she loved the six elder ones more than her last one.

So they all lived quietly at home, till the sultan’s cat went and caught a calf. And the owner of the calf went and told the sultan, but he answered, ‘The cat is mine, and the calf mine,’ and the man dared not complain further.

Two days after, the cat caught a cow, and the sultan was told, ‘Master, the cat has caught a cow,’ but he only said, ‘It was my cow and my cat.’

And the cat waited a few days, and then it caught a donkey, and they told the sultan, ‘Master, the cat has caught a donkey,’ and he said, ‘My cat and my donkey.’ Next it was a horse, and after that a camel, and when the sultan was told he said, ‘You don’t like this cat, and want me to kill it. And I shall not kill it. Let it eat the camel: let it even eat a man.’

And it waited till the next day, and caught some one’s child. And the sultan was told, ‘The cat has caught a child.’ And he said, ‘The cat is mine and the child mine.’ Then it caught a grown-up man.

After that the cat left the town and took up its abode in a thicket near the road. So if any one passed, going for water, it devoured him. If it saw a

cow going to feed, it devoured him. If it saw a goat, it devoured him. Whatever went along that road the cat caught and ate.

Then the people went to the sultan in a body, and told him of all the misdeeds of that cat. But he answered as before, ‘The cat is mine and the people are mine.’ And no man dared kill the cat, which grew bolder and bolder, and at last came into the town to look for its prey.

One day, the sultan said to his six sons, ‘I am going into the country, to see how the wheat is growing, and you shall come with me.’ They went on merrily along the road, till they came to a thicket, when out sprang the cat, and killed three of the sons.

‘The cat! The cat!’ shrieked the soldiers who were with him. And this time the sultan said:

‘Seek for it and kill it. It is no longer a cat, but a demon!’

And the soldiers answered him, ‘Did we not tell you, master, what the cat was doing, and did you not say, “My cat and my people”?’

And he answered: ‘True, I said it.’

Now the youngest son had not gone with the rest, but had stayed at home with his mother; and when he heard that his brothers had been killed by the cat he said, ‘Let me go, that it may slay me also.’ His mother entreated him not to leave her, but he would not listen, and he took his sword and a spear and some rice cakes, and went after the cat, which by this time had run of to a great distance.

The lad spent many days hunting the cat, which now bore the name of ‘The Nunda, eater of people,’ but though he killed many wild animals he saw no trace of the enemy he was hunting for. There was no beast, however fierce, that he was afraid of, till at last his father and mother begged him to give up the chase after the Nunda.

But he answered: ‘What I have said, I cannot take back. If I am to die, then I die, but every day I must go and seek for the Nunda.’

And again his father offered him what he would, even the crown itself, but the boy would hear nothing, and went on his way.

Many times his slaves came and told him, ‘We have seen footprints, and to-day we shall behold the Nunda.’ But the footprints never turned out to be those of the Nunda. They wandered far through deserts and through forests, and at length came to the foot of a great hill. And something in the

boy's soul whispered that here was the end of all their seeking, and to-day they would find the Nunda.

But before they began to climb the mountain the boy ordered his slaves to cook some rice, and they rubbed the stick to make a fire, and when the fire was kindled they cooked the rice and ate it. Then they began their climb.

Suddenly, when they had almost reached the top, a slave who was on in front cried:

'Master! Master!' And the boy pushed on to where the slave stood, and the slave said:

'Cast your eyes down to the foot of the mountain.' And the boy looked, and his soul told him it was the Nunda.

And he crept down with his spear in his hand, and then he stopped and gazed below him.

'This MUST be the real Nunda,' thought he. 'My mother told me its ears were small, and this one's are small. She told me it was broad and not long, and this is broad and not long. She told me it had spots like a civet-cat, and this has spots like a civet-cat.'

Then he left the Nunda lying asleep at the foot of the mountain, and went back to his slaves.

'We will feast to-day,' he said; 'make cakes of batter, and bring water,' and they ate and drank. And when they had finished he bade them hide the rest of the food in the thicket, that if they slew the Nunda they might return and eat and sleep before going back to the town. And the slaves did as he bade them.

It was now afternoon, and the lad said: 'It is time we went after the Nunda.' And they went till they reached the bottom and came to a great forest which lay between them and the Nunda.

Here the lad stopped, and ordered every slave that wore two cloths to cast one away and tuck up the other between his legs. 'For,' said he, 'the wood is not a little one. Perhaps we may be caught by the thorns, or perhaps we may have to run before the Nunda, and the cloth might bind our legs, and cause us to fall before it.'

And they answered, 'Good, master,' and did as he bade them. Then they crawled on their hands and knees to where the Nunda lay asleep.

Noiselessly they crept along till they were quite close to it; then, at a sign from the boy, they threw their spears. The Nunda did not stir: the spears had done their work, but a great fear seized them all, and they ran away and climbed the mountain.

The sun was setting when they reached the top, and glad they were to take out the fruit and the cakes and the water which they had hidden away, and sit down and rest themselves. And after they had eaten and were filled, they lay down and slept till morning.

When the dawn broke they rose up and cooked more rice, and drank more water. After that they walked all round the back of the mountain to the place where they had left the Nunda, and they saw it stretched out where they had found it, stiff and dead. And they took it up and carried it back to the town, singing as they went, ‘He has killed the Nunda, the eater of people.’

And when his father heard the news, and that his son was come, and was bringing the Nunda with him, he felt that the man did not dwell on the earth whose joy was greater than his. And the people bowed down to the boy and gave him presents, and loved him, because he had delivered them from the bondage of fear, and had slain the Nunda.

(Adapted from Swahili Tales.)

THE STORY OF HASSEBU

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Once upon a time there lived a poor woman who had only one child, and he was a little boy called Hassebu. When he ceased to be a baby, and his mother thought it was time for him to learn to read, she sent him to school. And, after he had done with school, he was put into a shop to learn how to make clothes, and did not learn; and he was put to do silversmith's work, and did not learn; and whatsoever he was taught, he did not learn it. His mother never wished him to do anything he did not like, so she said: 'Well, stay at home, my son.' And he stayed at home, eating and sleeping.

One day the boy said to his mother: 'What was my father's business?'

'He was a very learned doctor,' answered she.

'Where, then, are his books?' asked Hassebu.

'Many days have passed, and I have thought nothing of them. But look inside and see if they are there.' So Hassebu looked, and saw they were eaten by insects, all but one book, which he took away and read.

He was sitting at home one morning poring over the medicine book, when some neighbours came by and said to his mother: 'Give us this boy, that we may go together to cut wood.' For wood-cutting was their trade, and they loaded several donkeys with the wood, and sold it in the town.

And his mother answered, 'Very well; to-morrow I will buy him a donkey, and you can all go together.'

So the donkey was bought, and the neighbours came, and they worked hard all day, and in the evening they brought the wood back into the town, and sold it for a good sum of money. And for six days they went and did the like, but on the seventh it rained, and the wood-cutters ran and hid in the rocks, all but Hassebu, who did not mind wetting, and stayed where he was.

While he was sitting in the place where the wood-cutters had left him, he took up a stone that lay near him, and idly dropped it on the ground. It rang with a hollow sound, and he called to his companions, and said, 'Come here and listen; the ground seems hollow!'

‘Knock again!’ cried they. And he knocked and listened.

‘Let us dig,’ said the boy. And they dug, and found a large pit like a well, filled with honey up to the brim.

‘This is better than firewood,’ said they; ‘it will bring us more money. And as you have found it, Hassebu, it is you who must go inside and dip out the honey and give to us, and we will take it to the town and sell it, and will divide the money with you.’

The following day each man brought every bowl and vessel he could find at home, and Hassebu filled them all with honey. And this he did every day for three months.

At the end of that time the honey was very nearly finished, and there was only a little left, quite at the bottom, and that was very deep down, so deep that it seemed as if it must be right in the middle of the earth. Seeing this, the men said to Hassebu, ‘We will put a rope under your arms, and let you down, so that you may scrape up all the honey that is left, and when you have done we will lower the rope again, and you shall make it fast, and we will draw you up.’

‘Very well,’ answered the boy, and he went down, and he scraped and scraped till there was not so much honey left as would cover the point of a needle. ‘Now I am ready!’ he cried; but they consulted together and said, ‘Let us leave him there inside the pit, and take his share of the money, and we will tell his mother, “Your son was caught by a lion and carried off into the forest, and we tried to follow him, but could not.” ’

Then they arose and went into the town and told his mother as they had agreed, and she wept much and made her mourning for many months. And when the men were dividing the money, one said, ‘Let us send a little to our friend’s mother,’ and they sent some to her; and every day one took her rice, and one oil; one took her meat, and one took her cloth, every day.

It did not take long for Hassebu to find out that his companions had left him to die in the pit, but he had a brave heart, and hoped that he might be able to find a way out for himself. So he at once began to explore the pit and found it ran back a long way underground. And by night he slept, and by day he took a little of the honey he had gathered and ate it; and so many days passed by.

One morning, while he was sitting on a rock having his breakfast, a large scorpion dropped down at his feet, and he took a stone and killed it,

fearing it would sting him. Then suddenly the thought darted into his head, ‘This scorpion must have come from somewhere! Perhaps there is a hole. I will go and look for it,’ and he felt all round the walls of the pit till he found a very little hole in the roof of the pit, with a tiny glimmer of light at the far end of it. Then his heart felt glad, and he took out his knife and dug and dug, till the little hole became a big one, and he could wriggle himself through. And when he had got outside, he saw a large open space in front of him, and a path leading out of it.

He went along the path, on and on, till he reached a large house, with a golden door standing open. Inside was a great hall, and in the middle of the hall a throne set with precious stones and a sofa spread with the softest cushions. And he went in and lay down on it, and fell fast asleep, for he had wandered far.

By-and-by there was a sound of people coming through the courtyard, and the measured tramp of soldiers. This was the King of the Snakes coming in state to his palace.

They entered the hall, but all stopped in surprise at finding a man lying on the king’s own bed. The soldiers wished to kill him at once, but the king said, ‘Leave him alone, put me on a chair,’ and the soldiers who were carrying him knelt on the floor, and he slid from their shoulders on to a chair. When he was comfortably seated, he turned to his soldiers, and bade them wake the stranger gently. And they woke him, and he sat up and saw many snakes all round him, and one of them very beautiful, decked in royal robes.

‘Who are you?’ asked Hassebu.

‘I am the King of the Snakes,’ was the reply, ‘and this is my palace. And will you tell me who you are, and where you come from?’

‘My name is Hassebu, but whence I come I know not, nor whither I go.’

‘Then stay for a little with me,’ said the king, and he bade his soldiers bring water from the spring and fruits from the forest, and to set them before the guest.

For some days Hassebu rested and feasted in the palace of the King of the Snakes, and then he began to long for his mother and his own country. So he said to the King of the Snakes, ‘Send me home, I pray.’

But the King of the Snakes answered, ‘When you go home, you will do me evil!’

‘I will do you no evil,’ replied Hassebu; ‘send me home, I pray.’

But the king said, ‘I know it. If I send you home, you will come back, and kill me. I dare not do it.’ But Hassebu begged so hard that at last the king said, ‘Swear that when you get home you will not go to bathe where many people are gathered.’ And Hassebu swore, and the king ordered his soldiers to take Hassebu in sight of his native city. Then he went straight to his mother’s house, and the heart of his mother was glad.

Now the Sultan of the city was very ill, and all the wise men said that the only thing to cure him was the flesh of the King of the Snakes, and that the only man who could get it was a man with a strange mark on his chest. So the Vizir had set people to watch at the public baths, to see if such a man came there.

For three days Hassebu remembered his promise to the King of the Snakes, and did not go near the baths; then came a morning so hot he could hardly breathe, and he forgot all about it.

The moment he had slipped off his robe he was taken before the Vizir, who said to him, ‘Lead us to the place where the King of the Snakes lives.’

‘I do not know it!’ answered he, but the Vizir did not believe him, and had him bound and beaten till his back was all torn.

Then Hassebu cried, ‘Loose me, that I may take you.’

They went together a long, long way, till they reached the palace of the King of the Snakes.

And Hassebu said to the King: ‘It was not I: look at my back and you will see how they drove me to it.’

‘Who has beaten you like this?’ asked the King.

‘It was the Vizir,’ replied Hassebu.

‘Then I am already dead,’ said the King sadly, ‘but you must carry me there yourself.’

So Hassebu carried him. And on the way the King said, ‘When I arrive, I shall be killed, and my flesh will be cooked. But take some of the water that I am boiled in, and put it in a bottle and lay it on one side. The Vizir will tell you to drink it, but be careful not to do so. Then take some more of the water, and drink it, and you will become a great physician, and the third supply you will give to the Sultan. And when the Vizir comes to you

and asks, “Did you drink what I gave you?” you must answer, “I did, and this is for you,” and he will drink it and die! and your soul will rest.’

And they went their way into the town, and all happened as the King of the Snakes had said.

And the Sultan loved Hassebu, who became a great physician, and cured many sick people. But he was always sorry for the poor King of the Snakes.

(Adapted from Swahili Tales,)

THE MAIDEN WITH THE WOODEN HELMET

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In a little village in the country of Japan there lived long, long ago a man and his wife. For many years they were happy and prosperous, but bad times came, and at last nothing was left them but their daughter, who was as beautiful as the morning. The neighbours were very kind, and would have done anything they could to help their poor friends, but the old couple felt that since everything had changed they would rather go elsewhere, so one day they set off to bury themselves in the country, taking their daughter with them.

Now the mother and daughter had plenty to do in keeping the house clean and looking after the garden, but the man would sit for hours together gazing straight in front of him, and thinking of the riches that once were his. Each day he grew more and more wretched, till at length he took to his bed and never got up again.

His wife and daughter wept bitterly for his loss, and it was many months before they could take pleasure in anything. Then one morning the mother suddenly looked at the girl, and found that she had grown still more lovely than before. Once her heart would have been glad at the sight, but now that they two were alone in the world she feared some harm might come of it. So, like a good mother, she tried to teach her daughter all she knew, and to bring her up to be always busy, so that she would never have time to think about herself. And the girl was a good girl, and listened to all her mother’s lessons, and so the years passed away.

At last one wet spring the mother caught cold, and though in the beginning she did not pay much attention to it, she gradually grew more and more ill, and knew that she had not long to live. Then she called her daughter and told her that very soon she would be alone in the world; that she must take care of herself, as there would be no one to take care of her. And because it was more difficult for beautiful women to pass unheeded than for others, she bade her fetch a wooden helmet out of the next room,

and put it on her head, and pull it low down over her brows, so that nearly the whole of her face should lie in its shadow. The girl did as she was bid, and her beauty was so hidden beneath the wooden cap, which covered up all her hair, that she might have gone through any crowd, and no one would have looked twice at her. And when she saw this the heart of the mother was at rest, and she lay back in her bed and died.

The girl wept for many days, but by-and-by she felt that, being alone in the world, she must go and get work, for she had only herself to depend upon. There was none to be got by staying where she was, so she made her clothes into a bundle, and walked over the hills till she reached the house of the man who owned the fields in that part of the country. And she took service with him and laboured for him early and late, and every night when she went to bed she was at peace, for she had not forgotten one thing that she had promised her mother; and, however hot the sun might be, she always kept the wooden helmet on her head, and the people gave her the nickname of Hatschihime.

In spite, however, of all her care the fame of her beauty spread abroad: many of the impudent young men that are always to be found in the world stole softly up behind her while she was at work, and tried to lift off the wooden helmet. But the girl would have nothing to say to them, and only bade them be off; then they began to talk to her, but she never answered them, and went on with what she was doing, though her wages were low and food not very plentiful. Still she could manage to live, and that was enough.

One day her master happened to pass through the field where she was working, and was struck by her industry and stopped to watch her. After a while he put one or two questions to her, and then led her into his house, and told her that henceforward her only duty should be to tend his sick wife. From this time the girl felt as if all her troubles were ended, but the worst of them was yet to come.

Not very long after Hatschihime had become maid to the sick woman, the eldest son of the house returned home from Kioto, where he had been studying all sorts of things. He was tired of the splendours of the town and its pleasures, and was glad enough to be back in the green country, among the peach-blossoms and sweet flowers. Strolling about in the early morning, he caught sight of the girl with the odd wooden helmet on her

head, and immediately he went to his mother to ask who she was, and where she came from, and why she wore that strange thing over her face.

His mother answered that it was a whim, and nobody could persuade her to lay it aside; whereat the young man laughed, but kept his thoughts to himself.

One hot day, however, he happened to be going towards home when he caught sight of his mother's waiting maid kneeling by a little stream that flowed through the garden, splashing some water over her face. The helmet was pushed on one side, and as the youth stood watching from behind a tree he had a glimpse of the girl's great beauty; and he determined that no one else should be his wife. But when he told his family of his resolve to marry her they were very angry, and made up all sorts of wicked stories about her. However, they might have spared themselves the trouble, as he knew it was only idle talk. 'I have merely to remain firm,' thought he, 'and they will have to give in.' It was such a good match for the girl that it never occurred to anyone that she would refuse the young man, but so it was. It would not be right, she felt, to make a quarrel in the house, and though in secret she wept bitterly, for a long while, nothing would make her change her mind. At length one night her mother appeared to her in a dream, and bade her marry the young man. So the next time he asked her—as he did nearly every day—to his surprise and joy she consented. The parents then saw they had better make the best of a bad business, and set about making the grand preparations suitable to the occasion. Of course the neighbours said a great many ill-natured things about the wooden helmet, but the bridegroom was too happy to care, and only laughed at them.

When everything was ready for the feast, and the bride was dressed in the most beautiful embroidered dress to be found in Japan, the maids took hold of the helmet to lift it off her head, so that they might do her hair in the latest fashion. But the helmet would not come, and the harder they pulled, the faster it seemed to be, till the poor girl yelled with pain. Hearing her cries the bridegroom ran in and soothed her, and declared that she should be married in the helmet, as she could not be married without. Then the ceremonies began, and the bridal pair sat together, and the cup of wine was brought them, out of which they had to drink. And when they had drunk it all, and the cup was empty, a wonderful thing happened. The

helmet suddenly burst with a loud noise, and fell in pieces on the ground; and as they all turned to look they found the floor covered with precious stones which had fallen out of it. But the guests were less astonished at the brilliancy of the diamonds than at the beauty of the bride, which was beyond anything they had ever seen or heard of. The night was passed in singing and dancing, and then the bride and bridegroom went to their own house, where they lived till they died, and had many children, who were famous throughout Japan for their goodness and beauty.

(Japanische Marchen.)

THE MONKEY AND THE JELLY-FISH

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Children must often have wondered why jelly-fishes have no shells, like so many of the creatures that are washed up every day on the beach. In old times this was not so; the jelly-fish had as hard a shell as any of them, but he lost it through his own fault, as may be seen in this story.

The sea-queen Otohime, whom you read of in the story of Uraschimatoro, grew suddenly very ill. The swiftest messengers were sent hurrying to fetch the best doctors from every country under the sea, but it was all of no use; the queen grew rapidly worse instead of better. Everyone had almost given up hope, when one day a doctor arrived who was cleverer than the rest, and said that the only thing that would cure her was the liver of an ape. Now apes do not dwell under the sea, so a council of the wisest heads in the nation was called to consider the question how a liver could be obtained. At length it was decided that the turtle, whose prudence was well known, should swim to land and contrive to catch a living ape and bring him safely to the ocean kingdom.

It was easy enough for the council to entrust this mission to the turtle, but not at all so easy for him to fulfil it. However he swam to a part of the coast that was covered with tall trees, where he thought the apes were likely to be; for he was old, and had seen many things. It was some time before he caught sight of any monkeys, and he often grew tired with watching for them, so that one hot day he fell fast asleep, in spite of all his efforts to keep awake. By-and-by some apes, who had been peeping at him from the tops of the trees, where they had been carefully hidden from the turtle’s eyes, stole noiselessly down, and stood round staring at him, for they had never seen a turtle before, and did not know what to make of it. At last one young monkey, bolder than the rest, stooped down and stroked the shining shell that the strange new creature wore on its back. The movement, gentle though it was, woke the turtle. With one sweep he seized the monkey’s hand in his mouth, and held it tight, in spite of every

effort to pull it away. The other apes, seeing that the turtle was not to be trifled with, ran off, leaving their young brother to his fate.

Then the turtle said to the monkey, ‘If you will be quiet, and do what I tell you, I won’t hurt you. But you must get on my back and come with me.’

The monkey, seeing there was no help for it, did as he was bid; indeed he could not have resisted, as his hand was still in the turtle’s mouth.

Delighted at having secured his prize, the turtle hastened back to the shore and plunged quickly into the water. He swam faster than he had ever done before, and soon reached the royal palace. Shouts of joy broke forth from the attendants when he was seen approaching, and some of them ran to tell the queen that the monkey was there, and that before long she would be as well as ever she was. In fact, so great was their relief that they gave the monkey such a kind welcome, and were so anxious to make him happy and comfortable, that he soon forgot all the fears that had beset him as to his fate, and was generally quite at his ease, though every now and then a fit of home-sickness would come over him, and he would hide himself in some dark corner till it had passed away.

It was during one of these attacks of sadness that a jelly-fish happened to swim by. At that time jelly-fishes had shells. At the sight of the gay and lively monkey crouching under a tall rock, with his eyes closed and his head bent, the jelly-fish was filled with pity, and stopped, saying, ‘Ah, poor fellow, no wonder you weep; a few days more, and they will come and kill you and give your liver to the queen to eat.’

The monkey shrank back horrified at these words and asked the jelly-fish what crime he had committed that deserved death.

‘Oh, none at all,’ replied the jelly-fish, ‘but your liver is the only thing that will cure our queen, and how can we get at it without killing you? You had better submit to your fate, and make no noise about it, for though I pity you from my heart there is no way of helping you.’ Then he went away, leaving the ape cold with horror.

At first he felt as if his liver was already being taken from his body, but soon he began to wonder if there was no means of escaping this terrible death, and at length he invented a plan which he thought would do. For a few days he pretended to be gay and happy as before, but when the sun went in, and rain fell in torrents, he wept and howled from dawn to

dark, till the turtle, who was his head keeper, heard him, and came to see what was the matter. Then the monkey told him that before he left home he had hung his liver out on a bush to dry, and if it was always going to rain like this it would become quite useless. And the rogue made such a fuss and moaning that he would have melted a heart of stone, and nothing would content him but that somebody should carry him back to land and let him fetch his liver again.

The queen's councillors were not the wisest of people, and they decided between them that the turtle should take the monkey back to his native land and allow him to get his liver off the bush, but desired the turtle not to lose sight of his charge for a single moment. The monkey knew this, but trusted to his power of beguiling the turtle when the time came, and mounted on his back with feelings of joy, which he was, however, careful to conceal. They set out, and in a few hours were wandering about the forest where the ape had first been caught, and when the monkey saw his family peering out from the tree tops, he swung himself up by the nearest branch, just managing to save his hind leg from being seized by the turtle. He told them all the dreadful things that had happened to him, and gave a war cry which brought the rest of the tribe from the neighbouring hills. At a word from him they rushed in a body to the unfortunate turtle, threw him on his back, and tore off the shield that covered his body. Then with mocking words they hunted him to the shore, and into the sea, which he was only too thankful to reach alive. Faint and exhausted he entered the queen's palace for the cold of the water struck upon his naked body, and made him feel ill and miserable. But wretched though he was, he had to appear before the queen's advisers and tell them all that had befallen him, and how he had suffered the monkey to escape. But, as sometimes happens, the turtle was allowed to go scot-free, and had his shell given back to him, and all the punishment fell on the poor jelly-fish, who was condemned by the queen to go shieldless for ever after.

(Japanische Marchen.)

THE HEADLESS DWARFS

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There was once a minister who spent his whole time in trying to find a servant who would undertake to ring the church bells at midnight, in addition to all his other duties.

Of course it was not everyone who cared to get up in the middle of the night, when he had been working hard all day; still, a good many had agreed to do it. But the strange thing was that no sooner had the servant set forth to perform his task than he disappeared, as if the earth had swallowed him up. No bells were rung, and no ringer ever came back. The minister did his best to keep the matter secret, but it leaked out for all that, and the end of it was that no one would enter his service. Indeed, there were even those who whispered that the minister himself had murdered the missing men!

It was to no purpose that Sunday after Sunday the minister gave out from his pulpit that double wages would be paid to anyone that would fulfil the sacred duty of ringing the bells of the church. No one took the slightest notice of any offer he might make, and the poor man was in despair, when one day, as he was standing at his house door, a youth known in the village as Clever Hans came up to him. ‘I am tired of living with a miser who will not give me enough to eat and drink,’ said he, ‘and I am ready to do all you want.’ ‘Very good, my son,’ replied the minister, ‘you shall have the chance of proving your courage this very night. To-morrow we will settle what your wages are to be.’

Hans was quite content with this proposal, and went straight into the kitchen to begin his work, not knowing that his new master was quite as stingy as his old one. In the hope that his presence might be a restraint upon them, the minister used to sit at the table during his servants’ meals, and would exhort them to drink much and often, thinking that they would not be able to eat as well, and beef was dearer than beer. But in Hans he had met his match, and the minister soon found to his cost that in his case at any rate a full cup did not mean an empty plate.

About an hour before midnight, Hans entered the church and locked the door behind him, but what was his surprise when, in place of the darkness and silence he expected, he found the church brilliantly lighted, and a crowd of people sitting round a table playing cards. Hans felt no fear at this strange sight, or was prudent enough to hide it if he did, and, going up to the table, sat down amongst the players. One of them looked up and asked, ‘My friend, what are you doing here?’ and Hans gazed at him for a moment, then laughed and answered, ‘Well, if anybody has a right to put that question, it is I! And if *I* do not put it, it will certainly be wiser for you not to do so!’

Then he picked up some cards, and played with the unknown men as if he had known them all his life. The luck was on his side, and soon the money of the other gamblers found its way from their pockets into his. On the stroke of midnight the cock crew, and in an instant lights, table, cards, and people all had vanished, and Hans was left alone.

He groped about for some time, till he found the staircase in the tower, and then began to feel his way up the steps.

On the first landing a glimmer of light came through a slit in the wall, and he saw a tiny man sitting there, without a head. ‘Ho! ho! my little fellow, what are you doing there?’ asked Hans, and, without waiting for an answer, gave him a kick which sent him flying down the stairs. Then he climbed higher still, and finding as he went dumb watchers sitting on every landing, treated them as he had done the first.

At last he reached the top, and as he paused for a moment to look round him he saw another headless man cowering in the very bell itself, waiting till Hans should seize the bell-pull in order to strike him a blow with the clapper, which would soon have made an end of him.

‘Stop, my little friend!’ cried Hans. ‘That is not part of the bargain! Perhaps you saw how your comrades walked down stairs, and you are going after them. But as you are in the highest place you shall make a more dignified exit, and follow them through the window!’

With these words he began to climb the ladder, in order to take the little man from the bell and carry out his threat.

At this the dwarf cried out imploringly, ‘Oh, brother! spare my life, and I promise that neither I nor my comrades will ever trouble you any

more. I am small and weak, but who knows whether some day I shall not be able to reward you.'

'You wretched little shrimp,' replied Hans, 'a great deal of good your gratitude is likely to do me! But as I happen to be feeling in a cheerful mood to-night I will let you have your life. But take care how you come across me again, or you may not escape so easily!'

The headless man thanked him humbly, slid hastily down the bell rope, and ran down the steps of the tower as if he had left a fire behind him. Then Hans began to ring lustily.

When the minister heard the sound of the midnight bells he wondered greatly, but rejoiced that he had at last found some one to whom he could trust this duty. Hans rang the bells for some time, then went to the hay-loft, and fell fast asleep.

Now it was the custom of the minister to get up very early, and to go round to make sure that the men were all at their work. This morning everyone was in his place except Hans, and no one knew anything about him. Nine o'clock came, and no Hans, but when eleven struck the minister began to fear that he had vanished like the ringers who had gone before him. When, however, the servants all gathered round the table for dinner, Hans at last made his appearance stretching himself and yawning.

'Where have you been all this time?' asked the minister.

'Asleep,' said Hans.

'Asleep!' exclaimed the minister in astonishment. 'You don't mean to tell me that you can go on sleeping till mid-day?'

'That is exactly what I do mean,' replied Hans. 'If one works in the night one must sleep in the day, just as if one works in the day one sleeps in the night. If you can find somebody else to ring the bells at midnight I am ready to begin work at dawn; but if you want me to ring them I must go on sleeping till noon at the very earliest.'

The minister tried to argue the point with him, but at length the following agreement was come to. Hans was to give up the ringing, and was to work like the rest from sunrise to sunset, with the exception of an hour after breakfast and an hour after dinner, when he might go to sleep. 'But, of course,' added the minister carelessly, 'it may happen now and then, especially in winter, when the days are short, that you will have to work a little longer, to get something finished.'

‘Not at all!’ answered Hans. ‘Unless I were to leave off work earlier in summer, I will not do a stroke more than I have promised, and that is from dawn to dark; so you know what you have to expect.’

A few weeks later the minister was asked to attend a christening in the neighbouring town. He bade Hans come with him, but, as the town was only a few hours’ ride from where he lived, the minister was much surprised to see Hans come forth laden with a bag containing food.

‘What are you taking that for?’ asked the minister. ‘We shall be there before dark.’

‘Who knows?’ replied Hans. ‘Many things may happen to delay our journey, and I need not remind you of our contract that the moment the sun sets I cease to be your servant. If we don’t reach the town while it is still daylight I shall leave you to shift for yourself.’

The minister thought he was joking, and made no further remark. But when they had left the village behind them, and had ridden a few miles, they found that snow had fallen during the night, and had been blown by the wind into drifts. This hindered their progress, and by the time they had entered the thick wood which lay between them and their destination the sun was already touching the tops of the trees. The horses ploughed their way slowly through the deep soft snow and as they went Hans kept turning to look at the sun, which lay at their backs.

‘Is there anything behind you?’ asked the minister. ‘Or what is it you are always turning round for?’

‘I turn round because I have no eyes in the back of my neck,’ said Hans.

‘Cease talking nonsense,’ replied the minister, ‘and give all your mind to getting us to the town before nightfall.’

Hans did not answer, but rode on steadily, though every now and then he cast a glance over his shoulder.

When they arrived in the middle of the wood the sun sank altogether. Then Hans reined up his horse, took his knapsack, and jumped out of the sledge.

‘What are you doing? Are you mad?’ asked the minister, but Hans answered quietly, ‘The sun is set and my work is over, and I am going to camp here for the night.’

In vain the master prayed and threatened, and promised Hans a large reward if he would only drive him on. The young man was not to be moved.

‘Are you not ashamed to urge me to break my word?’ said he. ‘If you want to reach the town to-night you must go alone. The hour of my freedom has struck, and I cannot go with you.’

‘My good Hans,’ entreated the minister, ‘I really ought not to leave you here. Consider what danger you would be in! Yonder, as you see, a gallows is set up, and two evil-doers are hanging on it. You could not possibly sleep with such ghastly neighbours.’

‘Why not?’ asked Hans. ‘Those gallows birds hang high in the air, and my camp will be on the ground; we shall have nothing to do with each other.’ As he spoke, he turned his back on the minister, and went his way.

There was no help for it, and the minister had to push on by himself, if he expected to arrive in time for the christening. His friends were much surprised to see him drive up without a coachman, and thought some accident had happened. But when he told them of his conversation with Hans they did not know which was the most foolish, master or man.

It would have mattered little to Hans had he known what they were saying or thinking of him. He satisfied his hunger with the food he had in his knapsack, lit his pipe, pitched his tent under the boughs of a tree, wrapped himself in his furs, and went sound asleep. After some hours, he was awakened by a sudden noise, and sat up and looked about him. The moon was shining brightly above his head, and close by stood two headless dwarfs, talking angrily. At the sight of Hans the little dwarfs cried out:

‘It is he! It is he!’ and one of them stepping nearer exclaimed, ‘Ah, my old friend! it is a lucky chance that has brought us here. My bones still ache from my fall down the steps of the tower. I dare say you have not forgotten that night! Now it is the turn of your bones. Hi! comrades, make haste! make haste!’

Like a swarm of midges, a host of tiny headless creatures seemed to spring straight out of the ground, and every one was armed with a club. Although they were so small, yet there were such numbers of them and they struck so hard that even a strong man could do nothing against them.

Hans thought his last hour was come, when just as the fight was at the hottest another little dwarf arrived on the scene.

‘Hold, comrades!’ he shouted, turning to the attacking party. ‘This man once did me a service, and I am his debtor. When I was in his power he granted me my life. And even if he did throw you downstairs, well, a warm bath soon cured your bruises, so you must just forgive him and go quietly home.’

The headless dwarfs listened to his words and disappeared as suddenly as they had come. As soon as Hans recovered himself a little he looked at his rescuer, and saw he was the dwarf he had found seated in the church bell.

‘Ah!’ said the dwarf, seating himself quietly under the tree. ‘You laughed at me when I told you that some day I might do you a good turn. Now you see I was right, and perhaps you will learn for the future not to despise any creature, however small.’

‘I thank you from my heart,’ answered Hans. ‘My bones are still sore from their blows, and had it not been for you I should indeed have fared badly.’

‘I have almost paid my debt,’ went on the little man, ‘but as you have suffered already, I will do more, and give you a piece of information. You need not remain any longer in the service of that stingy minister, but when you get home to-morrow go at once to the north corner of the church, and there you will find a large stone built into the wall, but not cemented like the rest. The day after to-morrow the moon is full, and at midnight you must go to the spot and get the stone out of the wall with a pickaxe. Under the stone lies a great treasure, which has been hidden there in time of war. Besides church plate, you will find bags of money, which have been lying in this place for over a hundred years, and no one knows to whom it all belongs. A third of this money you must give to the poor, but the rest you may keep for yourself.’ As he finished, the cocks in the village crowed, and the little man was nowhere to be seen. Hans found that his limbs no longer pained him, and lay for some time thinking of the hidden treasure. Towards morning he fell asleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when his master returned from the town.

‘Hans,’ said he, ‘what a fool you were not to come with me yesterday! I was well feasted and entertained, and I have money in my pocket into the bargain,’ he went on, rattling some coins while he spoke, to make Hans understand how much he had lost.

‘Ah, sir,’ replied Hans calmly, ‘in order to have gained so much money you must have lain awake all night, but I have earned a hundred times that amount while I was sleeping soundly.’

‘How did you manage that?’ asked the minister eagerly, but Hans answered, ‘It is only fools who boast of their farthings; wise men take care to hide their crowns.’

They drove home, and Hans neglected none of his duties, but put up the horses and gave them their food before going to the church corner, where he found the loose stone, exactly in the place described by the dwarf. Then he returned to his work.

The first night of the full moon, when the whole village was asleep, he stole out, armed with a pickaxe, and with much difficulty succeeded in dislodging the stone from its place. Sure enough, there was the hole, and in the hole lay the treasure, exactly as the little man had said.

The following Sunday he handed over the third part to the village poor, and informed the minister that he wished to break his bond of service. As, however, he did not claim any wages, the minister made no objections, but allowed him to do as he wished. So Hans went his way, bought himself a large house, and married a young wife, and lived happily and prosperously to the end of his days.

(Ehstnische Marchen.)

THE YOUNG MAN WHO WOULD HAVE HIS EYES OPENED

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Once upon a time there lived a youth who was never happy unless he was prying into something that other people knew nothing about. After he had learned to understand the language of birds and beasts, he discovered accidentally that a great deal took place under cover of night which mortal eyes never saw. From that moment he felt he could not rest till these hidden secrets were laid bare to him, and he spent his whole time wandering from one wizard to another, begging them to open his eyes, but found none to help him. At length he reached an old magician called Mana, whose learning was greater than that of the rest, and who could tell him all he wanted to know. But when the old man had listened attentively to him, he said, warningly:

'My son, do not follow after empty knowledge, which will not bring you happiness, but rather evil. Much is hidden from the eyes of men, because did they know everything their hearts would no longer be at peace. Knowledge kills joy, therefore think well what you are doing, or some day you will repent. But if you will not take my advice, then truly I can show you the secrets of the night. Only you will need more than a man's courage to bear the sight.'

He stopped and looked at the young man, who nodded his head, and then the wizard continued, 'To-morrow night you must go to the place where, once in seven years, the serpent-king gives a great feast to his whole court. In front of him stands a golden bowl filled with goats' milk, and if you can manage to dip a piece of bread in this milk, and eat it before you are obliged to fly, you will understand all the secrets of the night that are hidden from other men. It is lucky for you that the serpent-king's feast happens to fall this year, otherwise you would have had long to wait for it. But take care to be quick and bold, or it will be the worse for you.'

The young man thanked the wizard for his counsel, and went his way firmly resolved to carry out his purpose, even if he paid for it with his life;

and when night came he set out for a wide, lonely moor, where the serpent-king held his feast. With sharpened eyes, he looked eagerly all round him, but could see nothing but a multitude of small hillocks, that lay motionless under the moonlight. He crouched behind a bush for some time, till he felt that midnight could not be far off, when suddenly there arose in the middle of the moor a brilliant glow, as if a star was shining over one of the hillocks. At the same moment all the hillocks began to writhe and to crawl, and from each one came hundreds of serpents and made straight for the glow, where they knew they should find their king. When they reached the hillock where he dwelt, which was higher and broader than the rest, and had a bright light hanging over the top, they coiled themselves up and waited. The whirr and confusion from all the serpent-houses were so great that the youth did not dare to advance one step, but remained where he was, watching intently all that went on; but at last he began to take courage, and moved on softly step by step.

What he saw was creepier than creepy, and surpassed all he had ever dreamt of. Thousands of snakes, big and little and of every colour, were gathered together in one great cluster round a huge serpent, whose body was as thick as a beam, and which had on its head a golden crown, from which the light sprang. Their hissings and darting tongues so terrified the young man that his heart sank, and he felt he should never have courage to push on to certain death, when suddenly he caught sight of the golden bowl in front of the serpent-king, and knew that if he lost this chance it would never come back. So, with his hair standing on end and his blood frozen in his veins, he crept forwards. Oh! what a noise and a whirr rose afresh among the serpents. Thousands of heads were reared, and tongues were stretched out to sting the intruder to death, but happily for him their bodies were so closely entwined one in the other that they could not disentangle themselves quickly. Like lightning he seized a bit of bread, dipped it in the bowl, and put it in his mouth, then dashed away as if fire was pursuing him. On he flew as if a whole army of foes were at his heels, and he seemed to hear the noise of their approach growing nearer and nearer. At length his breath failed him, and he threw himself almost senseless on the turf. While he lay there dreadful dreams haunted him. He thought that the serpent-king with the fiery crown had twined himself round him, and was crushing out his life. With a loud shriek he sprang up to do battle with his

enemy, when he saw that it was rays of the sun which had wakened him. He rubbed his eyes and looked all round, but nothing could he see of the foes of the past night, and the moor where he had run into such danger must be at least a mile away. But it was no dream that he had run hard and far, or that he had drunk of the magic goats' milk. And when he felt his limbs, and found them whole, his joy was great that he had come through such perils with a sound skin.

After the fatigues and terrors of the night, he lay still till mid-day, but he made up his mind he would go that very evening into the forest to try what the goats' milk could really do for him, and if he would now be able to understand all that had been a mystery to him. And once in the forest his doubts were set at rest, for he saw what no mortal eyes had ever seen before. Beneath the trees were golden pavilions, with flags of silver all brightly lighted up. He was still wondering why the pavilions were there, when a noise was heard among the trees, as if the wind had suddenly got up, and on all sides beautiful maidens stepped from the trees into the bright light of the moon. These were the wood-nymphs, daughters of the earth-mother, who came every night to hold their dances, in the forest. The young man, watching from his hiding place, wished he had a hundred eyes in his head, for two were not nearly enough for the sight before him, the dances lasting till the first streaks of dawn. Then a silvery veil seemed to be drawn over the ladies, and they vanished from sight. But the young man remained where he was till the sun was high in the heavens, and then went home.

He felt that day to be endless, and counted the minutes till night should come, and he might return to the forest. But when at last he got there he found neither pavilions nor nymphs, and though he went back many nights after he never saw them again. Still, he thought about them night and day, and ceased to care about anything else in the world, and was sick to the end of his life with longing for that beautiful vision. And that was the way he learned that the wizard had spoken truly when he said, 'Blindness is man's highest good.'

(Ehstnische Marchen.)

THE BOYS WITH THE GOLDEN STARS

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Once upon a time what happened did happen: and if it had not happened, you would never have heard this story.

Well, once upon a time there lived an emperor who had half a world all to himself to rule over, and in this world dwelt an old herd and his wife and their three daughters, Anna, Stana, and Laptitza.

Anna, the eldest, was so beautiful that when she took the sheep to pasture they forgot to eat as long as she was walking with them. Stana, the second, was so beautiful that when she was driving the flock the wolves protected the sheep. But Laptitza, the youngest, with a skin as white as the foam on the milk, and with hair as soft as the finest lamb's wool, was as beautiful as both her sisters put together—as beautiful as she alone could be.

One summer day, when the rays of the sun were pouring down on the earth, the three sisters went to the wood on the outskirts of the mountain to pick strawberries. As they were looking about to find where the largest berries grew they heard the tramp of horses approaching, so loud that you would have thought a whole army was riding by. But it was only the emperor going to hunt with his friends and attendants.

They were all fine handsome young men, who sat their horses as if they were part of them, but the finest and handsomest of all was the young emperor himself.

As they drew near the three sisters, and marked their beauty, they checked their horses and rode slowly by.

'Listen, sisters!' said Anna, as they passed on. 'If one of those young men should make me his wife, I would bake him a loaf of bread which should keep him young and brave for ever.'

'And if I,' said Stana, 'should be the one chosen, I would weave my husband a shirt which will keep him unscathed when he fights with dragons; when he goes through water he will never even be wet; or if through fire, it will not scorch him.'

‘And I,’ said Laptitza, ‘will give the man who chooses me two boys, twins, each with a golden star on his forehead, as bright as those in the sky.’

And though they spoke low the young men heard, and turned their horses’ heads.

‘I take you at your word, and mine shall you be, most lovely of empresses!’ cried the emperor, and swung Laptitza and her strawberries on the horse before him.

‘And I will have you,’ ‘And I you,’ exclaimed two of his friends, and they all rode back to the palace together.

The following morning the marriage ceremony took place, and for three days and three nights there was nothing but feasting over the whole kingdom. And when the rejoicings were over the news was in everybody’s mouth that Anna had sent for corn, and had made the loaf of which she had spoken at the strawberry beds. And then more days and nights passed, and this rumour was succeeded by another one—that Stana had procured some flax, and had dried it, and combed it, and spun it into linen, and sewed it herself into the shirt of which she had spoken over the strawberry beds.

Now the emperor had a stepmother, and she had a daughter by her first husband, who lived with her in the palace. The girl’s mother had always believed that her daughter would be empress, and not the ‘Milkwhite Maiden,’ the child of a mere shepherd. So she hated the girl with all her heart, and only bided her time to do her ill.

But she could do nothing as long as the emperor remained with his wife night and day, and she began to wonder what she could do to get him away from her.

At last, when everything else had failed, she managed to make her brother, who was king of the neighbouring country, declare war against the emperor, and besiege some of the frontier towns with a large army. This time her scheme was successful. The young emperor sprang up in wrath the moment he heard the news, and vowed that nothing, not even his wife, should hinder his giving them battle. And hastily assembling whatever soldiers happened to be at hand he set off at once to meet the enemy. The other king had not reckoned on the swiftness of his movements, and was not ready to receive him. The emperor fell on him when he was off his guard, and routed his army completely. Then when victory was won, and

the terms of peace hastily drawn up, he rode home as fast as his horse would carry him, and reached the palace on the third day.

But early that morning, when the stars were growing pale in the sky, two little boys with golden hair and stars on their foreheads were born to Laptitza. And the stepmother, who was watching, took them away, and dug a hole in the corner of the palace, under the windows of the emperor, and put them in it, while in their stead she placed two little puppies.

The emperor came into the palace, and when they told him the news he went straight to Laptitza's room. No words were needed; he saw with his own eyes that Laptitza had not kept the promise she had made at the strawberry beds, and, though it nearly broke his heart, he must give orders for her punishment.

So he went out sadly and told his guards that the empress was to be buried in the earth up to her neck, so that everyone might know what would happen to those who dared to deceive the emperor.

Not many days after, the stepmother's wish was fulfilled. The emperor took her daughter to wife, and again the rejoicings lasted for three days and three nights.

Let us now see what happened to the two little boys.

The poor little babies had found no rest even in their graves. In the place where they had been buried there sprang up two beautiful young aspens, and the stepmother, who hated the sight of the trees, which reminded her of her crime, gave orders that they should be uprooted. But the emperor heard of it, and forbade the trees to be touched, saying, 'Let them alone; I like to see them there! They are the finest aspens I have ever beheld!'

And the aspens grew as no aspens had ever grown before. In each day they added a year's growth, and each night they added a year's growth, and at dawn, when the stars faded out of the sky, they grew three years' growth in the twinkling of an eye, and their boughs swept across the palace windows. And when the wind moved them softly, the emperor would sit and listen to them all the day long.

The stepmother knew what it all meant, and her mind never ceased from trying to invent some way of destroying the trees. It was not an easy thing, but a woman's will can press milk out of a stone, and her cunning

will overcome heroes. What craft will not do soft words may attain, and if these do not succeed there still remains the resource of tears.

One morning the empress sat on the edge of her husband's bed, and began to coax him with all sorts of pretty ways.

It was some time before the bait took, but at length—even emperors are only men!

'Well, well,' he said at last, 'have your way and cut down the trees; but out of one they shall make a bed for me, and out of the other, one for you!'

And with this the empress was forced to be content. The aspens were cut down next morning, and before night the new bed had been placed in the emperor's room.

Now when the emperor lay down in it he seemed as if he had grown a hundred times heavier than usual, yet he felt a kind of calm that was quite new to him. But the empress felt as if she was lying on thorns and nettles, and could not close her eyes.

When the emperor was fast asleep, the bed began to crack loudly, and to the empress each crack had a meaning. She felt as if she were listening to a language which no one but herself could understand.

'Is it too heavy for you, little brother?' asked one of the beds.

'Oh, no, it is not heavy at all,' answered the bed in which the emperor was sleeping. 'I feel nothing but joy now that my beloved father rests over me.'

'It is very heavy for me!' said the other bed, 'for on me lies an evil soul.'

And so they talked on till the morning, the empress listening all the while.

By daybreak the empress had determined how to get rid of the beds. She would have two others made exactly like them, and when the emperor had gone hunting they should be placed in his room. This was done and the aspen beds were burnt in a large fire, till only a little heap of ashes was left.

Yet while they were burning the empress seemed to hear the same words, which she alone could understand.

Then she stooped and gathered up the ashes, and scattered them to the four winds, so that they might blow over fresh lands and fresh seas, and nothing remain of them.

But she had not seen that where the fire burnt brightest two sparks flew up, and, after floating in the air for a few moments, fell down into the great river that flows through the heart of the country. Here the sparks had turned into two little fishes with golden scales, and one was so exactly like the other that everyone could tell at the first glance that they must be twins. Early one morning the emperor's fishermen went down to the river to get some fish for their master's breakfast, and cast their nets into the stream. As the last star twinkled out of the sky they drew them in, and among the multitude of fishes lay two with scales of gold, such as no man had ever looked on.

They all gathered round and wondered, and after some talk they decided that they would take the little fishes alive as they were, and give them as a present to the emperor.

'Do not take us there, for that is whence we came, and yonder lies our destruction,' said one of the fishes.

'But what are we to do with you?' asked the fisherman.

'Go and collect all the dew that lies on the leaves, and let us swim in it. Then lay us in the sun, and do not come near us till the sun's rays shall have dried off the dew,' answered the other fish.

The fisherman did as they told him—gathered the dew from the leaves and let them swim in it, then put them to lie in the sun till the dew should be all dried up.

And when he came back, what do you think he saw? Why, two boys, two beautiful young princes, with hair as golden as the stars on their foreheads, and each so like the other, that at the first glance every one would have known them for twins.

The boys grew fast. In every day they grew a year's growth, and in every night another year's growth, but at dawn, when the stars were fading, they grew three years' growth in the twinkling of an eye. And they grew in other things besides height, too. Thrice in age, and thrice in wisdom, and thrice in knowledge. And when three days and three nights had passed they were twelve years in age, twenty-four in strength, and thirty-six in wisdom.

'Now take us to our father,' said they. So the fisherman gave them each a lambskin cap which half covered their faces, and completely hid their golden hair and the stars on their foreheads, and led them to the court.

By the time they arrived there it was midday, and the fisherman and his charges went up to an official who was standing about. ‘We wish to speak with the emperor,’ said one of the boys.

‘You must wait until he has finished his dinner,’ replied the porter.

‘No, while he is eating it,’ said the second boy, stepping across the threshold.

The attendants all ran forward to thrust such impudent youngsters outside the palace, but the boys slipped through their fingers like quicksilver, and entered a large hall, where the emperor was dining, surrounded by his whole court.

‘We desire to enter,’ said one of the princes sharply to a servant who stood near the door.

‘That is quite impossible,’ replied the servant.

‘Is it? let us see!’ said the second prince, pushing the servants to right and left.

But the servants were many, and the princes only two. There was the noise of a struggle, which reached the emperor’s ears.

‘What is the matter?’ asked he angrily.

The princes stopped at the sound of their father’s voice.

‘Two boys who want to force their way in,’ replied one of the servants, approaching the emperor.

‘To FORCE their way in? Who dares to use force in my palace? What boys are they?’ said the emperor all in one breath.

‘We know not, O mighty emperor,’ answered the servant, ‘but they must surely be akin to you, for they have the strength of lions, and have scattered the guards at the gate. And they are as proud as they are strong, for they will not take their caps from their heads.’

The emperor, as he listened, grew red with anger.

‘Thrust them out,’ cried he. ‘Set the dogs after them.’

‘Leave us alone, and we will go quietly,’ said the princes, and stepped backwards, weeping silently at the harsh words. They had almost reached the gates when a servant ran up to them.

‘The emperor commands you to return,’ panted he: ‘the empress wishes to see you.’

The princes thought a moment: then they went back the way they had come, and walked straight up to the emperor, their caps still on their

heads.

He sat at the top of a long table covered with flowers and filled with guests. And beside him sat the empress, supported by twelve cushions. When the princes entered one of the cushions fell down, and there remained only eleven.

‘Take off your caps,’ said one of the courtiers.

‘A covered head is among men a sign of honour. We wish to seem what we are.’

‘Never mind,’ said the emperor, whose anger had dropped before the silvery tones of the boy’s voice. ‘Stay as you are, but tell me WHO you are! Where do you come from, and what do you want?’

‘We are twins, two shoots from one stem, which has been broken, and half lies in the ground and half sits at the head of this table. We have travelled a long way, we have spoken in the rustle of the wind, have whispered in the wood, we have sung in the waters, but now we wish to tell you a story which you know without knowing it, in the speech of men.’

And a second cushion fell down.

‘Let them take their silliness home,’ said the empress.

‘Oh, no, let them go on,’ said the emperor. ‘You wished to see them, but I wish to hear them. Go on, boys, sing me the story.’

The empress was silent, but the princes began to sing the story of their lives.

‘There was once an emperor,’ began they, and the third cushion fell down.

When they reached the warlike expedition of the emperor three of the cushions fell down at once.

And when the tale was finished there were no more cushions under the empress, but the moment that they lifted their caps, and showed their golden hair and the golden stars, the eyes of the emperor and of all his guests were bent on them, and they could hardly bear the power of so many glances.

And there happened in the end what should have happened in the beginning. Laptitza sat next her husband at the top of the table. The stepmother’s daughter became the meanest sewing maid in the palace, the stepmother was tied to a wild horse, and every one knew and has never

forgotten that whoever has a mind turned to wickedness is sure to end badly.

(Rumanische Marchen.)

THE FROG

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Once upon a time there was a woman who had three sons. Though they were peasants they were well off, for the soil on which they lived was fruitful, and yielded rich crops. One day they all three told their mother they meant to get married. To which their mother replied: ‘Do as you like, but see that you choose good housewives, who will look carefully after your affairs; and, to make certain of this, take with you these three skeins of flax, and give it to them to spin. Whoever spins the best will be my favourite daughter-in-law.’

Now the two eldest sons had already chosen their wives; so they took the flax from their mother, and carried it off with them, to have it spun as she had said. But the youngest son was puzzled what to do with his skein, as he knew no girl (never having spoken to any) to whom he could give it to be spun. He wandered hither and thither, asking the girls that he met if they would undertake the task for him, but at the sight of the flax they laughed in his face and mocked at him. Then in despair he left their villages, and went out into the country, and, seating himself on the bank of a pond began to cry bitterly.

Suddenly there was a noise close beside him, and a frog jumped out of the water on to the bank and asked him why he was crying. The youth told her of his trouble, and how his brothers would bring home linen spun for them by their promised wives, but that no one would spin his thread.

Then the frog answered: ‘Do not weep on that account; give me the thread, and I will spin it for you.’ And, having said this, she took it out of his hand, and flopped back into the water, and the youth went back, not knowing what would happen next.

In a short time the two elder brothers came home, and their mother asked to see the linen which had been woven out of the skeins of flax she had given them. They all three left the room; and in a few minutes the two eldest returned, bringing with them the linen that had been spun by their chosen wives. But the youngest brother was greatly troubled, for he had

nothing to show for the skein of flax that had been given to him. Sadly he betook himself to the pond, and sitting down on the bank, began to weep.

Flop! and the frog appeared out of the water close beside him.

‘Take this,’ she said; ‘here is the linen that I have spun for you.’

You may imagine how delighted the youth was. She put the linen into his hands, and he took it straight back to his mother, who was so pleased with it that she declared she had never seen linen so beautifully spun, and that it was far finer and whiter than the webs that the two elder brothers had brought home.

Then she turned to her sons and said: ‘But this is not enough, my sons, I must have another proof as to what sort of wives you have chosen. In the house there are three puppies. Each of you take one, and give it to the woman whom you mean to bring home as your wife. She must train it and bring it up. Whichever dog turns out the best, its mistress will be my favourite daughter-in-law.’

So the young men set out on their different ways, each taking a puppy with him. The youngest, not knowing where to go, returned to the pond, sat down once more on the bank, and began to weep.

Flop! and close beside him, he saw the frog. ‘Why are you weeping?’ she said. Then he told her his difficulty, and that he did not know to whom he should take the puppy.

‘Give it to me,’ she said, ‘and I will bring it up for you.’ And, seeing that the youth hesitated, she took the little creature out of his arms, and disappeared with it into the pond.

The weeks and months passed, till one day the mother said she would like to see how the dogs had been trained by her future daughters-in-law. The two eldest sons departed, and returned shortly, leading with them two great mastiffs, who growled so fiercely, and looked so savage, that the mere sight of them made the mother tremble with fear.

The youngest son, as was his custom, went to the pond, and called on the frog to come to his rescue.

In a minute she was at his side, bringing with her the most lovely little dog, which she put into his arms. It sat up and begged with its paws, and went through the prettiest tricks, and was almost human in the way it understood and did what it was told.

In high spirits the youth carried it off to his mother. As soon as she saw it, she exclaimed: ‘This is the most beautiful little dog I have ever seen. You are indeed fortunate, my son; you have won a pearl of a wife.’

Then, turning to the others, she said: ‘Here are three shirts; take them to your chosen wives. Whoever sews the best will be my favourite daughter-in-law.’

So the young men set out once more; and again, this time, the work of the frog was much the best and the neatest.

This time the mother said: ‘Now that I am content with the tests I gave, I want you to go and fetch home your brides, and I will prepare the wedding-feast.’

You may imagine what the youngest brother felt on hearing these words. Whence was he to fetch a bride? Would the frog be able to help him in this new difficulty? With bowed head, and feeling very sad, he sat down on the edge of the pond.

Flop! and once more the faithful frog was beside him.

‘What is troubling you so much?’ she asked him, and then the youth told her everything.

‘Will you take me for a wife?’ she asked.

‘What should I do with you as a wife,’ he replied, wondering at her strange proposal.

‘Once more, will you have me or will you not?’ she said.

‘I will neither have you, nor will I refuse you,’ said he.

At this the frog disappeared; and the next minute the youth beheld a lovely little chariot, drawn by two tiny ponies, standing on the road. The frog was holding the carriage door open for him to step in.

‘Come with me,’ she said. And he got up and followed her into the chariot.

As they drove along the road they met three witches; the first of them was blind, the second was hunchbacked, and the third had a large thorn in her throat. When the three witches beheld the chariot, with the frog seated pompously among the cushions, they broke into such fits of laughter that the eyelids of the blind one burst open, and she recovered her sight; the hunchback rolled about on the ground in merriment till her back became straight, and in a roar of laughter the thorn fell out of the throat of the

third witch. Their first thought was to reward the frog, who had unconsciously been the means of curing them of their misfortunes.

The first witch waved her magic wand over the frog, and changed her into the loveliest girl that had ever been seen. The second witch waved the wand over the tiny chariot and ponies, and they were turned into a beautiful large carriage with prancing horses, and a coachman on the seat. The third witch gave the girl a magic purse, filled with money. Having done this, the witches disappeared, and the youth with his lovely bride drove to his mother’s home. Great was the delight of the mother at her youngest son’s good fortune. A beautiful house was built for them; she was the favourite daughter-in-law; everything went well with them, and they lived happily ever after.

(From the Italian.)

THE PRINCESS WHO WAS HIDDEN UNDERGROUND

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Once there was a king who had great riches, which, when he died, he divided among his three sons. The two eldest of these lived in rioting and feasting, and thus wasted and squandered their father’s wealth till nothing remained, and they found themselves in want and misery. The youngest of the three sons, on the contrary, made good use of his portion. He married a wife and soon they had a most beautiful daughter, for whom, when she was grown up, he caused a great palace to be built underground, and then killed the architect who had built it. Next he shut up his daughter inside, and then sent heralds all over the world to make known that he who should find the king’s daughter should have her to wife. If he were not capable of finding her then he must die.

Many young men sought to discover her, but all perished in the attempt.

After many had met their death thus, there came a young man, beautiful to behold, and as clever as he was beautiful, who had a great desire to attempt the enterprise. First he went to a herdsman, and begged him to hide him in a sheepskin, which had a golden fleece, and in this disguise to take him to the king. The shepherd let himself be persuaded so to do, took a skin having a golden fleece, sewed the young man in it, putting in also food and drink, and so brought him before the king.

When the latter saw the golden lamb, he asked the herd: ‘Will you sell me this lamb?’

But the herd answered: ‘No, oh king; I will not sell it; but if you find pleasure therein, I will be willing to oblige you, and I will lend it to you, free of charge, for three days, after that you must give it back to me.’

This the king agreed to do, and he arose and took the lamb to his daughter. When he had led it into her palace, and through many rooms, he came to a shut door. Then he called ‘Open, Sartara Martara of the earth!’ and the door opened of itself. After that they went through many more

rooms, and came to another closed door. Again the king called out: ‘Open, Sartara Martara of the earth!’ and this door opened like the other, and they came into the apartment where the princess dwelt, the floor, walls, and roof of which were all of silver.

When the king had embraced the princess, he gave her the lamb, to her great joy. She stroked it, caressed it, and played with it.

After a while the lamb got loose, which, when the princess saw, she said: ‘See, father, the lamb is free.’

But the king answered: ‘It is only a lamb, why should it not be free?’

Then he left the lamb with the princess, and went his way.

In the night, however, the young man threw off the skin. When the princess saw how beautiful he was, she fell in love with him, and asked him: ‘Why did you come here disguised in a sheepskin like that?’

Then he answered: ‘When I saw how many people sought you, and could not find you, and lost their lives in so doing, I invented this trick, and so I am come safely to you.’

The princess exclaimed: ‘You have done well so to do; but you must know that your wager is not yet won, for my father will change me and my maidens into ducks, and will ask you, “Which of these ducks is the princess?” Then I will turn my head back, and with my bill will clean my wings, so that you may know me.’

When they had spent three days together, chatting and caressing one another, the herd came back to the king, and demanded his lamb. Then the king went to his daughter to bring it away, which troubled the princess very much, for she said they had played so nicely together.

But the king said: ‘I cannot leave it with you, my daughter, for it is only lent to me.’ So he took it away with him, and gave it back to the shepherd.

Then the young man threw the skin from off him, and went to the king, saying: ‘Sire, I am persuaded I can find your daughter.’

When the king saw how handsome he was, he said: ‘My lad, I have pity on your youth. This enterprise has already cost the lives of many, and will certainly be your death as well.’

But the young man answered, ‘I accept your conditions, oh king; I will either find her or lose my head.’

Thereupon he went before the king, who followed after him, till they came to the great door. Then the young man said to the king: ‘Speak the words that it may open.’

And the king answered: ‘What are the words? Shall I say something like this: “Shut; shut; shut”?’

‘No,’ said he; ‘say “Open, Sartara Martara of the earth.”’

When the king had so said, the door opened of itself, and they went in, while the king gnawed his moustache in anger. Then they came to the second door, where the same thing happened as at the first, and they went in and found the princess.

Then spoke the king and said: ‘Yes, truly, you have found the princess. Now I will turn her as well as all her maidens into ducks, and if you can guess which of these ducks is my daughter, then you shall have her to wife.’

And immediately the king changed all the maidens into ducks, and he drove them before the young man, and said: ‘Now show me which is my daughter.’

Then the princess, according to their understanding, began to clean her wings with her bill, and the lad said: ‘She who cleans her wings is the princess.’

Now the king could do nothing more but give her to the young man to wife, and they lived together in great joy and happiness.

(From the German.)

THE GIRL WHO PRETENDED TO BE A BOY

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Once upon a time there lived an emperor who was a great conqueror, and reigned over more countries than anyone in the world. And whenever he subdued a fresh kingdom, he only granted peace on condition that the king should deliver him one of his sons for ten years' service.

Now on the borders of his kingdom lay a country whose emperor was as brave as his neighbour, and as long as he was young he was the victor in every war. But as years passed away, his head grew weary of making plans of campaign, and his people wanted to stay at home and till their fields, and at last he too felt that he must do homage to the other emperor.

One thing, however, held him back from this step which day by day he saw more clearly was the only one possible. His new overlord would demand the service of one of his sons. And the old emperor had no son; only three daughters.

Look on which side he would, nothing but ruin seemed to lie before him, and he became so gloomy, that his daughters were frightened, and did everything they could think of to cheer him up, but all to no purpose.

At length one day when they were at dinner, the eldest of the three summoned up all her courage and said to her father:

'What secret grief is troubling you? Are your subjects discontented? or have we given you cause for displeasure? To smooth away your wrinkles, we would gladly shed our blood, for our lives are bound up in yours; and this you know.'

'My daughter,' answered the emperor, 'what you say is true. Never have you given me one moment's pain. Yet now you cannot help me. Ah! why is not one of you a boy!'

'I don't understand,' she answered in surprise. 'Tell us what is wrong: and though we are not boys, we are not quite useless!'

'But what can you do, my dear children? Spin, sew, and weave—that is all your learning. Only a warrior can deliver me now, a young giant who is

strong to wield the battle-axe: whose sword deals deadly blows.'

'But WHY do you need a son so much at present? Tell us all about it! It will not make matters worse if we know!'

'Listen then, my daughters, and learn the reason of my sorrow. You have heard that as long as I was young no man ever brought an army against me without it costing him dear. But the years have chilled my blood and drunk my strength. And now the deer can roam the forest, my arrows will never pierce his heart; strange soldiers will set fire to my houses and water their horses at my wells, and my arm cannot hinder them. No, my day is past, and the time has come when I too must bow my head under the yoke of my foe! But who is to give him the ten years' service that is part of the price which the vanquished must pay?'

'*I* will,' cried the eldest girl, springing to her feet. But her father only shook his head sadly.

'Never will I bring shame upon you,' urged the girl. 'Let me go. Am I not a princess, and the daughter of an emperor?'

'Go then!' he said.

The brave girl's heart almost stopped beating from joy, as she set about her preparations. She was not still for a single moment, but danced about the house, turning chests and wardrobes upside down. She set aside enough things for a whole year—dresses embroidered with gold and precious stones, and a great store of provisions. And she chose the most spirited horse in the stable, with eyes of flame, and a coat of shining silver.

When her father saw her mounted and curvetting about the court, he gave her much wise advice, as to how she was to behave like the young man she appeared to be, and also how to behave as the girl she really was. Then he gave her his blessing, and she touched her horse with the spur.

The silver armour of herself and her steed dazzled the eyes of the people as she darted past. She was soon out of sight, and if after a few miles she had not pulled up to allow her escort to join her, the rest of the journey would have been performed alone.

But though none of his daughters were aware of the fact, the old emperor was a magician, and had laid his plans accordingly. He managed, unseen, to overtake his daughter, and throw a bridge of copper over a stream which she would have to cross. Then, changing himself into a wolf, he lay down under one of the arches, and waited.

He had chosen his time well, and in about half an hour the sound of a horse's hoofs was heard. His feet were almost on the bridge, when a big grey wolf with grinning teeth appeared before the princess. With a deep growl that froze the blood, he drew himself up, and prepared to spring.

The appearance of the wolf was so sudden and so unexpected, that the girl was almost paralysed, and never even dreamt of flight, till the horse leaped violently to one side. Then she turned him round, and urging him to his fullest speed, never drew rein till she saw the gates of the palace rising before her.

The old emperor, who had got back long since, came to the door to meet her, and touching her shining armour, he said, 'Did I not tell you, my child, that flies do not make honey?'

The days passed on, and one morning the second princess implored her father to allow her to try the adventure in which her sister had made such a failure. He listened unwillingly, feeling sure it was no use, but she begged so hard that in the end he consented, and having chosen her arms, she rode away.

But though, unlike her sister, she was quite prepared for the appearance of the wolf when she reached the copper bridge, she showed no greater courage, and galloped home as fast as her horse could carry her. On the steps of the castle her father was standing, and as still trembling with fright she knelt at his feet, he said gently, 'Did I not tell you, my child, that every bird is not caught in a net?'

The three girls stayed quietly in the palace for a little while, embroidering, spinning, weaving, and tending their birds and flowers, when early one morning, the youngest princess entered the door of the emperor's private apartments. 'My father, it is my turn now. Perhaps I shall get the better of that wolf!'

'What, do you think you are braver than your sisters, vain little one? You who have hardly left your long clothes behind you!' but she did not mind being laughed at, and answered,

'For your sake, father, I would cut the devil himself into small bits, or even become a devil myself. I think I shall succeed, but if I fail, I shall come home without more shame than my sisters.'

Still the emperor hesitated, but the girl petted and coaxed him till at last he said,

‘Well, well, if you must go, you must. It remains to be seen what I shall get by it, except perhaps a good laugh when I see you come back with your head bent and your eyes on the ground.’

‘He laughs best who laughs last,’ said the princess.

Happy at having got her way, the princess decided that the first thing to be done was to find some old white-haired boyard, whose advice she could trust, and then to be very careful in choosing her horse. So she went straight to the stables where the most beautiful horses in the empire were feeding in the stalls, but none of them seemed quite what she wanted. Almost in despair she reached the last box of all, which was occupied by her father’s ancient war-horse, old and worn like himself, stretched sadly out on the straw.

The girl’s eyes filled with tears, and she stood gazing at him. The horse lifted his head, gave a little neigh, and said softly, ‘You look gentle and pitiful, but I know it is your love for your father which makes you tender to me. Ah, what a warrior he was, and what good times we shared together! But now I too have grown old, and my master has forgotten me, and there is no reason to care whether my coat is dull or shining. Yet, it is not too late, and if I were properly tended, in a week I could vie with any horse in the stables!’

‘And how should you be tended?’ asked the girl.

‘I must be rubbed down morning and evening with rain water, my barley must be boiled in milk, because of my bad teeth, and my feet must be washed in oil.’

‘I should like to try the treatment, as you might help me in carrying out my scheme.’

‘Try it then, mistress, and I promise you will never repent.’

So in a week’s time the horse woke up one morning with a sudden shiver through all his limbs; and when it had passed away, he found his skin shining like a mirror, his body as fat as a water melon, his movement light as a chamois.

Then looking at the princess who had come early to the stable, he said joyfully,

‘May success await on the steps of my master’s daughter, for she has given me back my life. Tell me what I can do for you, princess, and I will do it.’

‘I want to go to the emperor who is our over-lord, and I have no one to advise me. Which of all the white-headed boyards shall I choose as counsellor?’

‘If you have me, you need no one else: I will serve you as I served your father, if you will only listen to what I say.’

‘I will listen to everything. Can you start in three days?’

‘This moment, if you like,’ said the horse.

The preparations of the emperor’s youngest daughter were much fewer and simpler than those of her sisters. They only consisted of some boy’s clothes, a small quantity of linen and food, and a little money in case of necessity. Then she bade farewell to her father, and rode away.

A day’s journey from the palace, she reached the copper bridge, but before they came in sight of it, the horse, who was a magician, had warned her of the means her father would take to prove her courage.

Still in spite of his warning she trembled all over when a huge wolf, as thin as if he had fasted for a month, with claws like saws, and mouth as wide as an oven, bounded howling towards her. For a moment her heart failed her, but the next, touching the horse lightly with her spur, she drew her sword from its sheath, ready to separate the wolf’s head from its body at a single blow.

The beast saw the sword, and shrank back, which was the best thing it could do, as now the girl’s blood was up, and the light of battle in her eyes. Then without looking round, she rode across the bridge.

The emperor, proud of this first victory, took a short cut, and waited for her at the end of another day’s journey, close to a river, over which he threw a bridge of silver. And this time he took the shape of a lion.

But the horse guessed this new danger and told the princess how to escape it. But it is one thing to receive advice when we feel safe and comfortable, and quite another to be able to carry it out when some awful peril is threatening us. And if the wolf had made the girl quake with terror, it seemed like a lamb beside this dreadful lion.

At the sound of his roar the very trees quivered and his claws were so large that every one of them looked like a cutlass.

The breath of the princess came and went, and her feet rattled in the stirrups. Suddenly the remembrance flashed across her of the wolf whom she had put to flight, and waving her sword, she rushed so violently on the

lion that he had barely time to spring on one side, so as to avoid the blow. Then, like a flash, she crossed this bridge also.

Now during her whole life, the princess had been so carefully brought up, that she had never left the gardens of the palace, so that the sight of the hills and valleys and tinkling streams, and the song of the larks and blackbirds, made her almost beside herself with wonder and delight. She longed to get down and bathe her face in the clear pools, and pick the brilliant flowers, but the horse said ‘No,’ and quickened his pace, neither turning to the right or the left.

‘Warriors,’ he told her, ‘only rest when they have won the victory. You have still another battle to fight, and it is the hardest of all.’

This time it was neither a wolf nor a lion that was waiting for her at the end of the third day’s journey, but a dragon with twelve heads, and a golden bridge behind it.

The princess rode up without seeing anything to frighten her, when a sudden puff of smoke and flame from beneath her feet, caused her to look down, and there was the horrible creature twisted and writhing, its twelve heads reared up as if to seize her between them.

The bridle fell from her hand: and the sword which she had just grasped slid back into its sheath, but the horse bade her fear nothing, and with a mighty effort she sat upright and spurred straight on the dragon.

The fight lasted an hour and the dragon pressed her hard. But in the end, by a well-directed side blow, she cut off one of the heads, and with a roar that seemed to rend the heavens in two, the dragon fell back on the ground, and rose as a man before her.

Although the horse had informed the princess the dragon was really her own father, the girl had hardly believed him, and stared in amazement at the transformation. But he flung his arms round her and pressed her to his heart saying, ‘Now I see that you are as brave as the bravest, and as wise as the wisest. You have chosen the right horse, for without his help you would have returned with a bent head and downcast eyes. You have filled me with the hope that you may carry out the task you have undertaken, but be careful to forget none of my counsels, and above all to listen to those of your horse.’

When he had done speaking, the princess knelt down to receive his blessing, and they went their different ways.

The princess rode on and on, till at last she came to the mountains which hold up the roof of the world. There she met two Genii who had been fighting fiercely for two years, without one having got the least advantage over the other. Seeing what they took to be a young man seeking adventures, one of the combatants called out, ‘Fet-Fruners! deliver me from my enemy, and I will give you the horn that can be heard the distance of a three days’ journey;’ while the other cried, ‘Fet-Fruners! help me to conquer this pagan thief, and you shall have my horse, Sunlight.’

Before answering, the princess consulted her own horse as to which offer she should accept, and he advised her to side with the genius who was master of Sunlight, his own younger brother, and still more active than himself.

So the girl at once attacked the other genius, and soon clove his skull; then the one who was left victor begged her to come back with him to his house and he would hand her over Sunlight, as he had promised.

The mother of the genius was rejoiced to see her son return safe and sound, and prepared her best room for the princess, who, after so much fatigue, needed rest badly. But the girl declared that she must first make her horse comfortable in his stable; but this was really only an excuse, as she wanted to ask his advice on several matters.

But the old woman had suspected from the very first that the boy who had come to the rescue of her son was a girl in disguise, and told the genius that she was exactly the wife he needed. The genius scoffed, and inquired what female hand could ever wield a sabre like that; but, in spite of his sneers, his mother persisted, and as a proof of what she said, laid at night on each of their pillows a handful of magic flowers, that fade at the touch of man, but remain eternally fresh in the fingers of a woman.

It was very clever of her, but unluckily the horse had warned the princess what to expect, and when the house was silent, she stole very softly to the genius’s room, and exchanged his faded flowers for those she held. Then she crept back to her own bed and fell fast asleep.

At break of day, the old woman ran to see her son, and found, as she knew she would, a bunch of dead flowers in his hand. She next passed on to the bedside of the princess, who still lay asleep grasping the withered flowers. But she did not believe any the more that her guest was a man,

and so she told her son. So they put their heads together and laid another trap for her.

After breakfast the genius gave his arm to his guest, and asked her to come with him into the garden. For some time they walked about looking at the flowers, the genius all the while pressing her to pick any she fancied. But the princess, suspecting a trap, inquired roughly why they were wasting the precious hours in the garden, when, as men, they should be in the stables looking after their horses. Then the genius told his mother that she was quite wrong, and his deliverer was certainly a man. But the old woman was not convinced for all that.

She would try once more she said, and her son must lead his visitor into the armoury, where hung every kind of weapon used all over the world—some plain and bare, others ornamented with precious stones—and beg her to make choice of one of them. The princess looked at them closely, and felt the edges and points of their blades, then she hung at her belt an old sword with a curved blade, that would have done credit to an ancient warrior. After this she informed the genius that she would start early next day and take Sunlight with her.

And there was nothing for the mother to do but to submit, though she still stuck to her own opinion.

The princess mounted Sunlight, and touched him with her spur, when the old horse, who was galloping at her side, suddenly said:

‘Up to this time, mistress, you have obeyed my counsels and all has gone well. Listen to me once more, and do what I tell you. I am old, and—now that there is someone to take my place, I will confess it—I am afraid that my strength is not equal to the task that lies before me. Give me leave, therefore, to return home, and do you continue your journey under the care of my brother. Put your faith in him as you put it in me, and you will never repent. Wisdom has come early to Sunlight.’

‘Yes, my old comrade, you have served me well; and it is only through your help that up to now I have been victorious. So grieved though I am to say farewell, I will obey you yet once more, and will listen to your brother as I would to yourself. Only, I must have a proof that he loves me as well as you do.’

‘How should I not love you?’ answered Sunlight; ‘how should I not be proud to serve a warrior such as you? Trust me, mistress, and you shall

never regret the absence of my brother. I know there will be difficulties in our path, but we will face them together.'

Then, with tears in her eyes, the princess took leave of her old horse, who galloped back to her father.

She had ridden only a few miles further, when she saw a golden curl lying on the road before her. Checking her horse, she asked whether it would be better to take it or let it lie.

'If you take it,' said Sunlight, 'you will repent, and if you don't, you will repent too: so take it.' On this the girl dismounted, and picking up the curl, wound it round her neck for safety.

They passed by hills, they passed by mountains, they passed through valleys, leaving behind them thick forests, and fields covered with flowers; and at length they reached the court of the over-lord.

He was sitting on his throne, surrounded by the sons of the other emperors, who served him as pages. These youths came forward to greet their new companion, and wondered why they felt so attracted towards him.

However, there was no time for talking and concealing her fright.

The princess was led straight up to the throne, and explained, in a low voice, the reason of her coming. The emperor received her kindly, and declared himself fortunate at finding a vassal so brave and so charming, and begged the princess to remain in attendance on his person.

She was, however, very careful in her behaviour towards the other pages, whose way of life did not please her. One day, however, she had been amusing herself by making sweetmeats, when two of the young princes looked in to pay her a visit. She offered them some of the food which was already on the table, and they thought it so delicious that they even licked their fingers so as not to lose a morsel. Of course they did not keep the news of their discovery to themselves, but told all their companions that they had just been enjoying the best supper they had had since they were born. And from that moment the princess was left no peace, till she had promised to cook them all a dinner.

Now it happened that, on the very day fixed, all the cooks in the palace became intoxicated, and there was no one to make up the fire.

When the pages heard of this shocking state of things, they went to their companion and implored her to come to the rescue.

The princess was fond of cooking, and was, besides, very good-natured; so she put on an apron and went down to the kitchen without delay. When the dinner was placed before the emperor he found it so nice that he ate much more than was good for him. The next morning, as soon as he woke, he sent for his head cook, and told him to send up the same dishes as before. The cook, seized with fright at this command, which he knew he could not fulfil, fell on his knees, and confessed the truth.

The emperor was so astonished that he forgot to scold, and while he was thinking over the matter, some of his pages came in and said that their new companion had been heard to boast that he knew where Iliane was to be found—the celebrated Iliane of the song which begins:

‘Golden Hair
The fields are green,’

and that to their certain knowledge he had a curl of her hair in his possession.

When he heard that, the emperor desired the page to be brought before him, and, as soon as the princess obeyed his summons, he said to her abruptly:

‘Fet-Fruners, you have hidden from me the fact that you knew the golden-haired Iliane! Why did you do this? for I have treated you more kindly than all my other pages.’

Then, after making the princess show him the golden curl which she wore round her neck, he added: ‘Listen to me; unless by some means or other you bring me the owner of this lock, I will have your head cut off in the place where you stand. Now go!’

In vain the poor girl tried to explain how the lock of hair came into her possession; the emperor would listen to nothing, and, bowing low, she left his presence and went to consult Sunlight what she was to do.

At his first words she brightened up. ‘Do not be afraid, mistress; only last night my brother appeared to me in a dream and told me that a genius had carried off Iliane, whose hair you picked up on the road. But Iliane declares that, before she marries her captor, he must bring her, as a present, the whole stud of mares which belong to her. The genius, half crazy with love, thinks of nothing night and day but how this can be done,

and meanwhile she is quite safe in the island swamps of the sea. Go back to the emperor and ask him for twenty ships filled with precious merchandise. The rest you shall know by-and-by.'

On hearing this advice, the princess went at once into the emperor's presence.

'May a long life be yours, O Sovereign all mighty!' said she. 'I have come to tell you that I can do as you command if you will give me twenty ships, and load them with the most precious wares in your kingdom.'

'You shall have all that I possess if you will bring me the golden-haired Iliane,' said the emperor.

The ships were soon ready, and the princess entered the largest and finest, with Sunlight at her side. Then the sails were spread and the voyage began.

For seven weeks the wind blew them straight towards the west, and early one morning they caught sight of the island swamps of the sea.

They cast anchor in a little bay, and the princess made haste to disembark with Sunlight, but, before leaving the ship, she tied to her belt a pair of tiny gold slippers, adorned with precious stones. Then mounting Sunlight, she rode about till she came to several palaces, built on hinges, so that they could always turn towards the sun.

The most splendid of these was guarded by three slaves, whose greedy eyes were caught by the glistening gold of the slippers. They hastened up to the owner of these treasures, and inquired who he was. 'A merchant,' replied the princess, 'who had somehow missed his road, and lost himself among the island swamps of the sea.'

Not knowing if it was proper to receive him or not, the slaves returned to their mistress and told her all they had seen, but not before she had caught sight of the merchant from the roof of her palace. Luckily her gaoler was away, always trying to catch the stud of mares, so for the moment she was free and alone.

The slaves told their tale so well that their mistress insisted on going down to the shore and seeing the beautiful slippers for herself. They were even lovelier than she expected, and when the merchant besought her to come on board, and inspect some that he thought were finer still, her curiosity was too great to refuse, and she went.

Once on board ship, she was so busy turning over all the precious things stored there, that she never knew that the sails were spread, and that they were flying along with the wind behind them; and when she did know, she rejoiced in her heart, though she pretended to weep and lament at being carried captive a second time. Thus they arrived at the court of the emperor.

They were just about to land, when the mother of the genius stood before them. She had learnt that Iliane had fled from her prison in company with a merchant, and, as her son was absent, had come herself in pursuit. Striding over the blue waters, hopping from wave to wave, one foot reaching to heaven, and the other planted in the foam, she was close at their heels, breathing fire and flame, when they stepped on shore from the ship. One glance told Iliane who the horrible old woman was, and she whispered hastily to her companion. Without saying a word, the princess swung her into Sunlight's saddle, and leaping up behind her, they were off like a flash.

It was not till they drew near the town that the princess stooped and asked Sunlight what they should do. 'Put your hand into my left ear,' said he, 'and take out a sharp stone, which you must throw behind you.'

The princess did as she was told, and a huge mountain sprang up behind them. The mother of the genius began to climb up it, and though they galloped quickly, she was quicker still.

They heard her coming, faster, faster; and again the princess stooped to ask what was to be done now. 'Put your hand into my right ear,' said the horse, 'and throw the brush you will find there behind you.' The princess did so, and a great forest sprang up behind them, and, so thick were its leaves, that even a wren could not get through. But the old woman seized hold of the branches and flung herself like a monkey from one to the others, and always she drew nearer—always, always—till their hair was singed by the flames of her mouth.

Then, in despair, the princess again bent down and asked if there was nothing more to be done, and Sunlight replied 'Quick, quick, take off the betrothal ring on the finger of Iliane and throw it behind you.'

This time there sprang up a great tower of stone, smooth as ivory, hard as steel, which reached up to heaven itself. And the mother of the genius gave a howl of rage, knowing that she could neither climb it nor get

through it. But she was not beaten yet, and gathering herself together, she made a prodigious leap, which landed her on the top of the tower, right in the middle of Iliane's ring which lay there, and held her tight. Only her claws could be seen grasping the battlements.

All that could be done the old witch did; but the fire that poured from her mouth never reached the fugitives, though it laid waste the country a hundred miles round the tower, like the flames of a volcano. Then, with one last effort to free herself, her hands gave way, and, falling down to the bottom of the tower, she was broken in pieces.

When the flying princess saw what had happened she rode back to the spot, as Sunlight counselled her, and placed her finger on the top of the tower, which was gradually shrinking into the earth. In an instant the tower had vanished as if it had never been, and in its place was the finger of the princess with a ring round it.

The emperor received Iliane with all the respect that was due to her, and fell in love at first sight besides.

But this did not seem to please Iliane, whose face was sad as she walked about the palace or gardens, wondering how it was that, while other girls did as they liked, she was always in the power of someone whom she hated.

So when the emperor asked her to share his throne Iliane answered:

'Noble Sovereign, I may not think of marriage till my stud of horses has been brought me, with their trappings all complete.'

When he heard this, the emperor once more sent for Fet-Fruners, and said:

'Fet-Fruners, fetch me instantly the stud of mares, with their trappings all complete. If not, your head shall pay the forfeit.'

'Mighty Emperor, I kiss your hands! I have but just returned from doing your bidding, and, behold, you send me on another mission, and stake my head on its fulfilment, when your court is full of valiant young men, pining to win their spurs. They say you are a just man; then why not entrust this quest to one of them? Where am I to seek these mares that I am to bring you?'

'How do I know? They may be anywhere in heaven or earth; but, wherever they are, you will have to find them.'

The princess bowed and went to consult Sunlight. He listened while she told her tale, and then said:

‘Fetch quickly nine buffalo skins; smear them well with tar, and lay them on my back. Do not fear; you will succeed in this also; but, in the end, the emperor’s desires will be his undoing.’

The buffalo skins were soon got, and the princess started off with Sunlight. The way was long and difficult, but at length they reached the place where the mares were grazing. Here the genius who had carried off Iliane was wandering about, trying to discover how to capture them, all the while believing that Iliane was safe in the palace where he had left her.

As soon as she caught sight of him, the princess went up and told him that Iliane had escaped, and that his mother, in her efforts to recapture her, had died of rage. At this news a blind fury took possession of the genius, and he rushed madly upon the princess, who awaited his onslaught with perfect calmness. As he came on, with his sabre lifted high in the air, Sunlight bounded right over his head, so that the sword fell harmless. And when in her turn the princess prepared to strike, the horse sank upon his knees, so that the blade pierced the genius’s thigh.

The fight was so fierce that it seemed as if the earth would give way under them, and for twenty miles round the beasts in the forests fled to their caves for shelter. At last, when her strength was almost gone, the genius lowered his sword for an instant. The princess saw her chance, and, with one swoop of her arm, severed her enemy’s head from his body. Still trembling from the long struggle, she turned away, and went to the meadow where the stud were feeding.

By the advice of Sunlight, she took care not to let them see her, and climbed a thick tree, where she could see and hear without being seen herself. Then he neighed, and the mares came galloping up, eager to see the new comer—all but one horse, who did not like strangers, and thought they were very well as they were. As Sunlight stood his ground, well pleased with the attention paid him, this sulky creature suddenly advanced to the charge, and bit so violently that had it not been for the nine buffalo skins Sunlight’s last moment would have come. When the fight was ended, the buffalo skins were in ribbons, and the beaten animal writhing with pain on the grass.

Nothing now remained to be done but to drive the whole stud to the emperor's court. So the princess came down from the tree and mounted Sunlight, while the stud followed meekly after, the wounded horse bringing up the rear. On reaching the palace, she drove them into a yard, and went to inform the emperor of her arrival.

The news was told at once to Iliane, who ran down directly and called them to her one by one, each mare by its name. And at the first sight of her the wounded animal shook itself quickly, and in a moment its wounds were healed, and there was not even a mark on its glossy skin.

By this time the emperor, on hearing where she was, joined her in the yard, and at her request ordered the mares to be milked, so that both he and she might bathe in the milk and keep young for ever. But they would suffer no one to come near them, and the princess was commanded to perform this service also.

At this, the heart of the girl swelled within her. The hardest tasks were always given to her, and long before the two years were up, she would be worn out and useless. But while these thoughts passed through her mind, a fearful rain fell, such as no man remembered before, and rose till the mares were standing up to their knees in water. Then as suddenly it stopped, and, behold! the water was ice, which held the animals firmly in its grasp. And the princess's heart grew light again, and she sat down gaily to milk them, as if she had done it every morning of her life.

The love of the emperor for Iliane waxed greater day by day, but she paid no heed to him, and always had an excuse ready to put off their marriage. At length, when she had come to the end of everything she could think of, she said to him one day: 'Grant me, Sire, just one request more, and then I will really marry you; for you have waited patiently this long time.'

'My beautiful dove,' replied the emperor, 'both I and all I possess are yours, so ask your will, and you shall have it.'

'Get me, then,' she said, 'a flask of the holy water that is kept in a little church beyond the river Jordan, and I will be your wife.'

Then the emperor ordered Fet-Fruners to ride without delay to the river Jordan, and to bring back, at whatever cost, the holy water for Iliane.

'This, my mistress,' said Sunlight, when she was saddling him, 'is the last and most difficult of your tasks. But fear nothing, for the hour of the

emperor has struck.’

So they started; and the horse, who was not a wizard for nothing, told the princess exactly where she was to look for the holy water.

‘It stands,’ he said, ‘on the altar of a little church, and is guarded by a troop of nuns. They never sleep, night or day, but every now and then a hermit comes to visit them, and from him they learn certain things it is needful for them to know. When this happens, only one of the nuns remains on guard at a time, and if we are lucky enough to hit upon this moment, we may get hold of the vase at once; if not, we shall have to wait the arrival of the hermit, however long it may be; for there is no other means of obtaining the holy water.’

They came in sight of the church beyond the Jordan, and, to their great joy, beheld the hermit just arriving at the door. They could hear him calling the nuns around him, and saw them settle themselves under a tree, with the hermit in their midst—all but one, who remained on guard, as was the custom.

The hermit had a great deal to say, and the day was very hot, so the nun, tired of sitting by herself, lay down right across the threshold, and fell sound asleep.

Then Sunlight told the princess what she was to do, and the girl stepped softly over the sleeping nun, and crept like a cat along the dark aisle, feeling the wall with her fingers, lest she should fall over something and ruin it all by a noise. But she reached the altar in safety, and found the vase of holy water standing on it. This she thrust into her dress, and went back with the same care as she came. With a bound she was in the saddle, and seizing the reins bade Sunlight take her home as fast as his legs could carry him.

The sound of the flying hoofs aroused the nun, who understood instantly that the precious treasure was stolen, and her shrieks were so loud and piercing that all the rest came flying to see what was the matter. The hermit followed at their heels, but seeing it was impossible to overtake the thief, he fell on his knees and called his most deadly curse down on her head, praying that if the thief was a man, he might become a woman; and if she was a woman, that she might become a man. In either case he thought that the punishment would be severe.

But punishments are things about which people do not always agree, and when the princess suddenly felt she was really the man she had pretended to be, she was delighted, and if the hermit had only been within reach she would have thanked him from her heart.

By the time she reached the emperor's court, Fet-Fruners looked a young man all over in the eyes of everyone; and even the mother of the genius would now have had her doubts set at rest. He drew forth the vase from his tunic and held it up to the emperor, saying: 'Mighty Sovereign, all hail! I have fulfilled this task also, and I hope it is the last you have for me; let another now take his turn.'

'I am content, Fet-Fruners,' replied the emperor, 'and when I am dead it is you who will sit upon my throne; for I have yet no son to come after me. But if one is given me, and my dearest wish is accomplished, then you shall be his right hand, and guide him with your counsels.'

But though the emperor was satisfied, Iliane was not, and she determined to revenge herself on the emperor for the dangers which he had caused Fet-Fruners to run. And as for the vase of holy water, she thought that, in common politeness, her suitor ought to have fetched it himself, which he could have done without any risk at all.

So she ordered the great bath to be filled with the milk of her mares, and begged the emperor to clothe himself in white robes, and enter the bath with her, an invitation he accepted with joy. Then, when both were standing with the milk reaching to their necks, she sent for the horse which had fought Sunlight, and made a secret sign to him. The horse understood what he was to do, and from one nostril he breathed fresh air over Iliane, and from the other, he snorted a burning wind which shrivelled up the emperor where he stood, leaving only a little heap of ashes.

His strange death, which no one could explain, made a great sensation throughout the country, and the funeral his people gave him was the most splendid ever known. When it was over, Iliane summoned Fet-Fruners before her, and addressed him thus:

'Fet-Fruners! it is you who brought me and have saved my life, and obeyed my wishes. It is you who gave me back my stud; you who killed the genius, and the old witch his mother; you who brought me the holy water. And you, and none other, shall be my husband.'

‘Yes, I will marry you,’ said the young man, with a voice almost as soft as when he was a princess. ‘But know that in OUR house, it will be the cock who sings and not the hen!’

(From Sept Contes Roumains, Jules Brun and Leo Bachelin.)

THE STORY OF HALFMAN

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In a certain town there lived a judge who was married but had no children. One day he was standing lost in thought before his house, when an old man passed by.

‘What is the matter, sir, said he, ‘you look troubled?’

‘Oh, leave me alone, my good man!’

‘But what is it?’ persisted the other.

‘Well, I am successful in my profession and a person of importance, but I care nothing for it all, as I have no children.’

Then the old man said, ‘Here are twelve apples. If your wife eats them, she will have twelve sons.’

The judge thanked him joyfully as he took the apples, and went to seek his wife. ‘Eat these apples at once,’ he cried, ‘and you will have twelve sons.’

So she sat down and ate eleven of them, but just as she was in the middle of the twelfth her sister came in, and she gave her the half that was left.

The eleven sons came into the world, strong and handsome boys; but when the twelfth was born, there was only half of him.

By-and-by they all grew into men, and one day they told their father it was high time he found wives for them. ‘I have a brother,’ he answered, ‘who lives away in the East, and he has twelve daughters; go and marry them.’ So the twelve sons saddled their horses and rode for twelve days, till they met an old woman.

‘Good greeting to you, young men!’ said she, ‘we have waited long for you, your uncle and I. The girls have become women, and are sought, in marriage by many, but I knew you would come one day, and I have kept them for you. Follow me into my house.’

And the twelve brothers followed her gladly, and their father’s brother stood at the door, and gave them meat and drink. But at night, when every

one was asleep, Halfman crept softly to his brothers, and said to them, ‘Listen, all of you! This man is no uncle of ours, but an ogre.’

‘Nonsense; of course he is our uncle,’ answered they.

‘Well, this very night you will see!’ said Halfman. And he did not go to bed, but hid himself and watched.

Now in a little while he saw the wife of the ogre steal into the room on tiptoe and spread a red cloth over the brothers and then go and cover her daughters with a white cloth. After that she lay down and was soon snoring loudly. When Halfman was quite sure she was sound asleep, he took the red cloth from his brothers and put it on the girls, and laid their white cloth over his brothers. Next he drew their scarlet caps from their heads and exchanged them for the veils which the ogre’s daughters were wearing. This was hardly done when he heard steps coming along the floor, so he hid himself quickly in the folds of a curtain. There was only half of him!

The ogress came slowly and gently along, stretching out her hands before her, so that she might not fall against anything unawares, for she had only a tiny lantern slung at her waist, which did not give much light. And when she reached the place where the sisters were lying, she stooped down and held a corner of the cloth up to the lantern. Yes! it certainly was red! Still, to make sure that there was no mistake, she passed her hands lightly over their heads, and felt the caps that covered them. Then she was quite certain the brothers lay sleeping before her, and began to kill them one by one. And Halfman whispered to his brothers, ‘Get up and run for your lives, as the ogress is killing her daughters.’ The brothers needed no second bidding, and in a moment were out of the house.

By this time the ogress had slain all her daughters but one, who awoke suddenly and saw what had happened. ‘Mother, what are you doing?’ cried she. ‘Do you know that you have killed my sisters?’

‘Oh, woe is me!’ wailed the ogress. ‘Halfman has outwitted me after all!’ And she turned to wreak vengeance on him, but he and his brothers were far away.

They rode all day till they got to the town where their real uncle lived, and inquired the way to his house.

‘Why have you been so long in coming?’ asked he, when they had found him.

‘Oh, dear uncle, we were very nearly not coming at all!’ replied they. ‘We fell in with an ogress who took us home and would have killed us if it had not been for Halfman. He knew what was in her mind and saved us, and here we are. Now give us each a daughter to wife, and let us return whence we came.’

‘Take them!’ said the uncle; ‘the eldest for the eldest, the second for the second, and so on to the youngest.’

But the wife of Halfman was the prettiest of them all, and the other brothers were jealous and said to each other: ‘What, is he who is only half a man to get the best? Let us put him to death and give his wife to our eldest brother!’ And they waited for a chance.

After they had all ridden, in company with their brides, for some distance, they arrived at a brook, and one of them asked, ‘Now, who will go and fetch water from the brook?’

‘Halfman is the youngest,’ said the elder brother, ‘he must go.’

So Halfman got down and filled a skin with water, and they drew it up by a rope and drank. When they had done drinking, Halfman, who was standing in the middle of the stream, called out: ‘Throw me the rope and draw me up, for I cannot get out alone.’ And the brothers threw him a rope to draw him up the steep bank; but when he was half-way up they cut the rope, and he fell back into the stream. Then the brothers rode away as fast as they could, with his bride.

Halfman sank down under the water from the force of the fall, but before he touched the bottom a fish came and said to him, ‘Fear nothing, Halfman; I will help you.’ And the fish guided him to a shallow place, so that he scrambled out. On the way it said to him, ‘Do you understand what your brothers, whom you saved from death, have done to you?’

‘Yes; but what am I to do?’ asked Halfman.

‘Take one of my scales,’ said the fish, ‘and when you find yourself in danger, throw it in the fire. Then I will appear before you.’

‘Thank you,’ said Halfman, and went his way, while the fish swam back to its home.

The country was strange to Halfman, and he wandered about without knowing where he was going, till he suddenly found the ogress standing before him. ‘Ah, Halfman, have I got you at last? You killed my daughters

and helped your brothers to escape. What do you think I shall do with you?'

'Whatever you like!' said Halfman.

'Come into my house, then,' said the ogress, and he followed her.

'Look here!' she called to her husband, 'I have got hold of Halfman. I am going to roast him, so be quick and make up the fire!'

So the ogre brought wood, and heaped it up till the flames roared up the chimney. Then he turned to his wife and said: 'It is all ready, let us put him on!'

'What is the hurry, my good ogre?' asked Halfman. 'You have me in your power, and I cannot escape. I am so thin now, I shall hardly make one mouthful. Better fatten me up; you will enjoy me much more.'

'That is a very sensible remark,' replied the ogre; 'but what fattens you quickest?'

'Butter, meat, and red wine,' answered Halfman.

'Very good; we will lock you into this room, and here you shall stay till you are ready for eating.'

So Halfman was locked into the room, and the ogre and his wife brought him his food. At the end of three months he said to his gaolers: 'Now I have got quite fat; take me out, and kill me.'

'Get out, then!' said the ogre.

'But,' went on Halfman, 'you and your wife had better go to invite your friends to the feast, and your daughter can stay in the house and look after me!'

'Yes, that is a good idea,' answered they.

'You had better bring the wood in here,' continued Halfman, 'and I will split it up small, so that there may be no delay in cooking me.'

So the ogress gave Halfman a pile of wood and an axe, and then set out with her husband, leaving Halfman and her daughter busy in the house.

After he had chopped for a little while he called to the girl, 'Come and help me, or else I shan't have it all ready when your mother gets back.'

'All right,' said she, and held a billet of wood for him to chop.

But he raised his axe and cut off her head, and ran away like the wind. By-and-by the ogre and his wife returned and found their daughter lying without her head, and they began to cry and sob, saying, 'This is Halfman's work, why did we listen to him?' But Halfman was far away.

When he escaped from the house he ran on straight before him for some time, looking for a safe shelter, as he knew that the ogre's legs were much longer than his, and that it was his only chance. At last he saw an iron tower which he climbed up. Soon the ogre appeared, looking right and left lest his prey should be sheltering behind a rock or tree, but he did not know Halfman was so near till he heard his voice calling, 'Come up! come up! you will find me here!'

'But how can I come up?' said the ogre, 'I see no door, and I could not possibly climb that tower.'

'Oh, there is no door,' replied Halfman.

'Then how did you climb up?'

'A fish carried me on his back.'

'And what am I to do?'

'You must go and fetch all your relations, and tell them to bring plenty of sticks; then you must light a fire, and let it burn till the tower becomes red hot. After that you can easily throw it down.'

'Very good,' said the ogre, and he went round to every relation he had, and told them to collect wood and bring it to the tower where Halfman was. The men did as they were ordered, and soon the tower was glowing like coral, but when they flung themselves against it to overthrow it, they caught themselves on fire and were burnt to death. And overhead sat Halfman, laughing heartily. But the ogre's wife was still alive, for she had taken no part in kindling the fire.

'Oh,' she shrieked with rage, 'you have killed my daughters and my husband, and all the men belonging to me; how can I get at you to avenge myself?'

'Oh, that is easy enough,' said Halfman. 'I will let down a rope, and if you tie it tightly round you, I will draw it up.'

'All right,' returned the ogress, fastening the rope which Halfman let down. 'Now pull me up.'

'Are you sure it is secure?'

'Yes, quite sure.'

'Don't be afraid.'

'Oh, I am not afraid at all!'

So Halfman slowly drew her up, and when she was near the top he let go the rope, and she fell down and broke her neck. Then Halfman heaved a

great sigh and said, ‘That was hard work; the rope has hurt my hands badly, but now I am rid of her for ever.’

So Halfman came down from the tower, and went on, till he got to a desert place, and as he was very tired, he lay down to sleep. While it was still dark, an ogress passed by, and she woke him and said, ‘Halfman, to-morrow your brother is to marry your wife.’

‘Oh, how can I stop it?’ asked he. ‘Will you help me?’

‘Yes, I will,’ replied the ogress.

‘Thank you, thank you!’ cried Halfman, kissing her on the forehead. ‘My wife is dearer to me than anything else in the world, and it is not my brother’s fault that I am not dead long ago.’

‘Very well, I will rid you of him,’ said the ogress, ‘but only on one condition. If a boy is born to you, you must give him to me!’

‘Oh, anything,’ answered Halfman, ‘as long as you deliver me from my brother, and get me my wife.’

‘Mount on my back, then, and in a quarter of an hour we shall be there.’

The ogress was as good as her word, and in a few minutes they arrived at the outskirts of the town where Halfman and his brothers lived. Here she left him, while she went into the town itself, and found the wedding guests just leaving the brother’s house. Unnoticed by anyone, the ogress crept into a curtain, changing herself into a scorpion, and when the brother was going to get into bed, she stung him behind the ear, so that he fell dead where he stood. Then she returned to Halfman and told him to go and claim his bride. He jumped up hastily from his seat, and took the road to his father’s house. As he drew near he heard sounds of weeping and lamentations, and he said to a man he met: ‘What is the matter?’

‘The judge’s eldest son was married yesterday, and died suddenly before night.’

‘Well,’ thought Halfman, ‘my conscience is clear anyway, for it is quite plain he coveted my wife, and that is why he tried to drown me.’ He went at once to his father’s room, and found him sitting in tears on the floor. ‘Dear father,’ said Halfman, ‘are you not glad to see me? You weep for my brother, but I am your son too, and he stole my bride from me and tried to drown me in the brook. If he is dead, I at least am alive.’

‘No, no, he was better than you!’ moaned the father.

‘Why, dear father?’

‘He told me you had behaved very ill,’ said he.

‘Well, call my brothers,’ answered Halfman, ‘as I have a story to tell them.’ So the father called them all into his presence. Then Halfman began: ‘After we were twelve days’ journey from home, we met an ogress, who gave us greeting and said, “Why have you been so long coming? The daughters of your uncle have waited for you in vain,” and she bade us follow her to the house, saying, “Now there need be no more delay; you can marry your cousins as soon as you please, and take them with you to your own home.” But I warned my brothers that the man was not our uncle, but an ogre.

‘When we lay down to sleep, she spread a red cloth over us, and covered her daughters with a white one; but I changed the cloths, and when the ogress came back in the middle of the night, and looked at the cloths, she mistook her own daughters for my brothers, and killed them one by one, all but the youngest. Then I woke my brothers, and we all stole softly from the house, and we rode like the wind to our real uncle.

‘And when he saw us, he bade us welcome, and married us to his twelve daughters, the eldest to the eldest, and so on to me, whose bride was the youngest of all and also the prettiest. And my brothers were filled with envy, and left me to drown in a brook, but I was saved by a fish who showed me how to get out. Now, you are a judge! Who did well, and who did evil—I or my brothers?’

‘Is this story true?’ said the father, turning to his sons.

‘It is true, my father,’ answered they. ‘It is even as Halfman has said, and the girl belongs to him.’

Then the judge embraced Halfman and said to him: ‘You have done well, my son. Take your bride, and may you both live long and happily together!’

At the end of the year Halfman’s wife had a son, and not long after she came one day hastily into the room, and found her husband weeping. ‘What is the matter?’ she asked.

‘The matter?’ said he.

‘Yes, why are you weeping?’

‘Because,’ replied Halfman, ‘the baby is not really ours, but belongs to an ogress.’

‘Are you mad?’ cried the wife. ‘What do you mean by talking like that?’

‘I promised,’ said Halfman, ‘when she undertook to kill my brother and to give you to me, that the first son we had should be hers.’

‘And will she take him from us now?’ said the poor woman.

‘No, not quite yet,’ replied Halfman; ‘when he is bigger.’

‘And is she to have all our children?’ asked she.

‘No, only this one,’ returned Halfman.

Day by day the boy grew bigger, and one day as he was playing in the street with the other children, the ogress came by. ‘Go to your father,’ she said, ‘and repeat this speech to him: “I want my forfeit; when am I to have it?” ’

‘All right,’ replied the child, but when he went home forgot all about it. The next day the ogress came again, and asked the boy what answer the father had given. ‘I forgot all about it,’ said he.

‘Well, put this ring on your finger, and then you won’t forget.’

‘Very well,’ replied the boy, and went home.

The next morning, as he was at breakfast, his mother said to him, ‘Child, where did you get that ring?’

‘A woman gave it to me yesterday, and she told me, father, to tell you that she wanted her forfeit, and when was she to have it?’

Then his father burst into tears and said, ‘If she comes again you must say to her that your parents bid her take her forfeit at once, and depart.’

At this they both began to weep afresh, and his mother kissed him, and put on his new clothes and said, ‘If the woman bids you to follow her, you must go,’ but the boy did not heed her grief, he was so pleased with his new clothes. And when he went out, he said to his play-fellows, ‘Look how smart I am; I am going away with my aunt to foreign lands.’

At that moment the ogress came up and asked him, ‘Did you give my message to your father and mother?’

‘Yes, dear aunt, I did.’

‘And what did they say?’

‘Take it away at once!’

So she took him.

But when dinner-time came, and the boy did not return, his father and mother knew that he would never come back, and they sat down and wept

all day. At last Halfman rose up and said to his wife, ‘Be comforted; we will wait a year, and then I will go to the ogress and see the boy, and how he is cared for.’

‘Yes, that will be the best,’ said she.

The year passed away, then Halfman saddled his horse, and rode to the place where the ogress had found him sleeping. She was not there, but not knowing what to do next, he got off his horse and waited. About midnight she suddenly stood before him.

‘Halfman, why did you come here?’ said she.

‘I have a question I want to ask you.’

‘Well, ask it; but I know quite well what it is. Your wife wishes you to ask whether I shall carry off your second son as I did the first.’

‘Yes, that is it,’ replied Halfman. Then he seized her hand and said, ‘Oh, let me see my son, and how he looks, and what he is doing.’

The ogress was silent, but stuck her staff hard in the earth, and the earth opened, and the boy appeared and said, ‘Dear father, have you come too?’ And his father clasped him in his arms, and began to cry. But the boy struggled to be free, saying ‘Dear father, put me down. I have got a new mother, who is better than the old one; and a new father, who is better than you.’

Then his father sat him down and said, ‘Go in peace, my boy, but listen first to me. Tell your father the ogre and your mother the ogress, that never more shall they have any children of mine.’

‘All right,’ replied the boy, and called ‘Mother!’

‘What is it?’

‘You are never to take away any more of my father and mother’s children!’

‘Now that I have got you, I don’t want any more,’ answered she.

Then the boy turned to his father and said, ‘Go in peace, dear father, and give my mother greeting and tell her not to be anxious any more, for she can keep all her children.’

And Halfman mounted his horse and rode home, and told his wife all he had seen, and the message sent by Mohammed—Mohammed the son of Halfman, the son of the judge.

(Marchen und Gedichte aus der Stadt Tripolis. Hans von Stumme.)

THE PRINCE WHO WANTED TO SEE THE WORLD

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There was once a king who had only one son, and this young man tormented his father from morning till night to allow him to travel in far countries. For a long time the king refused to give him leave; but at last, wearied out, he granted permission, and ordered his treasurer to produce a large sum of money for the prince's expenses. The youth was overjoyed at the thought that he was really going to see the world, and after tenderly embracing his father he set forth.

He rode on for some weeks without meeting with any adventures; but one night when he was resting at an inn, he came across another traveller, with whom he fell into conversation, in the course of which the stranger inquired if he never played cards. The young man replied that he was very fond of doing so. Cards were brought, and in a very short time the prince had lost every penny he possessed to his new acquaintance. When there was absolutely nothing left at the bottom of the bag, the stranger proposed that they should have just one more game, and that if the prince won he should have the money restored to him, but in case he lost, should remain in the inn for three years, and besides that should be his servant for another three. The prince agreed to those terms, played, and lost; so the stranger took rooms for him, and furnished him with bread and water every day for three years.

The prince lamented his lot, but it was no use; and at the end of three years he was released and had to go to the house of the stranger, who was really the king of a neighbouring country, and be his servant. Before he had gone very far he met a woman carrying a child, which was crying from hunger. The prince took it from her, and fed it with his last crust of bread and last drop of water, and then gave it back to its mother. The woman thanked him gratefully, and said:

'Listen, my lord. You must walk straight on till you notice a very strong scent, which comes from a garden by the side of the road. Go in and

hide yourself close to a tank, where three doves will come to bathe. As the last one flies past you, catch hold of its robe of feathers, and refuse to give it back till the dove has promised you three things.'

The young man did as he was told, and everything happened as the woman had said. He took the robe of feathers from the dove, who gave him in exchange for it a ring, a collar, and one of its own plumes, saying: 'When you are in any trouble, cry "Come to my aid, O dove!" I am the daughter of the king you are going to serve, who hates your father and made you gamble in order to cause your ruin.'

Thus the prince went on his way, and in course of time he arrived at the king's palace. As soon as his master knew he was there, the young man was sent for into his presence, and three bags were handed to him with these words:

'Take this wheat, this millet, and this barley, and sow them at once, so that I may have loaves of them all to-morrow.'

The prince stood speechless at this command, but the king did not condescend to give any further explanation, and when he was dismissed the young man flew to the room which had been set aside for him, and pulling out his feather, he cried: 'Dove, dove! be quick and come.'

'What is it?' said the dove, flying in through the open window, and the prince told her of the task before him, and of his despair at being unable to accomplish it. 'Fear nothing; it will be all right,' replied the dove, as she flew away again.

The next morning when the prince awoke he saw the three loaves standing beside his bed. He jumped up and dressed, and he was scarcely ready when a page arrived with the message that he was to go at once into the king's chamber. Taking the loaves in his arm he followed the boy, and, bowing low, laid them down before the king. The monarch looked at the loaves for a moment without speaking, then he said:

'Good. The man who can do this can also find the ring which my eldest daughter dropped into the sea.'

The prince hastened back to his room and summoned the dove, and when she heard this new command she said: 'Now listen. To-morrow take a knife and a basin and go down to the shore and get into a boat you will find there.'

The young man did not know what he was to do when he was in the boat or where he was to go, but as the dove had come to his rescue before, he was ready to obey her blindly.

When he reached the boat he found the dove perched on one of the masts, and at a signal from her he put to sea; the wind was behind them and they soon lost sight of land. The dove then spoke for the first time and said, ‘Take that knife and cut off my head, but be careful that not a single drop of blood falls to the ground. Afterwards you must throw it into the sea.’

Wondering at this strange order, the prince picked up his knife and severed the dove’s head from her body at one stroke. A little while after a dove rose from the water with a ring in its beak, and laying it in the prince’s hand, dabbled itself with the blood that was in the basin, when its head became that of a beautiful girl. Another moment and it had vanished completely, and the prince took the ring and made his way back to the palace.

The king stared with surprise at the sight of the ring, but he thought of another way of getting rid of the young man which was surer even than the other two.

‘This evening you will mount my colt and ride him to the field, and break him in properly.’

The prince received this command as silently as he had received the rest, but no sooner was he in his room than he called for the dove, who said: ‘Attend to me. My father longs to see you dead, and thinks he will kill you by this means. He himself is the colt, my mother is the saddle, my two sisters are the stirrups, and I am the bridle. Do not forget to take a good club, to help you in dealing with such a crew.’

So the prince mounted the colt, and gave him such a beating that when he came to the palace to announce that the animal was now so meek that it could be ridden by the smallest child, he found the king so bruised that he had to be wrapped in cloths dipped in vinegar, the mother was too stiff to move, and several of the daughters’ ribs were broken. The youngest, however, was quite unharmed. That night she came to the prince and whispered to him:

‘Now that they are all in too much pain to move, we had better seize our chance and run away. Go to the stable and saddle the leanest horse you

can find there.’ But the prince was foolish enough to choose the fattest: and when they had started and the princess saw what he had done, she was very sorry, for though this horse ran like the wind, the other flashed like thought. However, it was dangerous to go back, and they rode on as fast as the horse would go.

In the night the king sent for his youngest daughter, and as she did not come he sent again; but she did not come any the more for that. The queen, who was a witch, discovered that her daughter had gone off with the prince, and told her husband he must leave his bed and go after them. The king got slowly up, groaning with pain, and dragged himself to the stables, where he saw the lean horse still in his stall.

Leaping on his back he shook the reins, and his daughter, who knew what to expect and had her eyes open, saw the horse start forward, and in the twinkling of an eye changed her own steed into a cell, the prince into a hermit, and herself into a nun.

When the king reached the chapel, he pulled up his horse and asked if a girl and a young man had passed that way. The hermit raised his eyes, which were bent on the ground, and said that he had not seen a living creature. The king, much disgusted at this news, and not knowing what to do, returned home and told his wife that, though he had ridden for miles, he had come across nothing but a hermit and a nun in a cell.

‘Why those were the runaways, of course,’ she cried, flying into a passion, ‘and if you had only brought a scrap of the nun’s dress, or a bit of stone from the wall, I should have had them in my power.’

At these words the king hastened back to the stable, and brought out the lean horse who travelled quicker than thought. But his daughter saw him coming, and changed her horse into a plot of ground, herself into a rose-tree covered with roses, and the prince into a gardener. As the king rode up, the gardener looked up from the tree which he was trimming and asked if anything was the matter. ‘Have you seen a young man and a girl go by?’ said the king, and the gardener shook his head and replied that no one had passed that way since he had been working there. So the king turned his steps homewards and told his wife.

‘Idiot!’ cried she, ‘if you had only brought me one of the roses, or a handful of earth, I should have had them in my power. But there is no time to waste. I shall have to go with you myself.’

The girl saw them from afar, and a great fear fell on her, for she knew her mother's skill in magic of all kinds. However, she determined to fight to the end, and changed the horse into a deep pool, herself into an eel, and the prince into a turtle. But it was no use. Her mother recognised them all, and, pulling up, asked her daughter if she did not repent and would not like to come home again. The eel wagged 'No' with her tail, and the queen told her husband to put a drop of water from the pool into a bottle, because it was only by that means that she could seize hold of her daughter. The king did as he was bid, and was just in the act of drawing the bottle out of the water after he had filled it, when the turtle knocked against and spilt it all. The king then filled it a second time, but again the turtle was too quick for him.

The queen saw that she was beaten, and called down a curse on her daughter that the prince should forget all about her. After having relieved her feelings in this manner, she and the king went back to the palace.

The others resumed their proper shapes and continued their journey, but the princess was so silent that at last the prince asked her what was the matter. 'It is because I know you will soon forget all about me,' said she, and though he laughed at her and told her it was impossible, she did not cease to believe it.

They rode on and on and on, till they reached the end of the world, where the prince lived, and leaving the girl in an inn he went himself to the palace to ask leave of his father to present her to him as his bride; but in his joy at seeing his family once more he forgot all about her, and even listened when the king spoke of arranging a marriage for him.

When the poor girl heard this she wept bitterly, and cried out, 'Come to me, my sisters, for I need you badly!'

In a moment they stood beside her, and the elder one said, 'Do not be sad, all will go well,' and they told the innkeeper that if any of the king's servants wanted any birds for their master they were to be sent up to them, as they had three doves for sale.

And so it fell out, and as the doves were very beautiful the servant bought them for the king, who admired them so much that he called his son to look at them. The prince was much pleased with the doves and was coaxing them to come to him, when one fluttered on to the top of the

window and said, ‘If you could only hear us speak, you would admire us still more.’

And another perched on a table and added, ‘Talk away, it might help him to remember!’

And the third flew on his shoulder and whispered to him, ‘Put on this ring, prince, and see if it fits you.’

And it did. Then they hung a collar round his neck, and held a feather on which was written the name of the dove. And at last his memory came back to him, and he declared he would marry the princess and nobody else. So the next day the wedding took place, and they lived happy till they died.

(From the Portuguese.)

VIRGILIUS THE SORCERER

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Long, long ago there was born to a Roman knight and his wife Maja a little boy called Virgilius. While he was still quite little, his father died, and the kinsmen, instead of being a help and protection to the child and his mother, robbed them of their lands and money, and the widow, fearing that they might take the boy's life also, sent him away to Spain, that he might study in the great University of Toledo.

Virgilius was fond of books, and pored over them all day long. But one afternoon, when the boys were given a holiday, he took a long walk, and found himself in a place where he had never been before. In front of him was a cave, and, as no boy ever sees a cave without entering it, he went in. The cave was so deep that it seemed to Virgilius as if it must run far into the heart of the mountain, and he thought he would like to see if it came out anywhere on the other side. For some time he walked on in pitch darkness, but he went steadily on, and by-and-by a glimmer of light shot across the floor, and he heard a voice calling, 'Virgilius! Virgilius!'

'Who calls?' he asked, stopping and looking round.

'Virgilius!' answered the voice, 'do you mark upon the ground where you are standing a slide or bolt?'

'I do,' replied Virgilius.

'Then,' said the voice, 'draw back that bolt, and set me free.'

'But who are you?' asked Virgilius, who never did anything in a hurry.

'I am an evil spirit,' said the voice, 'shut up here till Doomsday, unless a man sets me free. If you will let me out I will give you some magic books, which will make you wiser than any other man.'

Now Virgilius loved wisdom, and was tempted by these promises, but again his prudence came to his aid, and he demanded that the books should be handed over to him first, and that he should be told how to use them. The evil spirit, unable to help itself, did as Virgilius bade him, and then the bolt was drawn back. Underneath was a small hole, and out of this the evil spirit gradually wriggled himself; but it took some time, for when at last

he stood upon the ground he proved to be about three times as large as Virgilius himself, and coal black besides.

‘Why, you can’t have been as big as that when you were in the hole!’ cried Virgilius.

‘But I was!’ replied the spirit.

‘I don’t believe it!’ answered Virgilius.

‘Well, I’ll just get in and show you,’ said the spirit, and after turning and twisting, and curling himself up, then he lay neatly packed into the hole. Then Virgilius drew the bolt, and, picking the books up under his arm, he left the cave.

For the next few weeks Virgilius hardly ate or slept, so busy was he in learning the magic the books contained. But at the end of that time a messenger from his mother arrived in Toledo, begging him to come at once to Rome, as she had been ill, and could look after their affairs no longer.

Though sorry to leave Toledo, where he was much thought of as showing promise of great learning, Virgilius would willingly have set out at once, but there were many things he had first to see to. So he entrusted to the messenger four pack-horses laden with precious things, and a white palfrey on which she was to ride out every day. Then he set about his own preparations, and, followed by a large train of scholars, he at length started for Rome, from which he had been absent twelve years.

His mother welcomed him back with tears in her eyes, and his poor kinsmen pressed round him, but the rich ones kept away, for they feared that they would no longer be able to rob their kinsman as they had done for many years past. Of course, Virgilius paid no attention to this behaviour, though he noticed they looked with envy on the rich presents he bestowed on the poorer relations and on anyone who had been kind to his mother.

Soon after this had happened the season of tax-gathering came round, and everyone who owned land was bound to present himself before the emperor. Like the rest, Virgilius went to court, and demanded justice from the emperor against the men who had robbed him. But as these were kinsmen to the emperor he gained nothing, as the emperor told him he would think over the matter for the next four years, and then give judgment. This reply naturally did not satisfy Virgilius, and, turning on his

heel, he went back to his own home, and, gathering in his harvest, he stored it up in his various houses.

When the enemies of Virgilius heard of this, they assembled together and laid siege to his castle. But Virgilius was a match for them. Coming forth from the castle so as to meet them face to face, he cast a spell over them of such power that they could not move, and then bade them defiance. After which he lifted the spell, and the invading army slunk back to Rome, and reported what Virgilius had said to the emperor.

Now the emperor was accustomed to have his lightest word obeyed, almost before it was uttered, and he hardly knew how to believe his ears. But he got together another army, and marched straight off to the castle. But directly they took up their position Virgilius girded them about with a great river, so that they could neither move hand nor foot, then, hailing the emperor, he offered him peace, and asked for his friendship. The emperor, however, was too angry to listen to anything, so Virgilius, whose patience was exhausted, feasted his own followers in the presence of the starving host, who could not stir hand or foot.

Things seemed getting desperate, when a magician arrived in the camp and offered to sell his services to the emperor. His proposals were gladly accepted, and in a moment the whole of the garrison sank down as if they were dead, and Virgilius himself had much ado to keep awake. He did not know how to fight the magician, but with a great effort struggled to open his Black Book, which told him what spells to use. In an instant all his foes seemed turned to stone, and where each man was there he stayed. Some were half way up the ladders, some had one foot over the wall, but wherever they might chance to be there every man remained, even the emperor and his sorcerer. All day they stayed there like flies upon the wall, but during the night Virgilius stole softly to the emperor, and offered him his freedom, as long as he would do him justice. The emperor, who by this time was thoroughly frightened, said he would agree to anything Virgilius desired. So Virgilius took off his spells, and, after feasting the army and bestowing on every man a gift, bade them return to Rome. And more than that, he built a square tower for the emperor, and in each corner all that was said in that quarter of the city might be heard, while if you stood in the centre every whisper throughout Rome would reach your ears.

Having settled his affairs with the emperor and his enemies, Virgilius had time to think of other things, and his first act was to fall in love! The lady's name was Febilla, and her family was noble, and her face fairer than any in Rome, but she only mocked Virgilius, and was always playing tricks upon him. To this end, she bade him one day come to visit her in the tower where she lived, promising to let down a basket to draw him up as far as the roof. Virgilius was enchanted at this quite unexpected favour, and stepped with glee into the basket. It was drawn up very slowly, and by-and-by came altogether to a standstill, while from above rang the voice of Febilla crying, 'Rogue of a sorcerer, there shalt thou hang!' And there he hung over the market-place, which was soon thronged with people, who made fun of him till he was mad with rage. At last the emperor, hearing of his plight, commanded Febilla to release him, and Virgilius went home vowing vengeance.

The next morning every fire in Rome went out, and as there were no matches in those days this was a very serious matter. The emperor, guessing that this was the work of Virgilius, besought him to break the spell. Then Virgilius ordered a scaffold to be erected in the market-place, and Febilla to be brought clothed in a single white garment. And further, he bade every one to snatch fire from the maiden, and to suffer no neighbour to kindle it. And when the maiden appeared, clad in her white smock, flames of fire curled about her, and the Romans brought some torches, and some straw, and some shavings, and fires were kindled in Rome again.

For three days she stood there, till every hearth in Rome was alight, and then she was suffered to go where she would.

But the emperor was wroth at the vengeance of Virgilius, and threw him into prison, vowing that he should be put to death. And when everything was ready he was led out to the Viminal Hill, where he was to die.

He went quietly with his guards, but the day was hot, and on reaching his place of execution he begged for some water. A pail was brought, and he, crying 'Emperor, all hail! seek for me in Sicily,' jumped headlong into the pail, and vanished from their sight.

For some time we hear no more of Virgilius, or how he made his peace with the emperor, but the next event in his history was his being sent for to

the palace to give the emperor advice how to guard Rome from foes within as well as foes without. Virgilius spent many days in deep thought, and at length invented a plan which was known to all as the ‘Preservation of Rome.’

On the roof of the Capitol, which was the most famous public building in the city, he set up statues representing the gods worshipped by every nation subject to Rome, and in the middle stood the god of Rome herself. Each of the conquered gods held in its hand a bell, and if there was even a thought of treason in any of the countries its god turned its back upon the god of Rome and rang its bell furiously, and the senators came hurrying to see who was rebelling against the majesty of the empire. Then they made ready their armies, and marched against the foe.

Now there was a country which had long felt bitter jealousy of Rome, and was anxious for some way of bringing about its destruction. So the people chose three men who could be trusted, and, loading them with money, sent them to Rome, bidding them to pretend that they were diviners of dreams. No sooner had the messengers reached the city than they stole out at night and buried a pot of gold far down in the earth, and let down another into the bed of the Tiber, just where a bridge spans the river.

Next day they went to the senate house, where the laws were made, and, bowing low, they said, ‘Oh, noble lords, last night we dreamed that beneath the foot of a hill there lies buried a pot of gold. Have we your leave to dig for it?’ And leave having been given, the messengers took workmen and dug up the gold and made merry with it.

A few days later the diviners again appeared before the senate, and said, ‘Oh, noble lords, grant us leave to seek out another treasure, which has been revealed to us in a dream as lying under the bridge over the river.’

And the senators gave leave, and the messengers hired boats and men, and let down ropes with hooks, and at length drew up the pot of gold, some of which they gave as presents to the senators.

A week or two passed by, and once more they appeared in the senate house.

‘O, noble lords!’ said they, ‘last night in a vision we beheld twelve casks of gold lying under the foundation stone of the Capitol, on which

stands the statue of the Preservation of Rome. Now, seeing that by your goodness we have been greatly enriched by our former dreams, we wish, in gratitude, to bestow this third treasure on you for your own profit; so give us workers, and we will begin to dig without delay.'

And receiving permission they began to dig, and when the messengers had almost undermined the Capitol they stole away as secretly as they had come.

And next morning the stone gave way, and the sacred statue fell on its face and was broken. And the senators knew that their greed had been their ruin.

From that day things went from bad to worse, and every morning crowds presented themselves before the emperor, complaining of the robberies, murders, and other crimes that were committed nightly in the streets.

The emperor, desiring nothing so much as the safety of his subjects, took counsel with Virgilius how this violence could be put down.

Virgilius thought hard for a long time, and then he spoke:

'Great prince,' said he, 'cause a copper horse and rider to be made, and stationed in front of the Capitol. Then make a proclamation that at ten o'clock a bell will toll, and every man is to enter his house, and not leave it again.'

The emperor did as Virgilius advised, but thieves and murderers laughed at the horse, and went about their misdeeds as usual.

But at the last stroke of the bell the horse set off at full gallop through the streets of Rome, and by daylight men counted over two hundred corpses that it had trodden down. The rest of the thieves—and there were still many remaining—instead of being frightened into honesty, as Virgilius had hoped, prepared rope ladders with hooks to them, and when they heard the sound of the horse's hoofs they stuck their ladders into the walls, and climbed up above the reach of the horse and its rider.

Then the emperor commanded two copper dogs to be made that would run after the horse, and when the thieves, hanging from the walls, mocked and jeered at Virgilius and the emperor, the dogs leaped high after them and pulled them to the ground, and bit them to death.

Thus did Virgilius restore peace and order to the city.

Now about this time there came to be noised abroad the fame of the daughter of the sultan who ruled over the province of Babylon, and indeed she was said to be the most beautiful princess in the world.

Virgilius, like the rest, listened to the stories that were told of her, and fell so violently in love with all he heard that he built a bridge in the air, which stretched all the way between Rome and Babylon. He then passed over it to visit the princess, who, though somewhat surprised to see him, gave him welcome, and after some conversation became in her turn anxious to see the distant country where this stranger lived, and he promised that he would carry her there himself, without wetting the soles of his feet.

The princess spent some days in the palace of Virgilius, looking at wonders of which she had never dreamed, though she declined to accept the presents he longed to heap on her. The hours passed as if they were minutes, till the princess said that she could be no longer absent from her father. Then Virgilius conducted her himself over the airy bridge, and laid her gently down on her own bed, where she was found next morning by her father.

She told him all that had happened to her, and he pretended to be very much interested, and begged that the next time Virgilius came he might be introduced to him.

Soon after, the sultan received a message from his daughter that the stranger was there, and he commanded that a feast should be made ready, and, sending for the princess delivered into her hands a cup, which he said she was to present to Virgilius herself, in order to do him honour.

When they were all seated at the feast the princess rose and presented the cup to Virgilius, who directly he had drunk fell into a deep sleep.

Then the sultan ordered his guards to bind him, and left him there till the following day.

Directly the sultan was up he summoned his lords and nobles into his great hall, and commanded that the cords which bound Virgilius should be taken off, and the prisoner brought before him. The moment he appeared the sultan’s passion broke forth, and he accused his captive of the crime of conveying the princess into distant lands without his leave.

Virgilius replied that if he had taken her away he had also brought her back, when he might have kept her, and that if they would set him free to

return to his own land he would come hither no more.

‘Not so!’ cried the sultan, ‘but a shameful death you shall die!’ And the princess fell on her knees, and begged she might die with him.

‘You are out in your reckoning, Sir Sultan!’ said Virgilius, whose patience was at an end, and he cast a spell over the sultan and his lords, so that they believed that the great river of Babylon was flowing through the hall, and that they must swim for their lives. So, leaving them to plunge and leap like frogs and fishes, Virgilius took the princess in his arms, and carried her over the airy bridge back to Rome.

Now Virgilius did not think that either his palace, or even Rome itself, was good enough to contain such a pearl as the princess, so he built her a city whose foundations stood upon eggs, buried far away down in the depths of the sea. And in the city was a square tower, and on the roof of the tower was a rod of iron, and across the rod he laid a bottle, and on the bottle he placed an egg, and from the egg there hung chained an apple, which hangs there to this day. And when the egg shakes the city quakes, and when the egg shall be broken the city shall be destroyed. And the city Virgilius filled full of wonders, such as never were seen before, and he called its name Naples.

(Adapted from ‘Virgilius the Sorcerer.’)

MOGARZEA AND HIS SON

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There was once a little boy, whose father and mother, when they were dying, left him to the care of a guardian. But the guardian whom they chose turned out to be a wicked man, and spent all the money, so the boy determined to go away and strike out a path for himself.

So one day he set off, and walked and walked through woods and meadows till when evening came he was very tired, and did not know where to sleep. He climbed a hill and looked about him to see if there was no light shining from a window. At first all seemed dark, but at length he noticed a tiny spark far, far off, and, plucking up his spirits, he at once went in search of it.

The night was nearly half over before he reached the spark, which turned out to be a big fire, and by the fire a man was sleeping who was so tall he might have been a giant. The boy hesitated for a moment what he should do; then he crept close up to the man, and lay down by his legs.

When the man awoke in the morning he was much surprised to find the boy nestling up close to him.

‘Dear me! where do you come from?’ said he.

‘I am your son, born in the night,’ replied the boy.

‘If that is true,’ said the man, ‘you shall take care of my sheep, and I will give you food. But take care you never cross the border of my land, or you will repent it.’ Then he pointed out where the border of his land lay, and bade the boy begin his work at once.

The young shepherd led his flock out to the richest meadows and stayed with them till evening, when he brought them back, and helped the man to milk them. When this was done, they both sat down to supper, and while they were eating the boy asked the big man: ‘What is your name, father?’

‘Mogarzea,’ answered he.

‘I wonder you are not tired of living by yourself in this lonely place.’

‘There is no reason you should wonder! Don’t you know that there was never a bear yet who danced of his own free will?’

‘Yes, that is true,’ replied the boy. ‘But why is it you are always so sad? Tell me your history, father.’

‘What is the use of my telling you things that would only make you sad too?’

‘Oh, never mind that! I should like to hear. Are you not my father, and am I not your son?’

‘Well, if you really want to know my story, this is it: As I told you, my name is Mogarzea, and my father is an emperor. I was on my way to the Sweet Milk Lake, which lies not far from here, to marry one of the three fairies who have made the lake their home. But on the road three wicked elves fell on me, and robbed me of my soul, so that ever since I have stayed in this spot watching my sheep without wishing for anything different, without having felt one moment’s joy, or ever once being able to laugh. And the horrible elves are so ill-natured that if anyone sets one foot on their land he is instantly punished. That is why I warn you to be careful, lest you should share my fate.’

‘All right, I will take great care. Do let me go, father,’ said the boy, as they stretched themselves out to sleep.

At sunrise the boy got up and led his sheep out to feed, and for some reason he did not feel tempted to cross into the grassy meadows belonging to the elves, but let his flock pick up what pasture they could on Mogarzea’s dry ground.

On the third day he was sitting under the shadow of a tree, playing on his flute—and there was nobody in the world who could play a flute better—when one of his sheep strayed across the fence into the flowery fields of the elves, and another and another followed it. But the boy was so absorbed in his flute that he noticed nothing till half the flock were on the other side.

He jumped up, still playing on his flute, and went after the sheep, meaning to drive them back to their own side of the border, when suddenly he saw before him three beautiful maidens who stopped in front of him, and began to dance. The boy understood what he must do, and played with all his might, but the maidens danced on till evening.

‘Now let me go,’ he cried at last, ‘for poor Mogarzea must be dying of hunger. I will come and play for you to-morrow.’

‘Well, you may go!’ they said, ‘but remember that even if you break your promise you will not escape us.’

So they both agreed that the next day he should come straight there with the sheep, and play to them till the sun went down. This being settled, they each returned home.

Mogarzea was surprised to find that his sheep gave so much more milk than usual, but as the boy declared he had never crossed the border the big man did not trouble his head further, and ate his supper heartily.

With the earliest gleams of light, the boy was off with his sheep to the elfin meadow, and at the first notes of his flute the maidens appeared before him and danced and danced and danced till evening came. Then the boy let the flute slip through his fingers, and trod on it, as if by accident.

If you had heard the noise he made, and how he wrung his hands and wept and cried that he had lost his only companion, you would have been sorry for him. The hearts of the elves were quite melted, and they did all they could to comfort him.

‘I shall never find another flute like that, moaned he. ‘I have never heard one whose tone was as sweet as mine! It was cut from the centre of a seven-year-old cherry tree!’

‘There is a cherry tree in our garden that is exactly seven years old,’ said they. ‘Come with us, and you shall make yourself another flute.’

So they all went to the cherry tree, and when they were standing round it the youth explained that if he tried to cut it down with an axe he might very likely split open the heart of the tree, which was needed for the flute. In order to prevent this, he would make a little cut in the bark, just large enough for them to put their fingers in, and with this help he could manage to tear the tree in two, so that the heart should run no risk of damage. The elves did as he told them without a thought; then he quickly drew out the axe, which had been sticking into the cleft, and behold! all their fingers were imprisoned tight in the tree.

It was in vain that they shrieked with pain and tried to free themselves. They could do nothing, and the young man remained cold as marble to all their entreaties.

Then he demanded of them Mogarzea’s soul.

‘Oh, well, if you must have it, it is in a bottle on the window sill,’ said they, hoping that they might obtain their freedom at once. But they were mistaken.

‘You have made so many men suffer,’ answered he sternly, ‘that it is but just you should suffer yourselves, but to-morrow I will let you go.’ And he turned towards home, taking his sheep and the soul of Mogarzea with him.

Mogarzea was waiting at the door, and as the boy drew near he began scolding him for being so late. But at the first word of explanation the man became beside himself with joy, and he sprang so high into the air that the false soul which the elves had given him flew out of his mouth, and his own, which had been shut tightly into the flask of water, took its place.

When his excitement had somewhat calmed down, he cried to the boy, ‘Whether you are really my son matters nothing to me; tell me, how can I repay you for what you have done for me?’

‘By showing me where the Milk Lake is, and how I can get one of the three fairies who lives there to wife, and by letting me remain your son for ever.’

The night was passed by Mogarzea and his son in songs and feasting, for both were too happy to sleep, and when day dawned they set out together to free the elves from the tree. When they reached the place of their imprisonment, Mogarzea took the cherry tree and all the elves with it on his back, and carried them off to his father’s kingdom, where everyone rejoiced to see him home again. But all he did was to point to the boy who had saved him, and had followed him with his flock.

For three days the boy stayed in the palace, receiving the thanks and praises of the whole court. Then he said to Mogarzea:

‘The time has come for me to go hence, but tell me, I pray you, how to find the Sweet Milk Lake, and I will return, and will bring my wife back with me.’

Mogarzea tried in vain to make him stay, but, finding it was useless, he told him all he knew, for he himself had never seen the lake.

For three summer days the boy and his flute journeyed on, till one evening he reached the lake, which lay in the kingdom of a powerful fairy. The next morning had scarcely dawned when the youth went down to the shore, and began to play on his flute, and the first notes had hardly

sounded when he saw a beautiful fairy standing before him, with hair and robes that shone like gold. He gazed at her in wonder, when suddenly she began to dance. Her movements were so graceful that he forgot to play, and as soon as the notes of his flute ceased she vanished from his sight. The next day the same thing happened, but on the third he took courage, and drew a little nearer, playing on his flute all the while. Suddenly he sprang forward, seized her in his arms and kissed her, and plucked a rose from her hair.

The fairy gave a cry, and begged him to give her back her rose, but he would not. He only stuck the rose in his hat, and turned a deaf ear to all her prayers.

At last she saw that her entreaties were vain, and agreed to marry him, as he wished. And they went together to the palace, where Mogarzea was still waiting for him, and the marriage was celebrated by the emperor himself. But every May they returned to the Milk Lake, they and their children, and bathed in its waters.

(Olumanische Marchen.)

THE CRIMSON FAIRY BOOK

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PREFACE

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Each Fairy Book demands a preface from the Editor, and these introductions are inevitably both monotonous and unavailing. A sense of literary honesty compels the Editor to keep repeating that he is the Editor, and not the author of the Fairy Tales, just as a distinguished man of science is only the Editor, not the Author of Nature. Like nature, popular tales are too vast to be the creation of a single modern mind. The Editor's business is to hunt for collections of these stories told by peasant or savage grandmothers in many climes, from New Caledonia to Zululand; from the frozen snows of the Polar regions to Greece, or Spain, or Italy, or far Lochaber. When the tales are found they are adapted to the needs of British children by various hands, the Editor doing little beyond guarding the interests of propriety, and toning down to mild reproofs the tortures inflicted on wicked stepmothers, and other naughty characters.

These explanations have frequently been offered already; but, as far as ladies and children are concerned, to no purpose. They still ask the Editor how he can invent so many stories—more than Shakespeare, Dumas, and Charles Dickens could have invented in a century. And the Editor still avers, in Prefaces, that he did not invent one of the stories; that nobody knows, as a rule, who invented them, or where, or when. It is only plain that, perhaps a hundred thousand years ago, some savage grandmother told a tale to a savage granddaughter; that the granddaughter told it in her turn; that various tellers made changes to suit their taste, adding or omitting features and incidents; that, as the world grew civilised, other alterations were made, and that, at last, Homer composed the 'Odyssey,' and somebody else composed the Story of Jason and the Fleece of Gold, and the enchantress Medea, out of a set of wandering popular tales, which are still told among Samoyeds and Samoans, Hindoos and Japanese.

All this has been known to the wise and learned for centuries, and especially since the brothers Grimm wrote in the early years of the Nineteenth Century. But children remain unaware of the facts, and so do

their dear mothers; whence the Editor infers that they do not read his prefaces, and are not members of the Folk Lore Society, or students of Herr Kohler and M. Cosquin, and M. Henri Guidoz and Professor Child, and Mr. Max Muller. Though these explanations are not attended to by the Editor’s customers, he makes them once more, for the relief of his conscience. Many tales in this book are translated, or adapted, from those told by mothers and nurses in Hungary; others are familiar to Russian nurseries; the Servians are responsible for some; a rather peculiarly fanciful set of stories are adapted from the Roumanians; others are from the Baltic shores; others from sunny Sicily; a few are from Finland, and Iceland, and Japan, and Tunis, and Portugal. No doubt many children will like to look out these places on the map, and study their mountains, rivers, soil, products, and fiscal policies, in the geography books. The peoples who tell the stories differ in colour; language, religion, and almost everything else; but they all love a nursery tale. The stories have mainly been adapted or translated by Mrs. Lang, a few by Miss Lang and Miss Blackley.

LOVELY ILONKA

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There was once a king’s son who told his father that he wished to marry.

‘No, no!’ said the king; ‘you must not be in such a hurry. Wait till you have done some great deed. My father did not let me marry till I had won the golden sword you see me wear.’

The prince was much disappointed, but he never dreamed of disobeying his father, and he began to think with all his might what he could do. It was no use staying at home, so one day he wandered out into the world to try his luck, and as he walked along he came to a little hut in which he found an old woman crouching over the fire.

‘Good evening, mother. I see you have lived long in this world; do you know anything about the three bulrushes?’

‘Yes, indeed, I’ve lived long and been much about in the world, but I have never seen or heard anything of what you ask. Still, if you will wait till to-morrow I may be able to tell you something.’

Well, he waited till the morning, and quite early the old woman appeared and took out a little pipe and blew in it, and in a moment all the crows in the world were flying about her. Not one was missing. Then she asked if they knew anything about the three bulrushes, but not one of them did.

The prince went on his way, and a little further on he found another hut in which lived an old man. On being questioned the old man said he knew nothing, but begged the prince to stay overnight, and the next morning the old man called all the ravens together, but they too had nothing to tell.

The prince bade him farewell and set out. He wandered so far that he crossed seven kingdoms, and at last, one evening, he came to a little house in which was an old woman.

‘Good evening, dear mother,’ said he politely.

‘Good evening to you, my dear son,’ answered the old woman. ‘It is lucky for you that you spoke to me or you would have met with a horrible death. But may I ask where are you going?’

‘I am seeking the three bulrushes. Do you know anything about them?’

‘I don’t know anything myself, but wait till to-morrow. Perhaps I can tell you then.’ So the next morning she blew on her pipe, and lo! and behold every magpie in the world flew up. That is to say, all the magpies except one who had broken a leg and a wing. The old woman sent after it at once, and when she questioned the magpies the crippled one was the only one who knew where the three bulrushes were.

Then the prince started off with the lame magpie. They went on and on till they reached a great stone wall, many, many feet high.

‘Now, prince,’ said the magpie, ‘the three bulrushes are behind that wall.’

The prince wasted no time. He set his horse at the wall and leaped over it. Then he looked about for the three bulrushes, pulled them up and set off with them on his way home. As he rode along one of the bulrushes happened to knock against something. It split open and, only think! out sprang a lovely girl, who said: ‘My heart’s love, you are mine and I am yours; do give me a glass of water.’

But how could the prince give it her when there was no water at hand? So the lovely maiden flew away. He split the second bulrush as an experiment and just the same thing happened.

How careful he was of the third bulrush! He waited till he came to a well, and there he split it open, and out sprang a maiden seven times lovelier than either of the others, and she too said: ‘My heart’s love, I am yours and you are mine; do give me a glass of water.’

This time the water was ready and the girl did not fly away, but she and the prince promised to love each other always. Then they set out for home.

They soon reached the prince’s country, and as he wished to bring his promised bride back in a fine coach he went on to the town to fetch one. In the field where the well was, the king’s swineherds and cowherds were feeding their droves, and the prince left Ilonka (for that was her name) in their care.

Unluckily the chief swineherd had an ugly old daughter, and whilst the prince was away he dressed her up in fine clothes, and threw Ilonka into the well.

The prince returned before long, bringing with him his father and mother and a great train of courtiers to escort Ilonka home. But how they

all stared when they saw the swineherd's ugly daughter! However, there was nothing for it but to take her home; and, two days later, the prince married her, and his father gave up the crown to him.

But he had no peace! He knew very well he had been cheated, though he could not think how. Once he desired to have some water brought him from the well into which Ilonka had been thrown. The coachman went for it and, in the bucket he pulled up, a pretty little duck was swimming. He looked wonderingly at it, and all of a sudden it disappeared and he found a dirty looking girl standing near him. The girl returned with him and managed to get a place as housemaid in the palace.

Of course she was very busy all day long, but whenever she had a little spare time she sat down to spin. Her distaff turned of itself and her spindle span by itself and the flax wound itself off; and however much she might use there was always plenty left.

When the queen—or, rather, the swineherd's daughter—heard of this, she very much wished to have the distaff, but the girl flatly refused to give it to her. However, at last she consented on condition that she might sleep one night in the king's room. The queen was very angry, and scolded her well; but as she longed to have the distaff she consented, though she gave the king a sleeping draught at supper.

Then the girl went to the king's room looking seven times lovelier than ever. She bent over the sleeper and said: 'My heart's love, I am yours and you are mine. Speak to me but once; I am your Ilonka.' But the king was so sound asleep he neither heard nor spoke, and Ilonka left the room, sadly thinking he was ashamed to own her.

Soon after the queen again sent to say that she wanted to buy the spindle. The girl agreed to let her have it on the same conditions as before; but this time, also, the queen took care to give the king a sleeping draught. And once more Ilonka went to the king's room and spoke to him; whisper as sweetly as she might she could get no answer.

Now some of the king's servants had taken note of the matter, and warned their master not to eat and drink anything that the queen offered him, as for two nights running she had given him a sleeping draught. The queen had no idea that her doings had been discovered; and when, a few days later, she wanted the flax, and had to pay the same price for it, she felt no fears at all.

At supper that night the queen offered the king all sorts of nice things to eat and drink, but he declared he was not hungry, and went early to bed.

The queen repented bitterly her promise to the girl, but it was too late to recall it; for Ilonka had already entered the king's room, where he lay anxiously waiting for something, he knew not what. All of a sudden he saw a lovely maiden who bent over him and said: 'My dearest love, I am yours and you are mine. Speak to me, for I am your Ilonka.'

At these words the king's heart bounded within him. He sprang up and embraced and kissed her, and she told him all her adventures since the moment he had left her. And when he heard all that Ilonka had suffered, and how he had been deceived, he vowed he would be revenged; so he gave orders that the swineherd, his wife and daughter should all be hanged; and so they were.

The next day the king was married, with great rejoicings, to the fair Ilonka; and if they are not yet dead—why, they are still living.

[From Ungarische Mahrehen.]

LUCKY LUCK

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Once upon a time there was a king who had an only son. When the lad was about eighteen years old his father had to go to fight in a war against a neighbouring country, and the king led his troops in person. He bade his son act as Regent in his absence, but ordered him on no account to marry till his return.

Time went by. The prince ruled the country and never even thought of marrying. But when he reached his twenty-fifth birthday he began to think that it might be rather nice to have a wife, and he thought so much that at last he got quite eager about it. He remembered, however, what his father had said, and waited some time longer, till at last it was ten years since the king went out to war. Then the prince called his courtiers about him and set off with a great retinue to seek a bride. He hardly knew which way to go, so he wandered about for twenty days, when, suddenly, he found himself in his father's camp.

The king was delighted to see his son, and had a great many questions to ask and answer; but when he heard that instead of quietly waiting for him at home the prince was starting off to seek a wife he was very angry, and said: 'You may go where you please but I will not leave any of my people with you.'

Only one faithful servant stayed with the prince and refused to part from him. They journeyed over hill and dale till they came to a place called Goldtown. The King of Goldtown had a lovely daughter, and the prince, who soon heard about her beauty, could not rest till he saw her.

He was very kindly received, for he was extremely good-looking and had charming manners, so he lost no time in asking for her hand and her parents gave her to him with joy. The wedding took place at once, and the feasting and rejoicings went on for a whole month. At the end of the month they set off for home, but as the journey was a long one they spent the first evening at an inn. Everyone in the house slept, and only the

faithful servant kept watch. About midnight he heard three crows, who had flown to the roof, talking together.

‘That’s a handsome couple which arrived here tonight. It seems quite a pity they should lose their lives so soon.’

‘Truly,’ said the second crow; ‘for to-morrow, when midday strikes, the bridge over the Gold Stream will break just as they are driving over it. But, listen! whoever overhears and tells what we have said will be turned to stone up to his knees.’

The crows had hardly done speaking when away they flew. And close upon them followed three pigeons.

‘Even if the prince and princess get safe over the bridge they will perish,’ said they; ‘for the king is going to send a carriage to meet them which looks as new as paint. But when they are seated in it a raging wind will rise and whirl the carriage away into the clouds. Then it will fall suddenly to earth, and they will be killed. But anyone who hears and betrays what we have said will be turned to stone up to his waist.’

With that the pigeons flew off and three eagles took their places, and this is what they said:

‘If the young couple does manage to escape the dangers of the bridge and the carriage, the king means to send them each a splendid gold embroidered robe. When they put these on they will be burnt up at once. But whoever hears and repeats this will turn to stone from head to foot.’

Early next morning the travellers got up and breakfasted. They began to tell each other their dreams. At last the servant said:

‘Gracious prince, I dreamt that if your Royal Highness would grant all I asked we should get home safe and sound; but if you did not we should certainly be lost. My dreams never deceive me, so I entreat you to follow my advice during the rest of the journey.’

‘Don’t make such a fuss about a dream,’ said the prince; ‘dreams are but clouds. Still, to prevent your being anxious I will promise to do as you wish.’

With that they set out on their journey.

At midday they reached the Gold Stream. When they got to the bridge the servant said: ‘Let us leave the carriage here, my prince, and walk a little way. The town is not far off and we can easily get another carriage

there, for the wheels of this one are bad and will not hold out much longer.'

The prince looked well at the carriage. He did not think it looked so unsafe as his servant said; but he had given his word and he held to it.

They got down and loaded the horses with the luggage. The prince and his bride walked over the bridge, but the servant said he would ride the horses through the stream so as to water and bathe them.

They reached the other side without harm, and bought a new carriage in the town, which was quite near, and set off once more on their travels; but they had not gone far when they met a messenger from the king who said to the prince: 'His Majesty has sent your Royal Highness this beautiful carriage so that you may make a fitting entry into your own country and amongst your own people.'

The prince was so delighted that he could not speak. But the servant said: 'My lord, let me examine this carriage first and then you can get in if I find it is all right; otherwise we had better stay in our own.'

The prince made no objections, and after looking the carriage well over the servant said: 'It is as bad as it is smart'; and with that he knocked it all to pieces, and they went on in the one that they had bought.

At last they reached the frontier; there another messenger was waiting for them, who said that the king had sent two splendid robes for the prince and his bride, and begged that they would wear them for their state entry. But the servant implored the prince to have nothing to do with them, and never gave him any peace till he had obtained leave to destroy the robes.

The old king was furious when he found that all his arts had failed; that his son still lived and that he would have to give up the crown to him now he was married, for that was the law of the land. He longed to know how the prince had escaped, and said: 'My dear son, I do indeed rejoice to have you safely back, but I cannot imagine why the beautiful carriage and the splendid robes I sent did not please you; why you had them destroyed.'

'Indeed, sire,' said the prince, 'I was myself much annoyed at their destruction; but my servant had begged to direct everything on the journey and I had promised him that he should do so. He declared that we could not possibly get home safely unless I did as he told me.'

The old king fell into a tremendous rage. He called his Council together and condemned the servant to death.

The gallows was put up in the square in front of the palace. The servant was led out and his sentence read to him.

The rope was being placed round his neck, when he begged to be allowed a few last words. ‘On our journey home,’ he said, ‘we spent the first night at an inn. I did not sleep but kept watch all night.’ And then he went on to tell what the crows had said, and as he spoke he turned to stone up to his knees. The prince called to him to say no more as he had proved his innocence. But the servant paid no heed to him, and by the time his story was done he had turned to stone from head to foot.

Oh! how grieved the prince was to lose his faithful servant! And what pained him most was the thought that he was lost through his very faithfulness, and he determined to travel all over the world and never rest till he found some means of restoring him to life.

Now there lived at Court an old woman who had been the prince’s nurse. To her he confided all his plans, and left his wife, the princess, in her care. ‘You have a long way before you, my son,’ said the old woman; ‘you must never return till you have met with Lucky Luck. If he cannot help you no one on earth can.’

So the prince set off to try to find Lucky Luck. He walked and walked till he got beyond his own country, and he wandered through a wood for three days but did not meet a living being in it. At the end of the third day he came to a river near which stood a large mill. Here he spent the night. When he was leaving next morning the miller asked him: ‘My gracious lord, where are you going all alone?’

And the prince told him.

‘Then I beg your Highness to ask Lucky Luck this question: Why is it that though I have an excellent mill, with all its machinery complete, and get plenty of grain to grind, I am so poor that I hardly know how to live from one day to another?’

The prince promised to inquire, and went on his way. He wandered about for three days more, and at the end of the third day saw a little town. It was quite late when he reached it, but he could discover no light anywhere, and walked almost right through it without finding a house where he could turn in. But far away at the end of the town he saw a light in a window. He went straight to it and in the house were three girls playing a game together. The prince asked for a night’s lodging and they

took him in, gave him some supper and got a room ready for him, where he slept.

Next morning when he was leaving they asked where he was going and he told them his story. ‘Gracious prince,’ said the maidens, ‘do ask Lucky Luck how it happens that here we are over thirty years old and no lover has come to woo us, though we are good, pretty, and very industrious.’

The prince promised to inquire, and went on his way.

Then he came to a great forest and wandered about in it from morning to night and from night to morning before he got near the other end. Here he found a pretty stream which was different from other streams as, instead of flowing, it stood still and began to talk: ‘Sir prince, tell me what brings you into these wilds? I must have been flowing here a hundred years and more and no one has ever yet come by.’

‘I will tell you,’ answered the prince, ‘if you will divide yourself so that I may walk through.’

The stream parted at once, and the prince walked through without wetting his feet; and directly he got to the other side he told his story as he had promised.

‘Oh, do ask Lucky Luck,’ cried the brook, ‘why, though I am such a clear, bright, rapid stream I never have a fish or any other living creature in my waters.’

The prince said he would do so, and continued his journey.

When he got quite clear of the forest he walked on through a lovely valley till he reached a little house thatched with rushes, and he went in to rest for he was very tired.

Everything in the house was beautifully clean and tidy, and a cheerful honest-looking old woman was sitting by the fire.

‘Good-morning, mother,’ said the prince.

‘May Luck be with you, my son. What brings you into these parts?’

‘I am looking for Lucky Luck,’ replied the prince.

‘Then you have come to the right place, my son, for I am his mother. He is not at home just now, he is out digging in the vineyard. Do you go too. Here are two spades. When you find him begin to dig, but don’t speak a word to him. It is now eleven o’clock. When he sits down to eat his dinner sit beside him and eat with him. After dinner he will question you,

and then tell him all your troubles freely. He will answer whatever you may ask.'

With that she showed him the way, and the prince went and did just as she had told him. After dinner they lay down to rest.

All of a sudden Lucky Luck began to speak and said: 'Tell me, what sort of man are you, for since you came here you have not spoken a word?'

'I am not dumb,' replied the young man, 'but I am that unhappy prince whose faithful servant has been turned to stone, and I want to know how to help him.'

'And you do well, for he deserves everything. Go back, and when you get home your wife will just have had a little boy. Take three drops of blood from the child's little finger, rub them on your servant's wrists with a blade of grass and he will return to life.'

'I have another thing to ask,' said the prince, when he had thanked him. 'In the forest near here is a fine stream but not a fish or other living creature in it. Why is this?'

'Because no one has ever been drowned in the stream. But take care, in crossing, to get as near the other side as you can before you say so, or you may be the first victim yourself.'

'Another question, please, before I go. On my way here I lodged one night in the house of three maidens. All were well-mannered, hard-working, and pretty, and yet none has had a wooer. Why was this?'

'Because they always throw out their sweepings in the face of the sun.'

'And why is it that a miller, who has a large mill with all the best machinery and gets plenty of corn to grind is so poor that he can hardly live from day to day?'

'Because the miller keeps everything for himself, and does not give to those who need it.'

The prince wrote down the answers to his questions, took a friendly leave of Lucky Luck, and set off for home.

When he reached the stream it asked if he brought it any good news. 'When I get across I will tell you,' said he. So the stream parted; he walked through and on to the highest part of the bank. He stopped and shouted out:

'Listen, oh stream! Lucky Luck says you will never have any living creature in your waters until someone is drowned in you.'

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the stream swelled and overflowed till it reached the rock up which he had climbed, and dashed so far up it that the spray flew over him. But he clung on tight, and after failing to reach him three times the stream returned to its proper course. Then the prince climbed down, dried himself in the sun, and set out on his march home.

He spent the night once more at the mill and gave the miller his answer, and by-and-by he told the three sisters not to throw out all their sweepings in the face of the sun.

The prince had hardly arrived at home when some thieves tried to ford the stream with a fine horse they had stolen. When they were half-way across, the stream rose so suddenly that it swept them all away. From that time it became the best fishing stream in the country-side.

The miller, too, began to give alms and became a very good man, and in time grew so rich that he hardly knew how much he had.

And the three sisters, now that they no longer insulted the sun, had each a wooer within a week.

When the prince got home he found that his wife had just got a fine little boy. He did not lose a moment in pricking the baby’s finger till the blood ran, and he brushed it on the wrists of the stone figure, which shuddered all over and split with a loud noise in seven parts and there was the faithful servant alive and well.

When the old king saw this he foamed with rage, stared wildly about, flung himself on the ground and died.

The servant stayed on with his royal master and served him faithfully all the rest of his life; and, if neither of them is dead, he is serving him still.

[From Ungarische Mahrchen.]

THE HAIRY MAN

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Somewhere or other, but I don’t know where, there lived a king who owned two remarkably fine fields of rape, but every night two of the rape heaps were burnt down in one of the fields. The king was extremely angry at this, and sent out soldiers to catch whoever had set fire to the ricks; but it was all of no use—not a soul could they see. Then he offered nine hundred crowns to anyone who caught the evil-doer, and at the same time ordered that whoever did not keep proper watch over the fields should be killed; but though there were a great many people, none seemed able to protect the fields.

The king had already put ninety-nine people to death, when a little swineherd came to him who had two dogs; one was called ‘Psst,’ and the other ‘Hush’; and the boy told the king that he would watch over the ricks.

When it grew dark he climbed up on the top of the fourth rick, from where he could see the whole field. About eleven o’clock he thought he saw someone going to a rick and putting a light to it. ‘Just you wait,’ thought he, and called out to his dogs: ‘Hi! Psst, Hush, catch him!’ But Psst and Hush had not waited for orders, and in five minutes the man was caught.

Next morning he was brought bound before the king, who was so pleased with the boy that he gave him a thousand crowns at once. The prisoner was all covered with hair, almost like an animal; and altogether he was so curious to look at that the king locked him up in a strong room and sent out letters of invitation to all the other kings and princes asking them to come and see this wonder.

That was all very well; but the king had a little boy of ten years old who went to look at the hairy man also, and the man begged so hard to be set free that the boy took pity on him. He stole the key of the strong room from his mother and opened the door. Then he took the key back, but the hairy man escaped and went off into the world.

Then the kings and princes began to arrive one after another, and all were most anxious to see the hairy man; but he was gone! The king nearly burst with rage and with the shame he felt. He questioned his wife sharply, and told her that if she could not find and bring back the hairy man he would put her in a hut made of rushes and burn her there. The queen declared she had had nothing to do with the matter; if her son had happened to take the key it had not been with her knowledge.

So they fetched the little prince and asked him all sorts of questions, and at last he owned that he had let the hairy man out. The king ordered his servants to take the boy into the forest and to kill him there, and to bring back part of his liver and lungs.

There was grief all over the palace when the king's command was known, for he was a great favourite. But there was no help for it, and they took the boy out into the forest. But the man was sorry for him, and shot a dog and carried pieces of his lungs and liver to the king, who was satisfied, and did not trouble himself any more.

The prince wandered about in the forest and lived as best he could for five years. One day he came upon a poor little cottage in which was an old man. They began to talk, and the prince told his story and sad fate. Then they recognised each other, for the old fellow was no other than the hairy man whom the prince had set free, and who had lived ever since in the forest.

The prince stayed here for two years; then he wished to go further. The old man begged him hard to stay, but he would not, so his hairy friend gave him a golden apple out of which came a horse with a golden mane, and a golden staff with which to guide the horse. The old man also gave him a silver apple out of which came the most beautiful hussars and a silver staff; and a copper apple from which he could draw as many foot soldiers as ever he wished, and a copper staff. He made the prince swear solemnly to take the greatest care of these presents, and then he let him go.

The boy wandered on and on till he came to a large town. Here he took service in the king's palace, and as no one troubled themselves about him he lived quietly on.

One day news was brought to the king that he must go out to war. He was horribly frightened for he had a very small army, but he had to go all the same.

When they had all left, the prince said to the housekeeper:

‘Give me leave to go to the next village—I owe a small bill there, and I want to go and pay it’; and as there was nothing to be done in the palace the housekeeper gave him leave.

When he got beyond the town he took out his golden apple, and when the horse sprang out he swung himself into the saddle. Then he took the silver and the copper apples, and with all these fine soldiers he joined the king’s army.

The king saw them approach with fear in his heart, for he did not know if it might not be an enemy; but the prince rode up, and bowed low before him. ‘I bring your Majesty reinforcements,’ said he.

The king was delighted, and all dread of his enemy at once disappeared. The princesses were there too, and they were very friendly with the prince and begged him to get into their carriage so as to talk to them. But he declined, and remained on horseback, as he did not know at what moment the battle might begin; and whilst they were all talking together the youngest princess, who was also the loveliest, took off her ring, and her sister tore her handkerchief in two pieces, and they gave these gifts to the prince.

Suddenly the enemy came in sight. The king asked whether his army or the prince’s should lead the way; but the prince set off first and with his hussars he fought so bravely that only two of the enemy were left alive, and these two were only spared to act as messengers.

The king was overjoyed and so were his daughters at this brilliant victory. As they drove home they begged the prince to join them, but he would not come, and galloped off with his hussars.

When he got near the town he packed his soldiers and his fine horse all carefully into the apple again, and then strolled into the town. On his return to the palace he was well scolded by the housekeeper for staying away so long.

Well, the whole matter might have ended there; but it so happened that the younger princess had fallen in love with the prince, as he had with her. And as he had no jewels with him, he gave her the copper apple and staff.

One day, as the princesses were talking with their father, the younger one asked him whether it might not have been their servant who had helped him so much. The king was quite angry at the idea; but, to satisfy

her, he ordered the servant's room to be searched. And there, to everyone's surprise, they found the golden ring and the half of the handkerchief. When these were brought to the king he sent for the prince at once and asked if it had been he who had come to their rescue.

'Yes, your Majesty, it was I,' answered the prince.

'But where did you get your army?'

'If you wish to see it, I can show it you outside the city walls.'

And so he did; but first he asked for the copper apple from the younger princess, and when all the soldiers were drawn up there were such numbers that there was barely room for them.

The king gave him his daughter and kingdom as a reward for his aid, and when he heard that the prince was himself a king's son his joy knew no bounds. The prince packed all his soldiers carefully up once more, and they went back into the town.

Not long after there was a grand wedding; perhaps they may all be alive still, but I don't know.

TO YOUR GOOD HEALTH!

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Long, long ago there lived a king who was such a mighty monarch that whenever he sneezed every one in the whole country had to say ‘To your good health!’ Every one said it except the shepherd with the staring eyes, and he would not say it.

The king heard of this and was very angry, and sent for the shepherd to appear before him.

The shepherd came and stood before the throne, where the king sat looking very grand and powerful. But however grand or powerful he might be the shepherd did not feel a bit afraid of him.

‘Say at once, “To my good health!”’ cried the king.

‘To my good health!’ replied the shepherd.

‘To mine—to mine, you rascal, you vagabond!’ stormed the king.

‘To mine, to mine, your Majesty,’ was the answer.

‘But to mine—to my own,’ roared the king, and beat on his breast in a rage.

‘Well, yes; to mine, of course, to my own,’ cried the shepherd, and gently tapped his breast.

The king was beside himself with fury and did not know what to do, when the Lord Chamberlain interfered:

‘Say at once—say this very moment: “To your health, your Majesty”; for if you don’t say it you’ll lose your life, whispered he.

‘No, I won’t say it till I get the princess for my wife,’ was the shepherd’s answer. Now the princess was sitting on a little throne beside the king, her father, and she looked as sweet and lovely as a little golden dove. When she heard what the shepherd said she could not help laughing, for there is no denying the fact that this young shepherd with the staring eyes pleased her very much; indeed he pleased her better than any king’s son she had yet seen.

But the king was not as pleasant as his daughter, and he gave orders to throw the shepherd into the white bear’s pit.

The guards led him away and thrust him into the pit with the white bear, who had had nothing to eat for two days and was very hungry. The door of the pit was hardly closed when the bear rushed at the shepherd; but when it saw his eyes it was so frightened that it was ready to eat itself. It shrank away into a corner and gazed at him from there, and, in spite of being so famished, did not dare to touch him, but sucked its own paws from sheer hunger. The shepherd felt that if he once removed his eyes off the beast he was a dead man, and in order to keep himself awake he made songs and sang them, and so the night went by.

Next morning the Lord Chamberlain came to see the shepherd's bones, and was amazed to find him alive and well. He led him to the king, who fell into a furious passion, and said: 'Well, you have learned what it is to be very near death, and now will you say "To my good health"?'

But the shepherd answered: 'I am not afraid of ten deaths! I will only say it if I may have the princess for my wife.'

'Then go to your death,' cried the king; and ordered him to be thrown into the den with the wild boars. The wild boars had not been fed for a week, and when the shepherd was thrust into their don they rushed at him to tear him to pieces. But the shepherd took a little flute out of the sleeve of his jacket and began to play a merry tune, on which the wild boars first of all shrank shyly away, and then got up on their hind legs and danced gaily. The shepherd would have given anything to be able to laugh, they looked so funny; but he dared not stop playing, for he knew well enough that the moment he stopped they would fall upon him and tear him to pieces. His eyes were of no use to him here, for he could not have stared ten wild boars in the face at once; so he kept on playing, and the wild boars danced very slowly, as if in a minuet, then by degrees he played faster and faster till they could hardly twist and turn quickly enough, and ended by all falling over each other in a heap, quite exhausted and out of breath.

Then the shepherd ventured to laugh at last; and he laughed so long and so loud that when the Lord Chamberlain came early in the morning, expecting to find only his bones, the tears were still running down his cheeks from laughter.

As soon as the king was dressed the shepherd was again brought before him; but he was more angry than ever to think the wild boars had not torn

the man to bits, and he said: ‘Well, you have learned what it feels to be near ten deaths, now say “To my good health!” ’

But the shepherd broke in with, ‘I do not fear a hundred deaths, and I will only say it if I may have the princess for my wife.’

‘Then go to a hundred deaths!’ roared the king, and ordered the shepherd to be thrown down the deep vault of scythes.

The guards dragged him away to a dark dungeon, in the middle of which was a deep well with sharp scythes all round it. At the bottom of the well was a little light by which one could see if anyone was thrown in whether he had fallen to the bottom.

When the shepherd was dragged to the dungeons he begged the guards to leave him alone a little while that he might look down into the pit of scythes; perhaps he might after all make up his mind to say ‘To your good health’ to the king. So the guards left him alone and he stuck up his long stick near the well, hung his cloak round the stick and put his hat on the top. He also hung his knapsack up inside the cloak so that it might seem to have some body within it. When this was done he called out to the guards and said that he had considered the matter but after all he could not make up his mind to say what the king wished. The guards came in, threw the hat and cloak, knapsack and stick all down the well together, watched to see how they put out the light at the bottom and came away, thinking that now there really was an end of the shepherd. But he had hidden in a dark corner and was laughing to himself all the time.

Quite early next morning came the Lord Chamberlain, carrying a lamp and he nearly fell backwards with surprise when he saw the shepherd alive and well. He brought him to the king, whose fury was greater than ever, but who cried:

‘Well, now you have been near a hundred deaths; will you say: “To your good health”?’

But the shepherd only gave the same answer:

‘I won’t say it till the princess is my wife.’

‘Perhaps after all you may do it for less,’ said the king, who saw that there was no chance of making away with the shepherd; and he ordered the state coach to be got ready, then he made the shepherd get in with him and sit beside him, and ordered the coachman to drive to the silver wood.

When they reached it he said: ‘Do you see this silver wood? Well, if you will say, “To your good health,” I will give it to you.’

The shepherd turned hot and cold by turns, but he still persisted:

‘I will not say it till the princess is my wife.’

The king was much vexed; he drove further on till they came to a splendid castle, all of gold, and then he said:

‘Do you see this golden castle? Well, I will give you that too, the silver wood and the golden castle, if only you will say that one thing to me: “To your good health.”’

The shepherd gaped and wondered and was quite dazzled, but he still said:

‘No; I will not say it till I have the princess for my wife.’

This time the king was overwhelmed with grief, and gave orders to drive on to the diamond pond, and there he tried once more.

‘Do you see this diamond pond? I will give you that too, the silver wood and the golden castle and the diamond pond. You shall have them all —all—if you will but say: “To your good health!”’

The shepherd had to shut his staring eyes tight not to be dazzled with the brilliant pond, but still he said:

‘No, no; I will not say it till I have the princess for my wife.’

Then the king saw that all his efforts were useless, and that he might as well give in, so he said:

‘Well, well, it’s all the same to me—I will give you my daughter to wife; but, then, you really and truly must say to me: “To your good health.”’

‘Of course I’ll say it; why should I not say it? It stands to reason that I shall say it then.’

At this the king was more delighted than anyone could have believed. He made it known all through the country that there were to be great rejoicings, as the princess was going to be married. And everyone rejoiced to think that the princess, who had refused so many royal suitors, should have ended by falling in love with the staring-eyed shepherd.

There was such a wedding as had never been seen. Everyone ate and drank and danced. Even the sick were feasted, and quite tiny new-born children had presents given them.

But the greatest merry-making was in the king’s palace; there the best bands played and the best food was cooked; a crowd of people sat down to table, and all was fun and merry-making.

And when the groomsman, according to custom, brought in the great boar’s head on a big dish and placed it before the king so that he might carve it and give everyone a share, the savoury smell was so strong that the king began to sneeze with all his might.

‘To your very good health,’ cried the shepherd before anyone else, and the king was so delighted that he did not regret having given him his daughter.

In time, when the old king died, the shepherd succeeded him. He made a very good king and never expected his people to wish him well against their wills; but, all the same, everyone did wish him well, for they all loved him.

[From Russische Mahrchen.]

THE STORY OF THE SEVEN SIMONS

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Far, far away, beyond all sorts of countries, seas and rivers, there stood a splendid city where lived King Archidej, who was as good as he was rich and handsome. His great army was made up of men ready to obey his slightest wish; he owned forty times forty cities, and in each city he had ten palaces with silver doors, golden roofs, and crystal windows. His council consisted of the twelve wisest men in the country, whose long beards flowed down over their breasts, each of whom was as learned as a whole college. This council always told the king the exact truth.

Now the king had everything to make him happy, but he did not enjoy anything because he could not find a bride to his mind.

One day, as he sat in his palace looking out to sea, a great ship sailed into the harbour and several merchants came on shore. Said the king to himself: ‘These people have travelled far and beheld many lands. I will ask them if they have seen any princess who is as clever and as handsome as I am.’

So he ordered the merchants to be brought before him, and when they came he said: ‘You have travelled much and visited many wonders. I wish to ask you a question, and I beg you to answer truthfully.

‘Have you anywhere seen or heard of the daughter of an emperor, king, or a prince, who is as clever and as handsome as I am, and who would be worthy to be my wife and the queen of my country?’

The merchants considered for some time. At last the eldest of them said: ‘I have heard that across many seas, in the Island of Busan, there is a mighty king, whose daughter, the Princess Helena, is so lovely that she can certainly not be plainer than your Majesty, and so clever that the wisest greybeard cannot guess her riddles.’

‘Is the island far off, and which is the way to it?’

‘It is not near,’ was the answer. ‘The journey would take ten years, and we do not know the way. And even if we did, what use would that be? The princess is no bride for you.’

‘How dare you say so?’ cried the king angrily.

‘Your Majesty must pardon us; but just think for a moment. Should you send an envoy to the island he will take ten years to get there and ten more to return—twenty years in all. Will not the princess have grown old in that time and have lost all her beauty?’

The king reflected gravely. Then he thanked the merchants, gave them leave to trade in his country without paying any duties, and dismissed them.

After they were gone the king remained deep in thought. He felt puzzled and anxious; so he decided to ride into the country to distract his mind, and sent for his huntsmen and falconers. The huntsmen blew their horns, the falconers took their hawks on their wrists, and off they all set out across country till they came to a green hedge. On the other side of the hedge stretched a great field of maize as far as the eye could reach, and the yellow ears swayed to and fro in the gentle breeze like a rippling sea of gold.

The king drew rein and admired the field. ‘Upon my word,’ said he, ‘whoever dug and planted it must be good workmen. If all the fields in my kingdom were as well cared for as this, there would be more bread than my people could eat.’ And he wished to know to whom the field belonged.

Off rushed all his followers at once to do his bidding, and found a nice, tidy farmhouse, in front of which sat seven peasants, lunching on rye bread and drinking water. They wore red shirts bound with gold braid, and were so much alike that one could hardly tell one from another.

The messengers asked: ‘Who owns this field of golden maize?’ And the seven brothers answered: ‘The field is ours.’

‘And who are you?’

‘We are King Archidej’s labourers.’

These answers were repeated to the king, who ordered the brothers to be brought before him at once. On being asked who they were, the eldest said, bowing low:

‘We, King Archidej, are your labourers, children of one father and mother, and we all have the same name, for each of us is called Simon. Our father taught us to be true to our king, and to till the ground, and to be kind to our neighbours. He also taught each of us a different trade which

he thought might be useful to us, and he bade us not neglect our mother earth, which would be sure amply to repay our labour.'

The king was pleased with the honest peasant, and said: 'You have done well, good people, in planting your field, and now you have a golden harvest. But I should like each of you to tell me what special trades your father taught you.'

'My trade, O king!' said the first Simon, 'is not an easy one. If you will give me some workmen and materials I will build you a great white pillar that shall reach far above the clouds.'

'Very good,' replied the king. 'And you, Simon the second, what is your trade?'

'Mine, your Majesty, needs no great cleverness. When my brother has built the pillar I can mount it, and from the top, far above the clouds, I can see what is happening: in every country under the sun.'

'Good,' said the king; 'and Simon the third?'

'My work is very simple, sire. You have many ships built by learned men, with all sorts of new and clever improvements. If you wish it I will build you quite a simple boat—one, two, three, and it's done! But my plain little home-made ship is not grand enough for a king. Where other ships take a year, mine makes the voyage in a day, and where they would require ten years mine will do the distance in a week.'

'Good,' said the king again; 'and what has Simon the fourth learnt?'

'My trade, O king, is really of no importance. Should my brother build you a ship, then let me embark in it. If we should be pursued by an enemy I can seize our boat by the prow and sink it to the bottom of the sea. When the enemy has sailed off, I can draw it up to the top again.'

'That is very clever of you,' answered the king; 'and what does Simon the fifth do?'

'My work, your Majesty, is mere smith's work. Order me to build a smithy and I will make you a cross-bow, but from which neither the eagle in the sky nor the wild beast in the forest is safe. The bolt hits whatever the eye sees.'

'That sounds very useful,' said the king. 'And now, Simon the sixth, tell me your trade.'

'Sire, it is so simple I am almost ashamed to mention it. If my brother hits any creature I catch it quicker than any dog can. If it falls into the

water I pick it up out of the greatest depths, and if it is in a dark forest I can find it even at midnight.'

The king was much pleased with the trades and talk of the six brothers, and said: 'Thank you, good people; your father did well to teach you all these things. Now follow me to the town, as I want to see what you can do. I need such people as you about me; but when harvest time comes I will send you home with royal presents.'

The brothers bowed and said: 'As the king wills.' Suddenly the king remembered that he had not questioned the seventh Simon, so he turned to him and said: 'Why are you silent? What is your handicraft?'

And the seventh Simon answered: 'I have no handicraft, O king; I have learnt nothing. I could not manage it. And if I do know how to do anything it is not what might properly be called a real trade—it is rather a sort of performance; but it is one which no one—not the king himself—must watch me doing, and I doubt whether this performance of mine would please your Majesty.'

'Come, come,' cried the king; 'I will have no excuses, what is this trade?'

'First, sire, give me your royal word that you will not kill me when I have told you. Then you shall hear.'

'So be it, then; I give you my royal word.'

Then the seventh Simon stepped back a little, cleared his throat, and said: 'My trade, King Archidej, is of such a kind that the man who follows it in your kingdom generally loses his life and has no hopes of pardon. There is only one thing I can do really well, and that is—to steal, and to hide the smallest scrap of anything I have stolen. Not the deepest vault, even if its lock were enchanted, could prevent my stealing anything out of it that I wished to have.'

When the king heard this he fell into a passion. 'I will not pardon you, you rascal,' he cried; 'I will shut you up in my deepest dungeon on bread and water till you have forgotten such a trade. Indeed, it would be better to put you to death at once, and I've a good mind to do so.'

'Don't kill me, O king! I am really not as bad as you think. Why, had I chosen, I could have robbed the royal treasury, have bribed your judges to let me off, and built a white marble palace with what was left. But though I

know how to steal I don’t do it. You yourself asked me my trade. If you kill me you will break your royal word.’

‘Very well,’ said the king, ‘I will not kill you. I pardon you. But from this hour you shall be shut up in a dark dungeon. Here, guards! away with him to the prison. But you six Simons follow me and be assured of my royal favour.’

So the six Simons followed the king. The seventh Simon was seized by the guards, who put him in chains and threw him in prison with only bread and water for food. Next day the king gave the first Simon carpenters, masons, smiths and labourers, with great stores of iron, mortar, and the like, and Simon began to build. And he built his great white pillar far, far up into the clouds, as high as the nearest stars; but the other stars were higher still.

Then the second Simon climbed up the pillar and saw and heard all that was going on through the whole world. When he came down he had all sorts of wonderful things to tell. How one king was marching in battle against another, and which was likely to be the victor. How, in another place, great rejoicings were going on, while in a third people were dying of famine. In fact there was not the smallest event going on over the earth that was hidden from him.

Next the third Simon began. He stretched out his arms, once, twice, thrice, and the wonder-ship was ready. At a sign from the king it was launched, and floated proudly and safely like a bird on the waves. Instead of ropes it had wires for rigging, and musicians played on them with fiddle bows and made lovely music. As the ship swam about, the fourth Simon seized the prow with his strong hand, and in a moment it was gone—sunk to the bottom of the sea. An hour passed, and then the ship floated again, drawn up by Simon’s left hand, while in his right he brought a gigantic fish from the depth of the ocean for the royal table.

Whilst this was going on the fifth Simon had built his forge and hammered out his iron, and when the king returned from the harbour the magic cross-bow was made.

His Majesty went out into an open field at once, looked up into the sky and saw, far, far away, an eagle flying up towards the sun and looking like a little speck.

‘Now,’ said the king, ‘if you can shoot that bird I will reward you.’

Simon only smiled; he lifted his cross-bow, took aim, fired, and the eagle fell. As it was falling the sixth Simon ran with a dish, caught the bird before it fell to earth and brought it to the king.

‘Many thanks, my brave lads,’ said the king; ‘I see that each of you is indeed a master of his trade. You shall be richly rewarded. But now rest and have your dinner.’

The six Simons bowed and went to dinner. But they had hardly begun before a messenger came to say that the king wanted to see them. They obeyed at once and found him surrounded by all his court and men of state.

‘Listen, my good fellows,’ cried the king, as soon as he saw them. ‘Hear what my wise counsellors have thought of. As you, Simon the second, can see the whole world from the top of the great pillar, I want you to climb up and to see and hear. For I am told that, far away, across many seas, is the great kingdom of the Island of Busan, and that the daughter of the king is the beautiful Princess Helena.’

Off ran the second Simon and clambered quickly up the pillar. He gazed around, listened on all sides, and then slid down to report to the king.

‘Sire, I have obeyed your orders. Far away I saw the Island of Busan. The king is a mighty monarch, but full of pride, harsh and cruel. He sits on his throne and declares that no prince or king on earth is good enough for his lovely daughter, that he will give her to none, and that if any king asks for her hand he will declare war against him and destroy his kingdom.’

‘Has the king of Busan a great army?’ asked King Archidej; ‘is his country far off?’

‘As far as I could judge,’ replied Simon, ‘it would take you nearly ten years in fair weather to sail there. But if the weather were stormy we might say twelve. I saw the army being reviewed. It is not so very large—a hundred thousand men at arms and a hundred thousand knights. Besides these, he has a strong bodyguard and a good many cross-bowmen. Altogether you may say another hundred thousand, and there is a picked body of heroes who reserve themselves for great occasions requiring particular courage.’

The king sat for some time lost in thought. At last he said to the nobles and courtiers standing round: ‘I am determined to marry the Princess

Helena, but how shall I do it?’

The nobles, courtiers and counsellors said nothing, but tried to hide behind each other. Then the third Simon said:

‘Pardon me, your Majesty, if I offer my advice. You wish to go to the Island of Busan? What can be easier? In my ship you will get there in a week instead of in ten years. But ask your council to advise you what to do when you arrive—in one word, whether you will win the princess peacefully or by war?’

But the wise men were as silent as ever.

The king frowned, and was about to say something sharp, when the Court Fool pushed his way to the front and said: ‘Dear me, what are all you clever people so puzzled about? The matter is quite clear. As it seems it will not take long to reach the island why not send the seventh Simon? He will steal the fair maiden fast enough, and then the king, her father, may consider how he is going to bring his army over here—it will take him ten years to do it!—no less! What do you think of my plan?’

‘What do I think? Why, that your idea is capital, and you shall be rewarded for it. Come, guards, hurry as fast as you can and bring the seventh Simon before me.’

Not many minutes later, Simon the seventh stood before the king, who explained to him what he wished done, and also that to steal for the benefit of his king and country was by no means a wrong thing, though it was very wrong to steal for his own advantage.

The youngest Simon, who looked very pale and hungry, only nodded his head.

‘Come,’ said the king, ‘tell me truly. Do you think you could steal the Princess Helena?’

‘Why should I not steal her, sire? The thing is easy enough. Let my brother’s ship be laden with rich stuffs, brocades, Persian carpets, pearls and jewels. Send me in the ship. Give me my four middle brothers as companions, and keep the two others as hostages.’

When the king heard these words his heart became filled with longing, and he ordered all to be done as Simon wished. Every one ran about to do his bidding; and in next to no time the wonder-ship was laden and ready to start.

The five Simons took leave of the king, went on board, and had no sooner set sail than they were almost out of sight. The ship cut through the waters like a falcon through the air, and just a week after starting sighted the Island of Busan. The coast appeared to be strongly guarded, and from afar the watchman on a high tower called out: ‘Halt and anchor! Who are you? Where do you come from, and what do you want?’

The seventh Simon answered from the ship: ‘We are peaceful people. We come from the country of the great and good King Archidej, and we bring foreign wares—rich brocades, carpets, and costly jewels, which we wish to show to your king and the princess. We desire to trade—to sell, to buy, and to exchange.’

The brothers launched a small boat, took some of their valuable goods with them, rowed to shore and went up to the palace. The princess sat in a rose-red room, and when she saw the brothers coming near she called her nurse and other women, and told them to inquire who and what these people were, and what they wanted.

The seventh Simon answered the nurse: ‘We come from the country of the wise and good King Archidej,’ said he, ‘and we have brought all sorts of goods for sale. We trust the king of this country may condescend to welcome us, and to let his servants take charge of our wares. If he considers them worthy to adorn his followers we shall be content.’

This speech was repeated to the princess, who ordered the brothers to be brought to the red-room at once. They bowed respectfully to her and displayed some splendid velvets and brocades, and opened cases of pearls and precious stones. Such beautiful things had never been seen in the island, and the nurse and waiting women stood bewildered by all the magnificence. They whispered together that they had never beheld anything like it. The princess too saw and wondered, and her eyes could not weary of looking at the lovely things, or her fingers of stroking the rich soft stuffs, and of holding up the sparkling jewels to the light.

‘Fairest of princesses,’ said Simon. ‘Be pleased to order your waiting-maids to accept the silks and velvets, and let your women trim their head-dresses with the jewels; these are no special treasures. But permit me to say that they are as nothing to the many coloured tapestries, the gorgeous stones and ropes of pearls in our ship. We did not like to bring more with us, not knowing what your royal taste might be; but if it seems good to you

to honour our ship with a visit, you might condescend to choose such things as were pleasing in your eyes.’

This polite speech pleased the princess very much. She went to the king and said: ‘Dear father, some merchants have arrived with the most splendid wares. Pray allow me to go to their ship and choose out what I like.’

The king thought and thought, frowned hard and rubbed his ear. At last he gave consent, and ordered out his royal yacht, with 100 cross-bows, 100 knights, and 1,000 soldiers, to escort the Princess Helena.

Off sailed the yacht with the princess and her escort. The brothers Simon came on board to conduct the princess to their ship, and, led by the brothers and followed by her nurse and other women, she crossed the crystal plank from one vessel to another.

The seventh Simon spread out his goods, and had so many curious and interesting tales to tell about them, that the princess forgot everything else in looking and listening, so that she did not know that the fourth Simon had seized the prow of the ship, and that all of a sudden it had vanished from sight, and was racing along in the depths of the sea.

The crew of the royal yacht shouted aloud, the knights stood still with terror, the soldiers were struck dumb and hung their heads. There was nothing to be done but to sail back and tell the king of his loss.

How he wept and stormed! ‘Oh, light of my eyes,’ he sobbed; ‘I am indeed punished for my pride. I thought no one good enough to be your husband, and now you are lost in the depths of the sea, and have left me alone! As for all of you who saw this thing—away with you! Let them be put in irons and lock them up in prison, whilst I think how I can best put them to death!’

Whilst the King of Busan was raging and lamenting in this fashion, Simon’s ship was swimming like any fish under the sea, and when the island was well out of sight he brought it up to the surface again. At that moment the princess recollected herself. ‘Nurse,’ said she, ‘we have been gazing at these wonders only too long. I hope my father won’t be vexed at our delay.’

She tore herself away and stepped on deck. Neither the yacht nor the island was in sight! Helena wrung her hands and beat her breast. Then she changed herself into a white swan and flew off. But the fifth Simon seized

his bow and shot the swan, and the sixth Simon did not let it fall into the water but caught it in the ship, and the swan turned into a silver fish, but Simon lost no time and caught the fish, when, quick as thought, the fish turned into a black mouse and ran about the ship. It darted towards a hole, but before it could reach it Simon sprang upon it more swiftly than any cat, and then the little mouse turned once more into the beautiful Princess Helena.

Early one morning King Archidej sat thoughtfully at his window gazing out to sea. His heart was sad and he would neither eat nor drink. His thoughts were full of the Princess Helena, who was as lovely as a dream. Is that a white gull he sees flying towards the shore, or is it a sail? No, it is no gull, it is the wonder-ship flying along with billowing sails. Its flags wave, the fiddlers play on the wire rigging, the anchor is thrown out and the crystal plank laid from the ship to the pier. The lovely Helena steps across the plank. She shines like the sun, and the stars of heaven seem to sparkle in her eyes.

Up sprang King Archidej in haste: ‘Hurry, hurry,’ he cried. ‘Let us hasten to meet her! Let the bugles sound and the joy bells be rung!’

And the whole Court swarmed with courtiers and servants. Golden carpets were laid down and the great gates thrown open to welcome the princess.

King Archidej went out himself, took her by the hand and led her into the royal apartments.

‘Madam,’ said he, ‘the fame of your beauty had reached me, but I had not dared to expect such loveliness. Still I will not keep you here against your will. If you wish it, the wonder-ship shall take you back to your father and your own country; but if you will consent to stay here, then reign over me and my country as our queen.’

What more is there to tell? It is not hard to guess that the princess listened to the king’s wooing, and their betrothal took place with great pomp and rejoicings.

The brothers Simon were sent again to the Island of Busan with a letter to the king from his daughter to invite him to their wedding. And the wonder-ship arrived at the Island of Busan just as all the knights and soldiers who had escorted the princess were being led out to execution.

Then the seventh Simon cried out from the ship: ‘Stop! stop! I bring a letter from the Princess Helena!’

The King of Busan read the letter over and over again, and ordered the knights and soldiers to be set free. He entertained King Archidej’s ambassadors hospitably, and sent his blessing to his daughter, but he could not be brought to attend the wedding.

When the wonder-ship got home King Archidej and Princess Helena were enchanted with the news it brought.

The king sent for the seven Simons. ‘A thousand thanks to you, my brave fellows,’ he cried. ‘Take what gold, silver, and precious stones you will out of my treasury. Tell me if there is anything else you wish for and I will give it you, my good friends. Do you wish to be made nobles, or to govern towns? Only speak.’

Then the eldest Simon bowed and said: ‘We are plain folk, your Majesty, and understand simple things best. What figures should we cut as nobles or governors? Nor do we desire gold. We have our fields which give us food, and as much money as we need. If you wish to reward us then grant that our land may be free of taxes, and of your goodness pardon the seventh Simon. He is not the first who has been a thief by trade and he will certainly not be the last.’

‘So be it,’ said the king; ‘your land shall be free of all taxes, and Simon the seventh is pardoned.’

Then the king gave each brother a goblet of wine and invited them to the wedding feast. And what a feast that was!

[From Ungarischen Mahrchen.]

THE LANGUAGE OF BEASTS

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Once upon a time a man had a shepherd who served him many years faithfully and honestly. One day, whilst herding his flock, this shepherd heard a hissing sound, coming out of the forest near by, which he could not account for. So he went into the wood in the direction of the noise to try to discover the cause. When he approached the place he found that the dry grass and leaves were on fire, and on a tree, surrounded by flames, a snake was coiled, hissing with terror.

The shepherd stood wondering how the poor snake could escape, for the wind was blowing the flames that way, and soon that tree would be burning like the rest. Suddenly the snake cried: ‘O shepherd! for the love of heaven save me from this fire!’

Then the shepherd stretched his staff out over the flames and the snake wound itself round the staff and up to his hand, and from his hand it crept up his arm, and twined itself about his neck. The shepherd trembled with fright, expecting every instant to be stung to death, and said: ‘What an unlucky man I am! Did I rescue you only to be destroyed myself?’ But the snake answered: ‘Have no fear; only carry me home to my father who is the King of the Snakes.’ The shepherd, however, was much too frightened to listen, and said that he could not go away and leave his flock alone; but the snake said: ‘You need not be afraid to leave your flock, no evil shall befall them; but make all the haste you can.’

So he set off through the wood carrying the snake, and after a time he came to a great gateway, made entirely of snakes intertwined one with another. The shepherd stood still with surprise, but the snake round his neck whistled, and immediately all the arch unwound itself.

‘When we are come to my father’s house,’ said his own snake to him, ‘he will reward you with anything you like to ask—silver, gold, jewels, or whatever on this earth is most precious; but take none of all these things, ask rather to understand the language of beasts. He will refuse it to you a long time, but in the end he will grant it to you.’

Soon after that they arrived at the house of the King of the Snakes, who burst into tears of joy at the sight of his daughter, as he had given her up for dead. ‘Where have you been all this time?’ he asked, directly he could speak, and she told him that she had been caught in a forest fire, and had been rescued from the flames by the shepherd. The King of the Snakes, then turning to the shepherd, said to him: ‘What reward will you choose for saving my child?’

‘Make me to know the language of beasts,’ answered the shepherd, ‘that is all I desire.’

The king replied: ‘Such knowledge would be of no benefit to you, for if I granted it to you and you told any one of it, you would immediately die; ask me rather for whatever else you would most like to possess, and it shall be yours.’

But the shepherd answered him: ‘Sir, if you wish to reward me for saving your daughter, grant me, I pray you, to know the language of beasts. I desire nothing else’; and he turned as if to depart.

Then the king called him back, saying: ‘If nothing else will satisfy you, open your mouth.’ The man obeyed, and the king spat into it, and said: ‘Now spit into my mouth.’ The shepherd did as he was told, then the King of the Snakes spat again into the shepherd’s mouth. When they had spat into each other’s mouths three times, the king said:

‘Now you know the language of beasts, go in peace; but, if you value your life, beware lest you tell any one of it, else you will immediately die.’

So the shepherd set out for home, and on his way through the wood he heard and understood all that was said by the birds, and by every living creature. When he got back to his sheep he found the flock grazing peacefully, and as he was very tired he laid himself down by them to rest a little. Hardly had he done so when two ravens flew down and perched on a tree near by, and began to talk to each other in their own language: ‘If that shepherd only knew that there is a vault full of gold and silver beneath where that lamb is lying, what would he not do?’ When the shepherd heard these words he went straight to his master and told him, and the master at once took a waggon, and broke open the door of the vault, and they carried off the treasure. But instead of keeping it for himself, the master, who was an honourable man, gave it all up to the shepherd, saying: ‘Take it, it is yours. The gods have given it to you.’ So the shepherd took the treasure

and built himself a house. He married a wife, and they lived in great peace and happiness, and he was acknowledged to be the richest man, not only of his native village, but of all the country-side. He had flocks of sheep, and cattle, and horses without end, as well as beautiful clothes and jewels.

One day, just before Christmas, he said to his wife: ‘Prepare everything for a great feast, to-morrow we will take things with us to the farm that the shepherds there may make merry.’ The wife obeyed, and all was prepared as he desired. Next day they both went to the farm, and in the evening the master said to the shepherds: ‘Now come, all of you, eat, drink, and make merry. I will watch the flocks myself to-night in your stead.’ Then he went out to spend the night with the flocks.

When midnight struck the wolves howled and the dogs barked, and the wolves spoke in their own tongue, saying:

‘Shall we come in and work havoc, and you too shall eat flesh?’ And the dogs answered in their tongue: ‘Come in, and for once we shall have enough to eat.’

Now amongst the dogs there was one so old that he had only two teeth left in his head, and he spoke to the wolves, saying: ‘So long as I have my two teeth still in my head, I will let no harm be done to my master.’

All this the master heard and understood, and as soon as morning dawned he ordered all the dogs to be killed excepting the old dog. The farm servants wondered at this order, and exclaimed: ‘But surely, sir, that would be a pity?’

The master answered: ‘Do as I bid you’; and made ready to return home with his wife, and they mounted their horses, her steed being a mare. As they went on their way, it happened that the husband rode on ahead, while the wife was a little way behind. The husband’s horse, seeing this, neighed, and said to the mare: ‘Come along, make haste; why are you so slow?’ And the mare answered: ‘It is very easy for you, you carry only your master, who is a thin man, but I carry my mistress, who is so fat that she weights as much as three.’ When the husband heard that he looked back and laughed, which the wife perceiving, she urged on the mare till she caught up with her husband, and asked him why he laughed. ‘For nothing at all,’ he answered; ‘just because it came into my head.’ She would not be satisfied with this answer, and urged him more and more to tell her why he had laughed. But he controlled himself and said: ‘Let me

be, wife; what ails you? I do not know myself why I laughed.' But the more he put her off, the more she tormented him to tell her the cause of his laughter. At length he said to her: 'Know, then, that if I tell it you I shall immediately and surely die.' But even this did not quiet her; she only besought him the more to tell her.

Meanwhile they had reached home, and before getting down from his horse the man called for a coffin to be brought; and when it was there he placed it in front of the house, and said to his wife:

'See, I will lay myself down in this coffin, and will then tell you why I laughed, for as soon as I have told you I shall surely die.' So he lay down in the coffin, and while he took a last look around him, his old dog came out from the farm and sat down by him, and whined. When the master saw this, he called to his wife: 'Bring a piece of bread to give to the dog.' The wife brought some bread and threw it to the dog, but he would not look at it. Then the farm cock came and pecked at the bread; but the dog said to it: 'Wretched glutton, you can eat like that when you see that your master is dying?' The cock answered: 'Let him die, if he is so stupid. I have a hundred wives, which I call together when I find a grain of corn, and as soon as they are there I swallow it myself; should one of them dare to be angry, I would give her a lesson with my beak. He has only one wife, and he cannot keep her in order.'

As soon as the man understood this, he got up out of the coffin, seized a stick, and called his wife into the room, saying: 'Come, and I will tell you what you so much want to know'; and then he began to beat her with the stick, saying with each blow: 'It is that, wife, it is that!' And in this way he taught her never again to ask why he had laughed.

THE BOY WHO COULD KEEP A SECRET

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Once upon a time there lived a poor widow who had one little boy. At first sight you would not have thought that he was different from a thousand other little boys; but then you noticed that by his side hung the scabbard of a sword, and as the boy grew bigger the scabbard grew bigger too. The sword which belonged to the scabbard was found by the little boy sticking out of the ground in the garden, and every day he pulled it up to see if it would go into the scabbard. But though it was plainly becoming longer and longer, it was some time before the two would fit.

However, there came a day at last when it slipped in quite easily. The child was so delighted that he could hardly believe his eyes, so he tried it seven times, and each time it slipped in more easily than before. But pleased though the boy was, he determined not to tell anyone about it, particularly not his mother, who never could keep anything from her neighbours.

Still, in spite of his resolutions, he could not hide altogether that something had happened, and when he went in to breakfast his mother asked him what was the matter.

‘Oh, mother, I had such a nice dream last night,’ said he; ‘but I can’t tell it to anybody.’

‘You can tell it to me,’ she answered. ‘It must have been a nice dream, or you wouldn’t look so happy.’

‘No, mother; I can’t tell it to anybody,’ returned the boy, ‘till it comes true.’

‘I want to know what it was, and know it I will,’ cried she, ‘and I will beat you till you tell me.’

But it was no use, neither words nor blows would get the secret out of the boy; and when her arm was quite tired and she had to leave off, the child, sore and aching, ran into the garden and knelt weeping beside his little sword. It was working round and round in its hole all by itself, and if

anyone except the boy had tried to catch hold of it, he would have been badly cut. But the moment he stretched out his hand it stopped and slid quietly into the scabbard.

For a long time the child sat sobbing, and the noise was heard by the king as he was driving by. ‘Go and see who it is that is crying so,’ said he to one of his servants, and the man went. In a few minutes he returned saying: ‘Your Majesty, it is a little boy who is kneeling there sobbing because his mother has beaten him.’

‘Bring him to me at once,’ commanded the monarch, ‘and tell him that it is the king who sends for him, and that he has never cried in all his life and cannot bear anyone else to do so.’ On receiving this message the boy dried his tears and went with the servant to the royal carriage. ‘Will you be my son?’ asked the king.

‘Yes, if my mother will let me,’ answered the boy. And the king bade the servant go back to the mother and say that if she would give her boy to him, he should live in the palace and marry his prettiest daughter as soon as he was a man.

The widow’s anger now turned into joy, and she came running to the splendid coach and kissed the king’s hand. ‘I hope you will be more obedient to his Majesty than you were to me,’ she said; and the boy shrank away half-frightened. But when she had gone back to her cottage, he asked the king if he might fetch something that he had left in the garden, and when he was given permission, he pulled up his little sword, which he slid into the scabbard.

Then he climbed into the coach and was driven away.

After they had gone some distance the king said: ‘Why were you crying so bitterly in the garden just now?’

‘Because my mother had been beating me,’ replied the boy.

‘And what did she do that for?’ asked the king again.

‘Because I would not tell her my dream.’

‘And why wouldn’t you tell it to her?’

‘Because I will never tell it to anyone till it comes true,’ answered the boy.

‘And won’t you tell it to me either?’ asked the king in surprise.

‘No, not even to you, your Majesty,’ replied he.

‘Oh, I am sure you will when we get home,’ said the king smiling, and he talked to him about other things till they came to the palace.

‘I have brought you such a nice present,’ he said to his daughters, and as the boy was very pretty they were delighted to have him and gave him all their best toys.

‘You must not spoil him,’ observed the king one day, when he had been watching them playing together. He has a secret which he won’t tell to anyone.’

‘He will tell me,’ answered the eldest princess; but the boy only shook his head.

‘He will tell me,’ said the second girl.

‘Not I,’ replied the boy.

‘He will tell me,’ cried the youngest, who was the prettiest too.

‘I will tell nobody till it comes true,’ said the boy, as he had said before; ‘and I will beat anybody who asks me.’

The king was very sorry when he heard this, for he loved the boy dearly; but he thought it would never do to keep anyone near him who would not do as he was bid. So he commanded his servants to take him away and not to let him enter the palace again until he had come to his right senses.

The sword clanked loudly as the boy was led away, but the child said nothing, though he was very unhappy at being treated so badly when he had done nothing. However, the servants were very kind to him, and their children brought him fruit and all sorts of nice things, and he soon grew merry again, and lived amongst them for many years till his seventeenth birthday.

Meanwhile the two eldest princesses had become women, and had married two powerful kings who ruled over great countries across the sea. The youngest one was old enough to be married too, but she was very particular, and turned up her nose at all the young princes who had sought her hand.

One day she was sitting in the palace feeling rather dull and lonely, and suddenly she began to wonder what the servants were doing, and whether it was not more amusing down in their quarters. The king was at his council and the queen was ill in bed, so there was no one to stop the princess, and she hastily ran across the gardens to the houses where the

servants lived. Outside she noticed a youth who was handsomer than any prince she had ever seen, and in a moment she knew him to be the little boy she had once played with.

‘Tell me your secret and I will marry you,’ she said to him; but the boy only gave her the beating he had promised her long ago, when she asked him the same question. The girl was very angry, besides being hurt, and ran home to complain to her father.

‘If he had a thousand souls, I would kill them all,’ swore the king.

That very day a gallows was built outside the town, and all the people crowded round to see the execution of the young man who had dared to beat the king’s daughter. The prisoner, with his hands tied behind his back, was brought out by the hangman, and amidst dead silence his sentence was being read by the judge when suddenly the sword clanked against his side. Instantly a great noise was heard and a golden coach rumbled over the stones, with a white flag waving out of the window. It stopped underneath the gallows, and from it stepped the king of the Magyars, who begged that the life of the boy might be spared.

‘Sir, he has beaten my daughter, who only asked him to tell her his secret. I cannot pardon that,’ answered the princess’s father.

‘Give him to me, I’m sure he will tell me the secret; or, if not, I have a daughter who is like the Morning Star, and he is sure to tell it to her.’

The sword clanked for the third time, and the king said angrily: ‘Well, if you want him so much you can have him; only never let me see his face again.’ And he made a sign to the hangman. The bandage was removed from the young man’s eyes, and the cords from his wrists, and he took his seat in the golden coach beside the king of the Magyars. Then the coachman whipped up his horses, and they set out for Buda.

The king talked very pleasantly for a few miles, and when he thought that his new companion was quite at ease with him, he asked him what was the secret which had brought him into such trouble. ‘That I cannot tell you,’ answered the youth, ‘until it comes true.’

‘You will tell my daughter,’ said the king, smiling.

‘I will tell nobody,’ replied the youth, and as he spoke the sword clanked loudly. The king said no more, but trusted to his daughter’s beauty to get the secret from him.

The journey to Buda was long, and it was several days before they arrived there. The beautiful princess happened to be picking roses in the garden, when her father's coach drove up.

'Oh, what a handsome youth! Have you brought him from fairyland?' cried she, when they all stood upon the marble steps in front of the castle.

'I have brought him from the gallows,' answered the king; rather vexed at his daughter's words, as never before had she consented to speak to any man.

'I don't care where you brought him from,' said the spoilt girl. 'I will marry him and nobody else, and we will live together till we die.'

'You will tell another tale,' replied the king, 'when you ask him his secret. After all he is no better than a servant.'

'That is nothing to me,' said the princess, 'for I love him. He will tell his secret to me, and will find a place in the middle of my heart.'

But the king shook his head, and gave orders that the lad was to be lodged in the summer-house.

One day, about a week later, the princess put on her finest dress, and went to pay him a visit. She looked so beautiful that, at the sight of her, the book dropped from his hand, and he stood up speechless. 'Tell me,' she said, coaxingly, 'what is this wonderful secret? Just whisper it in my ear, and I will give you a kiss.'

'My angel,' he answered, 'be wise, and ask no questions, if you wish to get safely back to your father's palace; I have kept my secret all these years, and do not mean to tell it now.'

However, the girl would not listen, and went on pressing him, till at last he slapped her face so hard that her nose bled. She shrieked with pain and rage, and ran screaming back to the palace, where her father was waiting to hear if she had succeeded. 'I will starve you to death, you son of a dragon,' cried he, when he saw her dress streaming with blood; and he ordered all the masons and bricklayers in the town to come before him.

'Build me a tower as fast as you can,' he said, 'and see that there is room for a stool and a small table, and for nothing else. The men set to work, and in two hours the tower was built, and they proceeded to the palace to inform the king that his commands were fulfilled. On the way they met the princess, who began to talk to one of the masons, and when the rest were out of hearing she asked if he could manage to make a hole

in the tower, which nobody could see, large enough for a bottle of wine and some food to pass through.

‘To be sure I can,’ said the mason, turning back, and in a few minutes the hole was bored.

At sunset a large crowd assembled to watch the youth being led to the tower, and after his misdeeds had been proclaimed he was solemnly walled up. But every morning the princess passed him in food through the hole, and every third day the king sent his secretary to climb up a ladder and look down through a little window to see if he was dead. But the secretary always brought back the report that he was fat and rosy.

‘There is some magic about this,’ said the king.

This state of affairs lasted some time, till one day a messenger arrived from the Sultan bearing a letter for the king, and also three canes. ‘My master bids me say,’ said the messenger, bowing low, ‘that if you cannot tell him which of these three canes grows nearest the root, which in the middle, and which at the top, he will declare war against you.

The king was very much frightened when he heard this, and though he took the canes and examined them closely, he could see no difference between them. He looked so sad that his daughter noticed it, and inquired the reason.

‘Alas! my daughter,’ he answered, ‘how can I help being sad? The Sultan has sent me three canes, and says that if I cannot tell him which of them grows near the root, which in the middle, and which at the top, he will make war upon me. And you know that his army is far greater than mine.’

‘Oh, do not despair, my father,’ said she. ‘We shall be sure to find out the answer’; and she ran away to the tower, and told the young man what had occurred.

‘Go to bed as usual,’ replied he, ‘and when you wake, tell your father that you have dreamed that the canes must be placed in warm water. After a little while one will sink to the bottom; that is the one that grows nearest the root. The one which neither sinks nor comes to the surface is the cane that is cut from the middle; and the one that floats is from the top.’

So, the next morning, the princess told her father of her dream, and by her advice he cut notches in each of the canes when he took them out of the water, so that he might make no mistake when he handed them back to

the messenger. The Sultan could not imagine how he had found out, but he did not declare war.

The following year the Sultan again wanted to pick a quarrel with the king of the Magyars, so he sent another messenger to him with three foals, begging him to say which of the animals was born in the morning, which at noon, and which in the evening. If an answer was not ready in three days, war would be declared at once. The king's heart sank when he read the letter. He could not expect his daughter to be lucky enough to dream rightly a second time, and as a plague had been raging through the country, and had carried off many of his soldiers, his army was even weaker than before. At this thought his face became so gloomy that his daughter noticed it, and inquired what was the matter.

'I have had another letter from the Sultan,' replied the king, 'and he says that if I cannot tell him which of three foals was born in the morning, which at noon, and which in the evening, he will declare war at once.'

'Oh, don't be cast down,' said she, 'something is sure to happen'; and she ran down to the tower to consult the youth.

'Go home, idol of my heart, and when night comes, pretend to scream out in your sleep, so that your father hears you. Then tell him that you have dreamt that he was just being carried off by the Turks because he could not answer the question about the foals, when the lad whom he had shut up in the tower ran up and told them which was foaled in the morning, which at noon, and which in the evening.'

So the princess did exactly as the youth had bidden her; and no sooner had she spoken than the king ordered the tower to be pulled down, and the prisoner brought before him.

'I did not think that you could have lived so long without food,' said he, 'and as you have had plenty of time to repent your wicked conduct, I will grant you pardon, on condition that you help me in a sore strait. Read this letter from the Sultan; you will see that if I fail to answer his question about the foals, a dreadful war will be the result.'

The youth took the letter and read it through. 'Yes, I can help you,' replied he; 'but first you must bring me three troughs, all exactly alike. Into one you must put oats, into another wheat, and into the third barley. The foal which eats the oats is that which was foaled in the morning; the foal which eats the wheat is that which was foaled at noon; and the foal

which eats the barley is that which was foaled at night.' The king followed the youth's directions, and, marking the foals, sent them back to Turkey, and there was no war that year.

Now the Sultan was very angry that both his plots to get possession of Hungary had been such total failures, and he sent for his aunt, who was a witch, to consult her as to what he should do next.

'It is not the king who has answered your questions,' observed the aunt, when he had told his story. 'He is far too stupid ever to have done that! The person who has found out the puzzle is the son of a poor woman, who, if he lives, will become King of Hungary. Therefore, if you want the crown yourself, you must get him here and kill him.'

After this conversation another letter was written to the Court of Hungary, saying that if the youth, now in the palace, was not sent to Turkey within three days, a large army would cross the border. The king's heart was sorrowful as he read, for he was grateful to the lad for what he had done to help him; but the boy only laughed, and bade the king fear nothing, but to search the town instantly for two youths just like each other, and he would paint himself a mask that was just like them. And the sword at his side clanked loudly.

After a long search twin brothers were found, so exactly resembling each other that even their own mother could not tell the difference. The youth painted a mask that was the precise copy of them, and when he had put it on, no one would have known one boy from the other. They set out at once for the Sultan's palace, and when they reached it, they were taken straight into his presence. He made a sign for them to come near; they all bowed low in greeting. He asked them about their journey; they answered his questions all together, and in the same words. If one sat down to supper, the others sat down at the same instant. When one got up, the others got up too, as if there had been only one body between them. The Sultan could not detect any difference between them, and he told his aunt that he would not be so cruel as to kill all three.

'Well, you will see a difference to-morrow,' replied the witch, 'for one will have a cut on his sleeve. That is the youth you must kill.' And one hour before midnight, when witches are invisible, she glided into the room where all three lads were sleeping in the same bed. She took out a pair of scissors and cut a small piece out of the boy's coat-sleeve which was

hanging on the wall, and then crept silently from the room. But in the morning the youth saw the slit, and he marked the sleeves of his two companions in the same way, and all three went down to breakfast with the Sultan. The old witch was standing in the window and pretended not to see them; but all witches have eyes in the backs of their heads, and she knew at once that not one sleeve but three were cut, and they were all as alike as before. After breakfast, the Sultan, who was getting tired of the whole affair and wanted to be alone to invent some other plan, told them they might return home. So, bowing low with one accord, they went.

The princess welcomed the boy back joyfully, but the poor youth was not allowed to rest long in peace, for one day a fresh letter arrived from the Sultan, saying that he had discovered that the young man was a very dangerous person, and that he must be sent to Turkey at once, and alone. The girl burst into tears when the boy told her what was in the letter which her father had bade her to carry to him. ‘Do not weep, love of my heart,’ said the boy, ‘all will be well. I will start at sunrise to-morrow.’

So next morning at sunrise the youth set forth, and in a few days he reached the Sultan’s palace. The old witch was waiting for him at the gate, and whispered as he passed: ‘This is the last time you will ever enter it.’ But the sword clanked, and the lad did not even look at her. As he crossed the threshold fifteen armed Turks barred his way, with the Sultan at their head. Instantly the sword darted forth and cut off the heads of everyone but the Sultan, and then went quietly back to its scabbard. The witch, who was looking on, saw that as long as the youth had possession of the sword, all her schemes would be in vain, and tried to steal the sword in the night, but it only jumped out of its scabbard and sliced off her nose, which was of iron. And in the morning, when the Sultan brought a great army to capture the lad and deprive him of his sword, they were all cut to pieces, while he remained without a scratch.

Meanwhile the princess was in despair because the days slipped by, and the young man did not return, and she never rested until her father let her lead some troops against the Sultan. She rode proudly before them, dressed in uniform; but they had not left the town more than a mile behind them, when they met the lad and his little sword. When he told them what he had done they shouted for joy, and carried him back in triumph to the palace; and the king declared that as the youth had shown himself worthy

to become his son-in-law, he should marry the princess and succeed to the throne at once, as he himself was getting old, and the cares of government were too much for him. But the young man said he must first go and see his mother, and the king sent him in state, with a troop of soldiers as his bodyguard.

The old woman was quite frightened at seeing such an array draw up before her little house, and still more surprised when a handsome young man, whom she did not know, dismounted and kissed her hand, saying: ‘Now, dear mother, you shall hear my secret at last! I dreamed that I should become King of Hungary, and my dream has come true. When I was a child, and you begged me to tell you, I had to keep silence, or the Magyar king would have killed me. And if you had not beaten me nothing would have happened that has happened, and I should not now be King of Hungary.’

[From the Folk Tales of the Magyars.]

THE PRINCE AND THE DRAGON

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Once upon a time there lived an emperor who had three sons. They were all fine young men, and fond of hunting, and scarcely a day passed without one or other of them going out to look for game.

One morning the eldest of the three princes mounted his horse and set out for a neighbouring forest, where wild animals of all sorts were to be found. He had not long left the castle, when a hare sprang out of a thicket and dashed across the road in front. The young man gave chase at once, and pursued it over hill and dale, till at last the hare took refuge in a mill which was standing by the side of a river. The prince followed and entered the mill, but stopped in terror by the door, for, instead of a hare, before him stood a dragon, breathing fire and flame. At this fearful sight the prince turned to fly, but a fiery tongue coiled round his waist, and drew him into the dragon's mouth, and he was seen no more.

A week passed away, and when the prince never came back everyone in the town began to grow uneasy. At last his next brother told the emperor that he likewise would go out to hunt, and that perhaps he would find some clue as to his brother's disappearance. But hardly had the castle gates closed on the prince than the hare sprang out of the bushes as before, and led the huntsman up hill and down dale, till they reached the mill. Into this the hare flew with the prince at his heels, when, lo! instead of the hare, there stood a dragon breathing fire and flame; and out shot a fiery tongue which coiled round the prince's waist, and lifted him straight into the dragon's mouth, and he was seen no more.

Days went by, and the emperor waited and waited for the sons who never came, and could not sleep at night for wondering where they were and what had become of them. His youngest son wished to go in search of his brothers, but for long the emperor refused to listen to him, lest he should lose him also. But the prince prayed so hard for leave to make the search, and promised so often that he would be very cautious and careful,

that at length the emperor gave him permission, and ordered the best horse in the stables to be saddled for him.

Full of hope the young prince started on his way, but no sooner was he outside the city walls than a hare sprang out of the bushes and ran before him, till they reached the mill. As before, the animal dashed in through the open door, but this time he was not followed by the prince. Wiser than his brothers, the young man turned away, saying to himself: ‘There are as good hares in the forest as any that have come out of it, and when I have caught them, I can come back and look for you.’

For many hours he rode up and down the mountain, but saw nothing, and at last, tired of waiting, he went back to the mill. Here he found an old woman sitting, whom he greeted pleasantly.

‘Good morning to you, little mother,’ he said; and the old woman answered: ‘Good morning, my son.’

‘Tell me, little mother,’ went on the prince, ‘where shall I find my hare?’

‘My son,’ replied the old woman, ‘that was no hare, but a dragon who has led many men hither, and then has eaten them all.’ At these words the prince’s heart grew heavy, and he cried, ‘Then my brothers must have come here, and have been eaten by the dragon!’

‘You have guessed right,’ answered the old woman; ‘and I can give you no better counsel than to go home at once, before the same fate overtakes you.’

‘Will you not come with me out of this dreadful place?’ said the young man.

‘He took me prisoner, too,’ answered she, ‘and I cannot shake off his chains.’

‘Then listen to me,’ cried the prince. ‘When the dragon comes back, ask him where he always goes when he leaves here, and what makes him so strong; and when you have coaxed the secret from him, tell me the next time I come.’

So the prince went home, and the old woman remained in the mill, and as soon as the dragon returned she said to him:

‘Where have you been all this time—you must have travelled far?’

‘Yes, little mother, I have indeed travelled far.’ answered he. Then the old woman began to flatter him, and to praise his cleverness; and when she

thought she had got him into a good temper, she said: ‘I have wondered so often where you get your strength from; I do wish you would tell me. I would stoop and kiss the place out of pure love!’ The dragon laughed at this, and answered:

‘In the hearthstone yonder lies the secret of my strength.’

Then the old woman jumped up and kissed the hearth; whereat the dragon laughed the more, and said:

‘You foolish creature! I was only jesting. It is not in the hearthstone, but in that tall tree that lies the secret of my strength.’ Then the old woman jumped up again and put her arms round the tree, and kissed it heartily. Loudly laughed the dragon when he saw what she was doing.

‘Old fool,’ he cried, as soon as he could speak, ‘did you really believe that my strength came from that tree?’

‘Where is it then?’ asked the old woman, rather crossly, for she did not like being made fun of.

‘My strength,’ replied the dragon, ‘lies far away; so far that you could never reach it. Far, far from here is a kingdom, and by its capital city is a lake, and in the lake is a dragon, and inside the dragon is a wild boar, and inside the wild boar is a pigeon, and inside the pigeon a sparrow, and inside the sparrow is my strength.’ And when the old woman heard this, she thought it was no use flattering him any longer, for never, never, could she take his strength from him.

The following morning, when the dragon had left the mill, the prince came back, and the old woman told him all that the creature had said. He listened in silence, and then returned to the castle, where he put on a suit of shepherd’s clothes, and taking a staff in his hand, he went forth to seek a place as tender of sheep.

For some time he wandered from village to village and from town to town, till he came at length to a large city in a distant kingdom, surrounded on three sides by a great lake, which happened to be the very lake in which the dragon lived. As was his custom, he stopped everybody whom he met in the streets that looked likely to want a shepherd and begged them to engage him, but they all seemed to have shepherds of their own, or else not to need any. The prince was beginning to lose heart, when a man who had overheard his question turned round and said that he had

better go and ask the emperor, as he was in search of some one to see after his flocks.

‘Will you take care of my sheep?’ said the emperor, when the young man knelt before him.

‘Most willingly, your Majesty,’ answered the young man, and he listened obediently while the emperor told him what he was to do.

‘Outside the city walls,’ went on the emperor, ‘you will find a large lake, and by its banks lie the richest meadows in my kingdom. When you are leading out your flocks to pasture, they will all run straight to these meadows, and none that have gone there have ever been known to come back. Take heed, therefore, my son, not to suffer your sheep to go where they will, but drive them to any spot that you think best.’

With a low bow the prince thanked the emperor for his warning, and promised to do his best to keep the sheep safe. Then he left the palace and went to the market-place, where he bought two greyhounds, a hawk, and a set of pipes; after that he took the sheep out to pasture. The instant the animals caught sight of the lake lying before them, they trotted off as fast as their legs would go to the green meadows lying round it. The prince did not try to stop them; he only placed his hawk on the branch of a tree, laid his pipes on the grass, and bade the greyhounds sit still; then, rolling up his sleeves and trousers, he waded into the water crying as he did so: ‘Dragon! dragon! if you are not a coward, come out and fight with me!’ And a voice answered from the depths of the lake:

‘I am waiting for you, O prince’; and the next minute the dragon reared himself out of the water, huge and horrible to see. The prince sprang upon him and they grappled with each other and fought together till the sun was high, and it was noonday. Then the dragon gasped:

‘O prince, let me dip my burning head once into the lake, and I will hurl you up to the top of the sky.’ But the prince answered, ‘Oh, ho! my good dragon, do not crow too soon! If the emperor’s daughter were only here, and would kiss me on the forehead, I would throw you up higher still!’ And suddenly the dragon’s hold loosened, and he fell back into the lake.

As soon as it was evening, the prince washed away all signs of the fight, took his hawk upon his shoulder, and his pipes under his arm, and with his greyhounds in front and his flock following after him he set out

for the city. As they all passed through the streets the people stared in wonder, for never before had any flock returned from the lake.

The next morning he rose early, and led his sheep down the road to the lake. This time, however, the emperor sent two men on horseback to ride behind him, with orders to watch the prince all day long. The horsemen kept the prince and his sheep in sight, without being seen themselves. As soon as they beheld the sheep running towards the meadows, they turned aside up a steep hill, which overhung the lake. When the shepherd reached the place he laid, as before, his pipes on the grass and bade the greyhounds sit beside them, while the hawk he perched on the branch of the tree. Then he rolled up his trousers and his sleeves, and waded into the water crying:

'Dragon! dragon! if you are not a coward, come out and fight with me!' And the dragon answered:

'I am waiting for you, O prince,' and the next minute he reared himself out of the water, huge and horrible to see. Again they clasped each other tight round the body and fought till it was noon, and when the sun was at its hottest, the dragon gasped:

'O prince, let me dip my burning head once in the lake, and I will hurl you up to the top of the sky.' But the prince answered:

'Oh, ho! my good dragon, do not crow too soon! If the emperor's daughter were only here, and would kiss me on the forehead, I would throw you up higher still!' And suddenly the dragon's hold loosened, and he fell back into the lake.

As soon as it was evening the prince again collected his sheep, and playing on his pipes he marched before them into the city. When he passed through the gates all the people came out of their houses to stare in wonder, for never before had any flock returned from the lake.

Meanwhile the two horsemen had ridden quickly back, and told the emperor all that they had seen and heard. The emperor listened eagerly to their tale, then called his daughter to him and repeated it to her.

'To-morrow,' he said, when he had finished, 'you shall go with the shepherd to the lake, and then you shall kiss him on the forehead as he wishes.'

But when the princess heard these words, she burst into tears, and sobbed out:

‘Will you really send me, your only child, to that dreadful place, from which most likely I shall never come back?’

‘Fear nothing, my little daughter, all will be well. Many shepherds have gone to that lake and none have ever returned; but this one has in these two days fought twice with the dragon and has escaped without a wound. So I hope to-morrow he will kill the dragon altogether, and deliver this land from the monster who has slain so many of our bravest men.’

Scarcely had the sun begun to peep over the hills next morning, when the princess stood by the shepherd’s side, ready to go to the lake. The shepherd was brimming over with joy, but the princess only wept bitterly. ‘Dry your tears, I implore you,’ said he. ‘If you will just do what I ask you, and when the time comes, run and kiss my forehead, you have nothing to fear.’

Merrily the shepherd blew on his pipes as he marched at the head of his flock, only stopping every now and then to say to the weeping girl at his side:

‘Do not cry so, Heart of Gold; trust me and fear nothing.’ And so they reached the lake.

In an instant the sheep were scattered all over the meadows, and the prince placed his hawk on the tree, and his pipes on the grass, while he bade his greyhounds lie beside them. Then he rolled up his trousers and his sleeves, and waded into the water, calling:

‘Dragon! dragon! if you are not a coward, come forth, and let us have one more fight together.’ And the dragon answered: ‘I am waiting for you, O prince’; and the next minute he reared himself out of the water, huge and horrible to see. Swiftly he drew near to the bank, and the prince sprang to meet him, and they grasped each other round the body and fought till it was noon. And when the sun was at its hottest, the dragon cried:

‘O prince, let me dip my burning head in the lake, and I will hurl you to the top of the sky.’ But the prince answered:

‘Oh, ho! my good dragon, do not crow too soon! If the emperor’s daughter were only here, and she would kiss my forehead, I would throw you higher still.’

Hardly had he spoken, when the princess, who had been listening, ran up and kissed him on the forehead. Then the prince swung the dragon straight up into the clouds, and when he touched the earth again, he broke

into a thousand pieces. Out of the pieces there sprang a wild boar and galloped away, but the prince called his hounds to give chase, and they caught the boar and tore it to bits. Out of the pieces there sprang a hare, and in a moment the greyhounds were after it, and they caught it and killed it; and out of the hare there came a pigeon. Quickly the prince let loose his hawk, which soared straight into the air, then swooped upon the bird and brought it to his master. The prince cut open its body and found the sparrow inside, as the old woman had said.

‘Now,’ cried the prince, holding the sparrow in his hand, ‘now you shall tell me where I can find my brothers.’

‘Do not hurt me,’ answered the sparrow, ‘and I will tell you with all my heart.’ Behind your father’s castle stands a mill, and in the mill are three slender twigs. Cut off these twigs and strike their roots with them, and the iron door of a cellar will open. In the cellar you will find as many people, young and old, women and children, as would fill a kingdom, and among them are your brothers.’

By this time twilight had fallen, so the prince washed himself in the lake, took the hawk on his shoulder and the pipes under his arm, and with his greyhounds before him and his flock behind him, marched gaily into the town, the princess following them all, still trembling with fright. And so they passed through the streets, thronged with a wondering crowd, till they reached the castle.

Unknown to anyone, the emperor had stolen out on horseback, and had hidden himself on the hill, where he could see all that happened. When all was over, and the power of the dragon was broken for ever, he rode quickly back to the castle, and was ready to receive the prince with open arms, and to promise him his daughter to wife. The wedding took place with great splendour, and for a whole week the town was hung with coloured lamps, and tables were spread in the hall of the castle for all who chose to come and eat. And when the feast was over, the prince told the emperor and the people who he really was, and at this everyone rejoiced still more, and preparations were made for the prince and princess to return to their own kingdom, for the prince was impatient to set free his brothers.

The first thing he did when he reached his native country was to hasten to the mill, where he found the three twigs as the sparrow had told him. The moment that he struck the root the iron door flew open, and from the

cellar a countless multitude of men and women streamed forth. He bade them go one by one wheresoever they would, while he himself waited by the door till his brothers passed through. How delighted they were to meet again, and to hear all that the prince had done to deliver them from their enchantment. And they went home with him and served him all the days of their lives, for they said that he only who had proved himself brave and faithful was fit to be king.

[From Volksmarehen der Serben.]

LITTLE WILDROSE

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Once upon a time the things in this story happened, and if they had not happened then the story would never have been told. But that was the time when wolves and lambs lay peacefully together in one stall, and shepherds dined on grassy banks with kings and queens.

Once upon a time, then, my dear good children, there lived a man. Now this man was really a hundred years old, if not fully twenty years more. And his wife was very old too—how old I do not know; but some said she was as old as the goddess Venus herself. They had been very happy all these years, but they would have been happier still if they had had any children; but old though they were they had never made up their minds to do without them, and often they would sit over the fire and talk of how they would have brought up their children if only some had come to their house.

One day the old man seemed sadder and more thoughtful than was common with him, and at last he said to his wife: ‘Listen to me, old woman!’

‘What do you want?’ asked she.

‘Get me some money out of the chest, for I am going a long journey—all through the world—to see if I cannot find a child, for my heart aches to think that after I am dead my house will fall into the hands of a stranger. And this let me tell you: that if I never find a child I shall not come home again.’

Then the old man took a bag and filled it with food and money, and throwing it over his shoulders, bade his wife farewell.

For long he wandered, and wandered, and wandered, but no child did he see; and one morning his wanderings led him to a forest which was so thick with trees that no light could pass through the branches. The old man stopped when he saw this dreadful place, and at first was afraid to go in; but he remembered that, after all, as the proverb says: ‘It is the unexpected that happens,’ and perhaps in the midst of this black spot he might find the

child he was seeking. So summoning up all his courage he plunged boldly in.

How long he might have been walking there he never could have told you, when at last he reached the mouth of a cave where the darkness seemed a hundred times darker than the wood itself. Again he paused, but he felt as if something was driving him to enter, and with a beating heart he stepped in.

For some minutes the silence and darkness so appalled him that he stood where he was, not daring to advance one step. Then he made a great effort and went on a few paces, and suddenly, far before him, he saw the glimmer of a light. This put new heart into him, and he directed his steps straight towards the faint rays, till he could see, sitting by it, an old hermit, with a long white beard.

The hermit either did not hear the approach of his visitor, or pretended not to do so, for he took no notice, and continued to read his book. After waiting patiently for a little while, the old man fell on his knees, and said: ‘Good morning, holy father!’ But he might as well have spoken to the rock. ‘Good morning, holy father,’ he said again, a little louder than before, and this time the hermit made a sign to him to come nearer. ‘My son,’ whispered he, in a voice that echoed through the cavern, ‘what brings you to this dark and dismal place? Hundreds of years have passed since my eyes have rested on the face of a man, and I did not think to look on one again.’.

‘My misery has brought me here,’ replied the old man; ‘I have no child, and all our lives my wife and I have longed for one. So I left my home, and went out into the world, hoping that somewhere I might find what I was seeking.’

Then the hermit picked up an apple from the ground, and gave it to him, saying: ‘Eat half of this apple, and give the rest to your wife, and cease wandering through the world.’

The old man stooped and kissed the feet of the hermit for sheer joy, and left the cave. He made his way through the forest as fast as the darkness would let him, and at length arrived in flowery fields, which dazzled him with their brightness. Suddenly he was seized with a desperate thirst, and a burning in his throat. He looked for a stream but none was to be seen, and his tongue grew more parched every moment. At

length his eyes fell on the apple, which all this while he had been holding in his hand, and in his thirst he forgot what the hermit had told him, and instead of eating merely his own half, he ate up the old woman's also; after that he went to sleep.

When he woke up he saw something strange lying on a bank a little way off, amidst long trails of pink roses. The old man got up, rubbed his eyes, and went to see what it was, when, to his surprise and joy, it proved to be a little girl about two years old, with a skin as pink and white as the roses above her. He took her gently in his arms, but she did not seem at all frightened, and only jumped and crowed with delight; and the old man wrapped his cloak round her, and set off for home as fast as his legs would carry him.

When they were close to the cottage where they lived he laid the child in a pail that was standing near the door, and ran into the house, crying: 'Come quickly, wife, quickly, for I have brought you a daughter, with hair of gold and eyes like stars!'

At this wonderful news the old woman flew downstairs, almost tumbling down ill her eagerness to see the treasure; but when her husband led her to the pail it was perfectly empty! The old man was nearly beside himself with horror, while his wife sat down and sobbed with grief and disappointment. There was not a spot round about which they did not search, thinking that somehow the child might have got out of the pail and hidden itself for fun; but the little girl was not there, and there was no sign of her.

'Where can she be?' moaned the old man, in despair. 'Oh, why did I ever leave her, even for a moment? Have the fairies taken her, or has some wild beast carried her off?' And they began their search all over again; but neither fairies nor wild beasts did they meet with, and with sore hearts they gave it up at last and turned sadly into the hut.

And what had become of the baby? Well, finding herself left alone in a strange place she began to cry with fright, and an eagle hovering near, heard her, and went to see what the sound came from. When he beheld the fat pink and white creature he thought of his hungry little ones at home, and swooping down he caught her up in his claws and was soon flying with her over the tops of the trees. In a few minutes he reached the one in which he had built his nest, and laying little Wildrose (for so the old man had

called her) among his downy young eaglets, he flew away. The eaglets naturally were rather surprised at this strange animal, so suddenly popped down in their midst, but instead of beginning to eat her, as their father expected, they nestled up close to her and spread out their tiny wings to shield her from the sun.

Now, in the depths of the forest where the eagle had built his nest, there ran a stream whose waters were poisonous, and on the banks of this stream dwelt a horrible lindworm with seven heads. The lindworm had often watched the eagle flying about the top of the tree, carrying food to his young ones and, accordingly, he watched carefully for the moment when the eaglets began to try their wings and to fly away from the nest. Of course, if the eagle himself was there to protect them even the lindworm, big and strong as he was, knew that he could do nothing; but when he was absent, any little eaglets who ventured too near the ground would be sure to disappear down the monster's throat. Their brothers, who had been left behind as too young and weak to see the world, knew nothing of all this, but supposed their turn would soon come to see the world also. And in a few days their eyes, too, opened and their wings flapped impatiently, and they longed to fly away above the waving tree-tops to mountain and the bright sun beyond. But that very midnight the lindworm, who was hungry and could not wait for his supper, came out of the brook with a rushing noise, and made straight for the tree. Two eyes of flame came creeping nearer, nearer, and two fiery tongues were stretching themselves out closer, closer, to the little birds who were trembling and shuddering in the farthest corner of the nest. But just as the tongues had almost reached them, the lindworm gave a fearful cry, and turned and fell backwards. Then came the sound of battle from the ground below, and the tree shook, though there was no wind, and roars and snarls mixed together, till the eaglets felt more frightened than ever, and thought their last hour had come. Only Wildrose was undisturbed, and slept sweetly through it all.

In the morning the eagle returned and saw traces of a fight below the tree, and here and there a handful of yellow mane lying about, and here and there a hard scaly substance; when he saw that he rejoiced greatly, and hastened to the nest.

'Who has slain the lindworm?' he asked of his children; there were so many that he did not at first miss the two which the lindworm had eaten.

But the eaglets answered that they could not tell, only that they had been in danger of their lives, and at the last moment they had been delivered. Then the sunbeam had struggled through the thick branches and caught Wildrose's golden hair as she lay curled up in the corner, and the eagle wondered, as he looked, whether the little girl had brought him luck, and it was her magic which had killed his enemy.

'Children,' he said, 'I brought her here for your dinner, and you have not touched her; what is the meaning of this?' But the eaglets did not answer, and Wildrose opened her eyes, and seemed seven times lovelier than before.

From that day Wildrose lived like a little princess. The eagle flew about the wood and collected the softest, greenest moss he could find to make her a bed, and then he picked with his beak all the brightest and prettiest flowers in the fields or on the mountains to decorate it. So cleverly did he manage it that there was not a fairy in the whole of the forest who would not have been pleased to sleep there, rocked to and fro by the breeze on the treetops. And when the little ones were able to fly from their nest he taught them where to look for the fruits and berries which she loved.

So the time passed by, and with each year Wildrose grew taller and more beautiful, and she lived happily in her nest and never wanted to go out of it, only standing at the edge in the sunset, and looking upon the beautiful world. For company she had all the birds in the forest, who came and talked to her, and for playthings the strange flowers which they brought her from far, and the butterflies which danced with her. And so the days slipped away, and she was fourteen years old.

One morning the emperor's son went out to hunt, and he had not ridden far, before a deer started from under a grove of trees, and ran before him. The prince instantly gave chase, and where the stag led he followed, till at length he found himself in the depths of the forest, where no man before had trod.

The trees were so thick and the wood so dark, that he paused for a moment and listened, straining his ears to catch some sound to break a silence which almost frightened him. But nothing came, not even the baying of a hound or the note of a horn. He stood still, and wondered if he should go on, when, on looking up, a stream of light seemed to flow from

the top of a tall tree. In its rays he could see the nest with the young eaglets, who were watching him over the side. The prince fitted an arrow into his bow and took his aim, but, before he could let fly, another ray of light dazzled him; so brilliant was it, that his bow dropped, and he covered his face with his hands. When at last he ventured to peep, Wildrose, with her golden hair flowing round her, was looking at him. This was the first time she had seen a man.

‘Tell me how I can reach you?’ cried he; but Wildrose smiled and shook her head, and sat down quietly.

The prince saw that it was no use, and turned and made his way out of the forest. But he might as well have stayed there, for any good he was to his father, so full was his heart of longing for Wildrose. Twice he returned to the forest in the hopes of finding her, but this time fortune failed him, and he went home as sad as ever.

At length the emperor, who could not think what had caused this change, sent for his son and asked him what was the matter. Then the prince confessed that the image of Wildrose filled his soul, and that he would never be happy without her. At first the emperor felt rather distressed. He doubted whether a girl from a tree top would make a good empress; but he loved his son so much that he promised to do all he could to find her. So the next morning heralds were sent forth throughout the whole land to inquire if anyone knew where a maiden could be found who lived in a forest on the top of a tree, and to promise great riches and a place at court to any person who should find her. But nobody knew. All the girls in the kingdom had their homes on the ground, and laughed at the notion of being brought up in a tree. ‘A nice kind of empress she would make,’ they said, as the emperor had done, tossing their heads with disdain; for, having read many books, they guessed what she was wanted for.

The heralds were almost in despair, when an old woman stepped out of the crowd and came and spoke to them. She was not only very old, but she was very ugly, with a hump on her back and a bald head, and when the heralds saw her they broke into rude laughter. ‘I can show you the maiden who lives in the tree-top,’ she said, but they only laughed the more loudly.

‘Get away, old witch!’ they cried, ‘you will bring us bad luck’; but the old woman stood firm, and declared that she alone knew where to find the

maiden.

‘Go with her,’ said the eldest of the heralds at last. ‘The emperor’s orders are clear, that whoever knew anything of the maiden was to come at once to court. Put her in the coach and take her with us.’

So in this fashion the old woman was brought to court.

‘You have declared that you can bring hither the maiden from the wood?’ said the emperor, who was seated on his throne.

‘Yes, your Majesty, and I will keep my word,’ said she.

‘Then bring her at once,’ said the emperor.

‘Give me first a kettle and a tripod,’ asked the old w omen, and the emperor ordered them to be brought instantly. The old woman picked them up, and tucking them under her arm went on her way, keeping at a little distance behind the royal huntsmen, who in their turn followed the prince.

Oh, what a noise that old woman made as she walked along! She chattered to herself so fast and clattered her kettle so loudly that you would have thought that a whole campful of gipsies must be coming round the next corner. But when they reached the forest, she bade them all wait outside, and entered the dark wood by herself.

She stopped underneath the tree where the maiden dwelt and, gathering some dry sticks, kindled a fire. Next, she placed the tripod over it, and the kettle on top. But something was the matter with the kettle. As fast as the old woman put it where it was to stand, that kettle was sure to roll off, falling to the ground with a crash.

It really seemed bewitched, and no one knows what might have happened if Wildrose, who had been all the time peeping out of her nest, had not lost patience at the old woman’s stupidity, and cried out: ‘The tripod won’t stand on that hill, you must move it!’

‘But where am I to move it to, my child?’ asked the old woman, looking up to the nest, and at the same moment trying to steady the kettle with one hand and the tripod with the other.

‘Didn’t I tell you that it was no good doing that,’ said Wildrose, more impatiently than before. ‘Make a fire near a tree and hang the kettle from one of the branches.’

The old woman took the kettle and hung it on a little twig, which broke at once, and the kettle fell to the ground.

‘If you would only show me how to do it, perhaps I should understand,’ said she.

Quick as thought, the maiden slid down the smooth trunk of the tree, and stood beside the stupid old woman, to teach her how things ought to be done. But in an instant the old woman had caught up the girl and swung her over her shoulders, and was running as fast as she could go to the edge of the forest, where she had left the prince. When he saw them coming he rushed eagerly to meet them, and he took the maiden in his arms and kissed her tenderly before them all. Then a golden dress was put on her, and pearls were twined in her hair, and she took her seat in the emperor’s carriage which was drawn by six of the whitest horses in the world, and they carried her, without stopping to draw breath, to the gates of the palace. And in three days the wedding was celebrated, and the wedding feast was held, and everyone who saw the bride declared that if anybody wanted a perfect wife they must go to seek her on top of a tree.

[Adapted from file Roumanian.]

TIIDU THE PIPER

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Once upon a time there lived a poor man who had more children than bread to feed them with. However, they were strong and willing, and soon learned to make themselves of use to their father and mother, and when they were old enough they went out to service, and everyone was very glad to get them for servants, for they worked hard and were always cheerful. Out of all the ten or eleven, there was only one who gave his parents any trouble, and this was a big lazy boy whose name was Tiidu. Neither scoldings nor beatings nor kind words had any effect on him, and the older he grew the idler he got. He spent his winters crouching close to a warm stove, and his summers asleep under a shady tree; and if he was not doing either of these things he was playing tunes on his flute.

One day he was sitting under a bush playing so sweetly that you might easily have mistaken the notes for those of a bird, when an old man passed by. ‘What trade do you wish to follow, my son?’ he asked in a friendly voice, stopping as he did so in front of the youth.

‘If I were only a rich man, and had no need to work,’ replied the boy, ‘I should not follow any. I could not bear to be anybody’s servant, as all my brothers and sisters are.’

The old man laughed as he heard this answer, and said: ‘But I do not exactly see where your riches are to come from if you do not work for them. Sleeping cats catch no mice. He who wishes to become rich must use either his hands or his head, and be ready to toil night and day, or else —’

But here the youth broke in rudely:

‘Be silent, old man! I have been told all that a hundred times over; and it runs off me like water off a duck’s back. No one will ever make a worker out of me.’

‘You have one gift,’ replied the old man, taking no notice of this speech, ‘and if you would only go about and play the pipes, you would easily earn, not only your daily bread, but a little money into the bargain.

Listen to me; get yourself a set of pipes, and learn to play on them as well as you do on your flute, and wherever there are men to hear you, I promise you will never lack money.'

'But where am I to get the pipes from?' asked the youth.

'Blow on your flute for a few days,' replied the old man, 'and you will soon be able to buy your pipes. By-and-by I will come back again and see if you have taken my advice, and whether you are likely to grow rich.' And so saying he went his way.

Tiidu stayed where he was a little longer, thinking of all the old man had told him, and the more he thought the surer he felt that the old man was right. He determined to try whether his plan would really bring luck; but as he did not like being laughed at he resolved not to tell anyone a word about it. So next morning he left home—and never came back! His parents did not take his loss much to heart, but were rather glad that their useless son had for once shown a little spirit, and they hoped that time and hardship might cure Tiidu of his idle folly.

For some weeks Tiidu wandered from one village to another, and proved for himself the truth of the old man's promise. The people he met were all friendly and kind, and enjoyed his flute-playing, giving him his food in return, and even a few pence. These pence the youth hoarded carefully till he had collected enough to buy a beautiful pair of pipes. Then he felt himself indeed on the high road to riches. Nowhere could pipes be found as fine as his, or played in so masterly a manner. Tiidu's pipes set everybody's legs dancing. Wherever there was a marriage, a christening, or a feast of any kind, Tiidu must be there, or the evening would be a failure. In a few years he had become so noted a piper that people would travel far and wide to hear him.

One day he was invited to a christening where many rich men from the neighbouring town were present, and all agreed that never in all their lives had they heard such playing as his. They crowded round him, and praised him, and pressed him to come to their homes, declaring that it was a shame not to give their friends the chance of hearing such music. Of course all this delighted Tiidu, who accepted gladly, and left their houses laden with money and presents of every kind; one great lord clothed him in a magnificent dress, a second hung a chain of pearls round his neck, while a third handed him a set of new pipes encrusted in silver. As for the

ladies, the girls twisted silken scarves round his plumed hat, and their mothers knitted him gloves of all colours, to keep out the cold. Any other man in Tiidu's place would have been contented and happy in this life; but his craving for riches gave him no rest, and only goaded him day by day to fresh exertions, so that even his own mother would not have known him for the lazy boy who was always lying asleep in one place or the other.

Now Tiidu saw quite clearly that he could only hope to become rich by means of his pipes, and set about thinking if there was nothing he could do to make the money flow in faster. At length he remembered having heard some stories of a kingdom in the Kungla country, where musicians of all sorts were welcomed and highly paid; but where it was, or how it was reached, he could not recollect, however hard he thought. In despair, he wandered along the coast, hoping to see some ship or sailing boat that would take him where he wished to go, and at length he reached the town of Narva, where several merchantmen were lying at anchor. To his great joy, he found that one of them was sailing for Kungla in a few days, and he hastily went on board, and asked for the captain. But the cost of the passage was more than the prudent Tiidu cared to pay, and though he played his best on his pipes, the captain refused to lower his price, and Tiidu was just thinking of returning on shore when his usual luck flew to his aid. A young sailor, who had heard him play, came secretly to him, and offered to hide him on board, in the absence of the captain. So the next night, as soon as it was dark, Tiidu stepped softly on deck, and was hidden by his friend down in the hold in a corner between two casks. Unseen by the rest of the crew the sailor managed to bring him food and drink, and when they were well out of sight of land he proceeded to carry out a plan he had invented to deliver Tiidu from his cramped quarters. At midnight, while he was keeping watch and everyone else was sleeping, the man bade his friend Tiidu follow him on deck, where he tied a rope round Tiidu's body, fastening the other end carefully to one of the ship's ropes. 'Now,' he said, 'I will throw you into the sea, and you must shout for help; and when you see the sailors coming untie the rope from your waist, and tell them that you have swum after the ship all the way from shore.'

At first Tiidu did not much like this scheme, for the sea ran high, but he was a good swimmer, and the sailor assured him that there was no danger. As soon as he was in the water, his friend hastened to rouse his

mates, declaring that he was sure that there was a man in the sea, following the ship. They all came on deck, and what was their surprise when they recognised the person who had bargained about a passage the previous day with the captain.

‘Are you a ghost, or a dying man?’ they asked him trembling, as they stooped over the side of the ship.

‘I shall soon indeed be a dead man if you do not help me,’ answered Tiidu, ‘for my strength is going fast.’

Then the captain seized a rope and flung it out to him, and Tiidu held it between his teeth, while, unseen by the sailors; he loosed the one tied round his waist.

‘Where have you come from?’ said the captain, when Tiidu was brought up on board the ship.

‘I have followed you from the harbour,’ answered he, ‘and have been often in sore dread lest my strength should fail me. I hoped that by swimming after the ship I might at last reach Kungla, as I had no money to pay my passage.’ The captain’s heart melted at these words, and he said kindly: ‘You may be thankful that you were not drowned. I will land you at Kungla free of payment, as you are so anxious to get there. So he gave him dry clothes to wear, and a berth to sleep in, and Tiidu and his friend secretly made merry over their cunning trick.

For the rest of the voyage the ship’s crew treated Tiidu as something higher than themselves, seeing that in all their lives they had never met with any man that could swim for as many hours as he had done. This pleased Tiidu very much, though he knew that he had really done nothing to deserve it, and in return he delighted them by tunes on his pipes. When, after some days, they cast anchor at Kungla, the story of his wonderful swim brought him many friends, for everybody wished to hear him tell the tale himself. This might have been all very well, had not Tiidu lived in dread that some day he would be asked to give proof of his marvellous swimming powers, and then everything would be found out. Meanwhile he was dazzled with the splendour around him, and more than ever he longed for part of the riches, about which the owners seemed to care so little.

He wandered through the streets for many days, seeking some one who wanted a servant; but though more than one person would have been glad to engage him, they seemed to Tiidu not the sort of people to help him to

get rich quickly. At last, when he had almost made up his mind that he must accept the next place offered him, he happened to knock at the door of a rich merchant who was in need of a scullion, and gladly agreed to do the cook's bidding, and it was in this merchant's house that he first learned how great were the riches of the land of Kungla. All the vessels which in other countries are made of iron, copper, brass, or tin, in Kungla were made of silver, or even of gold. The food was cooked in silver saucepans, the bread baked in a silver oven, while the dishes and their covers were all of gold. Even the very pigs' troughs were of silver too. But the sight of these things only made Tiidu more covetous than before. 'What is the use of all this wealth that I have constantly before my eyes,' thought he, 'if none of it is mine? I shall never grow rich by what I earn as a scullion, even though I am paid as much in a month as I should get elsewhere in a year.'

By this time he had been in his place for two years, and had put by quite a large sum of money. His passion of saving had increased to such a pitch that it was only by his master's orders that he ever bought any new clothes, 'For,' said the merchant, 'I will not have dirty people in my house.' So with a heavy heart Tiidu spent some of his next month's wages on a cheap coat.

One day the merchant held a great feast in honour of the christening of his youngest child, and he gave each of his servants a handsome garment for the occasion. The following Sunday, Tiidu, who liked fine clothes when he did not have to pay for them, put on his new coat, and went for a walk to some beautiful pleasure gardens, which were always full of people on a sunny day. He sat down under a shady tree, and watched the passers-by, but after a little he began to feel rather lonely, for he knew nobody and nobody knew him. Suddenly his eyes fell on the figure of an old man, which seemed familiar to him, though he could not tell when or where he had seen it. He watched the figure for some time, till at length the old man left the crowded paths, and threw himself on the soft grass under a lime tree, which stood at some distance from where Tiidu was sitting. Then the young man walked slowly past, in order that he might look at him more closely, and as he did so the old man smiled, and held out his hand.

'What have you done with your pipes?' asked he; and then in a moment Tiidu knew him. Taking his arm he drew him into a quiet place

and told him all that had happened since they had last met. The old man shook his head as he listened, and when Tiidu had finished his tale, he said: ‘A fool you are, and a fool you will always be! Was there ever such a piece of folly as to exchange your pipes for a scullion’s ladle? You could have made as much by the pipes in a day as your wages would have come to in half a year. Go home and fetch your pipes, and play them here, and you will soon see if I have spoken the truth.’

Tiidu did not like this advice—he was afraid that the people would laugh at him; and, besides, it was long since he had touched his pipes—but the old man persisted, and at last Tiidu did as he was told.

‘Sit down on the bank by me,’ said the old man, when he came back, ‘and begin to play, and in a little while the people will flock round you.’ Tiidu obeyed, at first without much heart; but somehow the tone of the pipes was sweeter than he had remembered, and as he played, the crowd ceased to walk and chatter, and stood still and silent round him. When he had played for some time he took off his hat and passed it round, and dollars, and small silver coins, and even gold pieces, came tumbling in. Tiidu played a couple more tunes by way of thanks, then turned to go home, hearing on all sides murmurs of ‘What a wonderful piper! Come back, we pray you, next Sunday to give us another treat.’

‘What did I tell you?’ said the old man, as they passed through the garden gate. ‘Was it not pleasanter to play for a couple of hours on the pipes than to be stirring sauces all day long? For the second time I have shown you the path to follow; try to learn wisdom, and take the bull by the horns, lest your luck should slip from you! I can be your guide no longer, therefore listen to what I say, and obey me. Go every Sunday afternoon to those gardens; and sit under the lime tree and play to the people, and bring a felt hat with a deep crown, and lay it on the ground at your feet, so that everyone can throw some money into it. If you are invited to play at a feast, accept willingly, but beware of asking a fixed price; say you will take whatever they may feel inclined to give. You will get far more money in the end. Perhaps, some day, our paths may cross, and then I shall see how far you have followed my advice. Till then, farewell’; and the old man went his way.

As before, his words came true, though Tiidu could not at once do his bidding, as he had first to fulfil his appointed time of service. Meanwhile

he ordered some fine clothes, in which he played every Sunday in the gardens, and when he counted his gains in the evening they were always more than on the Sunday before. At length he was free to do as he liked, and he had more invitations to play than he could manage to accept, and at night, when the citizens used to go and drink in the inn, the landlord always begged Tiidu to come and play to them. Thus he grew so rich that very soon he had his silver pipes covered with gold, so that they glistened in the light of the sun or the fire. In all Kungla there was no prouder man than Tiidu.

In a few years he had saved such a large sum of money that he was considered a rich man even in Kungla, where everybody was rich. And then he had leisure to remember that he had once had a home, and a family, and that he should like to see them both again, and show them how well he could play. This time he would not need to hide in the ship's hold, but could hire the best cabin if he wished to, or even have a vessel all to himself. So he packed all his treasures in large chests, and sent them on board the first ship that was sailing to his native land, and followed them with a light heart. The wind at starting was fair, but it soon freshened, and in the night rose to a gale. For two days they ran before it, and hoped that by keeping well out to sea they might be able to weather the storm, when, suddenly, the ship struck on a rock, and began to fill. Orders were given to lower the boats, and Tiidu with three sailors got into one of them, but before they could push away from the ship a huge wave overturned it, and all four were flung into the water. Luckily for Tiidu an oar was floating near him, and with its help he was able to keep on the surface of the water; and when the sun rose, and the mist cleared away, he saw that he was not far from shore. By hard swimming, for the sea still ran high, he managed to reach it, and pulled himself out of the water, more dead than alive. Then he flung himself down on the ground and fell fast asleep.

When he awoke he got up to explore the island, and see if there were any men upon it; but though he found streams and fruit trees in abundance, there was no trace either of man or beast. Then, tired with his wanderings he sat down and began to think.

For perhaps the first time in his life his thoughts did not instantly turn to money. It was not on his lost treasures that his mind dwelt, but on his conduct to his parents: his laziness and disobedience as a boy; his

forgetfulness of them as a man. ‘If wild animals were to come and tear me to pieces,’ he said to himself bitterly, ‘it would be only what I deserve! My gains are all at the bottom of the sea—well! lightly won, lightly lost—but it is odd that I feel I should not care for that if only my pipes were left me.’ Then he rose and walked a little further, till he saw a tree with great red apples shining amidst the leaves, and he pulled some down, and ate them greedily. After that he stretched himself out on the soft moss and went to sleep.

In the morning he ran to the nearest stream to wash himself, but to his horror, when he caught sight of his face, he saw his nose had grown the colour of an apple, and reached nearly to his waist. He started back thinking he was dreaming, and put up his hand; but, alas! the dreadful thing was true. ‘Oh, why does not some wild beast devour me?’ he cried to himself; ‘never, never, can I go again amongst my fellow-men! If only the sea had swallowed me up, how much happier it had been for me!’ And he hid his head in his hands and wept. His grief was so violent, that it exhausted him, and growing hungry he looked about for something to eat. Just above him was a bough of ripe, brown nuts, end he picked them and ate a handful. To his surprise, as he was eating them, he felt his nose grow shorter and shorter, and after a while he ventured to feel it with his hand, and even to look in the stream again! Yes, there was no mistake, it was as short as before, or perhaps a little shorter. In his joy at this discovery Tiidu did a very bold thing. He took one of the apples out of his pocket, and cautiously bit a piece out of it. In an instant his nose was as long as his chin, and in a deadly fear lest it should stretch further, he hastily swallowed a nut, and awaited the result with terror. Supposing that the shrinking of his nose had only been an accident before! Supposing that that nut and no other was able to cause its shrinking! In that case he had, by his own folly, in not letting well alone, ruined his life completely. But, no! he had guessed rightly, for in no more time than his nose had taken to grow long did it take to return to its proper size. ‘This may make my fortune,’ he said joyfully to himself; and he gathered some of the apples, which he put into one pocket, and a good supply of nuts which he put into the other. Next day he wove a basket out of some rushes, so that if he ever left the island he might be able to carry his treasures about.

That night he dreamed that his friend the old man appeared to him and said: ‘Because you did not mourn for your lost treasure, but only for your pipes, I will give you a new set to replace them.’ And, behold! in the morning when he got up a set of pipes was lying in the basket. With what joy did he seize them and begin one of his favourite tunes; and as he played hope sprang up in his heart, and he looked out to sea, to try to detect the sign of a sail. Yes! there it was, making straight for the island; and Tiidu, holding his pipes in his hand, dashed down to the shore.

The sailors knew the island to be uninhabited, and were much surprised to see a man standing on the beach, waving his arms in welcome to them. A boat was put off, and two sailors rowed to the shore to discover how he came there, and if he wished to be taken away. Tiidu told them the story of his shipwreck, and the captain promised that he should come on board, and sail with them back to Kungla; and thankful indeed was Tiidu to accept the offer, and to show his gratitude by playing on his pipes whenever he was asked to do so.

They had a quick voyage, and it was not long before Tiidu found himself again in the streets of the capital of Kungla, playing as he went along. The people had heard no music like his since he went away, and they crowded round him, and in their joy gave him whatever money they had in their pockets. His first care was to buy himself some new clothes, which he sadly needed, taking care, however, that they should be made after a foreign fashion. When they were ready, he set out one day with a small basket of his famous apples, and went up to the palace. He did not have to wait long before one of the royal servants passed by and bought all the apples, begging as he did so that the merchant should return and bring some more. This Tiidu promised, and hastened away as if he had a mad bull behind him, so afraid was he that the man should begin to eat an apple at once.

It is needless to say that for some days he took no more apples back to the palace, but kept well away on the other side of the town, wearing other clothes, and disguised by a long black beard, so that even his own mother would not have known him.

The morning after his visit to the castle the whole city was in an uproar about the dreadful misfortune that had happened to the Royal Family, for not only the king but his wife and children, had eaten of the stranger’s

apples, and all, so said the rumour, were very ill. The most famous doctors and the greatest magicians were hastily summoned to the palace, but they shook their heads and came away again; never had they met with such a disease in all the course of their experience. By-and-bye a story went round the town, started no one knew how, that the malady was in some way connected with the nose; and men rubbed their own anxiously, to be sure that nothing catching was in the air.

Matters had been in this state for more than a week when it reached the ears of the king that a man was living in an inn on the other side of the town who declared himself able to cure all manner of diseases. Instantly the royal carriage was commanded to drive with all speed and bring back this magician, offering him riches untold if he could restore their noses to their former length. Tiidu had expected this summons, and had sat up all night changing his appearance, and so well had he succeeded that not a trace remained either of the piper or of the apple seller. He stepped into the carriage, and was driven post haste to the king, who was feverishly counting every moment, for both his nose and the queen's were by this time more than a yard long, and they did not know where they would stop.

Now Tiidu thought it would not look well to cure the royal family by giving them the raw nuts; he felt that it might arouse suspicion. So he had carefully pounded them into a powder, and divided the powder up into small doses, which were to be put on the tongue and swallowed at once. He gave one of these to the king and another to the queen, and told them that before taking them they were to get into bed in a dark room and not to move for some hours, after which they might be sure that they would come out cured.

The king's joy was so great at this news that he would gladly have given Tiidu half of his kingdom; but the piper was no longer so greedy of money as he once was, before he had been shipwrecked on the island. If he could get enough to buy a small estate and live comfortably on it for the rest of his life, that was all he now cared for. However, the king ordered his treasure to pay him three times as much as he asked, and with this Tiidu went down to the harbour and engaged a small ship to carry him back to his native country. The wind was fair, and in ten days the coast, which he had almost forgotten, stood clear before him. In a few hours he was standing in his old home, where his father, three sisters, and two

brothers gave him a hearty welcome. His mother and his other brothers had died some years before.

When the meeting was over, he began to make inquiries about a small estate that was for sale near the town, and after he had bought it the next thing was to find a wife to share it with him. This did not take long either; and people who were at the wedding feast declared that the best part of the whole day was the hour when Tiidu played to them on the pipes before they bade each other farewell and returned to their homes.

[From Esthnische Mahrchen.]

PAPERARELLOO

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Once upon a time there lived a king and a queen who had one son. The king loved the boy very much, but the queen, who was a wicked woman, hated the sight of him; and this was the more unlucky for, when he was twelve years old, his father died, and he was left alone in the world.

Now the queen was very angry because the people, who knew how bad she was, seated her son on the throne instead of herself, and she never rested till she had formed a plan to get him out of the way. Fortunately, however, the young king was wise and prudent, and knew her too well to trust her.

One day, when his mourning was over, he gave orders that everything should be made ready for a grand hunt. The queen pretended to be greatly delighted that he was going to amuse himself once more, and declared that she would accompany him. ‘No, mother, I cannot let you come,’ he answered; ‘the ground is rough, and you are not strong.’ But he might as well have spoken to the winds: when the horn was sounded at daybreak the queen was there with the rest.

All that day they rode, for game was plentiful, but towards evening the mother and son found themselves alone in a part of the country that was strange to them. They wandered on for some time, without knowing where they were going, till they met with a man whom they begged to give them shelter. ‘Come with me,’ said the man gladly, for he was an ogre, and fed on human flesh; and the king and his mother went with him, and he led them to his house. When they got there they found to what a dreadful place they had come, and, falling on their knees, they offered him great sums of money, if he would only spare their lives. The ogre’s heart was moved at the sight of the queen’s beauty, and he promised that he would do her no harm; but he stabbed the boy at once, and binding his body on a horse, turned him loose in the forest.

The ogre had happened to choose a horse which he had bought only the day before, and he did not know it was a magician, or he would not have

been so foolish as to fix upon it on this occasion. The horse no sooner had been driven off with the prince's body on its back than it galloped straight to the home of the fairies, and knocked at the door with its hoof. The fairies heard the knock, but were afraid to open till they had peeped from an upper window to see that it was no giant or ogre who could do them harm. 'Oh, look, sister!' cried the first to reach the window, 'it is a horse that has knocked, and on its back there is bound a dead boy, the most beautiful boy in all the world!' Then the fairies ran to open the door, and let in the horse and unbound the ropes which fastened the young king on its back. And they gathered round to admire his beauty, and whispered one to the other: 'We will make him alive again, and will keep him for our brother.' And so they did, and for many years they all lived together as brothers and sisters.

By-and-by the boy grew into a man, as boys will, and then the oldest of the fairies said to her sisters: 'Now I will marry him, and he shall be really your brother.' So the young king married the fairy, and they lived happily together in the castle; but though he loved his wife he still longed to see the world.

At length this longing grew so strong on him that he could bear it no more; and, calling the fairies together, he said to them: 'Dear wife and sisters, I must leave you for a time, and go out and see the world. But I shall think of you often, and one day I shall come back to you.'

The fairies wept and begged him to stay, but he would not listen, and at last the eldest, who was his wife, said to him: 'If you really will abandon us, take this lock of my hair with you; you will find it useful in time of need.' So she cut off a long curl, and handed it to him.

The prince mounted his horse, and rode on all day without stopping once. Towards evening he found himself in a desert, and, look where he would, there was no such thing as a house or a man to be seen. 'What am I to do now?' he thought. 'If I go to sleep here wild beasts will come and eat me! Yet both I and my horse are worn out, and can go no further.' Then suddenly he remembered the fairy's gift, and taking out the curl he said to it: 'I want a castle here, and servants, and dinner, and everything to make me comfortable tonight; and besides that, I must have a stable and fodder for my horse.' And in a moment the castle was before him just as he had wished.

In this way he travelled through many countries, till at last he came to a land that was ruled over by a great king. Leaving his horse outside the walls, he clad himself in the dress of a poor man, and went up to the palace. The queen, who was looking out of the window, saw him approaching, and filled with pity sent a servant to ask who he was and what he wanted. ‘I am a stranger here,’ answered the young king, ‘and very poor. I have come to beg for some work.’ ‘We have everybody we want,’ said the queen, when the servant told her the young man’s reply. ‘We have a gate-keeper, and a hall porter, and servants of all sorts in the palace; the only person we have not got is a goose-boy. Tell him that he can be our goose-boy if he likes.’ The youth answered that he was quite content to be goose-boy; and that was how he got his nickname of Paperarello. And in order that no one should guess that he was any better than a goose-boy should be, he rubbed his face and his rags over with mud, and made himself altogether such a disgusting object that every one crossed over to the other side of the road when he was seen coming.

‘Do go and wash yourself, Paperarello!’ said the queen sometimes, for he did his work so well that she took an interest in him. ‘Oh, I should not feel comfortable if I was clean, your Majesty,’ answered he, and went whistling after his geese.

It happened one day that, owing to some accident to the great flour mills which supplied the city, there was no bread to be had, and the king’s army had to do without. When the king heard of it, he sent for the cook, and told him that by the next morning he must have all the bread that the oven, heated seven times over, could bake. ‘But, your Majesty, it is not possible,’ cried the poor man in despair. ‘The mills have only just begun working, and the flour will not be ground till evening, and how can I heat the oven seven times in one night?’ ‘That is your affair,’ answered the King, who, when he took anything into his head, would listen to nothing. ‘If you succeed in baking the bread you shall have my daughter to wife, but if you fail your head will pay for it.’

Now Paperarello, who was passing through the hall where the king was giving his orders, heard these words, and said: ‘Your Majesty, have no fears; I will bake your bread.’ ‘Very well,’ answered the king; ‘but if you fail, you will pay for it with your head!’ and signed that both should leave his presence.

The cook was still trembling with the thought of what he had escaped, but to his surprise Paperarello did not seem disturbed at all, and when night came he went to sleep as usual. ‘Paperarello,’ cried the other servants, when they saw him quietly taking off his clothes, ‘you cannot go to bed; you will need every moment of the night for your work. Remember, the king is not to be played with!’

‘I really must have some sleep first,’ replied Paperarello, stretching himself and yawning; and he flung himself on his bed, and was fast asleep in a moment. In an hour’s time, the servants came and shook him by the shoulder. ‘Paperarello, are you mad?’ said they. ‘Get up, or you will lose your head.’ ‘Oh, do let me sleep a little more, answered he. And this was all he would say, though the servants returned to wake him many times in the night.

At last the dawn broke, and the servants rushed to his room, crying: ‘Paperarello! Paperarello! get up, the king is coming. You have baked no bread, and of a surety he will have your head.’

‘Oh, don’t scream so,’ replied Paperarello, jumping out of bed as he spoke; and taking the lock of hair in his hand, he went into the kitchen. And, behold! there stood the bread piled high—four, five, six ovens full, and the seventh still waiting to be taken out of the oven. The servants stood and stared in surprise, and the king said: ‘Well done, Paperarello, you have won my daughter.’ And he thought to himself: ‘This fellow must really be a magician.’

But when the princess heard what was in store for her she wept bitterly, and declared that never, never would she marry that dirty Paperarello! However, the king paid no heed to her tears and prayers, and before many days were over the wedding was celebrated with great splendour, though the bridegroom had not taken the trouble to wash himself, and was as dirty as before.

When night came he went as usual to sleep among his geese, and the princess went to the king and said: ‘Father, I entreat you to have that horrible Paperarello put to death.’ ‘No, no!’ replied her father, ‘he is a great magician, and before I put him to death, I must first find out the secret of his power, and then—we shall see.’

Soon after this a war broke out, and everybody about the palace was very busy polishing up armour and sharpening swords, for the king and his

sons were to ride at the head of the army. Then Paperarello left his geese, and came and told the king that he wished to go to fight also. The king gave him leave, and told him that he might go to the stable and take any horse he liked from the stables. So Paperarello examined the horses carefully, but instead of picking out one of the splendid well-groomed creatures, whose skin shone like satin, he chose a poor lame thing, put a saddle on it, and rode after the other men-at-arms who were attending the king. In a short time he stopped, and said to them: ‘My horse can go no further; you must go on to the war without me, and I will stay here, and make some little clay soldiers, and will play at a battle.’ The men laughed at him for being so childish, and rode on after their master.

Scarcely were they out of sight than Paperarello took out his curl, and wished himself the best armour, the sharpest sword, and the swiftest horse in the world, and the next minute was riding as fast as he could to the field of battle. The fight had already begun, and the enemy was getting the best of it, when Paperarello rode up, and in a moment the fortunes of the day had changed. Right and left this strange knight laid about him, and his sword pierced the stoutest breast-plate, and the strongest shield. He was indeed ‘a host in himself,’ and his foes fled before him thinking he was only the first of a troop of such warriors, whom no one could withstand. When the battle was over, the king sent for him to thank him for his timely help, and to ask what reward he should give him. ‘Nothing but your little finger, your Majesty,’ was his answer; and the king cut off his little finger and gave it to Paperarello, who bowed and hid it in his surcoat. Then he left the field, and when the soldiers rode back they found him still sitting in the road making whole rows of little clay dolls.

The next day the king went out to fight another battle, and again Paperarello appeared, mounted on his lame horse. As on the day before, he halted on the road, and sat down to make his clay soldiers; then a second time he wished himself armour, sword, and a horse, all sharper and better than those he had previously had, and galloped after the rest. He was only just in time: the enemy had almost beaten the king’s army back, and men whispered to each other that if the strange knight did not soon come to their aid, they would be all dead men. Suddenly someone cried: ‘Hold on a little longer, I see him in the distance; and his armour shines brighter, and his horse runs swifter, than yesterday.’ Then they took fresh heart and

fought desperately on till the knight came up, and threw himself into the thick of the battle. As before, the enemy gave way before him, and in a few minutes the victory remained with the king.

The first thing that the victor did was to send for the knight to thank him for his timely help, and to ask what gift he could bestow on him in token of gratitude. ‘Your Majesty’s ear,’ answered the knight; and as the king could not go back from his word, he cut it off and gave it to him. Paperarello bowed, fastened the ear inside his surcoat and rode away. In the evening, when they all returned from the battle, there he was, sitting in the road, making clay dolls.

On the third day the same thing happened, and this time he asked for the king’s nose as the reward of his aid. Now, to lose one’s nose, is worse even than losing one’s ear or one’s finger, and the king hesitated as to whether he should comply. However, he had always prided himself on being an honourable man, so he cut off his nose, and handed it to Paperarello. Paperarello bowed, put the nose in his surcoat, and rode away. In the evening, when the king returned from the battle, he found Paperarello sitting in the road making clay dolls. And Paperarello got up and said to him: ‘Do you know who I am? I am your dirty goose-boy, yet you have given me your finger, and your ear, and your nose.’

That night, when the king sat at dinner, Paperarello came in, and laying down the ear, and the nose, and the finger on the table, turned and said to the nobles and courtiers who were waiting on the king: ‘I am the invincible knight, who rode three times to your help, and I also am a king’s son, and no goose-boy as you all think.’ And he went away and washed himself, and dressed himself in fine clothes and entered the hall again, looking so handsome that the proud princess fell in love with him on the spot. But Paperarello took no notice of her, and said to the king: ‘It was kind of you to offer me your daughter in marriage, and for that I thank you; but I have a wife at home whom I love better, and it is to her that I am going. But as a token of farewell, I wish that your ear, and nose, and finger may be restored to their proper places.’ So saying, he bade them all goodbye, and went back to his home and his fairy bride, with whom he lived happily till the end of his life.

[From Sicilianisohen Mahrchen.]

THE GIFTS OF THE MAGICIAN

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Once upon a time there was an old man who lived in a little hut in the middle of a forest. His wife was dead, and he had only one son, whom he loved dearly. Near their hut was a group of birch trees, in which some black-game had made their nests, and the youth had often begged his father's permission to shoot the birds, but the old man always strictly forbade him to do anything of the kind.

One day, however, when the father had gone to a little distance to collect some sticks for the fire, the boy fetched his bow, and shot at a bird that was just flying towards its nest. But he had not taken proper aim, and the bird was only wounded, and fluttered along the ground. The boy ran to catch it, but though he ran very fast, and the bird seemed to flutter along very slowly, he never could quite come up with it; it was always just a little in advance. But so absorbed was he in the chase that he did not notice for some time that he was now deep in the forest, in a place where he had never been before. Then he felt it would be foolish to go any further, and he turned to find his way home.

He thought it would be easy enough to follow the path along which he had come, but somehow it was always branching off in unexpected directions. He looked about for a house where he might stop and ask his way, but there was not a sign of one anywhere, and he was afraid to stand still, for it was cold, and there were many stories of wolves being seen in that part of the forest. Night fell, and he was beginning to start at every sound, when suddenly a magician came running towards him, with a pack of wolves snapping at his heels. Then all the boy's courage returned to him. He took his bow, and aiming an arrow at the largest wolf, shot him through the heart, and a few more arrows soon put the rest to flight. The magician was full of gratitude to his deliverer, and promised him a reward for his help if the youth would go back with him to his house.

'Indeed there is nothing that would be more welcome to me than a night's lodging,' answered the boy; 'I have been wandering all day in the

forest, and did not know how to get home again.

‘Come with me, you must be hungry as well as tired,’ said the magician, and led the way to his house, where the guest flung himself on a bed, and went fast asleep. But his host returned to the forest to get some food, for the larder was empty.

While he was absent the housekeeper went to the boy’s room and tried to wake him. She stamped on the floor, and shook him and called to him, telling him that he was in great danger, and must take flight at once. But nothing would rouse him, and if he did ever open his eyes he shut them again directly.

Soon after, the magician came back from the forest, and told the housekeeper to bring them something to eat. The meal was quickly ready, and the magician called to the boy to come down and eat it, but he could not be wakened, and they had to sit down to supper without him. By-and-by the magician went out into the wood again for some more hunting, and on his return he tried afresh to waken the youth. But finding it quite impossible, he went back for the third time to the forest.

While he was absent the boy woke up and dressed himself. Then he came downstairs and began to talk to the housekeeper. The girl had heard how he had saved her master’s life, so she said nothing more about his running away, but instead told him that if the magician offered him the choice of a reward, he was to ask for the horse which stood in the third stall of the stable.

By-and-by the old man came back and they all sat down to dinner. When they had finished the magician said: ‘Now, my son, tell me what you will have as the reward of your courage?’

‘Give me the horse that stands in the third stall of your stable,’ answered the youth. ‘For I have a long way to go before I get home, and my feet will not carry me so far.’

‘Ah! my son,’ replied the magician, ‘it is the best horse in my stable that you want! Will not anything else please you as well?’

But the youth declared that it was the horse, and the horse only, that he desired, and in the end the old man gave way. And besides the horse, the magician gave him a zither, a fiddle, and a flute, saying: ‘If you are in danger, touch the zither; and if no one comes to your aid, then play on the fiddle; but if that brings no help, blow on the flute.’

The youth thanked the magician, and fastening his treasures about him mounted the horse and rode off. He had already gone some miles when, to his great surprise, the horse spoke, and said: ‘It is no use your returning home just now, your father will only beat you. Let us visit a few towns first, and something lucky will be sure to happen to us.’

This advice pleased the boy, for he felt himself almost a man by this time, and thought it was high time he saw the world. When they entered the capital of the country everyone stopped to admire the beauty of the horse. Even the king heard of it, and came to see the splendid creature with his own eyes. Indeed, he wanted directly to buy it, and told the youth he would give any price he liked. The young man hesitated for a moment, but before he could speak, the horse contrived to whisper to him:

‘Do not sell me, but ask the king to take me to his stable, and feed me there; then his other horses will become just as beautiful as I.’

The king was delighted when he was told what the horse had said, and took the animal at once to the stables, and placed it in his own particular stall. Sure enough, the horse had scarcely eaten a mouthful of corn out of the manger, when the rest of the horses seemed to have undergone a transformation. Some of them were old favourites which the king had ridden in many wars, and they bore the signs of age and of service. But now they arched their heads, and pawed the ground with their slender legs as they had been wont to do in days long gone by. The king’s heart beat with delight, but the old groom who had had the care of them stood crossly by, and eyed the owner of this wonderful creature with hate and envy. Not a day passed without his bringing some story against the youth to his master, but the king understood all about the matter and paid no attention. At last the groom declared that the young man had boasted that he could find the king’s war horse which had strayed into the forest several years ago, and had not been heard of since. Now the king had never ceased to mourn for his horse, so this time he listened to the tale which the groom had invented, and sent for the youth. ‘Find me my horse in three days,’ said he, ‘or it will be the worse for you.’

The youth was thunderstruck at this command, but he only bowed, and went off at once to the stable.

‘Do not worry yourself,’ answered his own horse. ‘Ask the king to give you a hundred oxen, and to let them be killed and cut into small pieces.

Then we will start on our journey, and ride till we reach a certain river. There a horse will come up to you, but take no notice of him. Soon another will appear, and this also you must leave alone, but when the third horse shows itself, throw my bridle over it.'

Everything happened just as the horse had said, and the third horse was safely bridled. Then the other horse spoke again: 'The magician's raven will try to eat us as we ride away, but throw it some of the oxen's flesh, and then I will gallop like the wind, and carry you safe out of the dragon's clutches.'

So the young man did as he was told, and brought the horse back to the king.

The old stableman was very jealous, when he heard of it, and wondered what he could do to injure the youth in the eyes of his royal master. At last he hit upon a plan, and told the king that the young man had boasted that he could bring home the king's wife, who had vanished many months before, without leaving a trace behind her. Then the king bade the young man come into his presence, and desired him to fetch the queen home again, as he had boasted he could do. And if he failed, his head would pay the penalty.

The poor youth's heart stood still as he listened. Find the queen? But how was he to do that, when nobody in the palace had been able to do so! Slowly he walked to the stable, and laying his head on his horse's shoulder, he said: 'The king has ordered me to bring his wife home again, and how can I do that when she disappeared so long ago, and no one can tell me anything about her?'

'Cheer up!' answered the horse, 'we will manage to find her. You have only got to ride me back to the same river that we went to yesterday, and I will plunge into it and take my proper shape again. For I am the king's wife, who was turned into a horse by the magician from whom you saved me.'

Joyfully the young man sprang into the saddle and rode away to the banks of the river. Then he threw himself off, and waited while the horse plunged in. The moment it dipped its head into the water its black skin vanished, and the most beautiful woman in the world was floating on the water. She came smiling towards the youth, and held out her hand, and he took it and led her back to the palace. Great was the king's surprise and

happiness when he beheld his lost wife stand before him, and in gratitude to her rescuer he loaded him with gifts.

You would have thought that after this the poor youth would have been left in peace; but no, his enemy the stableman hated him as much as ever, and laid a new plot for his undoing. This time he presented himself before the king and told him that the youth was so puffed up with what he had done that he had declared he would seize the king's throne for himself.

At this news the king waxed so furious that he ordered a gallows to be erected at once, and the young man to be hanged without a trial. He was not even allowed to speak in his own defence, but on the very steps of the gallows he sent a message to the king and begged, as a last favour, that he might play a tune on his zither. Leave was given him, and taking the instrument from under his cloak he touched the strings. Scarcely had the first notes sounded than the hangman and his helper began to dance, and the louder grew the music the higher they capered, till at last they cried for mercy. But the youth paid no heed, and the tunes rang out more merrily than before, and by the time the sun set they both sank on the ground exhausted, and declared that the hanging must be put off till to-morrow.

The story of the zither soon spread through the town, and on the following morning the king and his whole court and a large crowd of people were gathered at the foot of the gallows to see the youth hanged. Once more he asked a favour—permission to play on his fiddle, and this the king was graciously pleased to grant. But with the first notes, the leg of every man in the crowd was lifted high, and they danced to the sound of the music the whole day till darkness fell, and there was no light to hang the musician by.

The third day came, and the youth asked leave to play on his flute. 'No, no,' said the king, 'you made me dance all day yesterday, and if I do it again it will certainly be my death. You shall play no more tunes. Quick! the rope round his neck.'

At these words the young man looked so sorrowful that the courtiers said to the king: 'He is very young to die. Let him play a tune if it will make him happy.' So, very unwillingly, the king gave him leave; but first he had himself bound to a big fir tree, for fear that he should be made to dance.

When he was made fast, the young man began to blow softly on his flute, and bound though he was, the king's body moved to the sound, up and down the fir tree till his clothes were in tatters, and the skin nearly rubbed off his back. But the youth had no pity, and went on blowing, till suddenly the old magician appeared and asked: 'What danger are you in, my son, that you have sent for me?'

'They want to hang me,' answered the young man; 'the gallows are all ready and the hangman is only waiting for me to stop playing.'

'Oh, I will put that right,' said the magician; and taking the gallows, he tore it up and flung it into the air, and no one knows where it came down. 'Who has ordered you to be hanged?' asked he.

The young man pointed to the king, who was still bound to the fir; and without wasting words the magician took hold of the tree also, and with a mighty heave both fir and man went spinning through the air, and vanished in the clouds after the gallows.

Then the youth was declared to be free, and the people elected him for their king; and the stable helper drowned himself from envy, for, after all, if it had not been for him the young man would have remained poor all the days of his life.

[From Finnische Mahrchen.]

THE STRONG PRINCE

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Once upon a time there lived a king who was so fond of wine that he could not go to sleep unless he knew he had a great flaskful tied to his bed-post. All day long he drank till he was too stupid to attend to his business, and everything in the kingdom went to rack and ruin. But one day an accident happened to him, and he was struck on the head by a falling bough, so that he fell from his horse and lay dead upon the ground.

His wife and son mourned his loss bitterly, for, in spite of his faults, he had always been kind to them. So they abandoned the crown and forsook their country, not knowing or caring where they went.

At length they wandered into a forest, and being very tired, sat down under a tree to eat some bread that they had brought with them. When they had finished the queen said: ‘My son, I am thirsty; fetch me some water.’

The prince got up at once and went to a brook which he heard gurgling near at hand. He stooped and filled his hat with the water, which he brought to his mother; then he turned and followed the stream up to its source in a rock, where it bubbled out clear and fresh and cold. He knelt down to take a draught from the deep pool below the rock, when he saw the reflection of a sword hanging from the branch of a tree over his head. The young man drew back with a start; but in a moment he climbed the tree, cutting the rope which held the sword, and carried the weapon to his mother.

The queen was greatly surprised at the sight of anything so splendid in such a lonely place, and took it in her hands to examine it closely. It was of curious workmanship, wrought with gold, and on its handle was written: ‘The man who can buckle on this sword will become stronger than other men.’ The queen’s heart swelled with joy as she read these words, and she bade her son lose no time in testing their truth. So he fastened it round his waist, and instantly a glow of strength seemed to run through his veins. He took hold of a thick oak tree and rooted it up as easily as if it had been a weed.

This discovery put new life into the queen and her son, and they continued their walk through the forest. But night was drawing on, and the darkness grew so thick that it seemed as if it could be cut with a knife. They did not want to sleep in the wood, for they were afraid of wolves and other wild beasts, so they groped their way along, hand in hand, till the prince tripped over something which lay across the path. He could not see what it was, but stooped down and tried to lift it. The thing was very heavy, and he thought his back would break under the strain. At last with a great heave he moved it out of the road, and as it fell he knew it was a huge rock. Behind the rock was a cave which it was quite clear was the home of some robbers, though not one of the band was there.

Hastily putting out the fire which burned brightly at the back, and bidding his mother come in and keep very still, the prince began to pace up and down, listening for the return of the robbers. But he was very sleepy, and in spite of all his efforts he felt he could not keep awake much longer, when he heard the sound of the robbers returning, shouting and singing as they marched along. Soon the singing ceased, and straining his ears he heard them discussing anxiously what had become of their cave, and why they could not see the fire as usual. ‘This must be the place,’ said a voice, which the prince took to be that of the captain. ‘Yes, I feel the ditch before the entrance. Someone forgot to pile up the fire before we left and it has burnt itself out! But it is all right. Let every man jump across, and as he does so cry out “Hop! I am here.” I will go last. Now begin.’

The man who stood nearest jumped across, but he had no time to give the call which the captain had ordered, for with one swift, silent stroke of the prince’s sword, his head rolled into a corner. Then the young man cried instead, ‘Hop! I am here.’

The second man, hearing the signal, leapt the ditch in confidence, and was met by the same fate, and in a few minutes eleven of the robbers lay dead, and there remained only the captain.

Now the captain had wound round his neck the shawl of his lost wife, and the stroke of the prince’s sword fell harmless. Being very cunning, however, he made no resistance, and rolled over as if he were as dead as the other men. Still, the prince was no fool, and wondered if indeed he was as dead as he seemed to be; but the captain lay so stiff and stark, that at last he was taken in.

The prince next dragged the headless bodies into a chamber in the cave, and locked the door. Then he and his mother ransacked the place for some food, and when they had eaten it they lay down and slept in peace.

With the dawn they were both awake again, and found that, instead of the cave which they had come to the night before, they now were in a splendid castle, full of beautiful rooms. The prince went round all these and carefully locked them up, bidding his mother take care of the keys while he was hunting.

Unfortunately, the queen, like all women, could not bear to think that there was anything which she did not know. So the moment that her son had turned his back, she opened the doors of all the rooms, and peeped in, till she came to the one where the robbers lay. But if the sight of the blood on the ground turned her faint, the sight of the robber captain walking up and down was a greater shock still. She quickly turned the key in the lock, and ran back to the chamber she had slept in.

Soon after her son came in, bringing with him a large bear, which he had killed for supper. As there was enough food to last them for many days, the prince did not hunt the next morning, but, instead, began to explore the castle. He found that a secret way led from it into the forest; and following the path, he reached another castle larger and more splendid than the one belonging to the robbers. He knocked at the door with his fist, and said that he wanted to enter; but the giant, to whom the castle belonged, only answered: ‘I know who you are. I have nothing to do with robbers.’

‘I am no robber,’ answered the prince. ‘I am the son of a king, and I have killed all the band. If you do not open to me at once I will break in the door, and your head shall go to join the others.’

He waited a little, but the door remained shut as tightly as before. Then he just put his shoulder to it, and immediately the wood began to crack. When the giant found that it was no use keeping it shut, he opened it, saying: ‘I see you are a brave youth. Let there be peace between us.’

And the prince was glad to make peace, for he had caught a glimpse of the giant’s beautiful daughter, and from that day he often sought the giant’s house.

Now the queen led a dull life all alone in the castle, and to amuse herself she paid visits to the robber captain, who flattered her till at last

she agreed to marry him. But as she was much afraid of her son, she told the robber that the next time the prince went to bathe in the river, he was to steal the sword from its place above the bed, for without it the young man would have no power to punish him for his boldness.

The robber captain thought this good counsel, and the next morning, when the young man went to bathe, he unhooked the sword from its nail and buckled it round his waist. On his return to the castle, the prince found the robber waiting for him on the steps, waving the sword above his head, and knowing that some horrible fate was in store, fell on his knees and begged for mercy. But he might as well have tried to squeeze blood out of a stone. The robber, indeed, granted him his life, but took out both his eyes, which he thrust into the prince's hand, saying brutally:

'Here, you had better keep them! You may find them useful!'

Weeping, the blind youth felt his way to the giant's house, and told him all the story.

The giant was full of pity for the poor young man, but inquired anxiously what he had done with the eyes. The prince drew them out of his pocket, and silently handed them to the giant, who washed them well, and then put them back in the prince's head. For three days he lay in utter darkness; then the light began to come back, till soon he saw as well as ever.

But though he could not rejoice enough over the recovery of his eyes, he bewailed bitterly the loss of his sword, and that it should have fallen to the lot of his bitter enemy.

'Never mind, my friend,' said the giant, 'I will get it back for you.' And he sent for the monkey who was his head servant.

'Tell the fox and the squirrel that they are to go with you, and fetch me back the prince's sword,' ordered he.

The three servants set out at once, one seated on the back of the others, the ape, who disliked walking, being generally on top. Directly they came to the window of the robber captain's room, the monkey sprang from the backs of the fox and the squirrel, and climbed in. The room was empty, and the sword hanging from a nail. He took it down, and buckling it round his waist, as he had seen the prince do, swung himself down again, and mounting on the backs of his two companions, hastened to his master. The

giant bade him give the sword to the prince, who girded himself with it, and returned with all speed to the castle.

‘Come out, you rascal! come out, you villain!’ cried he, ‘and answer to me for the wrong you have done. I will show you who is the master in this house!’

The noise he made brought the robber into the room. He glanced up to where the sword usually hung, but it was gone; and instinctively he looked at the prince’s hand, where he saw it gleaming brightly. In his turn he fell on his knees to beg for mercy, but it was too late. As he had done to the prince, so the prince did to him, and, blinded, he was thrust forth, and fell down a deep hole, where he is to this day. His mother the prince sent back to her father, and never would see her again. After this he returned to the giant, and said to him:

‘My friend, add one more kindness to those you have already heaped on me. Give me your daughter as my wife.’

So they were married, and the wedding feast was so splendid that there was not a kingdom in the world that did not hear of it. And the prince never went back to his father’s throne, but lived peacefully with his wife in the forest, where, if they are not dead, they are living still.

[From Ungarische Volksmarchen.]

THE TREASURE SEEKER

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Once, long ago, in a little town that lay in the midst of high hills and wild forests, a party of shepherds sat one night in the kitchen of the inn talking over old times, and telling of the strange things that had befallen them in their youth.

Presently up spoke the silver-haired Father Martin.

‘Comrades,’ said he, ‘you have had wonderful adventures; but I will tell you something still more astonishing that happened to myself. When I was a young lad I had no home and no one to care for me, and I wandered from village to village all over the country with my knapsack on my back; but as soon as I was old enough I took service with a shepherd in the mountains, and helped him for three years. One autumn evening as we drove the flock homeward ten sheep were missing, and the master bade me go and seek them in the forest. I took my dog with me, but he could find no trace of them, though we searched among the bushes till night fell; and then, as I did not know the country and could not find my way home in the dark, I decided to sleep under a tree. At midnight my dog became uneasy, and began to whine and creep close to me with his tail between his legs; by this I knew that something was wrong, and, looking about, I saw in the bright moonlight a figure standing beside me. It seemed to be a man with shaggy hair, and a long beard which hung down to his knees. He had a garland upon his head, and a girdle of oak-leaves about his body, and carried an uprooted fir-tree in his right hand. I shook like an aspen leaf at the sight, and my spirit quaked for fear. The strange being beckoned with his hand that I should follow him; but as I did not stir from the spot he spoke in a hoarse, grating voice: “Take courage, fainthearted shepherd. I am the Treasure Seeker of the mountain. If you will come with me you shall dig up much gold.”

‘Though I was still deadly cold with terror I plucked up my courage and said: “Get away from me, evil spirit; I do not desire your treasures.”

‘At this the spectre grinned in my face and cried mockingly:

‘“Simpleton! Do you scorn your good fortune? Well, then, remain a ragamuffin all your days.”

‘He turned as if to go away from me, then came back again and said: “Bethink yourself, bethink yourself, rogue. I will fill your knapsack—I will fill your pouch.”

‘“Away from me, monster,” I answered, “I will have nothing to do with you.”

‘When the apparition saw that I gave no heed to him he ceased to urge me, saying only: “Some day you will rue this,” and looked at me sadly. Then he cried: “Listen to what I say, and lay it well to heart, it may be of use to you when you come to your senses. A vast treasure of gold and precious stones lies in safety deep under the earth. At twilight and at high noon it is hidden, but at midnight it may be dug up. For seven hundred years have I watched over it, but now my time has come; it is common property, let him find it who can. So I thought to give it into your hand, having a kindness for you because you feed your flock upon my mountain.”

‘Thereupon the spectre told me exactly where the treasure lay, and how to find it. It might be only yesterday so well do I remember every word he spoke.

‘“Go towards the little mountains,” said he, “and ask there for the Black King’s Valley, and when you come to a tiny brook follow the stream till you reach the stone bridge beside the saw-mill. Do not cross the bridge, but keep to your right along the bank till a high rock stands before you. A bow-shot from that you will discover a little hollow like a grave. When you find this hollow dig it out; but it will be hard work, for the earth has been pressed down into it with care. Still, work away till you find solid rock on all sides of you, and soon you will come to a square slab of stone; force it out of the wall, and you will stand at the entrance of the treasure house. Into this opening you must crawl, holding a lamp in your mouth. Keep your hands free lest you knock your nose against a stone, for the way is steep and the stones sharp. If it bruises your knees never mind; you are on the road to fortune. Do not rest till you reach a wide stairway, down which you will go till you come out into a spacious hall, in which there are three doors; two of them stand open, the third is fastened with locks and bolts of iron. Do not go through the door to the right lest you disturb the

bones of the lords of the treasure. Neither must you go through the door to the left, it leads to the snake's chamber, where adders and serpents lodge; but open the fast-closed door by means of the well-known spring-root, which you must on no account forget to take with you, or all your trouble will be for naught, for no crowbar or mortal tools will help you. If you want to procure the root ask a wood-seller; it is a common thing for hunters to need, and it is not hard to find. If the door bursts open suddenly with great crackings and groanings do not be afraid, the noise is caused by the power of the magic root, and you will not be hurt. Now trim your lamp that it may not fail you, for you will be nearly blinded by the flash and glitter of the gold and precious stones on the walls and pillars of the vault; but beware how you stretch out a hand towards the jewels! In the midst of the cavern stands a copper chest, in that you will find gold and silver, enough and to spare, and you may help yourself to your heart's content. If you take as much as you can carry you will have sufficient to last your lifetime, and you may return three times; but woe betide you if you venture to come a fourth time. You would have your trouble for your pains, and would be punished for your greediness by falling down the stone steps and breaking your leg. Do not neglect each time to heap back the loose earth which concealed the entrance of the king's treasure chamber."

'As the apparition left off speaking my dog pricked up his ears and began to bark. I heard the crack of a carter's whip and the noise of wheels in the distance, and when I looked again the spectre had disappeared.'

So ended the shepherd's tale; and the landlord who was listening with the rest, said shrewdly:

'Tell us now, Father Martin, did you go to the mountain and find what the spirit promised you; or is it a fable?'

'Nay, nay,' answered the graybeard. 'I cannot tell if the spectre lied, for never a step did I go towards finding the hollow, for two reasons:—one was that my neck was too precious for me to risk it in such a snare as that; the other, that no one could ever tell me where the spring-root was to be found.'

Then Blaize, another aged shepherd, lifted up his voice.

"Tis a pity, Father Martin, that your secret has grown old with you. If you had told it forty years ago truly you would not long have been lacking

the spring-root. Even though you will never climb the mountain now, I will tell you, for a joke, how it is to be found. The easiest way to get it is by the help of a black woodpecker. Look, in the spring, where she builds her nest in a hole in a tree, and when the time comes for her brood to fly off block up the entrance to the nest with a hard sod, and lurk in ambush behind the tree till the bird returns to feed her nestlings. When she perceives that she cannot get into her nest she will fly round the tree uttering cries of distress, and then dart off towards the sun-setting. When you see her do this, take a scarlet cloak, or if that be lacking to you, buy a few yards of scarlet cloth, and hurry back to the tree before the woodpecker returns with the spring-root in her beak. So soon as she touches with the root the sod that blocks the nest, it will fly violently out of the hole. Then spread the red cloth quickly under the tree, so that the woodpecker may think it is a fire, and in her terror drop the root. Some people really light a fire and strew spikenard blossoms in it; but that is a clumsy method, for if the flames do not shoot up at the right moment away will fly the woodpecker, carrying the root with her."

The party had listened with interest to this speech, but by the time it was ended the hour was late, and they went their ways homeward, leaving only one man who had sat unheeded in a corner the whole evening through.

Master Peter Bloch had once been a prosperous innkeeper, and a master-cook; but he had gone steadily down in the world for some time, and was now quite poor.

Formerly he had been a merry fellow, fond of a joke, and in the art of cooking had no equal in the town. He could make fish-jelly, and quince fritters, and even wafer-cakes; and he gilded the ears of all his boars' heads. Peter had looked about him for a wife early in life, but unluckily his choice fell upon a woman whose evil tongue was well known in the town. Ilse was hated by everybody, and the young folks would go miles out of their way rather than meet her, for she had some ill-word for everyone. Therefore, when Master Peter came along, and let himself be taken in by her boasted skill as a housewife, she jumped at his offer, and they were married the next day. But they had not got home before they began to quarrel. In the joy of his heart Peter had tasted freely of his own good wine, and as the bride hung upon his arm he stumbled and fell, dragging

her down with him; whereupon she beat him soundly, and the neighbours said truly that things did not promise well for Master Peter's comfort. Even when the ill-matched couple were presently blessed with children, his happiness was but short lived, the savage temper of his quarrelsome wife seemed to blight them from the first, and they died like little kids in a cold winter.

Though Master Peter had no great wealth to leave behind him, still it was sad to him to be childless; and he would bemoan himself to his friends, when he laid one baby after another in the grave, saying: 'The lightning has been among the cherry-blossoms again, so there will be no fruit to grow ripe.'

But, by-and-by, he had a little daughter so strong and healthy that neither her mother's temper nor her father's spoiling could keep her from growing up tall and beautiful. Meanwhile the fortunes of the family had changed. From his youth up, Master Peter had hated trouble; when he had money he spent it freely, and fed all the hungry folk who asked him for bread. If his pockets were empty he borrowed of his neighbours, but he always took good care to prevent his scolding wife from finding out that he had done so. His motto was: 'It will all come right in the end'; but what it did come to was ruin for Master Peter. He was at his wits' end to know how to earn an honest living, for try as he might ill-luck seemed to pursue him, and he lost one post after another, till at last all he could do was to carry sacks of corn to the mill for his wife, who scolded him well if he was slow about it, and grudged him his portion of food.

This grieved the tender heart of his pretty daughter, who loved him dearly, and was the comfort of his life.

Peter was thinking of her as he sat in the inn kitchen and heard the shepherds talking about the buried treasure, and for her sake he resolved to go and seek for it. Before he rose from the landlord's arm-chair his plan was made, and Master Peter went home more joyful and full of hope than he had been for many a long day; but on the way he suddenly remembered that he was not yet possessed of the magic spring-root, and he stole into the house with a heavy heart, and threw himself down upon his hard straw bed. He could neither sleep nor rest; but as soon as it was light he got up and wrote down exactly all that was to be done to find the treasure, that he might not forget anything, and when it lay clear and plain before his eyes

he comforted himself with the thought that, though he must do the rough work for his wife during one more winter at least, he would not have to tread the path to the mill for the rest of his life. Soon he heard his wife's harsh voice singing its morning song as she went about her household affairs, scolding her daughter the while. She burst open his door while he was still dressing: 'Well, Toper!' was her greeting, 'have you been drinking all night, wasting money that you steal from my housekeeping? For shame, drunkard!'

Master Peter, who was well used to this sort of talk, did not disturb himself, but waited till the storm blew over, then he said calmly:

'Do not be annoyed, dear wife. I have a good piece of business in hand which may turn out well for us.'

'You with a good business?' cried she, 'you are good for nothing but talk!'

'I am making my will,' said he, 'that when my hour comes my house may be in order.'

These unexpected words cut his daughter to the heart; she remembered that all night long she had dreamed of a newly dug grave, and at this thought she broke out into loud lamentations. But her mother only cried: 'Wretch! have you not wasted goods and possessions, and now do you talk of making a will?'

And she seized him like a fury, and tried to scratch out his eyes. But by-and-by the quarrel was patched up, and everything went on as before. From that day Peter saved up every penny that his daughter Lucia gave him on the sly, and bribed the boys of his acquaintance to spy out a black woodpecker's nest for him. He sent them into the woods and fields, but instead of looking for a nest they only played pranks on him. They led him miles over hill and vale, stock and stone, to find a raven's brood, or a nest of squirrels in a hollow tree, and when he was angry with them they laughed in his face and ran away. This went on for some time, but at last one of the boys spied out a woodpecker in the meadow-lands among the wood-pigeons, and when he had found her nest in a half-dead alder tree, came running to Peter with the news of his discovery. Peter could hardly believe his good fortune, and went quickly to see for himself if it was really true; and when he reached the tree there certainly was a bird flying in and out as if she had a nest in it. Peter was overjoyed at this fortunate

discovery, and instantly set himself to obtain a red cloak. Now in the whole town there was only one red cloak, and that belonged to a man of whom nobody ever willingly asked a favour—Master Hammerling the hangman. It cost Master Peter many struggles before he could bring himself to visit such a person, but there was no help for it, and, little as he liked it, he ended by making his request to the hangman, who was flattered that so respectable a man as Peter should borrow his robe of office, and willingly lent it to him.

Peter now had all that was necessary to secure the magic root; he stopped up the entrance to the nest, and everything fell out exactly as Blaize had foretold. As soon as the woodpecker came back with the root in her beak out rushed Master Peter from behind the tree and displayed the fiery red cloak so adroitly that the terrified bird dropped the root just where it could be easily seen. All Peter's plans had succeeded, and he actually held in his hand the magic root—that master-key which would unlock all doors, and bring its possessor unheard-of luck. His thoughts now turned to the mountain, and he secretly made preparations for his journey. He took with him only a staff, a strong sack, and a little box which his daughter Lucia had given him.

It happened that on the very day Peter had chosen for setting out, Lucia and her mother went off early to the town, leaving him to guard the house; but in spite of that he was on the point of taking his departure when it occurred to him that it might be as well first to test the much-vaunted powers of the magic root for himself. Dame Ilse had a strong cupboard with seven locks built into the wall of her room, in which she kept all the money she had saved, and she wore the key of it always hung about her neck. Master Peter had no control at all of the money affairs of the household, so the contents of this secret hoard were quite unknown to him, and this seemed to be a good opportunity for finding out what they were. He held the magic root to the keyhole, and to his astonishment heard all the seven locks creaking and turning, the door flew suddenly wide open, and his greedy wife's store of gold pieces lay before his eyes. He stood still in sheer amazement, not knowing which to rejoice over most—this unexpected find, or the proof of the magic root's real power; but at last he remembered that it was quite time to be starting on his journey. So, filling his pockets with the gold, he carefully locked the empty cupboard again

and left the house without further delay. When Dame Ilse and her daughter returned they wondered to find the house door shut, and Master Peter nowhere to be seen. They knocked and called, but nothing stirred within but the house cat, and at last the blacksmith had to be fetched to open the door. Then the house was searched from garret to cellar, but no Master Peter was to be found.

‘Who knows?’ cried Dame Ilse at last, ‘the wretch may have been idling in some tavern since early morning.’

Then a sudden thought startled her, and she felt for her keys. Suppose they had fallen into her good-for-nothing husband’s hands and he had helped himself to her treasure! But no, the keys were safe in their usual place, and the cupboard looked quite untouched. Mid-day came, then evening, then midnight, and still no Master Peter appeared, and the matter became really serious. Dame Ilse knew right well what a torment she had been to her husband, and remorse caused her the gloomiest forebodings.

‘Ah! Lucia,’ she cried, ‘I greatly fear that your father has done himself a mischief.’ And they sat till morning weeping over their own fancies.

As soon as it was light they searched every corner of the house again, and examined every nail in the wall and every beam; but, luckily, Master Peter was not hanging from any of them. After that the neighbours went out with long poles to fish in every ditch and pond, but they found nothing, and then Dame Ilse gave up the idea of ever seeing her husband again and very soon consoled herself, only wondering how the sacks of corn were to be carried to the mill in future. She decided to buy a strong ass to do the work, and having chosen one, and after some bargaining with the owner as to its price, she went to the cupboard in the wall to fetch the money. But what were her feelings when she perceived that every shelf lay empty and bare before her! For a moment she stood bewildered, then broke into such frightful ravings that Lucia ran to her in alarm; but as soon as she heard of the disappearance of the money she was heartily glad, and no longer feared that her father had come to any harm, but understood that he must have gone out into the world to seek his fortune in some new way.

About a month after this, someone knocked at Dame Ilse’s door one day, and she went to see if it was a customer for meal; but in stepped a handsome young man, dressed like a duke’s son, who greeted her

respectfully, and asked after her pretty daughter as if he were an old friend, though she could not remember having ever set eyes upon him before.

However, she invited him to step into the house and be seated while he unfolded his business. With a great air of mystery he begged permission to speak to the fair Lucia, of whose skill in needlework he had heard so much, as he had a commission to give her. Dame Ilse had her own opinion as to what kind of commission it was likely to be—brought by a young stranger to a pretty maiden; however, as the meeting would be under her own eye, she made no objection, but called to her industrious daughter, who left off working and came obediently; but when she saw the stranger she stopped short, blushing, and casting down her eyes. He looked at her fondly, and took her hand, which she tried to draw away, crying:

‘Ah! Friedlin, why are you here? I thought you were a hundred miles away. Are you come to grieve me again?’

‘No, dearest girl,’ answered he; ‘I am come to complete your happiness and my own. Since we last met my fortune has utterly changed; I am no longer the poor vagabond that I was then. My rich uncle has died, leaving me money and goods in plenty, so that I dare to present myself to your mother as a suitor for your hand. That I love you I know well; if you can love me I am indeed a happy man.’

Lucia’s pretty blue eyes had looked up shyly as he spoke, and now a smile parted her rosy lips; and she stole a glance at her mother to see what she thought about it all; but the dame stood lost in amazement to find that her daughter, whom she could have declared had never been out of her sight, was already well acquainted with the handsome stranger, and quite willing to be his bride. Before she had done staring, this hasty wooer had smoothed his way by covering the shining table with gold pieces as a wedding gift to the bride’s mother, and had filled Lucia’s apron into the bargain; after which the dame made no difficulties, and the matter was speedily settled.

While Ilse gathered up the gold and hid it away safely, the lovers whispered together, and what Friedlin told her seemed to make Lucia every moment more happy and contented.

Now a great hurry-burly began in the house, and preparations for the wedding went on apace. A few days later a heavily laden waggon drove up, and out of it came so many boxes and bales that Dame Ilse was lost in

wonder at the wealth of her future son-in-law. The day for the wedding was chosen, and all their friends and neighbours were bidden to the feast. As Lucia was trying on her bridal wreath she said to her mother: ‘This wedding-garland would please me indeed if father Peter could lead me to the church. If only he could come back again! Here we are rolling in riches while he may be nibbling at hunger’s table.’ And the very idea of such a thing made her weep, while even Dame Ilse said:

‘I should not be sorry myself to see him come back—there is always something lacking in a house when the good man is away.’

But the fact was that she was growing quite tired of having no one to scold. And what do you think happened?

On the very eve of the wedding a man pushing a wheelbarrow arrived at the city gate, and paid toll upon a barrel of nails which it contained, and then made the best of his way to the bride’s dwelling and knocked at the door.

The bride herself peeped out of the window to see who it could be, and there stood father Peter! Then there was great rejoicing in the house; Lucia ran to embrace him, and even Dame Ilse held out her hand in welcome, and only said: ‘Rogue, mend your ways,’ when she remembered the empty treasure cupboard. Father Peter greeted the bridegroom, looking at him shrewdly, while the mother and daughter hastened to say all they knew in his favour, and appeared to be satisfied with him as a son-in-law. When Dame Ilse had set something to eat before her husband, she was curious to hear his adventures, and questioned him eagerly as to why he had gone away.

‘God bless my native place,’ said he. ‘I have been marching through the country, and have tried every kind of work, but now I have found a job in the iron trade; only, so far, I have put more into it than I have earned by it. This barrel of nails is my whole fortune, which I wish to give as my contribution towards the bride’s house furnishing.’

This speech roused Dame Ilse to anger, and she broke out into such shrill reproaches that the bystanders were fairly deafened, and Friedlin hastily offered Master Peter a home with Lucia and himself, promising that he should live in comfort, and be always welcome. So Lucia had her heart’s desire, and father Peter led her to the church next day, and the marriage took place very happily. Soon afterwards the young people

settled in a fine house which Friedlin had bought, and had a garden and meadows, a fishpond, and a hill covered with vines, and were as happy as the day was long. Father Peter also stayed quietly with them, living, as everybody believed, upon the generosity of his rich son-in law. No one suspected that his barrel of nails was the real ‘Horn of Plenty,’ from which all this prosperity overflowed.

Peter had made the journey to the treasure mountain successfully, without being found out by anybody. He had enjoyed himself by the way, and taken his own time, until he actually reached the little brook in the valley which it had cost him some trouble to find. Then he pressed on eagerly, and soon came to the little hollow in the wood; down he went, burrowing like a mole into the earth; the magic root did its work, and at last the treasure lay before his eyes. You may imagine how gaily Peter filled his sack with as much gold as he could carry, and how he staggered up the seventy-seven steps with a heart full of hope and delight. He did not quite trust the gnome’s promises of safety, and was in such haste to find himself once more in the light of day that he looked neither to the right nor the left, and could not afterwards remember whether the walls and pillars had sparkled with jewels or not.

However, all went well—he neither saw nor heard anything alarming; the only thing that happened was that the great iron-barred door shut with a crash as soon as he was fairly outside it, and then he remembered that he had left the magic root behind him, so he could not go back for another load of treasure. But even that did not trouble Peter much; he was quite satisfied with what he had already. After he had faithfully done everything according to Father Martin’s instructions, and pressed the earth well back into the hollow, he sat down to consider how he could bring his treasure back to his native place, and enjoy it there, without being forced to share it with his scolding wife, who would give him no peace if she once found out about it. At last, after much thinking, he hit upon a plan. He carried his sack to the nearest village, and there bought a wheelbarrow, a strong barrel, and a quantity of nails. Then he packed his gold into the barrel, covered it well with a layer of nails, hoisted it on to the wheelbarrow with some difficulty, and set off with it upon his homeward way. At one place upon the road he met a handsome young man who seemed by his downcast air to be in some great trouble. Father Peter, who wished everybody to be

as happy as he was himself, greeted him cheerfully, and asked where he was going, to which he answered sadly:

‘Into the wide world, good father, or out of it, where ever my feet may chance to carry me.’

‘Why out of it?’ said Peter. ‘What has the world been doing to you?’

‘It has done nothing to me, nor I to it,’ he replied. ‘Nevertheless there is not anything left in it for me.’

Father Peter did his best to cheer the young man up, and invited him to sup with him at the first inn they came to, thinking that perhaps hunger and poverty were causing the stranger’s trouble. But when good food was set before him he seemed to forget to eat. So Peter perceived that what ailed his guest was sorrow of heart, and asked him kindly to tell him his story.

‘Where is the good, father?’ said he. ‘You can give me neither help nor comfort.’

‘Who knows?’ answered Master Peter. ‘I might be able to do something for you. Often enough in life help comes to us from the most unexpected quarter.’

The young man, thus encouraged, began his tale.

‘I am,’ said he, ‘a crossbow-man in the service of a noble count, in whose castle I was brought up. Not long ago my master went on a journey, and brought back with him, amongst other treasures, the portrait of a fair maiden so sweet and lovely that I lost my heart at first sight of it, and could think of nothing but how I might seek her out and marry her. The count had told me her name, and where she lived, but laughed at my love, and absolutely refused to give me leave to go in search of her, so I was forced to run away from the castle by night. I soon reached the little town where the maiden dwelt; but there fresh difficulties awaited me. She lived under the care of her mother, who was so severe that she was never allowed to look out of the window, or set her foot outside the door alone, and how to make friends with her I did not know. But at last I dressed myself as an old woman, and knocked boldly at her door. The lovely maiden herself opened it, and so charmed me that I came near forgetting my disguise; but I soon recovered my wits, and begged her to work a fine table-cloth for me, for she is reported to be the best needlewoman in all the country round. Now I was free to go and see her often under the

presence of seeing how the work was going oil, and one day, when her mother had gone to the town, I ventured to throw off my disguise, and tell her of my love. She was startled at first; but I persuaded her to listen to me, and I soon saw that I was not displeasing to her, though she scolded me gently for my disobedience to my master, and my deceit in disguising myself. But when I begged her to marry me, she told me sadly that her mother would scorn a penniless wooer, and implored me to go away at once, lest trouble should fall upon her.

‘Bitter as it was to me, I was forced to go when she bade me, and I have wandered about ever since, with grief gnawing at my heart; for how can a masterless man, without money or goods, ever hope to win the lovely Lucia?’

Master Peter, who had been listening attentively, pricked up his ears at the sound of his daughter’s name, and very soon found out that it was indeed with her that this young man was so deeply in love.

‘Your story is strange indeed,’ said he. ‘But where is the father of this maiden—why do you not ask him for her hand? He might well take your part, and be glad to have you for his son-in-law.’

‘Alas!’ said the young man, ‘her father is a wandering good-for-naught, who has forsaken wife and child, and gone off—who knows where? The wife complains of him bitterly enough, and scolds my dear maiden when she takes her father’s part.’

Father Peter was somewhat amused by this speech; but he liked the young man well, and saw that he was the very person he needed to enable him to enjoy his wealth in peace, without being separated from his dear daughter.

‘If you will take my advice,’ said he, ‘I promise you that you shall marry this maiden whom you love so much, and that before you are many days older.’

‘Comrade,’ cried Friedlin indignantly, for he thought Peter did but jest with him, ‘it is ill done to mock at an unhappy man; you had better find someone else who will let himself be taken in with your fine promises.’ And up he sprang, and was going off hastily, when Master Peter caught him by the arm.

‘Stay, hothead!’ he cried; ‘it is no jest, and I am prepared to make good my words.’

Thereupon he showed him the treasure hidden under the nails, and unfolded to him his plan, which was that Friedlin should play the part of the rich son-in-law, and keep a still tongue, that they might enjoy their wealth together in peace.

The young man was overjoyed at this sudden change in his fortunes, and did not know how to thank father Peter for his generosity. They took the road again at dawn the next morning, and soon reached a town, where Friedlin equipped himself as a gallant wooer should. Father Peter filled his pockets with gold for the wedding dowry, and agreed with him that when all was settled he should secretly send him word that Peter might send off the waggon load of house plenishings with which the rich bridegroom was to make such a stir in the little town where the bride lived. As they parted, father Peter's last commands to Friedlin were to guard well their secret, and not even to tell it to Lucia till she was his wife.

Master Peter long enjoyed the profits of his journey to the mountain, and no rumour of it ever got abroad. In his old age his prosperity was so great that he himself did not know how rich he was; but it was always supposed that the money was Friedlin's. He and his beloved wife lived in the greatest happiness and peace, and rose to great honour in the town. And to this day, when the citizens wish to describe a wealthy man, they say: 'As rich as Peter Bloch's son-in-law!'

THE COTTAGER AND HIS CAT

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Once upon a time there lived an old man and his wife in a dirty, tumble-down cottage, not very far from the splendid palace where the king and queen dwelt. In spite of the wretched state of the hut, which many people declared was too bad even for a pig to live in, the old man was very rich, for he was a great miser, and lucky besides, and would often go without food all day sooner than change one of his beloved gold pieces.

But after a while he found that he had starved himself once too often. He fell ill, and had no strength to get well again, and in a few days he died, leaving his wife and one son behind him.

The night following his death, the son dreamed that an unknown man appeared to him and said: ‘Listen to me; your father is dead and your mother will soon die, and all their riches will belong to you. Half of his wealth is ill-gotten, and this you must give back to the poor from whom he squeezed it. The other half you must throw into the sea. Watch, however, as the money sinks into the water, and if anything should swim, catch it and keep it, even if it is nothing more than a bit of paper.’

Then the man vanished, and the youth awoke.

The remembrance of his dream troubled him greatly. He did not want to part with the riches that his father had left him, for he had known all his life what it was to be cold and hungry, and now he had hoped for a little comfort and pleasure. Still, he was honest and good-hearted, and if his father had come wrongfully by his wealth he felt he could never enjoy it, and at last he made up his mind to do as he had been bidden. He found out who were the people who were poorest in the village, and spent half of his money in helping them, and the other half he put in his pocket. From a rock that jutted right out into the sea he flung it in. In a moment it was out of sight, and no man could have told the spot where it had sunk, except for a tiny scrap of paper floating on the water. He stretched down carefully and managed to reach it, and on opening it found six shillings wrapped inside. This was now all the money he had in the world.

The young man stood and looked at it thoughtfully. ‘Well, I can’t do much with this,’ he said to himself; but, after all, six shillings were better than nothing, and he wrapped them up again and slipped them into his coat.

He worked in his garden for the next few weeks, and he and his mother contrived to live on the fruit and vegetables he got out of it, and then she too died suddenly. The poor fellow felt very sad when he had laid her in her grave, and with a heavy heart he wandered into the forest, not knowing where he was going. By-and-by he began to get hungry, and seeing a small hut in front of him, he knocked at the door and asked if they could give him some milk. The old woman who opened it begged him to come in, adding kindly, that if he wanted a night’s lodging he might have it without its costing him anything.

Two women and three men were at supper when he entered, and silently made room for him to sit down by them. When he had eaten he began to look about him, and was surprised to see an animal sitting by the fire different from anything he had ever noticed before. It was grey in colour, and not very big; but its eyes were large and very bright, and it seemed to be singing in an odd way, quite unlike any animal in the forest. ‘What is the name of that strange little creature?’ asked he. And they answered, ‘We call it a cat.’

‘I should like to buy it—if it is not too dear,’ said the young man; ‘it would be company for me.’ And they told him that he might have it for six shillings, if he cared to give so much. The young man took out his precious bit of paper, handed them the six shillings, and the next morning bade them farewell, with the cat lying snugly in his cloak.

For the whole day they wandered through meadows and forests, till in the evening they reached a house. The young fellow knocked at the door and asked the old man who opened it if he could rest there that night, adding that he had no money to pay for it. ‘Then I must give it to you,’ answered the man, and led him into a room where two women and two men were sitting at supper. One of the women was the old man’s wife, the other his daughter. He placed the cat on the mantel shelf, and they all crowded round to examine this strange beast, and the cat rubbed itself against them, and held out its paw, and sang to them; and the women were

delighted, and gave it everything that a cat could eat, and a great deal more besides.

After hearing the youth's story, and how he had nothing in the world left him except his cat, the old man advised him to go to the palace, which was only a few miles distant, and take counsel of the king, who was kind to everyone, and would certainly be his friend. The young man thanked him, and said he would gladly take his advice; and early next morning he set out for the royal palace.

He sent a message to the king to beg for an audience, and received a reply that he was to go into the great hall, where he would find his Majesty.

The king was at dinner with his court when the young man entered, and he signed to him to come near. The youth bowed low, and then gazed in surprise at the crowd of little black creatures who were running about the floor, and even on the table itself. Indeed, they were so bold that they snatched pieces of food from the King's own plate, and if he drove them away, tried to bite his hands, so that he could not eat his food, and his courtiers fared no better.

'What sort of animals are these?' asked the youth of one of the ladies sitting near him.

'They are called rats,' answered the king, who had overheard the question, 'and for years we have tried some way of putting an end to them, but it is impossible. They come into our very beds.'

At this moment something was seen flying through the air. The cat was on the table, and with two or three shakes a number of rats were lying dead round him. Then a great scuffling of feet was heard, and in a few minutes the hall was clear.

For some minutes the King and his courtiers only looked at each other in astonishment. 'What kind of animal is that which can work magic of this sort?' asked he. And the young man told him that it was called a cat, and that he had bought it for six shillings.

And the King answered: 'Because of the luck you have brought me, in freeing my palace from the plague which has tormented me for many years, I will give you the choice of two things. Either you shall be my Prime Minister, or else you shall marry my daughter and reign after me. Say, which shall it be?'

‘The princess and the kingdom,’ said the young man.
And so it was.

[From Islandische Marchen.]

THE PRINCE WHO WOULD SEEK IMMORTALITY

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Once upon a time, in the very middle of the middle of a large kingdom, there was a town, and in the town a palace, and in the palace a king. This king had one son whom his father thought was wiser and cleverer than any son ever was before, and indeed his father had spared no pains to make him so. He had been very careful in choosing his tutors and governors when he was a boy, and when he became a youth he sent him to travel, so that he might see the ways of other people, and find that they were often as good as his own.

It was now a year since the prince had returned home, for his father felt that it was time that his son should learn how to rule the kingdom which would one day be his. But during his long absence the prince seemed to have changed his character altogether. From being a merry and light-hearted boy, he had grown into a gloomy and thoughtful man. The king knew of nothing that could have produced such an alteration. He vexed himself about it from morning till night, till at length an explanation occurred to him—the young man was in love!

Now the prince never talked about his feelings—for the matter of that he scarcely talked at all; and the father knew that if he was to come to the bottom of the prince's dismal face, he would have to begin. So one day, after dinner, he took his son by the arm and led him into another room, hung entirely with the pictures of beautiful maidens, each one more lovely than the other.

'My dear boy,' he said, 'you are very sad; perhaps after all your wanderings it is dull for you here all alone with me. It would be much better if you would marry, and I have collected here the portraits of the most beautiful women in the world of a rank equal to your own. Choose which among them you would like for a wife, and I will send an embassy to her father to ask for her hand.'

‘Alas! your Majesty,’ answered the prince, ‘it is not love or marriage that makes me so gloomy; but the thought, which haunts me day and night, that all men, even kings, must die. Never shall I be happy again till I have found a kingdom where death is unknown. And I have determined to give myself no rest till I have discovered the Land of Immortality.

The old king heard him with dismay; things were worse than he thought. He tried to reason with his son, and told him that during all these years he had been looking forward to his return, in order to resign his throne and its cares, which pressed so heavily upon him. But it was in vain that he talked; the prince would listen to nothing, and the following morning buckled on his sword and set forth on his journey.

He had been travelling for many days, and had left his fatherland behind him, when close to the road he came upon a huge tree, and on its topmost bough an eagle was sitting shaking the branches with all his might. This seemed so strange and so unlike an eagle, that the prince stood still with surprise, and the bird saw him and flew to the ground. The moment its feet touched the ground he changed into a king.

‘Why do you look so astonished?’ he asked.

‘I was wondering why you shook the boughs so fiercely,’ answered the prince.

‘I am condemned to do this, for neither I nor any of my kindred can die till I have rooted up this great tree,’ replied the king of the eagles. ‘But it is now evening, and I need work no more to-day. Come to my house with me, and be my guest for the night.’

The prince accepted gratefully the eagle’s invitation, for he was tired and hungry. They were received at the palace by the king’s beautiful daughter, who gave orders that dinner should be laid for them at once. While they were eating, the eagle questioned his guest about his travels, and if he was wandering for pleasure’s sake, or with any special aim. Then the prince told him everything, and how he could never turn back till he had discovered the Land of Immortality.

‘Dear brother,’ said the eagle, ‘you have discovered it already, and it rejoices my heart to think that you will stay with us. Have you not just heard me say that death has no power either over myself or any of my kindred till that great tree is rooted up? It will take me six hundred years’

hard work to do that; so marry my daughter and let us all live happily together here. After all, six hundred years is an eternity!'

'Ah, dear king,' replied the young man, 'your offer is very tempting! But at the end of six hundred years we should have to die, so we should be no better off! No, I must go on till I find the country where there is no death at all.'

Then the princess spoke, and tried to persuade the guest to change his mind, but he sorrowfully shook his head. At length, seeing that his resolution was firmly fixed, she took from a cabinet a little box which contained her picture, and gave it to him saying:

'As you will not stay with us, prince, accept this box, which will sometimes recall us to your memory. If you are tired of travelling before you come to the Land of Immortality, open this box and look at my picture, and you will be borne along either on earth or in the air, quick as thought, or swift as the whirlwind.'

The prince thanked her for her gift, which he placed in his tunic, and sorrowfully bade the eagle and his daughter farewell.

Never was any present in the world as useful as that little box, and many times did he bless the kind thought of the princess. One evening it had carried him to the top of a high mountain, where he saw a man with a bald head, busily engaged in digging up spadefuls of earth and throwing them in a basket. When the basket was full he took it away and returned with an empty one, which he likewise filled. The prince stood and watched him for a little, till the bald-headed man looked up and said to him: 'Dear brother, what surprises you so much?'

'I was wondering why you were filling the basket,' replied the prince.

'Oh!' replied the man, 'I am condemned to do this, for neither I nor any of my family can die till I have dug away the whole of this mountain and made it level with the plain. But, come, it is almost dark, and I shall work no longer.' And he plucked a leaf from a tree close by, and from a rough digger he was changed into a stately bald-headed king. 'Come home with me,' he added; 'you must be tired and hungry, and my daughter will have supper ready for us.' The prince accepted gladly, and they went back to the palace, where the bald-headed king's daughter, who was still more beautiful than the other princess, welcomed them at the door and led the way into a large hall and to a table covered with silver dishes. While they

were eating, the bald-headed king asked the prince how he had happened to wander so far, and the young man told him all about it, and how he was seeking the Land of Immortality. ‘You have found it already,’ answered the king, ‘for, as I said, neither I nor my family can die till I have levelled this great mountain; and that will take full eight hundred years longer. Stay here with us and marry my daughter. Eight hundred years is surely long enough to live.’

‘Oh, certainly,’ answered the prince; ‘but, all the same, I would rather go and seek the land where there is no death at all.’

So next morning he bade them farewell, though the princess begged him to stay with all her might; and when she found that she could not persuade him she gave him as a remembrance a gold ring. This ring was still more useful than the box, because when one wished oneself at any place one was there directly, without even the trouble of flying to it through the air. The prince put it on his finger, and thanking her heartily, went his way.

He walked on for some distance, and then he recollected the ring and thought he would try if the princess had spoken truly as to its powers. ‘I wish I was at the end of the world,’ he said, shutting his eyes, and when he opened them he was standing in a street full of marble palaces. The men who passed him were tall and strong, and their clothes were magnificent. He stopped some of them and asked in all the twenty-seven languages he knew what was the name of the city, but no one answered him. Then his heart sank within him; what should he do in this strange place if nobody could understand anything? he said. Suddenly his eyes fell upon a man dressed after the fashion of his native country, and he ran up to him and spoke to him in his own tongue. ‘What city is this, my friend?’ he inquired.

‘It is the capital city of the Blue Kingdom,’ replied the man, ‘but the king himself is dead, and his daughter is now the ruler.’

With this news the prince was satisfied, and begged his countryman to show him the way to the young queen’s palace. The man led him through several streets into a large square, one side of which was occupied by a splendid building that seemed borne up on slender pillars of soft green marble. In front was a flight of steps, and on these the queen was sitting wrapped in a veil of shining silver mist, listening to the complaints of her

people and dealing out justice. When the prince came up she saw directly that he was no ordinary man, and telling her chamberlain to dismiss the rest of her petitioners for that day, she signed to the prince to follow her into the palace. Luckily she had been taught his language as a child, so they had no difficulty in talking together.

The prince told all his story and how he was journeying in search of the Land of Immortality. When he had finished, the princess, who had listened attentively, rose, and taking his arm, led him to the door of another room, the floor of which was made entirely of needles, stuck so close together that there was not room for a single needle more.

‘Prince,’ she said, turning to him, ‘you see these needles? Well, know that neither I nor any of my family can die till I have worn out these needles in sewing. It will take at least a thousand years for that. Stay here, and share my throne; a thousand years is long enough to live!’

‘Certainly,’ answered he; ‘still, at the end of the thousand years I should have to die! No, I must find the land where there is no death.’

The queen did all she could to persuade him to stay, but as her words proved useless, at length she gave it up. Then she said to him: ‘As you will not stay, take this little golden rod as a remembrance of me. It has the power to become anything you wish it to be, when you are in need.’

So the prince thanked her, and putting the rod in his pocket, went his way.

Scarcely had he left the town behind him when he came to a broad river which no man might pass, for he was standing at the end of the world, and this was the river which flowed round it. Not knowing what to do next, he walked a little distance up the bank, and there, over his head, a beautiful city was floating in the air. He longed to get to it, but how? neither road nor bridge was anywhere to be seen, yet the city drew him upwards, and he felt that here at last was the country which he sought. Suddenly he remembered the golden rod which the mist-veiled queen had given him. With a beating heart he flung it to the ground, wishing with all his might that it should turn into a bridge, and fearing that, after all, this might prove beyond its power. But no, instead of the rod, there stood a golden ladder, leading straight up to the city of the air. He was about to enter the golden gates, when there sprang at him a wondrous beast, whose like he had never seen. ‘Out sword from the sheath,’ cried the prince,

springing back with a cry. And the sword leapt from the scabbard and cut off some of the monster's heads, but others grew again directly, so that the prince, pale with terror, stood where he was, calling for help, and put his sword back in the sheath again.

The queen of the city heard the noise and looked from her window to see what was happening. Summoning one of her servants, she bade him go and rescue the stranger, and bring him to her. The prince thankfully obeyed her orders, and entered her presence.

The moment she looked at him, the queen also felt that he was no ordinary man, and she welcomed him graciously, and asked him what had brought him to the city. In answer the prince told all his story, and how he had travelled long and far in search of the Land of Immortality.

'You have found it,' said she, 'for I am queen over life and over death. Here you can dwell among the immortals.'

A thousand years had passed since the prince first entered the city, but they had flown so fast that the time seemed no more than six months. There had not been one instant of the thousand years that the prince was not happy till one night when he dreamed of his father and mother. Then the longing for his home came upon him with a rush, and in the morning he told the Queen of the Immortals that he must go and see his father and mother once more. The queen stared at him with amazement, and cried: 'Why, prince, are you out of your senses? It is more than eight hundred years since your father and mother died! There will not even be their dust remaining.'

'I must go all the same,' said he.

'Well, do not be in a hurry,' continued the queen, understanding that he would not be prevented. 'Wait till I make some preparations for your journey.' So she unlocked her great treasure chest, and took out two beautiful flasks, one of gold and one of silver, which she hung round his neck. Then she showed him a little trap-door in one corner of the room, and said: 'Fill the silver flask with this water, which is below the trap-door. It is enchanted, and whoever you sprinkle with the water will become a dead man at once, even if he had lived a thousand years. The golden flask you must fill with the water here,' she added, pointing to a well in another corner. 'It springs from the rock of eternity; you have only to

sprinkle a few drops on a body and it will come to life again, if it had been a thousand years dead.'

The prince thanked the queen for her gifts, and, bidding her farewell, went on his journey.

He soon arrived in the town where the mist-veiled queen reigned in her palace, but the whole city had changed, and he could scarcely find his way through the streets. In the palace itself all was still, and he wandered through the rooms without meeting anyone to stop him. At last he entered the queen's own chamber, and there she lay, with her embroidery still in her hands, fast asleep. He pulled at her dress, but she did not waken. Then a dreadful idea came over him, and he ran to the chamber where the needles had been kept, but it was quite empty. The queen had broken the last over the work she held in her hand, and with it the spell was broken too, and she lay dead.

Quick as thought the prince pulled out the golden flask, and sprinkled some drops of the water over the queen. In a moment she moved gently, and raising her head, opened her eyes.

'Oh, my dear friend, I am so glad you wakened me; I must have slept a long while!'

'You would have slept till eternity,' answered the prince, 'if I had not been here to waken you.'

At these words the queen remembered about the needles. She knew now that she had been dead, and that the prince had restored her to life. She gave him thanks from her heart for what he had done, and vowed she would repay him if she ever got a chance.

The prince took his leave, and set out for the country of the bald-headed king. As he drew near the place he saw that the whole mountain had been dug away, and that the king was lying dead on the ground, his spade and bucket beside him. But as soon as the water from the golden flask touched him he yawned and stretched himself, and slowly rose to his feet. 'Oh, my dear friend, I am so glad to see you,' cried he, 'I must have slept a long while!'

'You would have slept till eternity if I had not been here to waken you,' answered the prince. And the king remembered the mountain, and the spell, and vowed to repay the service if he ever had a chance.

Further along the road which led to his old home the prince found the great tree torn up by its roots, and the king of the eagles sitting dead on the ground, with his wings outspread as if for flight. A flutter ran through the feathers as the drops of water fell on them, and the eagle lifted his beak from the ground and said: ‘Oh, how long I must have slept! How can I thank you for having awakened me, my dear, good friend!’

‘You would have slept till eternity if I had not been here to waken you’; answered the prince. Then the king remembered about the tree, and knew that he had been dead, and promised, if ever he had the chance, to repay what the prince had done for him.

At last he reached the capital of his father’s kingdom, but on reaching the place where the royal palace had stood, instead of the marble galleries where he used to play, there lay a great sulphur lake, its blue flames darting into the air. How was he to find his father and mother, and bring them back to life, if they were lying at the bottom of that horrible water? He turned away sadly and wandered back into the streets, hardly knowing where he was going; when a voice behind him cried: ‘Stop, prince, I have caught you at last! It is a thousand years since I first began to seek you.’ And there beside him stood the old, white-bearded, figure of Death. Swiftly he drew the ring from his finger, and the king of the eagles, the bald-headed king, and the mist-veiled queen, hastened to his rescue. In an instant they had seized upon Death and held him tight, till the prince should have time to reach the Land of Immortality. But they did not know how quickly Death could fly, and the prince had only one foot across the border, when he felt the other grasped from behind, and the voice of Death calling: ‘Halt! now you are mine.’

The Queen of the Immortals was watching from her window, and cried to Death that he had no power in her kingdom, and that he must seek his prey elsewhere.

‘Quite true,’ answered Death; ‘but his foot is in my kingdom, and that belongs to me!’

‘At any rate half of him is mine,’ replied the Queen, ‘and what good can the other half do you? Half a man is no use, either to you or to me! But this once I will allow you to cross into my kingdom, and we will decide by a wager whose he is.’

And so it was settled. Death stepped across the narrow line that surrounds the Land of Immortality, and the queen proposed the wager which was to decide the prince's fate. 'I will throw him up into the sky,' she said, 'right to the back of the morning star, and if he falls down into this city, then he is mine. But if he should fall outside the walls, he shall belong to you.'

In the middle of the city was a great open square, and here the queen wished the wager to take place. When all was ready, she put her foot under the foot of the prince and swung him into the air. Up, up, he went, high amongst the stars, and no man's eyes could follow him. Had she thrown him up straight? the queen wondered anxiously, for, if not, he would fall outside the walls, and she would lose him for ever. The moments seemed long while she and Death stood gazing up into the air, waiting to know whose prize the prince would be. Suddenly they both caught sight of a tiny speck no bigger than a wasp, right up in the blue. Was he coming straight? No! Yes! But as he was nearing the city, a light wind sprang up, and swayed him in the direction of the wall. Another second and he would have fallen half over it, when the queen sprang forward, seized him in her arms, and flung him into the castle. Then she commanded her servants to cast Death out of the city, which they did, with such hard blows that he never dared to show his face again in the Land of Immortality.

[From Ungarischen Volksmurchen.]

THE STONE-CUTTER

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Once upon a time there lived a stone-cutter, who went every day to a great rock in the side of a big mountain and cut out slabs for gravestones or for houses. He understood very well the kinds of stones wanted for the different purposes, and as he was a careful workman he had plenty of customers. For a long time he was quite happy and contented, and asked for nothing better than what he had.

Now in the mountain dwelt a spirit which now and then appeared to men, and helped them in many ways to become rich and prosperous. The stone-cutter, however, had never seen this spirit, and only shook his head, with an unbelieving air, when anyone spoke of it. But a time was coming when he learned to change his opinion.

One day the stone-cutter carried a gravestone to the house of a rich man, and saw there all sorts of beautiful things, of which he had never even dreamed. Suddenly his daily work seemed to grow harder and heavier, and he said to himself: ‘Oh, if only I were a rich man, and could sleep in a bed with silken curtains and golden tassels, how happy I should be!’

And a voice answered him: ‘Your wish is heard; a rich man you shall be!’

At the sound of the voice the stone-cutter looked round, but could see nobody. He thought it was all his fancy, and picked up his tools and went home, for he did not feel inclined to do any more work that day. But when he reached the little house where he lived, he stood still with amazement, for instead of his wooden hut was a stately palace filled with splendid furniture, and most splendid of all was the bed, in every respect like the one he had envied. He was nearly beside himself with joy, and in his new life the old one was soon forgotten.

It was now the beginning of summer, and each day the sun blazed more fiercely. One morning the heat was so great that the stone-cutter could scarcely breathe, and he determined he would stay at home till the

evening. He was rather dull, for he had never learned how to amuse himself, and was peeping through the closed blinds to see what was going on in the street, when a little carriage passed by, drawn by servants dressed in blue and silver. In the carriage sat a prince, and over his head a golden umbrella was held, to protect him from the sun's rays.

'Oh, if I were only a prince!' said the stone-cutter to himself, as the carriage vanished round the corner. 'Oh, if I were only a prince, and could go in such a carriage and have a golden umbrella held over me, how happy I should be!'

And the voice of the mountain spirit answered: 'Your wish is heard; a prince you shall be.'

And a prince he was. Before his carriage rode one company of men and another behind it; servants dressed in scarlet and gold bore him along, the coveted umbrella was held over his head, everything heart could desire was his. But yet it was not enough. He looked round still for something to wish for, and when he saw that in spite of the water he poured on his grass the rays of the sun scorched it, and that in spite of the umbrella held over his head each day his face grew browner and browner, he cried in his anger: 'The sun is mightier than I; oh, if I were only the sun!'

And the mountain spirit answered: 'Your wish is heard; the sun you shall be.'

And the sun he was, and felt himself proud in his power. He shot his beams above and below, on earth and in heaven; he burnt up the grass in the fields and scorched the faces of princes as well as of poorer folk. But in a short time he began to grow tired of his might, for there seemed nothing left for him to do. Discontent once more filled his soul, and when a cloud covered his face, and hid the earth from him, he cried in his anger: 'Does the cloud hold captive my rays, and is it mightier than I? Oh, that I were a cloud, and mightier than any!'

And the mountain spirit answered: 'Your wish is heard; a cloud you shall be!'

And a cloud he was, and lay between the sun and the earth. He caught the sun's beams and held them, and to his joy the earth grew green again and flowers blossomed. But that was not enough for him, and for days and weeks he poured forth rain till the rivers overflowed their banks, and the crops of rice stood in water. Towns and villages were destroyed by the

power of the rain, only the great rock on the mountain side remained unmoved. The cloud was amazed at the sight, and cried in wonder: ‘Is the rock, then, mightier than I? Oh, if I were only the rock!’

And the mountain spirit answered: ‘Your wish is heard; the rock you shall be!

And the rock he was, and gloried in his power. Proudly he stood, and neither the heat of the sun nor the force of the rain could move him. ‘This is better than all!’ he said to himself. But one day he heard a strange noise at his feet, and when he looked down to see what it could be, he saw a stone-cutter driving tools into his surface. Even while he looked a trembling feeling ran all through him, and a great block broke off and fell upon the ground. Then he cried in his wrath: ‘Is a mere child of earth mightier than a rock? Oh, if I were only a man!’

And the mountain spirit answered: ‘Your wish is heard. A man once more you shall be!’

And a man he was, and in the sweat of his brow he toiled again at his trade of stone-cutting. His bed was hard and his food scanty, but he had learned to be satisfied with it, and did not long to be something or somebody else. And as he never asked for things he had not got, or desired to be greater and mightier than other people, he was happy at last, and heard the voice of the mountain spirit no longer.

[From Japanische Mahrchen.]

THE GOLD-BEARDED MAN

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Once upon a time there lived a great king who had a wife and one son whom he loved very much. The boy was still young when, one day, the king said to his wife: ‘I feel that the hour of my death draws near, and I want you to promise that you will never take another husband but will give up your life to the care of our son.’

The queen burst into tears at these words, and sobbed out that she would never, never marry again, and that her son’s welfare should be her first thought as long as she lived. Her promise comforted the troubled heart of the king, and a few days after he died, at peace with himself and with the world.

But no sooner was the breath out of his body, than the queen said to herself, ‘To promise is one thing, and to keep is quite another.’ And hardly was the last spadeful of earth flung over the coffin than she married a noble from a neighbouring country, and got him made king instead of the young prince. Her new husband was a cruel, wicked man, who treated his stepson very badly, and gave him scarcely anything to eat, and only rags to wear; and he would certainly have killed the boy but for fear of the people.

Now by the palace grounds there ran a brook, but instead of being a water-brook it was a milk-brook, and both rich and poor flocked to it daily and drew as much milk as they chose. The first thing the new king did when he was seated on the throne, was to forbid anyone to go near the brook, on pain of being seized by the watchmen. And this was purely spite, for there was plenty of milk for everybody.

For some days no one dared venture near the banks of the stream, but at length some of the watchmen noticed that early in the mornings, just at dawn, a man with a gold beard came down to the brook with a pail, which he filled up to the brim with milk, and then vanished like smoke before they could get near enough to see who he was. So they went and told the king what they had seen.

At first the king would not believe their story, but as they persisted it was quite true, he said that he would go and watch the stream that night himself. With the earliest streaks of dawn the gold-bearded man appeared, and filled his pail as before. Then in an instant he had vanished, as if the earth had swallowed him up.

The king stood staring with eyes and mouth open at the place where the man had disappeared. He had never seen him before, that was certain; but what mattered much more was how to catch him, and what should be done with him when he was caught? He would have a cage built as a prison for him, and everyone would talk of it, for in other countries thieves were put in prison, and it was long indeed since any king had used a cage. It was all very well to plan, and even to station a watchman behind every bush, but it was of no use, for the man was never caught. They would creep up to him softly on the grass, as he was stooping to fill his pail, and just as they stretched out their hands to seize him, he vanished before their eyes. Time after time this happened, till the king grew mad with rage, and offered a large reward to anyone who could tell him how to capture his enemy.

The first person that came with a scheme was an old soldier who promised the king that if he would only put some bread and bacon and a flask of wine on the bank of the stream, the gold-bearded man would be sure to eat and drink, and they could shake some powder into the wine, which would send him to sleep at once. After that there was nothing to do but to shut him in the cage.

This idea pleased the king, and he ordered bread and bacon and a flask of drugged wine to be placed on the bank of the stream, and the watchers to be redoubled. Then, full of hope, he awaited the result.

Everything turned out just as the soldier had said. Early next morning the gold-bearded man came down to the brook, ate, drank, and fell sound asleep, so that the watchers easily bound him, and carried him off to the palace. In a moment the king had him fast in the golden cage, and showed him, with ferocious joy, to the strangers who were visiting his court. The poor captive, when he awoke from his drunken sleep, tried to talk to them, but no one would listen to him, so he shut himself up altogether, and the people who came to stare took him for a dumb man of the woods. He wept and moaned to himself all day, and would hardly touch food, though, in

dread that he should die and escape his tormentors, the king ordered his head cook to send him dishes from the royal table.

The gold-bearded man had been in captivity about a month, when the king was forced to make war upon a neighbouring country, and left the palace, to take command of his army. But before he went he called his stepson to him and said:

‘Listen, boy, to what I tell you. While I am away I trust the care of my prisoner to you. See that he has plenty to eat and drink, but be careful that he does not escape, or even walk about the room. If I return and find him gone, you will pay for it by a terrible death.’

The young prince was thankful that his stepfather was going to the war, and secretly hoped he might never come back. Directly he had ridden off the boy went to the room where the cage was kept, and never left it night and day. He even played his games beside it.

One day he was shooting at a mark with a silver bow; one of his arrows fell into the golden cage.

‘Please give me my arrow,’ said the prince, running up to him; but the gold-bearded man answered:

‘No, I shall not give it to you unless you let me out of my cage.’

‘I may not let you out,’ replied the boy, ‘for if I do my stepfather says that I shall have to die a horrible death when he returns from the war. My arrow can be of no use to you, so give it to me.’

The man handed the arrow through the bars, but when he had done so he begged harder than ever that the prince would open the door and set him free. Indeed, he prayed so earnestly that the prince’s heart was touched, for he was a tender-hearted boy who pitied the sorrows of other people. So he shot back the bolt, and the gold-bearded man stepped out into the world.

‘I will repay you a thousand fold for that good deed.’ said the man, and then he vanished. The prince began to think what he should say to the king when he came back; then he wondered whether it would be wise to wait for his stepfather’s return and run the risk of the dreadful death which had been promised him. ‘No,’ he said to himself, ‘I am afraid to stay. Perhaps the world will be kinder to me than he has been.’

Unseen he stole out when twilight fell, and for many days he wandered over mountains and through forests and valleys without knowing where he

was going or what he should do. He had only the berries for food, when, one morning, he saw a wood-pigeon sitting on a bough. In an instant he had fitted an arrow to his bow, and was taking aim at the bird, thinking what a good meal he would make off him, when his weapon fell to the ground at the sound of the pigeon's voice:

'Do not shoot, I implore you, noble prince! I have two little sons at home, and they will die of hunger if I am not there to bring them food.'

And the young prince had pity, and unstrung his bow.

'Oh, prince, I will repay your deed of mercy, said the grateful wood-pigeon.

'Poor thing! how can you repay me?' asked the prince.

'You have forgotten,' answered the wood-pigeon, 'the proverb that runs, "mountain and mountain can never meet, but one living creature can always come across another."' The boy laughed at this speech and went his way.

By-and-by he reached the edge of a lake, and flying towards some rushes which grew near the shore he beheld a wild duck. Now, in the days that the king, his father, was alive, and he had everything to eat he could possibly wish for, the prince always had wild duck for his birthday dinner, so he quickly fitted an arrow to his bow and took a careful aim.

'Do not shoot, I pray you, noble prince!' cried the wild duck; 'I have two little sons at home; they will die of hunger if I am not there to bring them food.'

And the prince had pity, and let fall his arrow and unstrung his bow.

'Oh, prince! I will repay your deed of mercy,' exclaimed the grateful wild duck.

'You poor thing! how can you repay me?' asked the prince.

'You have forgotten,' answered the wild duck, 'the proverb that runs, "mountain and mountain can never meet, but one living creature can always come across another."' The boy laughed at this speech and went his way.

He had not wandered far from the shores of the lake, when he noticed a stork standing on one leg, and again he raised his bow and prepared to take aim.

'Do not shoot, I pray you, noble prince,' cried the stork; 'I have two little sons at home; they will die of hunger if I am not there to bring them

food.’

Again the prince was filled with pity, and this time also he did not shoot.

‘Oh, prince, I will repay your deed of mercy,’ cried the stork.

‘You poor stork! how can you repay me?’ asked the prince.

‘You have forgotten,’ answered the stork, ‘the proverb that runs, “mountain and mountain can never meet, but one living creature can always come across another.” ’

The boy laughed at hearing these words again, and walked slowly on. He had not gone far, when he fell in with two discharged soldiers.

‘Where are you going, little brother?’ asked one.

‘I am seeking work,’ answered the prince.

‘So are we,’ replied the soldier. ‘We can all go together.’

The boy was glad of company and they went on, and on, and on, through seven kingdoms, without finding anything they were able to do. At length they reached a palace, and there was the king standing on the steps.

‘You seem to be looking for something,’ said he.

‘It is work we want,’ they all answered.

So the king told the soldiers that they might become his coachmen; but he made the boy his companion, and gave him rooms near his own. The soldiers were dreadfully angry when they heard this, for of course they did not know that the boy was really a prince; and they soon began to lay their heads together to plot his ruin.

Then they went to the king.

‘Your Majesty,’ they said, ‘we think it our duty to tell you that your new companion has boasted to us that if he were only your steward he would not lose a single grain of corn out of the storehouses. Now, if your Majesty would give orders that a sack of wheat should be mixed with one of barley, and would send for the youth, and command him to separate the grains one from another, in two hours’ time, you would soon see what his talk was worth.’

The king, who was weak, listened to what these wicked men had told him, and desired the prince to have the contents of the sack piled into two heaps by the time that he returned from his council. ‘If you succeed,’ he added, ‘you shall be my steward, but if you fail, I will put you to death on the spot.’

The unfortunate prince declared that he had never made any such boast as was reported; but it was all in vain. The king did not believe him, and turning him into an empty room, bade his servants carry in the huge sack filled with wheat and barley, and scatter them in a heap on the floor.

The prince hardly knew where to begin, and indeed if he had had a thousand people to help him, and a week to do it in, he could never have finished his task. So he flung himself on the ground in despair, and covered his face with his hands.

While he lay thus, a wood-pigeon flew in through the window.

‘Why are you weeping, noble prince?’ asked the wood-pigeon.

‘How can I help weeping at the task set me by the king. For he says, if I fail to do it, I shall die a horrible death.’

‘Oh, there is really nothing to cry about,’ answered the wood-pigeon soothingly. ‘I am the king of the wood-pigeons, whose life you spared when you were hungry. And now I will repay my debt, as I promised.’ So saying he flew out of the window, leaving the prince with some hope in his heart.

In a few minutes he returned, followed by a cloud of wood-pigeons, so dense that it seemed to fill the room. Their king showed them what they had to do, and they set to work so hard that the grain was sorted into two heaps long before the council was over. When the king came back he could not believe his eyes; but search as he might through the two heaps, he could not find any barley among the wheat, or any wheat amongst the barley. So he praised the prince for his industry and cleverness, and made him his steward at once.

This made the two soldiers more envious still, and they began to hatch another plot.

‘Your Majesty,’ they said to the king, one day, as he was standing on the steps of the palace, ‘that fellow has been boasting again, that if he had the care of your treasures not so much as a gold pin should ever be lost. Put this vain fellow to the proof, we pray you, and throw the ring from the princess’s finger into the brook, and bid him find it. We shall soon see what his talk is worth.’

And the foolish king listened to them, and ordered the prince to be brought before him.

‘My son,’ he said, ‘I have heard that you have declared that if I made you keeper of my treasures you would never lose so much as a gold pin. Now, in order to prove the truth of your words, I am going to throw the ring from the princess’s finger into the brook, and if you do not find it before I come back from council, you will have to die a horrible death.’

It was no use denying that he had said anything of the kind. The king did not believe him; in fact he paid no attention at all, and hurried off, leaving the poor boy speechless with despair in the corner. However, he soon remembered that though it was very unlikely that he should find the ring in the brook, it was impossible that he should find it by staying in the palace.

For some time the prince wandered up and down peering into the bottom of the stream, but though the water was very clear, nothing could he see of the ring. At length he gave it up in despair, and throwing himself down at the foot of the tree, he wept bitterly.

‘What is the matter, dear prince?’ said a voice just above him, and raising his head, he saw the wild duck.

‘The king of this country declares I must die a horrible death if I cannot find the princess’s ring which he has thrown into the brook,’ answered the prince.

‘Oh, you must not vex yourself about that, for I can help you,’ replied the bird. ‘I am the king of the wild ducks, whose life you spared, and now it is my turn to save yours.’ Then he flew away, and in a few minutes a great flock of wild ducks were swimming all up and down the stream looking with all their might, and long before the king came back from his council there it was, safe on the grass beside the prince.

At this sight the king was yet more astonished at the cleverness of his steward, and at once promoted him to be the keeper of his jewels.

Now you would have thought that by this time the king would have been satisfied with the prince, and would have left him alone; but people’s natures are very hard to change, and when the two envious soldiers came to him with a new falsehood, he was as ready to listen to them as before.

‘Gracious Majesty,’ said they, ‘the youth whom you have made keeper of your jewels has declared to us that a child shall be born in the palace this night, which will be able to speak every language in the world and to

play every instrument of music. Is he then become a prophet, or a magician, that he should know things which have not yet come to pass?'

At these words the king became more angry than ever. He had tried to learn magic himself, but somehow or other his spells would never work, and he was furious to hear that the prince claimed a power that he did not possess. Stammering with rage, he ordered the youth to be brought before him, and vowed that unless this miracle was accomplished he would have the prince dragged at a horse's tail until he was dead.

In spite of what the soldiers had said, the boy knew no more magic than the king did, and his task seemed more hopeless than before. He lay weeping in the chamber which he was forbidden to leave, when suddenly he heard a sharp tapping at the window, and, looking up, he beheld a stork.

'What makes you so sad, prince?' asked he.

'Someone has told the king that I have prophesied that a child shall be born this night in the palace, who can speak all the languages in the world and play every musical instrument. I am no magician to bring these things to pass, but he says that if it does not happen he will have me dragged through the city at a horse's tail till I die.'

'Do not trouble yourself,' answered the stork. 'I will manage to find such a child, for I am the king of the storks whose life you spared, and now I can repay you for it.'

The stork flew away and soon returned carrying in his beak a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid it down near a lute. In an instant the baby stretched out its little hands and began to play a tune so beautiful that even the prince forgot his sorrows as he listened. Then he was given a flute and a zither, but he was just as well able to draw music from them; and the prince, whose courage was gradually rising, spoke to him in all the languages he knew. The baby answered him in all, and no one could have told which was his native tongue!

The next morning the king went straight to the prince's room, and saw with his own eyes the wonders that baby could do. 'If your magic can produce such a baby,' he said, 'you must be greater than any wizard that ever lived, and shall have my daughter in marriage.' And, being a king, and therefore accustomed to have everything the moment he wanted it, he commanded the ceremony to be performed without delay, and a splendid

feast to be made for the bride and bridegroom. When it was over, he said to the prince:

‘Now that you are really my son, tell me by what arts you were able to fulfil the tasks I set you?’

‘My noble father-in-law,’ answered the prince, ‘I am ignorant of all spells and arts. But somehow I have always managed to escape the death which has threatened me.’ And he told the king how he had been forced to run away from his stepfather, and how he had spared the three birds, and had joined the two soldiers, who had from envy done their utmost to ruin him.

The king was rejoiced in his heart that his daughter had married a prince, and not a common man, and he chased the two soldiers away with whips, and told them that if they ever dared to show their faces across the borders of his kingdom, they should die the same death he had prepared for the prince.

[From Ungarische Mahrchen]

TRITILL, LITILL, AND THE BIRDS

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Once upon a time there lived a princess who was so beautiful and so good that everybody loved her. Her father could hardly bear her out of his sight, and he almost died of grief when, one day, she disappeared, and though the whole kingdom was searched through and through, she could not be found in any corner of it. In despair, the king ordered a proclamation to be made that whoever could bring her back to the palace should have her for his wife. This made the young men start afresh on the search, but they were no more successful than before, and returned sorrowfully to their homes.

Now there dwelt, not far from the palace, an old man who had three sons. The two eldest were allowed by their parents to do just as they liked, but the youngest was always obliged to give way to his brothers. When they were all grown up, the eldest told his father that he was tired of leading such a quiet life, and that he meant to go away and see the world.

The old people were very unhappy at the thought that they must part with him, but they said nothing, and began to collect all that he would want for his travels, and were careful to add a pair of new boots. When everything was ready, he bade them farewell, and started merrily on his way.

For some miles his road lay through a wood, and when he left it he suddenly came out on a bare hillside. Here he sat down to rest, and pulling out his wallet prepared to eat his dinner.

He had only eaten a few mouthfuls when an old man badly dressed passed by, and seeing the food, asked if the young man could not spare him a little.

‘Not I, indeed!’ answered he; ‘why I have scarcely enough for myself. If you want food you must earn it.’ And the beggar went on.

After the young man had finished his dinner he rose and walked on for several hours, till he reached a second hill, where he threw himself down on the grass, and took some bread and milk from his wallet. While he was eating and drinking, there came by an old man, yet more wretched than the

first, and begged for a few mouthfuls. But instead of food he only got hard words, and limped sadly away.

Towards evening the young man reached an open space in the wood, and by this time he thought he would like some supper. The birds saw the food, and flew round his head in numbers hoping for some crumbs, but he threw stones at them, and frightened them off. Then he began to wonder where he should sleep. Not in the open space he was in, for that was bare and cold, and though he had walked a long way that day, and was tired, he dragged himself up, and went on seeking for a shelter.

At length he saw a deep sort of hole or cave under a great rock, and as it seemed quite empty, he went in, and lay down in a corner. About midnight he was awakened by a noise, and peeping out he beheld a terrible ogress approaching. He implored her not to hurt him, but to let him stay there for the rest of the night, to which she consented, on condition that he should spend the next day in doing any task which she might choose to set him. To this the young man willingly agreed, and turned over and went to sleep again. In the morning, the ogress bade him sweep the dust out of the cave, and to have it clean before her return in the evening, otherwise it would be the worse for him. Then she left the cave.

The young man took the spade, and began to clean the floor of the cave, but try as he would to move it the dirt still stuck to its place. He soon gave up the task, and sat sulkily in the corner, wondering what punishment the ogress would find for him, and why she had set him to do such an impossible thing.

He had not long to wait, after the ogress came home, before he knew what his punishment was to be! She just gave one look at the floor of the cave, then dealt him a blow on the head which cracked his skull, and there was an end of him.

Meanwhile his next brother grew tired of staying at home, and let his parents have no rest till they had consented that he also should be given some food and some new boots, and go out to see the world. On his road, he also met the two old beggars, who prayed for a little of his bread and milk, but this young man had never been taught to help other people, and had made it a rule through his life to keep all he had to himself. So he turned a deaf ear and finished his dinner.

By-and-by he, too, came to the cave, and was bidden by the ogress to clean the floor, but he was no more successful than his brother, and his fate was the same.

Anyone would have thought that when the old people had only one son left that at least they would have been kind to him, even if they did not love him. But for some reason they could hardly bear the sight of him, though he tried much harder to make them comfortable than his brothers had ever done. So when he asked their leave to go out into the world they gave it at once, and seemed quite glad to be rid of him. They felt it was quite generous of them to provide him with a pair of new boots and some bread and milk for his journey.

Besides the pleasure of seeing the world, the youth was very anxious to discover what had become of his brothers, and he determined to trace, as far as he could, the way that they must have gone. He followed the road that led from his father's cottage to the hill, where he sat down to rest, saying to himself: 'I am sure my brothers must have stopped here, and I will do the same.'

He was hungry as well as tired, and took out some of the food his parents had given him. He was just going to begin to eat when the old man appeared, and asked if he could not spare him a little. The young man at once broke off some of the bread, begging the old man to sit down beside him, and treating him as if he was an old friend. At last the stranger rose, and said to him: 'If ever you are in trouble call me, and I will help you. My name is Tritill.' Then he vanished, and the young man could not tell where he had gone.

However, he felt he had now rested long enough, and that he had better be going his way. At the next hill he met with the second old man, and to him also he gave food and drink. And when this old man had finished he said, like the first: 'If you ever want help in the smallest thing call to me. My name is Litill.'

The young man walked on till he reached the open space in the wood, where he stopped for dinner. In a moment all the birds in the world seemed flying round his head, and he crumbled some of his bread for them and watched them as they darted down to pick it up. When they had cleared off every crumb the largest bird with the gayest plumage said to him: 'If you

are in trouble and need help say, “My birds, come to me!” and we will come.’ Then they flew away.

Towards evening the young man reached the cave where his brothers had met their deaths, and, like them, he thought it would be a good place to sleep in. Looking round, he saw some pieces of the dead men’s clothes and of their bones. The sight made him shiver, but he would not move away, and resolved to await the return of the ogress, for such he knew she must be.

Very soon she came striding in, and he asked politely if she would give him a night’s lodging. She answered as before, that he might stay on condition that he should do any work that she might set him to next morning. So the bargain being concluded, the young man curled himself up in his corner and went to sleep.

The dirt lay thicker than ever on the floor of the cave when the young man took the spade and began his work. He could not clear it any more than his brothers had done, and at last the spade itself stuck in the earth so that he could not pull it out. The youth stared at it in despair, then the old beggar’s words flashed into his mind, and he cried: ‘Tritill, Tritill, come and help me!’

And Tritill stood beside him and asked what he wanted. The youth told him all his story, and when he had finished, the old man said: ‘Spade and shovel do your duty,’ and they danced about the cave till, in a short time, there was not a speck of dust left on the floor. As soon as it was quite clean Tritill went his way.

With a light heart the young man awaited the return of the ogress. When she came in she looked carefully round, and then said to him: ‘You did not do that quite alone. However, as the floor is clean I will leave your head on.’

The following morning the ogress told the young man that he must take all the feathers out of her pillows and spread them to dry in the sun. But if one feather was missing when she came back at night his head should pay for it.’

The young man fetched the pillows, and shook out all the feathers, and oh! what quantities of them there were! He was thinking to himself, as he spread them out carefully, how lucky it was that the sun was so bright and that there was no wind, when suddenly a breeze sprang up, and in a

moment the feathers were dancing high in the air. At first the youth tried to collect them again, but he soon found that it was no use, and he cried in despair: ‘Tritill, Litill, and all my birds, come and help me!’

He had hardly said the words when there they all were; and when the birds had brought all the feathers back again, Tritill, and Litill, and he, put them away in the pillows, as the ogress had bidden him. But one little feather they kept out, and told the young man that if the ogress missed it he was to thrust it up her nose. Then they all vanished, Tritill, Litill, and the birds.

Directly the ogress returned home she flung herself with all her weight on the bed, and the whole cave quivered under her. The pillows were soft and full instead of being empty, which surprised her, but that did not content her. She got up, shook out the pillow-cases one by one, and began to count the feathers that were in each. ‘If one is missing I will have your head,’ said she, and at that the young man drew the feather from his pocket and thrust it up her nose, crying ‘If you want your feather, here it is.’

‘You did not sort those feathers alone,’ answered the ogress calmly; ‘however, this time I will let that pass.’

That night the young man slept soundly in his corner, and in the morning the ogress told him that his work that day would be to slay one of her great oxen, to cook its heart, and to make drinking cups of its horns, before she returned home ‘There are fifty oxen,’ added she, ‘and you must guess which of the herd I want killed. If you guess right, to-morrow you shall be free to go where you will, and you shall choose besides three things as a reward for your service. But if you slay the wrong ox your head shall pay for it.’

Left alone, the young man stood thinking for a little. Then he called: ‘Tritill, Litill, come to my help!’

In a moment he saw them, far away, driving the biggest ox the youth had ever seen. When they drew near, Tritill killed it, Litill took out its heart for the young man to cook, and both began quickly to turn the horns into drinking cups. The work went merrily on, and they talked gaily, and the young man told his friends of the payment promised him by the ogress if he had done her bidding. The old men warned him that he must ask her for the chest which stood at the foot of her bed, for whatever lay on the top of the bed, and for what lay under the side of the cave. The young man

thanked them for their counsel, and Tritill and Litill then took leave of him, saying that for the present he would need them no more.

Scarcely had they disappeared when the ogress came back, and found everything ready just as she had ordered. Before she sat down to eat the bullock's heart she turned to the young man, and said: 'You did not do that all alone, my friend; but, nevertheless, I will keep my word, and to-morrow you shall go your way.' So they went to bed and slept till dawn.

When the sun rose the ogress awoke the young man, and called to him to choose any three things out of her house.

'I choose,' answered he, 'the chest which stands at the foot of your bed; whatever lies on the top of the bed, and whatever is under the side of the cave.'

'You did not choose those things by yourself, my friend,' said the ogress; 'but what I have promised, that will I do.'

And then she gave him his reward.

'The thing which lay on the top of the bed' turned out to be the lost princess. 'The chest which stood at the foot of the bed' proved full of gold and precious stones; and 'what was under the side of the cave' he found to be a great ship, with oars and sails that went of itself as well on land as in the water. 'You are the luckiest man that ever was born,' said the ogress as she went out of the cave as usual.

With much difficulty the youth put the heavy chest on his shoulders and carried it on board the ship, the princess walking by his side. Then he took the helm and steered the vessel back to her father's kingdom. The king's joy at receiving back his lost daughter was so great that he almost fainted, but when he recovered himself he made the young man tell him how everything had really happened. 'You have found her, and you shall marry her,' said the king; and so it was done. And this is the end of the story.

[From Ungarische Mahrchen.]

THE THREE ROBES

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Long, long ago, a king and queen reigned over a large and powerful country. What their names were nobody knows, but their son was called Sigurd, and their daughter Lineik, and these young people were famed throughout the whole kingdom for their wisdom and beauty.

There was only a year between them, and they loved each other so much that they could do nothing apart. When they began to grow up the king gave them a house of their own to live in, with servants and carriages, and everything they could possibly want.

For many years they all lived happily together, and then the queen fell ill, and knew that she would never get better.

‘Promise me two things,’ she said one day to the king; ‘one, that if you marry again, as indeed you must, you will not choose as your wife a woman from some small state or distant island, who knows nothing of the world, and will be taken up with thoughts of her grandeur. But rather seek out a princess of some great kingdom, who has been used to courts all her life, and holds them at their true worth. The other thing I have to ask is, that you will never cease to watch over our children, who will soon become your greatest joy.’

These were the queen’s last words, and a few hours later she was dead. The king was so bowed down with sorrow that he would not attend even to the business of the kingdom, and at last his Prime Minister had to tell him that the people were complaining that they had nobody to right their wrongs. ‘You must rouse yourself, sir,’ went on the minister, ‘and put aside your own sorrows for the sake of your country.’

‘You do not spare me,’ answered the king; ‘but what you say is just, and your counsel is good. I have heard that men say, likewise, that it will be for the good of my kingdom for me to marry again, though my heart will never cease to be with my lost wife. But it was her wish also; therefore, to you I entrust the duty of finding a lady fitted to share my

throne; only, see that she comes neither from a small town nor a remote island.'

So an embassy was prepared, with the minister at its head, to visit the greatest courts in the world, and to choose out a suitable princess. But the vessel which carried them had not been gone many days when a thick fog came on, and the captain could see neither to the right nor to the left. For a whole month the ship drifted about in darkness, till at length the fog lifted and they beheld a cliff jutting out just in front. On one side of the cliff lay a sheltered bay, in which the vessel was soon anchored, and though they did not know where they were, at any rate they felt sure of fresh fruit and water.

The minister left the rest of his followers on board the ship, and taking a small boat rowed himself to land, in order to look about him and to find out if the island was really as deserted as it seemed.

He had not gone far, when he heard the sound of music, and, turning in its direction, he saw a woman of marvellous beauty sitting on a low stool playing on a harp, while a girl beside her sang. The minister stopped and greeted the lady politely, and she replied with friendliness, asking him why he had come to such an out-of-the way place. In answer he told her of the object of his journey.

'I am in the same state as your master,' replied the lady; 'I was married to a mighty king who ruled over this land, till Vikings [sea-robbers] came and slew him and put all the people to death. But I managed to escape, and hid myself here with my daughter.'

And the daughter listened, and said softly to her mother: 'Are you speaking the truth now?'

'Remember your promise,' answered the mother angrily, giving her a pinch which was unseen by the minister.

'What is your name, madam?' asked he, much touched by this sad story.

'Blauvor,' she replied 'and my daughter is called Laufer'; and then she inquired the name of the minister, and of the king his master. After this they talked of many things, and the lady showed herself learned in all that a woman should know, and even in much that men only were commonly taught. 'What a wife she would make for the king,' thought the minister to himself, and before long he had begged the honour of her hand for his

master. She declared at first that she was too unworthy to accept the position offered her, and that the minister would soon repent his choice; but this only made him the more eager, and in the end he gained her consent, and prevailed on her to return with him at once to his own country.

The minister then conducted the mother and daughter back to the ship; the anchor was raised, the sails spread, and a fair wind was behind them.

Now that the fog had lifted they could see as they looked back that, except just along the shore, the island was bare and deserted and not fit for men to live in; but about that nobody cared. They had a quick voyage, and in six days they reached the land, and at once set out for the capital, a messenger being sent on first by the minister to inform the king of what had happened.

When his Majesty's eyes fell on the two beautiful women, clad in dresses of gold and silver, he forgot his sorrows and ordered preparations for the wedding to be made without delay. In his joy he never remembered to inquire in what kind of country the future queen had been found. In fact his head was so turned by the beauty of the two ladies that when the invitations were sent by his orders to all the great people in the kingdom, he did not even recollect his two children, who remained shut up in their own house!

After the marriage the king ceased to have any will of his own and did nothing without consulting his wife. She was present at all his councils, and her opinion was asked before making peace or war. But when a few months had passed the king began to have doubts as to whether the minister's choice had really been a wise one, and he noticed that his children lived more and more in their palace and never came near their stepmother.

It always happens that if a person's eyes are once opened they see a great deal more than they ever expected; and soon it struck the king that the members of his court had a way of disappearing one after the other without any reason. At first he had not paid much attention to the fact, but merely appointed some fresh person to the vacant place. As, however, man after man vanished without leaving any trace, he began to grow uncomfortable and to wonder if the queen could have anything to do with it.

Things were in this state when, one day, his wife said to him that it was time for him to make a progress through his kingdom and see that his governors were not cheating him of the money that was his due. ‘And you need not be anxious about going,’ she added, ‘for I will rule the country while you are away as carefully as you could yourself.’

The king had no great desire to undertake this journey, but the queen’s will was stronger than his, and he was too lazy to make a fight for it. So he said nothing and set about his preparations, ordering his finest ship to be ready to carry him round the coast. Still his heart was heavy, and he felt uneasy, though he could not have told why; and the night before he was to start he went to the children’s palace to take leave of his son and daughter.

He had not seen them for some time, and they gave him a warm welcome, for they loved him dearly and he had always been kind to them. They had much to tell him, but after a while he checked their merry talk and said:

‘If I should never come back from this journey I fear that it may not be safe for you to stay here; so directly there are no more hopes of my return go instantly and take the road eastwards till you reach a high mountain, which you must cross. Once over the mountain keep along by the side of a little bay till you come to two trees, one green and the other red, standing in a thicket, and so far back from the road that without looking for them you would never see them. Hide each in the trunk of one of the trees and there you will be safe from all your enemies.’

With these words the king bade them farewell and entered sadly into his ship. For a few days the wind was fair, and everything seemed going smoothly; then, suddenly, a gale sprang up, and a fearful storm of thunder and lightning, such as had never happened within the memory of man. In spite of the efforts of the frightened sailors the vessel was driven on the rocks, and not a man on board was saved.

That very night Prince Sigurd had a dream, in which he thought his father appeared to him in dripping clothes, and, taking the crown from his head, laid it at his son’s feet, leaving the room as silently as he had entered it.

Hastily the prince awoke his sister Lineik, and they agreed that their father must be dead, and that they must lose no time in obeying his orders

and putting themselves in safety. So they collected their jewels and a few clothes and left the house without being observed by anyone.

They hurried on till they arrived at the mountain without once looking back. Then Sigurd glanced round and saw that their stepmother was following them, with an expression on her face which made her uglier than the ugliest old witch. Between her and them lay a thick wood, and Sigurd stopped for a moment to set it on fire; then he and his sister hastened on more swiftly than before, till they reached the grove with the red and green trees, into which they jumped, and felt that at last they were safe.

Now, at that time there reigned over Greece a king who was very rich and powerful, although his name has somehow been forgotten. He had two children, a son and a daughter, who were more beautiful and accomplished than any Greeks had been before, and they were the pride of their father's heart.

The prince had no sooner grown out of boyhood than he prevailed on his father to make war during the summer months on a neighbouring nation, so as to give him a chance of making himself famous. In winter, however, when it was difficult to get food and horses in that wild country, the army was dispersed, and the prince returned home.

During one of these wars he had heard reports of the Princess Lineik's beauty, and he resolved to seek her out, and to ask for her hand in marriage. All this Blauvor, the queen, found out by means of her black arts, and when the prince drew near the capital she put a splendid dress on her own daughter and then went to meet her guest.

She bade him welcome to her palace, and when they had finished supper she told him of the loss of her husband, and how there was no one left to govern the kingdom but herself.

'But where is the Princess Lineik?' asked the prince when she had ended her tale.

'Here,' answered the queen, bringing forward the girl, whom she had hitherto kept in the background.

The prince looked at her and was rather disappointed. The maiden was pretty enough, but not much out of the common.

'Oh, you must not wonder at her pale face and heavy eyes,' said the queen hastily, for she saw what was passing in his mind. 'She has never got over the loss of both father and mother.'

‘That shows a good heart,’ thought the prince; ‘and when she is happy her beauty will soon come back.’ And without any further delay he begged the queen to consent to their betrothal, for the marriage must take place in his own country.

The queen was enchanted. She had hardly expected to succeed so soon, and she at once set about her preparations. Indeed she wished to travel with the young couple, to make sure that nothing should go wrong; but here the prince was firm, that he would take no one with him but Laufer, whom he thought was Lineik.

They soon took leave of the queen, and set sail in a splendid ship; but in a short time a dense fog came on, and in the dark the captain steered out of his course, and they found themselves in a bay which was quite strange to all the crew. The prince ordered a boat to be lowered, and went on shore to look about him, and it was not long before he noticed the two beautiful trees, quite different from any that grew in Greece. Calling one of the sailors, he bade him cut them down, and carry them on board the ship. This was done, and as the sky was now clear they put out to sea, and arrived in Greece without any more adventures.

The news that the prince had brought home a bride had gone before them, and they were greeted with flowery arches and crowns of coloured lights. The king and queen met them on the steps of the palace, and conducted the girl to the women’s house, where she would have to remain until her marriage. The prince then went to his own rooms and ordered that the trees should be brought in to him.

The next morning the prince bade his attendants bring his future bride to his own apartments, and when she came he gave her silk which she was to weave into three robes—one red, one green, and one blue—and these must all be ready before the wedding. The blue one was to be done first and the green last, and this was to be the most splendid of all, ‘for I will wear it at our marriage,’ said he.

Left alone, Laufer sat and stared at the heap of shining silk before her. She did not know how to weave, and burst into tears as she thought that everything would be discovered, for Lineik’s skill in weaving was as famous as her beauty. As she sat with her face hidden and her body shaken by sobs, Sigurd in his tree heard her and was moved to pity. ‘Lineik, my sister,’ he called, softly, ‘Laufer is weeping; help her, I pray you.’

‘Have you forgotten the wrongs her mother did to us’ answered Lineik, ‘and that it is owing to her that we are banished from home?’

But she was not really unforgiving, and very soon she slid quietly out of her hiding-place, and taking the silk from Laufer’s hands began to weave it. So quick and clever was she that the blue dress was not only woven but embroidered, and Lineik was safe back in her tree before the prince returned.

‘It is the most beautiful work I have ever seen,’ said he, taking up a bit. ‘And I am sure that the red one will be still better, because the stuff is richer,’ and with a low bow he left the room.

Laufer had hoped secretly that when the prince had seen the blue dress finished he would have let her off the other two; but when she found she was expected to fulfil the whole task, her heart sank and she began to cry loudly. Again Sigurd heard her, and begged Lineik to come to her help, and Lineik, feeling sorry for her distress, wove and embroidered the second dress as she had done the first, mixing gold thread and precious stones till you could hardly see the red of the stuff. When it was done she glided into her tree just as the prince came in.

‘You are as quick as you are clever,’ said he, admiringly. ‘This looks as if it had been embroidered by the fairies! But as the green robe must outshine the other two I will give you three days in which to finish it. After it is ready we will be married at once.’

Now, as he spoke, there rose up in Laufer’s mind all the unkind things that she and her mother had done to Lineik. Could she hope that they would be forgotten, and that Lineik would come to her rescue for the third time? And perhaps Lineik, who had not forgotten the past either, might have left her alone, to get on as best she could, had not Sigurd, her brother, implored her to help just once more. So Lineik again slid out of her tree, and, to Laufer’s great relief, set herself to work. When the shining green silk was ready she caught the sun’s rays and the moon’s beams on the point of her needle and wove them into a pattern such as no man had ever seen. But it took a long time, and on the third morning, just as she was putting the last stitches into the last flower the prince came in.

Lineik jumped up quickly, and tried to get past him back to her tree; but the folds of the silk were wrapped round her, and she would have fallen had not the prince caught her.

‘I have thought for some time that all was not quite straight here,’ said he. ‘Tell me who you are, and where you come from?’

Lineik then told her name and her story. When she had ended the prince turned angrily to Laufer, and declared that, as a punishment for her wicked lies, she deserved to die a shameful death.

But Laufer fell at his feet and begged for mercy. It was her mother’s fault, she said: ‘It was she, and not I, who passed me off as the Princess Lineik. The only lie I have ever told you was about the robes, and I do not deserve death for that.’

She was still on her knees when Prince Sigurd entered the room. He prayed the Prince of Greece to forgive Laufer, which he did, on condition that Lineik would consent to marry him. ‘Not till my stepmother is dead,’ answered she, ‘for she has brought misery to all that came near her.’ Then Laufer told them that Blauvor was not the wife of a king, but an ogress who had stolen her from a neighbouring palace and had brought her up as her daughter. And besides being an ogress she was also a witch, and by her black arts had sunk the ship in which the father of Sigurd and Lineik had set sail. It was she who had caused the disappearance of the courtiers, for which no one could account, by eating them during the night, and she hoped to get rid of all the people in the country, and then to fill the land with ogres and ogresses like herself.

So Prince Sigurd and the Prince of Greece collected an army swiftly, and marched upon the town where Blauvor had her palace. They came so suddenly that no one knew of it, and if they had, Blauvor had eaten most of the strong men; and others, fearful of something they could not tell what, had secretly left the place. Therefore she was easily captured, and the next day was beheaded in the market-place. Afterwards the two princes marched back to Greece.

Lineik had no longer any reason for putting off her wedding, and married the Prince of Greece at the same time that Sigurd married the princess. And Laufer remained with Lineik as her friend and sister, till they found a husband for her in a great nobleman; and all three couples lived happily until they died.

[From Islandische Muhrchen Poestion Wien.]

THE SIX HUNGRY BEASTS

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Once upon a time there lived a man who dwelt with his wife in a little hut, far away from any neighbours. But they did not mind being alone, and would have been quite happy, if it had not been for a marten, who came every night to their poultry yard, and carried off one of their fowls. The man laid all sorts of traps to catch the thief, but instead of capturing the foe, it happened that one day he got caught himself, and falling down, struck his head against a stone, and was killed.

Not long after the marten came by on the look out for his supper. Seeing the dead man lying there, he said to himself: ‘That is a prize, this time I have done well’; and dragging the body with great difficulty to the sledge which was waiting for him, drove off with his booty. He had not driven far when he met a squirrel, who bowed and said: ‘Good-morning, godfather! what have you got behind you?’

The marten laughed and answered: ‘Did you ever hear anything so strange? The old man that you see here set traps about his hen-house, thinking to catch me but he fell into his own trap, and broke his own neck. He is very heavy; I wish you would help me to draw the sledge.’ The squirrel did as he was asked, and the sledge moved slowly along.

By-and-by a hare came running across a field, but stopped to see what wonderful thing was coming. ‘What have you got there?’ she asked, and the marten told his story and begged the hare to help them pull.

The hare pulled her hardest, and after a while they were joined by a fox, and then by a wolf, and at length a bear was added to the company, and he was of more use than all the other five beasts put together. Besides, when the whole six had supped off the man he was not so heavy to draw.

The worst of it was that they soon began to get hungry again, and the wolf, who was the hungriest of all, said to the rest:

‘What shall we eat now, my friends, as there is no more man?’

‘I suppose we shall have to eat the smallest of us,’ replied the bear, and the marten turned round to seize the squirrel who was much smaller than

any of the rest. But the squirrel ran up a tree like lightning, and the marten remembering, just in time, that he was the next in size, slipped quick as thought into a hole in the rocks.

‘What shall we eat now?’ asked the wolf again, when he had recovered from his surprise.

‘We must eat the smallest of us,’ repeated the bear, stretching out a paw towards the hare; but the hare was not a hare for nothing, and before the paw had touched her, she had darted deep into the wood.

Now that the squirrel, the marten, and the hare had all gone, the fox was the smallest of the three who were left, and the wolf and the bear explained that they were very sorry, but they would have to eat him. Michael, the fox, did not run away as the others had done, but smiled in a friendly manner, and remarked: ‘Things taste so stale in a valley; one’s appetite is so much better up on a mountain.’ The wolf and the bear agreed, and they turned out of the hollow where they had been walking, and chose a path that led up the mountain side. The fox trotted cheerfully by his two big companions, but on the way he managed to whisper to the wolf: ‘Tell me, Peter, when I am eaten, what will you have for your next dinner?’

This simple question seemed to put out the wolf very much. What would they have for their next dinner, and, what was more important still, who would there be to eat it? They had made a rule always to dine off the smallest of the party, and when the fox was gone, why of course, he was smaller than the bear.

These thoughts flashed quickly through his head, and he said hastily:

‘Dear brothers, would it not be better for us to live together as comrades, and everyone to hunt for the common dinner? Is not my plan a good one?’

‘It is the best thing I have ever heard,’ answered the fox; and as they were two to one the bear had to be content, though in his heart he would much have preferred a good dinner at once to any friendship.

For a few days all went well; there was plenty of game in the forest, and even the wolf had as much to eat as he could wish. One morning the fox as usual was going his rounds when he noticed a tall, slender tree, with a magpie’s nest in one of the top branches. Now the fox was particularly fond of young magpies, and he set about making a plan by which he could

have one for dinner. At last he hit upon something which he thought would do, and accordingly he sat down near the tree and began to stare hard at it.

‘What are you looking at, Michael?’ asked the magpie, who was watching him from a bough.

‘I’m looking at this tree. It has just struck me what a good tree it would be to cut my new snow-shoes out of.’ But at this answer the magpie screeched loudly, and exclaimed: ‘Oh, not this tree, dear brother, I implore you! I have built my nest on it, and my young ones are not yet old enough to fly.’

‘It will not be easy to find another tree that would make such good snow-shoes,’ answered the fox, cocking his head on one side, and gazing at the tree thoughtfully; ‘but I do not like to be ill-natured, so if you will give me one of your young ones I will seek my snow-shoes elsewhere.’

Not knowing what to do the poor magpie had to agree, and flying back, with a heavy heart, he threw one of his young ones out of the nest. The fox seized it in his mouth and ran off in triumph, while the magpie, though deeply grieved for the loss of his little one, found some comfort in the thought that only a bird of extraordinary wisdom would have dreamed of saving the rest by the sacrifice of the one. But what do you think happened? Why, a few days later, Michael the fox might have been seen sitting under the very same tree, and a dreadful pang shot through the heart of the magpie as he peeped at him from a hole in the nest.

‘What are you looking at?’ he asked in a trembling voice.

‘At this tree. I was just thinking what good snowshoes it would make,’ answered the fox in an absent voice, as if he was not thinking of what he was saying.

‘Oh, my brother, my dear little brother, don’t do that,’ cried the magpie, hopping about in his anguish. ‘You know you promised only a few days ago that you would get your snow-shoes elsewhere.’

‘So I did; but though I have searched through the whole forest, there is not a single tree that is as good as this. I am very sorry to put you out, but really it is not my fault. The only thing I can do for you is to offer to give up my snow-shoes altogether if you will throw me down one of your young ones in exchange.’

And the poor magpie, in spite of his wisdom, was obliged to throw another of his little ones out of the nest; and this time he was not able to

console himself with the thought that he had been much cleverer than other people.

He sat on the edge of his nest, his head drooping and his feathers all ruffled, looking the picture of misery. Indeed he was so different from the gay, jaunty magpie whom every creature in the forest knew, that a crow who was flying past, stopped to inquire what was the matter. ‘Where are the two young ones who are not in the nest?’ asked he.

‘I had to give them to the fox,’ replied the magpie in a quivering voice; ‘he has been here twice in the last week, and wanted to cut down my tree for the purpose of making snow-shoes out of it, and the only way I could buy him off was by giving him two of my young ones.’

Oh, you fool,’ cried the crow, ‘the fox was only trying to frighten you. He could not have cut down the tree, for he has neither axe nor knife. Dear me, to think that you have sacrificed your young ones for nothing! Dear, dear! how could you be so very foolish!’ And the crow flew away, leaving the magpie overcome with shame and sorrow.

The next morning the fox came to his usual place in front of the tree, for he was hungry, and a nice young magpie would have suited him very well for dinner. But this time there was no cowering, timid magpie to do his bidding, but a bird with his head erect and a determined voice.

‘My good fox,’ said the magpie putting his head on one side and looking very wise—‘my good fox, if you take my advice, you will go home as fast as you can. There is no use your talking about making snow-shoes out of this tree, when you have neither knife nor axe to cut it down with!’

‘Who has been teaching you wisdom?’ asked the fox, forgetting his manners in his surprise at this new turn of affairs.

‘The crow, who paid me a visit yesterday,’ answered the magpie.

‘The crow was it?’ said the fox, ‘well, the crow had better not meet me for the future, or it may be the worse for him.’

As Michael, the cunning beast, had no desire to continue the conversation, he left the forest; but when he came to the high road he laid himself at full length on the ground, stretching himself out, just as if he was dead. Very soon he noticed, out of the corner of his eye, that the crow was flying towards him, and he kept stiller and stiffer than ever, with his tongue hanging out of his mouth. The crow, who wanted her supper very

badly, hopped quickly towards him, and was stooping forward to peck at his tongue when the fox gave a snap, and caught him by the wing. The crow knew that it was of no use struggling, so he said:

‘Ah, brother, if you are really going to eat me, do it, I beg of you, in good style. Throw me first over this precipice, so that my feathers may be strewn here and there, and that all who see them may know that your cunning is greater than mine.’ This idea pleased the fox, for he had not yet forgiven the crow for depriving him of the young magpies, so he carried the crow to the edge of the precipice and threw him over, intending to go round by a path he knew and pick him up at the bottom. But no sooner had the fox let the crow go than he soared up into the air, and hovering just out of teach of his enemy’s jaws, he cried with a laugh: ‘Ah, fox! you know well how to catch, but you cannot keep.’

With his tail between his legs, the fox slunk into the forest. He did not know where to look for a dinner, as he guessed that the crow would have flown back before him, and put every one on their guard. The notion of going to bed supperless was very unpleasant to him, and he was wondering what in the world he should do, when he chanced to meet with his old friend the bear.

This poor animal had just lost his wife, and was going to get some one to mourn over her, for he felt her loss greatly. He had hardly left his comfortable cave when he had come across the wolf, who inquired where he was going. ‘I am going to find a mourner,’ answered the bear, and told his story.

‘Oh, let me mourn for you,’ cried the wolf.

‘Do you understand how to howl?’ said the bear.

‘Oh, certainly, godfather, certainly,’ replied the wolf; but the bear said he should like to have a specimen of his howling, to make sure that he knew his business. So the wolf broke forth in his song of lament: ‘Hu, hu, hu, hum, hoh,’ he shouted, and he made such a noise that the bear put up his paws to his ears, and begged him to stop.

‘You have no idea how it is done. Be off with you,’ said he angrily.

A little further down the road the hare was resting in a ditch, but when she saw the bear, she came out and spoke to him, and inquired why he looked so sad. The bear told her of the loss of his wife, and of his search after a mourner that could lament over her in the proper style. The hare

instantly offered her services, but the bear took care to ask her to give him a proof of her talents, before he accepted them. ‘Pu, pu, pu, pum, poh,’ piped the hare; but this time her voice was so small that the bear could hardly hear her. ‘That is not what I want,’ he said, ‘I will bid you good morning.’

It was after this that the fox came up, and he also was struck with the bear’s altered looks, and stopped. ‘What is the matter with you, godfather?’ asked he, ‘and where are you going?’

‘I am going to find a mourner for my wife,’ answered the bear.

‘Oh, do choose me,’ cried the fox, and the bear looked at him thoughtfully.

‘Can you howl well?’ he said.

‘Yes, beautifully, just listen,’ and the fox lifted up his voice and sang weeping: ‘Lou, lou, lou! the famous spinner, the baker of good cakes, the prudent housekeeper is torn from her husband! Lou, lou, lou! she is gone! she is gone!’

‘Now at last I have found some one who knows the art of lamentation,’ exclaimed the bear, quite delighted; and he led the fox back to his cave, and bade him begin his lament over the dead wife who was lying stretched out on her bed of grey moss. But this did not suit the fox at all.

‘One cannot wail properly in this cave,’ he said, ‘it is much too damp. You had better take the body to the storehouse. It will sound much finer there.’ So the bear carried his wife’s body to the storehouse, while he himself went back to the cave to cook some pap for the mourner. From time to time he paused and listened for the sound of wailing, but he heard nothing. At last he went to the door of the storehouse, and called to the fox:

‘Why don’t you howl, godfather? What are you about?’

And the fox, who, instead of weeping over the dead bear, had been quietly eating her, answered:

‘There only remain now her legs and the soles of her feet. Give me five minutes more and they will be gone also!’

When the bear heard that he ran back for the kitchen ladle, to give the traitor the beating he deserved. But as he opened the door of the storehouse, Michael was ready for him, and slipping between his legs, dashed straight off into the forest. The bear, seeing that the traitor had

escaped, flung the ladle after him, and it just caught the tip of his tail, and that is how there comes to be a spot of white on the tails of all foxes.

[From Finnische Mahrchen.]

HOW THE BEGGAR BOY TURNED INTO COUNT PIRO

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Once upon a time there lived a man who had only one son, a lazy, stupid boy, who would never do anything he was told. When the father was dying, he sent for his son and told him that he would soon be left alone in the world, with no possessions but the small cottage they lived in and a pear tree which grew behind it, and that, whether he liked it or not, he would have to work, or else he would starve. Then the old man died.

But the boy did not work; instead, he idled about as before, contenting himself with eating the pears off his tree, which, unlike other pear trees before or since, bore fruit the whole year round. Indeed, the pears were so much finer than any you could get even in the autumn, that one day, in the middle of the winter, they attracted the notice of a fox who was creeping by.

‘Dear me; what lovely pears!’ he said to the youth. ‘Do give me a basket of them. It will bring you luck!’

‘Ah, little fox, but if I give you a basketful, what am I to eat?’ asked the boy.

‘Oh, trust me, and do what I tell you,’ said the fox; ‘I know it will bring you luck.’ So the boy got up and picked some of the ripest pears and put them into a rush basket. The fox thanked him, and, taking the basket in his mouth, trotted off to the king’s palace and made his way straight to the king.

‘Your Majesty, my master sends you a few of his best pears, and begs you will graciously accept them,’ he said, laying the basket at the feet of the king.

‘Pears! at this season?’ cried the king, peering down to look at them; ‘and, pray, who is your master?’

‘The Count Piro,’ answered the fox.

‘But how does he manage to get pears in midwinter?’ asked the king.

‘Oh, he has everything he wants,’ replied the fox; ‘he is richer even than you are, your Majesty.’

‘Then what can I send him in return for his pears?’ said the king.

‘Nothing, your Majesty, or you would hurt his feelings,’ answered the fox.

‘Well, tell him how heartily I thank him, and how much I shall enjoy them.’ And the fox went away.

He trotted back to the cottage with his empty basket and told his tale, but the youth did not seem as pleased to hear as the fox was to tell.

‘But, my dear little fox,’ said he, ‘you have brought me nothing in return, and I am so hungry!’

‘Let me alone,’ replied the fox; ‘I know what I am doing. You will see, it will bring you luck.’

A few days after this the fox came back again.

‘I must have another basket of pears,’ said he.

‘Ah, little fox, what shall I eat if you take away all my pears?’ answered the youth.

‘Be quiet, it will be all right,’ said the fox; and taking a bigger basket than before, he filled it quite full of pears. Then he picked it up in his mouth, and trotted off to the palace.

‘Your Majesty, as you seemed to like the first basket of pears, I have brought you some more,’ said he, ‘with my master, the Count Piro’s humble respects.’

‘Now, surely it is not possible to grow such pears with deep snow on the ground?’ cried the king.

‘Oh, that never affects them,’ answered the fox lightly; ‘he is rich enough to do anything. But to-day he sends me to ask if you will give him your daughter in marriage?’

‘If he is so much richer than I am,’ said the king, ‘I shall be obliged to refuse. My honour would not permit me to accept his offer.’

‘Oh, your Majesty, you must not think that,’ replied the fox; ‘and do not let the question of a dowry trouble you. The Count Piro would not dream of asking anything but the hand of the princess.’

‘Is he really so rich that he can do without a dowry?’ asked the king.

‘Did I not tell your Majesty that he was richer than you?’ answered the fox reproachfully.

‘Well, beg him to come here, that we may talk together,’ said the king.

So the fox went back to the young man and said: ‘I have told the king that you are Count Piro, and have asked his daughter in marriage.’

‘Oh, little fox, what have you done?’ cried the youth in dismay; ‘when the king sees me he will order my head to be cut off.’

‘Oh, no, he won’t!’ replied the fox; ‘just do as I tell you.’ And he went off to the town, and stopped at the house of the best tailor.

‘My master, the Count Piro, begs that you will send him at once the finest coat that you have in your shop,’ said the fox, putting on his grandest air, ‘and if it fits him I will call and pay for it to-morrow! Indeed, as he is in a great hurry, perhaps it might be as well if I took it round myself.’ The tailor was not accustomed to serve counts, and he at once got out all the coats he had ready. The fox chose out a beautiful one of white and silver, bade the tailor tie it up in a parcel, and carrying the string in his teeth, he left the shop, and went to a horse-dealer’s, whom he persuaded to send his finest horse round to the cottage, saying that the king had bidden his master to the palace.

Very unwillingly the young man put on the coat and mounted the horse, and rode up to meet the king, with the fox running before him.

‘What am I to say to his Majesty, little fox?’ he asked anxiously; ‘you know that I have never spoken to a king before.’

‘Say nothing,’ answered the fox, ‘but leave the talking to me. “Good morning, your Majesty,” will be all that is necessary for you.’

By this time they had reached the palace, and the king came to the door to receive Count Piro, and led him to the great hall, where a feast was spread. The princess was already seated at the table, but was as dumb as Count Piro himself.

‘The Count speaks very little,’ the king said at last to the fox, and the fox answered: ‘He has so much to think about in the management of his property that he cannot afford to talk like ordinary people.’ The king was quite satisfied, and they finished dinner, after which Count Piro and the fox took leave.

The next morning the fox came round again.

‘Give me another basket of pears,’ he said.

‘Very well, little fox; but remember it may cost me my life,’ answered the youth.

‘Oh, leave it to me, and do as I tell you, and you will see that in the end it will bring you luck,’ answered the fox; and plucking the pears he took them up to the king.

‘My master, Count Piro, sends you these pears,’ he said, ‘and asks for an answer to his proposal.’

‘Tell the count that the wedding can take place whenever he pleases,’ answered the king, and, filled with pride, the fox trotted back to deliver his message.

‘But I can’t bring the princess here, little fox?’ cried the young man in dismay.

‘You leave everything to me,’ answered the fox; ‘have I not managed well so far?’

And up at the palace preparations were made for a grand wedding, and the youth was married to the princess.

After a week of feasting, the fox said to the king: ‘My master wishes to take his young bride home to his own castle.’

‘Very well, I will accompany them,’ replied the king; and he ordered his courtiers and attendants to get ready, and the best horses in his stable to be brought out for himself, Count Piro and the princess. So they all set out, and rode across the plain, the little fox running before them.

He stopped at the sight of a great flock of sheep, which was feeding peacefully on the rich grass. ‘To whom do these sheep belong?’ asked he of the shepherd. ‘To an ogre,’ replied the shepherd.

‘Hush,’ said the fox in a mysterious manner. ‘Do you see that crowd of armed men riding along? If you were to tell them that those sheep belonged to an ogre, they would kill them, and then the ogre would kill you! If they ask, just say the sheep belong to Count Piro; it will be better for everybody.’ And the fox ran hastily on, as he did not wish to be seen talking to the shepherd.

Very soon the king came up.

‘What beautiful sheep!’ he said, drawing up his horse. ‘I have none so fine in my pastures. Whose are they?’

‘Count Piro’s,’ answered the shepherd, who did not know the king.

‘Well, he must be a very rich man,’ thought the king to himself, and rejoiced that he had such a wealthy son-in-law.

Meanwhile the fox had met with a huge herd of pigs, snuffling about the roots of some trees.

‘To whom do these pigs belong?’ he asked of the swineherd.

‘To an ogre,’ replied he.

‘Hush!’ whispered the fox, though nobody could hear him; ‘do you see that troop of armed men riding towards us? If you tell them that the pigs belong to the ogre they will kill them, and then the ogre will kill you! If they ask, just say that the pigs belong to Count Piro; it will be better for everybody.’ And he ran hastily on.

Soon after the king rode up.

‘What fine pigs!’ he said, reining in his horse. ‘They are fatter than any I have got on my farms. Whose are they?’

‘Count Piro’s,’ answered the swineherd, who did not know the king; and again the king felt he was lucky to have such a rich son-in-law.

This time the fox ran faster than before, and in a flowery meadow he found a troop of horses feeding. ‘Whose horses are these?’ he asked of the man who was watching them.

‘An ogre’s,’ replied he.

‘Hush!’ whispered the fox, ‘do you see that crowd of armed men coming towards us? If you tell them the horses belong to an ogre they will drive them off, and then the ogre will kill you! If they ask, just say they are Count Piro’s; it will be better for everybody.’ And he ran on again.

In a few minutes the king rode up.

‘Oh, what lovely creatures! how I wish they were mine!’ he exclaimed. ‘Whose are they?’

Count Piro’s,’ answered the man, who did not know the king; and the king’s heart leapt as he thought that if they belonged to his rich son-in-law they were as good as his.

At last the fox came to the castle of the ogre himself. He ran up the steps, with tears falling from his eyes, and crying:

‘Oh, you poor, poor people, what a sad fate is yours!’

‘What has happened?’ asked the ogre, trembling with fright.

‘Do you see that troop of horsemen who are riding along the road? They are sent by the king to kill you!’

‘Oh, dear little fox, help us, we implore you!’ cried the ogre and his wife.

‘Well, I will do what I can,’ answered the fox. ‘The best place is for you both to hide in the big oven, and when the soldiers have gone by I will let you out.’

The ogre and ogress scrambled into the oven as quick as thought, and the fox banged the door on them; just as he did so the king came up.

‘Do us the honour to dismount, your Majesty,’ said the fox, bowing low. ‘This is the palace of Count Piro!’

‘Why it is more splendid than my own!’ exclaimed the king, looking round on all the beautiful things that filled the hall. But why are there no servants?’

‘His Excellency the Count Piro wished the princess to choose them for herself,’ answered the fox, and the king nodded his approval. He then rode on, leaving the bridal pair in the castle. But when it was dark and all was still, the fox crept downstairs and lit the kitchen fire, and the ogre and his wife were burned to death. The next morning the fox said to Count Piro:

‘Now that you are rich and happy, you have no more need of me; but, before I go, there is one thing I must ask of you in return: when I die, promise me that you will give me a magnificent coffin, and bury me with due honours.’

‘Oh, little, little fox, don’t talk of dying,’ cried the princess, nearly weeping, for she had taken a great liking to the fox.

After some time the fox thought he would see if the Count Piro was really grateful to him for all he had done, and went back to the castle, where he lay down on the door-step, and pretended to be dead. The princess was just going out for a walk, and directly she saw him lying there, she burst into tears and fell on her knees beside him.

‘My dear little fox, you are not dead,’ she wailed; ‘you poor, poor little creature, you shall have the finest coffin in the world!’

‘A coffin for an animal?’ said Count Piro. ‘What nonsense! just take him by the leg and throw him into the ditch.’

Then the fox sprang up and cried: ‘You wretched, thankless beggar; have you forgotten that you owe all your riches to me?’

Count Piro was frightened when he heard these words, as he thought that perhaps the fox might have power to take away the castle, and leave him as poor as when he had nothing to eat but the pears off his tree. So he tried to soften the fox’s anger, saying that he had only spoken in joke, as

he had known quite well that he was not really dead. For the sake of the princess, the fox let himself be softened, and he lived in the castle for many years, and played with Count Piro’s children. And when he actually did die, his coffin was made of silver, and Count Piro and his wife followed him to the grave.

[From Sicilianische Mahrchen.]

THE ROGUE AND THE HERDSMAN

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In a tiny cottage near the king's palace there once lived an old man, his wife, and his son, a very lazy fellow, who would never do a stroke of work. He could not be got even to look after their one cow, but left her to look after herself, while he lay on a bank and went to sleep in the sun. For a long time his father bore with him, hoping that as he grew older he might gain more sense; but at last the old man's patience was worn out, and he told his son that he should not stay at house in idleness, and must go out into the world to seek his fortune.

The young man saw that there was no help for it, and he set out with a wallet full of food over his shoulder. At length he came to a large house, at the door of which he knocked.

'What do you want?' asked the old man who opened it. And the youth told him how his father had turned him out of his house because he was so lazy and stupid, and he needed shelter for the night.

'That you shall have,' replied the man; 'but to-morrow I shall give you some work to do, for you must know that I am the chief herdsman of the king.'

The youth made no answer to this. He felt, if he was to be made to work after all, that he might as well have stayed where he was. But as he did not see any other way of getting a bed, he went slowly in.

The herdsman's two daughters and their mother were sitting at supper, and invited him to join them. Nothing more was said about work, and when the meal was over they all went to bed.

In the morning, when the young man was dressed, the herdsman called to him and said:

'Now listen, and I will tell you what you have to do.'

'What is it?' asked the youth, sulkily.

'Nothing less than to look after two hundred pigs,' was the reply.

'Oh, I am used to that,' answered the youth.

‘Yes; but this time you will have to do it properly,’ said the herdsman; and he took the youth to the place where the pigs were feeding, and told him to drive them to the woods on the side of the mountain. This the young man did, but as soon as they reached the outskirts of the mountain they grew quite wild, and would have run away altogether, had they not luckily gone towards a narrow ravine, from which the youth easily drove them home to his father’s cottage.

‘Where do all these pigs come from, and how did you get them?’ asked the old man in surprise, when his son knocked at the door of the hut he had left only the day before.

‘They belong to the king’s chief herdsman,’ answered his son. ‘He gave them to me to look after, but I knew I could not do it, so I drove them straight to you. Now make the best of your good fortune, and kill them and hang them up at once.’

‘What are you talking about?’ cried the father, pale with horror. ‘We should certainly both be put to death if I did any such thing.’

‘No, no; do as I tell you, and I will get out of it somehow,’ replied the young man. And in the end he had his way. The pigs were killed, and laid side by side in a row. Then he cut off the tails and tied them together with a piece of cord, and swinging the bundle over his back, he returned to the place where they should have been feeding. Here there was a small swamp, which was just what he wanted, and finding a large stone, he fastened the rope to it, and sank it in the swamp, after which he arranged the tails carefully one by one, so that only their points were seen sticking out of the water. When everything was in order, he hastened home to his master with such a sorrowful face that the herdsman saw at once that something dreadful had happened.

‘Where are the pigs?’ asked he.

‘Oh, don’t speak of them!’ answered the young man; ‘I really can hardly tell you. The moment they got into the field they became quite mad, and each ran in a different direction. I ran too, hither and thither, but as fast as I caught one, another was off, till I was in despair. At last, however, I collected them all and was about to drive them back, when suddenly they rushed down the hill into the swamp, where they vanished completely, leaving only the points of their tails, which you can see for yourself.’

‘You have made up that story very well,’ replied the herdsman.

‘No, it is the real truth; come with me and I’ll prove it.’ And they went together to the spot, and there sure enough were the points of the tails sticking up out of the water. The herdsman laid hold of the nearest, and pulled at it with all his might, but it was no use, for the stone and the rope held them all fast. He called to the young man to help him, but the two did not succeed any better than the one had done.

‘Yes, your story was true after all; it is a wonderful thing,’ said the herdsman. ‘But I see it is no fault of yours, and I must put up with my loss as well as I can. Now let us return home, for it is time for supper.

Next morning the herdsman said to the young man: ‘I have got some other work for you to do. To-day you must take a hundred sheep to graze; but be careful that no harm befalls them.’

‘I will do my best,’ replied the youth. And he opened the gate of the fold, where the sheep had been all night, and drove them out into the meadow. But in a short time they grew as wild as the pigs had done, and scattered in all directions. The young man could not collect them, try as he would, and he thought to himself that this was the punishment for his laziness in refusing to look after his father’s one cow.

At last, however, the sheep seemed tired of running about, and then the youth managed to gather them together, and drove them, as before, straight to his father’s house.

‘Whose sheep are these, and what are they doing here?’ asked the old man in wonder, and his son told him. But when the tale was ended the father shook his head.

‘Give up these bad ways and take them back to your master,’ said he.

‘No, no,’ answered the youth; ‘I am not so stupid as that! We will kill them and have them for dinner.’

‘You will lose your life if you do,’ replied the father.

‘Oh, I am not sure of that!’ said the son, ‘and, anyway, I will have my will for once.’ And he killed all the sheep and laid them on the grass. But he cut off the head of the ram which always led the flock and had bells round its horns. This he took back to the place where they should have been feeding, for here he had noticed a high rock, with a patch of green grass in the middle and two or three thick bushes growing on the edge. Up this rock he climbed with great difficulty, and fastened the ram’s head to

the bushes with a cord, leaving only the tips of the horns with the bells visible. As there was a soft breeze blowing, the bushes to which the head was tied moved gently, and the bells rang. When all was done to his liking he hastened quickly back to his master.

‘Where are the sheep?’ asked the herdsman as the young man ran panting up the steps.

‘Oh! don’t speak of them,’ answered he. ‘It is only by a miracle that I am here myself.’

‘Tell me at once what has happened,’ said the herdsman sternly.

The youth began to sob, and stammered out: ‘I—I hardly know how to tell you! They—they—they were so—so troublesome—that I could not manage them at all. They—ran about in—in all directions, and I—I—ran after them and nearly died of fatigue. Then I heard a—a noise, which I—I thought was the wind. But—but—it was the sheep, which, be—before my very eyes, were carried straight up—up into the air. I stood watching them as if I was turned to stone, but there kept ringing in my ears the sound of the bells on the ram which led them.’

‘That is nothing but a lie from beginning to end,’ said the herdsman.

‘No, it is as true as that there is a sun in heaven,’ answered the young man.

‘Then give me a proof of it,’ cried his master.

‘Well, come with me,’ said the youth. By this time it was evening and the dusk was falling. The young man brought the herdsman to the foot of the great rock, but it was so dark you could hardly see. Still the sound of sheep bells rang softly from above, and the herdsman knew them to be those he had hung on the horns of his ram.

‘Do you hear?’ asked the youth.

‘Yes, I hear; you have spoken the truth, and I cannot blame you for what has happened. I must bear the loss as best as I can.’

He turned and went home, followed by the young man, who felt highly pleased with his own cleverness.

‘I should not be surprised if the tasks I set you were too difficult, and that you were tired of them,’ said the herdsman next morning; ‘but to-day I have something quite easy for you to do. You must look after forty oxen, and be sure you are very careful, for one of them has gold-tipped horns and hoofs, and the king reckons it among his greatest treasures.’

The young man drove out the oxen into the meadow, and no sooner had they got there than, like the sheep and the pigs, they began to scamper in all directions, the precious bull being the wildest of all. As the youth stood watching them, not knowing what to do next, it came into his head that his father's cow was put out to grass at no great distance; and he forthwith made such a noise that he quite frightened the oxen, who were easily persuaded to take the path he wished. When they heard the cow lowing they galloped all the faster, and soon they all arrived at his father's house.

The old man was standing before the door of his hut when the great herd of animals dashed round a corner of the road, with his son and his own cow at their head.

'Whose cattle are these, and why are they here?' he asked; and his son told him the story.

'Take them back to your master as soon as you can,' said the old man; but the son only laughed, and said:

'No, no; they are a present to you! They will make you fat!'

For a long while the old man refused to have anything to do with such a wicked scheme; but his son talked him over in the end, and they killed the oxen as they had killed the sheep and the pigs. Last of all they came to the king's cherished ox.

The son had a rope ready to cast round its horns, and throw it to the ground, but the ox was stronger than the rope, and soon tore it in pieces. Then it dashed away to the wood, the youth following; over hedges and ditches they both went, till they reached the rocky pass which bordered the herdsman's land. Here the ox, thinking itself safe, stopped to rest, and thus gave the young man a chance to come up with it. Not knowing how to catch it, he collected all the wood he could find and made a circle of fire round the ox, who by this time had fallen asleep, and did not wake till the fire had caught its head, and it was too late for it to escape. Then the young man, who had been watching, ran home to his master.

'You have been away a long while,' said the herdsman. 'Where are the cattle?'

The young man gasped, and seemed as if he was unable to speak. At last he answered:

'It is always the same story! The oxen are—gone—gone!'

'G-g-gone?' cried the herdsman. 'Scoundrel, you lie!'

‘I am telling you the exact truth,’ answered the young man. ‘Directly we came to the meadow they grew so wild that I could not keep them together. Then the big ox broke away, and the others followed till they all disappeared down a deep hole into the earth. It seemed to me that I heard sounds of bellowing, and I thought I recognised the voice of the golden horned ox; but when I got to the place from which the sounds had come, I could neither see nor hear anything in the hole itself, though there were traces of a fire all round it.’

‘Wretch!’ cried the herdsman, when he had heard this story, ‘even if you did not lie before, you are lying now.’

‘No, master, I am speaking the truth. Come and see for yourself.’

‘If I find you have deceived me, you are a dead man, said the herdsman; and they went out together.

‘What do you call that?’ asked the youth. And the herdsman looked and saw the traces of a fire, which seemed to have sprung up from under the earth.

‘Wonder upon wonder,’ he exclaimed, ‘so you really did speak the truth after all! Well, I cannot reproach you, though I shall have to pay heavily to my royal master for the value of that ox. But come, let us go home! I will never set you to herd cattle again, henceforward I will give you something easier to do.’

‘I have thought of exactly the thing for you,’ said the herdsman as they walked along, ‘and it is so simple that you cannot make a mistake. Just make me ten scythes, one for every man, for I want the grass mown in one of my meadows to-morrow.’

At these words the youth’s heart sank, for he had never been trained either as a smith or a joiner. However, he dared not say no, but smiled and nodded.

Slowly and sadly he went to bed, but he could not sleep, for wondering how the scythes were to be made. All the skill and cunning he had shown before was of no use to him now, and after thinking about the scythes for many hours, there seemed only one way open to him. So, listening to make sure that all was still, he stole away to his parents, and told them the whole story. When they had heard everything, they hid him where no one could find him.

Time passed away, and the young man stayed at home doing all his parents bade him, and showing himself very different from what he had been before he went out to see the world; but one day he said to his father that he should like to marry, and have a house of his own.

‘When I served the king’s chief herdsman,’ added he, ‘I saw his daughter, and I am resolved to try if I cannot win her for my wife.’

‘It will cost you your life, if you do,’ answered the father, shaking his head.

‘Well, I will do my best,’ replied his son; ‘but first give me the sword which hangs over your bed!’

The old man did not understand what good the sword would do, however he took it down, and the young man went his way.

Late in the evening he arrived at the house of the herdsman, and knocked at the door, which was opened by a little boy.

‘I want to speak to your master,’ said he.

‘So it is you?’ cried the herdsman, when he had received the message. ‘Well, you can sleep here to-night if you wish.’

‘I have come for something else besides a bed,’ replied the young man, drawing his sword, ‘and if you do not promise to give me your youngest daughter as my wife I will stab you through the heart.’

What could the poor man do but promise? And he fetched his youngest daughter, who seemed quite pleased at the proposed match, and gave the youth her hand.

Then the young man went home to his parents, and bade them get ready to welcome his bride. And when the wedding was over he told his father-in-law, the herdsman, what he had done with the sheep, and pigs, and cattle. By-and-by the story came to the king’s ears, and he thought that a man who was so clever was just the man to govern the country; so he made him his minister, and after the king himself there was no one so great as he.

[From Islandische Mahrchen.]

EISENKOPF

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Once upon a time there lived an old man who had only one son, whom he loved dearly; but they were very poor, and often had scarcely enough to eat. Then the old man fell ill, and things grew worse than ever, so he called his son and said to him:

‘My dear boy, I have no longer any food to give you, and you must go into the world and get it for yourself. It does not matter what work you do, but remember if you do it well and are faithful to your master, you will always have your reward.’

So Peter put a piece of black bread in his knapsack, and strapping it on his back, took a stout stick in his hand, and set out to seek his fortune. For a long while he travelled on and on, and nobody seemed to want him; but one day he met an old man, and being a polite youth, he took off his hat and said: ‘Good morning,’ in a pleasant voice. ‘Good morning,’ answered the old man; ‘and where are you going?’

‘I am wandering through the country trying to get work,’ replied Peter.

‘Then stay with me, for I can give you plenty,’ said the old man, and Peter stayed.

His work did not seem hard, for he had only two horses and a cow to see after, and though he had been hired for a year, the year consisted of but three days, so that it was not long before he received his wages. In payment the old man gave him a nut, and offered to keep him for another year; but Peter was home-sick; and, besides, he would rather have been paid ever so small a piece of money than a nut; for, thought he, nuts grow on every tree, and I can gather as many as I like. However, he did not say this to the old man, who had been kind to him, but just bade him farewell.

The nearer Peter drew to his father’s house the more ashamed he felt at having brought back such poor wages. What could one nut do for him? Why, it would not buy even a slice of bacon. It was no use taking it home, he might as well eat it. So he sat down on a stone and cracked it with his teeth, and then took it out of his mouth to break off the shell. But who

could ever guess what came out of that nut? Why, horses and oxen and sheep stepped out in such numbers that they seemed as if they would stretch to the world's end! The sight gave Peter such a shock that he wrung his hands in dismay. What was he to do with all these creatures, where was he to put them? He stood and gazed in terror, and at this moment Eisenkopf came by.

'What is the matter, young man?' asked he.

'Oh, my friend, there is plenty the matter,' answered Peter. 'I have gained a nut as my wages, and when I cracked it this crowd of beasts came out, and I don't know what to do with them all!'

'Listen to me, my son,' said Eisenkopf. 'If you will promise never to marry I will drive them all back into the nut again.'

In his trouble Peter would have promised far harder things than this, so he gladly gave the promise Eisenkopf asked for; and at a whistle from the stranger the animals all began crowding into the nut again, nearly tumbling over each other in their haste. When the last foot had got inside, the two halves of the shell shut close. Then Peter put it in his pocket and went on to the house.

No sooner had he reached it than he cracked his nut for the second time, and out came the horses, sheep, and oxen again. Indeed Peter thought that there were even more of them than before. The old man could not believe his eyes when he saw the multitudes of horses, oxen and sheep standing before his door.

'How did you come by all these?' he gasped, as soon as he could speak; and the son told him the whole story, and of the promise he had given Eisenkopf.

The next day some of the cattle were driven to market and sold, and with the money the old man was able to buy some of the fields and gardens round his house, and in a few months had grown the richest and most prosperous man in the whole village. Everything seemed to turn to gold in his hands, till one day, when he and his son were sitting in the orchard watching their herds of cattle grazing in the meadows, he suddenly said: 'Peter, my boy, it is time that you were thinking of marrying.'

'But, my dear father, I told you I can never marry, because of the promise I gave to Eisenkopf.'

‘Oh, one promises here and promises there, but no one ever thinks of keeping such promises. If Eisenkopf does not like your marrying, he will have to put up with it all the same! Besides, there stands in the stable a grey horse which is saddled night and day; and if Eisenkopf should show his face, you have only got to jump on the horse’s back and ride away, and nobody on earth can catch you. When all is safe you will come back again, and we shall live as happily as two fish in the sea.’

And so it all happened. The young man found a pretty, brown-skinned girl who was willing to have him for a husband, and the whole village came to the wedding feast. The music was at its gayest, and the dance at its merriest, when Eisenkopf looked in at the window.

‘Oh, ho, my brother! what is going on here? It has the air of being a wedding feast. Yet I fancied—was I mistaken?—that you had given me a promise that you never would marry.’ But Peter had not waited for the end of this speech. Scarcely had he seen Eisenkopf than he darted like the wind to the stable and flung himself on the horse’s back. In another moment he was away over the mountain, with Eisenkopf running fast behind him.

On they went through thick forests where the sun never shone, over rivers so wide that it took a whole day to sail across them, up hills whose sides were all of glass; on they went through seven times seven countries till Peter reined in his horse before the house of an old woman.

‘Good day, mother,’ said he, jumping down and opening the door.

‘Good day, my son,’ answered she, ‘and what are you doing here, at the world’s end?’

‘I am flying for my life, mother, flying to the world which is beyond all worlds; for Eisenkopf is at my heels.’

‘Come in and rest then, and have some food, for I have a little dog who will begin to howl when Eisenkopf is still seven miles off.’

So Peter went in and warmed himself and ate and drank, till suddenly the dog began to howl.

‘Quick, my son, quick, you must go,’ cried the old woman. And the lightning itself was not quicker than Peter.

‘Stop a moment,’ cried the old woman again, just as he was mounting his horse, ‘take this napkin and this cake, and put them in your bag where you can get hold of them easily.’ Peter took them and put them into his bag, and waving his thanks for her kindness, he was off like the wind.

Round and round he rode, through seven times seven countries, through forests still thicker, and rivers still wider, and mountains still more slippery than the others he had passed, till at length he reached a house where dwelt another old woman.

‘Good day, mother,’ said he.

‘Good day, my son! What are you seeking here at the world’s end?’

‘I am flying for my life, mother, flying to the world that is beyond all worlds, for Eisenkopf is at my heels.’

‘Come in, my son, and have some food. I have a little dog who will begin to howl when Eisenkopf is still seven miles off; so lie on this bed and rest yourself in peace.’

Then she went to the kitchen and baked a number of cakes, more than Peter could have eaten in a whole month. He had not finished a quarter of them, when the dog began to howl.

‘Now, my son, you must go,’ cried the old woman ‘but first put these cakes and this napkin in your bag, where you can easily get at them.’ So Peter thanked her and was off like the wind.

On he rode, through seven times seven countries, till he came to the house of a third old woman, who welcomed him as the others had done. But when the dog howled, and Peter sprang up to go, she said, as she gave him the same gifts for his journey: ‘You have now three cakes and three napkins, for I know that my sisters have each given you one. Listen to me, and do what I tell you. Ride seven days and nights straight before you, and on the eighth morning you will see a great fire. Strike it three times with the three napkins and it will part in two. Then ride into the opening, and when you are in the middle of the opening, throw the three cakes behind your back with your left hand.’

Peter thanked her for her counsel, and was careful to do exactly all the old woman had told him. On the eighth morning he reached a fire so large that he could see nothing else on either side, but when he struck it with the napkins it parted, and stood on each hand like a wall. As he rode through the opening he threw the cakes behind him. From each cake there sprang a huge dog, and he gave them the names of World’s-weight, Ironstrong, and Quick-ear. They bayed with joy at the sight of him, and as Peter turned to pat them, he beheld Eisenkopf at the edge of the fire, but the opening had closed up behind Peter, and he could not get through.

‘Stop, you promise-breaker,’ shrieked he; ‘you have slipped through my hands once, but wait till I catch you again!’

Then he lay down by the fire and watched to see what would happen.

When Peter knew that he had nothing more to fear from Eisenkopf, he rode on slowly till he came to a small white house. Here he entered and found himself in a room where a gray-haired woman was spinning and a beautiful girl was sitting in the window combing her golden hair. ‘What brings you here, my son?’ asked the old woman.

‘I am seeking for a place, mother,’ answered Peter.

‘Stay with me, then, for I need a servant,’ said the old woman.

‘With pleasure, mother,’ replied he.

After that Peter’s life was a very happy one. He sowed and ploughed all day, except now and then when he took his dogs and went to hunt. And whatever game he brought back the maiden with the golden hair knew how to dress it.

One day the old woman had gone to the town to buy some flour, and Peter and the maiden were left alone in the house. They fell into talk, and she asked him where his home was, and how he had managed to come through the fire. Peter then told her the whole story, and of his striking the flames with the three napkins as he had been told to do. The maiden listened attentively and wondered in herself whether what he said was true. So after Peter had gone out to the fields, she crept up to his room and stole the napkins and then set off as fast as she could to the fire by a path she knew of over the hill.

At the third blow she gave the flames divided, and Eisenkopf, who had been watching and hoping for a chance of this kind, ran down the opening and stood before her. At this sight the maiden was almost frightened to death, but with a great effort she recovered herself and ran home as fast as her legs would carry her, closely pursued by Eisenkopf. Panting for breath she rushed into the house and fell fainting on the floor; but Eisenkopf entered behind her, and hid himself in the kitchen under the hearth.

Not long after, Peter came in and picked up the three napkins which the maiden had dropped on the threshold. He wondered how they got there, for he knew he had left them in his room; but what was his horror when he saw the form of the fainting girl lying where she had dropped, as still and white as if she had been dead. He lifted her up and carried her to her bed,

where she soon revived, but she did not tell Peter about Eisenkopf, who had been almost crushed to death under the hearth-stone by the body of World's-weight.

The next morning Peter locked up his dogs and went out into the forest alone. Eisenkopf, however, had seen him go, and followed so closely at his heels that Peter had barely time to clamber up a tall tree, where Eisenkopf could not reach him. 'Come down at once, you gallows bird,' he cried. 'Have you forgotten your promise that you never would marry?'

'Oh, I know it is all up with me,' answered Peter, 'but let me call out three times.'

'You can call a hundred times if you like,' returned Eisenkopf, 'for now I have got you in my power, and you shall pay for what you have done.'

'Iron-strong, World's-weight, Quick-ear, fly to my help!' cried Peter; and Quick-ear heard, and said to his brothers: 'Listen, our master is calling us.'

'You are dreaming, fool,' answered World's-weight; 'why he has not finished his breakfast.' And he gave Quick-ear a slap with his paw, for he was young and needed to be taught sense.

'Iron-strong, World's-weight, Quick-ear, fly to my help!' cried Peter again.

This time World's-weight heard also, and he said, 'Ah, now our master is really calling.'

'How silly you are!' answered Iron-strong; 'you know that at this hour he is always eating.' And he gave World's-weight a cuff, because he was old enough to know better.

Peter sat trembling on the tree dreading lest his dogs had never heard, or else that, having heard, they had refused to come. It was his last chance, so making a mighty effort he shrieked once more:

'Iron-strong, World's-weight, Quick-ear, fly to my help, or I am a dead man!'

And Iron-strong heard, and said: 'Yes, he is certainly calling, we must go at once.' And in an instant he had burst open the door, and all three were bounding away in the direction of the voice. When they reached the foot of the tree Peter just said: 'At him!' And in a few minutes there was nothing left of Eisenkopf.

As soon as his enemy was dead Peter got down and returned to the house, where he bade farewell to the old woman and her daughter, who gave him a beautiful ring, all set with diamonds. It was really a magic ring, but neither Peter nor the maiden knew that.

Peter's heart was heavy as he set out for home. He had ceased to love the wife whom he had left at his wedding feast, and his heart had gone out to the golden-haired girl. However, it was no use thinking of that, so he rode forward steadily.

The fire had to be passed through before he had gone very far, and when he came to it, Peter shook the napkins three times in the flames and a passage opened for trim. But then a curious thing happened; the three dogs, who had followed at his heels all the way, now became three cakes again, which Peter put into his bag with the napkins. After that he stopped at the houses of the three old women, and gave each one back her napkin and her cake.

'Where is my wife?' asked Peter, when he reached home.

'Oh, my dear son, why did you ever leave us? After you had vanished, no one knew where, your poor wife grew more and more wretched, and would neither eat nor drink. Little by little she faded away, and a month ago we laid her in her grave, to hide her sorrows under the earth.'

At this news Peter began to weep, for he had loved his wife before he went away and had seen the golden-haired maiden.

He went sorrowfully about his work for the space of half a year, when, one night, he dreamed that he moved the diamond ring given him by the maiden from his right hand and put it on the wedding finger of the left. The dream was so real that he awoke at once and changed the ring from one hand to the other. And as he did so guess what he saw? Why, the golden-haired girl standing before him. And he sprang up and kissed her, and said: 'Now you are mine for ever and ever, and when we die we will both be buried in one grave.'

And so they were.

[From Ungarische Mahrchen.]

THE DEATH OF ABU NOWAS AND OF HIS WIFE

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Once upon a time there lived a man whose name was Abu Nowas, and he was a great favourite with the Sultan of the country, who had a palace in the same town where Abu Nowas dwelt.

One day Abu Nowas came weeping into the hall of the palace where the Sultan was sitting, and said to him: ‘Oh, mighty Sultan, my wife is dead.’

‘That is bad news,’ replied the Sultan; ‘I must get you another wife.’ And he bade his Grand Vizir send for the Sultana.

‘This poor Abu Nowas has lost his wife,’ said he, when she entered the hall.

‘Oh, then we must get him another,’ answered the Sultana; ‘I have a girl that will suit him exactly,’ and clapped her hands loudly. At this signal a maiden appeared and stood before her.

‘I have got a husband for you,’ said the Sultana.

‘Who is he?’ asked the girl.

‘Abu Nowas, the jester,’ replied the Sultana.

‘I will take him,’ answered the maiden; and as Abu Nowas made no objection, it was all arranged. The Sultana had the most beautiful clothes made for the bride, and the Sultan gave the bridegroom his wedding suit, and a thousand gold pieces into the bargain, and soft carpets for the house.

So Abu Nowas took his wife home, and for some time they were very happy, and spent the money freely which the Sultan had given them, never thinking what they should do for more when that was gone. But come to an end it did, and they had to sell their fine things one by one, till at length nothing was left but a cloak apiece, and one blanket to cover them. ‘We have run through our fortune,’ said Abu Nowas, ‘what are we to do now? I am afraid to go back to the Sultan, for he will command his servants to turn me from the door. But you shall return to your mistress, and throw yourself at her feet and weep, and perhaps she will help us.’

‘Oh, you had much better go,’ said the wife. ‘I shall not know what to say.’

‘Well, then, stay at home, if you like,’ answered Abu Nowas, ‘and I will ask to be admitted to the Sultan’s presence, and will tell him, with sobs, that my wife is dead, and that I have no money for her burial. When he hears that perhaps he will give us something.’

‘Yes, that is a good plan,’ said the wife; and Abu Nowas set out.

The Sultan was sitting in the hall of justice when Abu Nowas entered, his eyes streaming with tears, for he had rubbed some pepper into them. They smarted dreadfully, and he could hardly see to walk straight, and everyone wondered what was the matter with him.

‘Abu Nowas! What has happened?’ cried the Sultan.

‘Oh, noble Sultan, my wife is dead,’ wept he.

‘We must all die,’ answered the Sultan; but this was not the reply for which Abu Nowas had hoped.

‘True, O Sultan, but I have neither shroud to wrap her in, nor money to bury her with,’ went on Abu Nowas, in no wise abashed by the way the Sultan had received his news.

‘Well, give him a hundred pieces of gold,’ said the Sultan, turning to the Grand Vizir. And when the money was counted out Abu Nowas bowed low, and left the hall, his tears still flowing, but with joy in his heart.

‘Have you got anything?’ cried his wife, who was waiting for him anxiously.

‘Yes, a hundred gold pieces,’ said he, throwing down the bag, ‘but that will not last us any time. Now you must go to the Sultana, clothed in sackcloth and robes of mourning, and tell her that your husband, Abu Nowas, is dead, and you have no money for his burial. When she hears that, she will be sure to ask you what has become of the money and the fine clothes she gave us on our marriage, and you will answer, “before he died he sold everything.” ’

The wife did as she was told, and wrapping herself in sackcloth went up to the Sultana’s own palace, and as she was known to have been one of Subida’s favourite attendants, she was taken without difficulty into the private apartments.

‘What is the matter?’ inquired the Sultana, at the sight of the dismal figure.

‘My husband lies dead at home, and he has spent all our money, and sold everything, and I have nothing left to bury him with,’ sobbed the wife.

Then Subida took up a purse containing two hundred gold pieces, and said: ‘Your husband served us long and faithfully. You must see that he has a fine funeral.’

The wife took the money, and, kissing the feet of the Sultana, she joyfully hastened home. They spent some happy hours planning how they should spend it, and thinking how clever they had been. ‘When the Sultan goes this evening to Subida’s palace,’ said Abu Nowas, ‘she will be sure to tell him that Abu Nowas is dead. “Not Abu Nowas, it is his wife,” he will reply, and they will quarrel over it, and all the time we shall be sitting here enjoying ourselves. Oh, if they only knew, how angry they would be!’

As Abu Nowas had foreseen, the Sultan went, in the evening after his business was over, to pay his usual visit to the Sultana.

‘Poor Abu Nowas is dead!’ said Subida when he entered the room.

‘It is not Abu Nowas, but his wife who is dead,’ answered the Sultan.

‘No; really you are quite wrong. She came to tell me herself only a couple of hours ago,’ replied Subida, ‘and as he had spent all their money, I gave her something to bury him with.’

‘You must be dreaming,’ exclaimed the Sultan. ‘Soon after midday Abu Nowas came into the hall, his eyes streaming with tears, and when I asked him the reason he answered that his wife was dead, and they had sold everything they had, and he had nothing left, not so much as would buy her a shroud, far less for her burial.’

For a long time they talked, and neither would listen to the other, till the Sultan sent for the door-keeper and bade him go instantly to the house of Abu Nowas and see if it was the man or his wife who was dead. But Abu Nowas happened to be sitting with his wife behind the latticed window, which looked on the street, and he saw the man coming, and sprang up at once. ‘There is the Sultan’s door-keeper! They have sent him here to find out the truth. Quick! throw yourself on the bed and pretend that you are dead.’ And in a moment the wife was stretched out stiffly, with a linen sheet spread across her, like a corpse.

She was only just in time, for the sheet was hardly drawn across her when the door opened and the porter came in. ‘Has anything happened?’

asked he.

‘My poor wife is dead,’ replied Abu Nowas. ‘Look! she is laid out here.’ And the porter approached the bed, which was in a corner of the room, and saw the stiff form lying underneath.

‘We must all die,’ said he, and went back to the Sultan.

‘Well, have you found out which of them is dead?’ asked the Sultan.

‘Yes, noble Sultan; it is the wife,’ replied the porter.

‘He only says that to please you,’ cried Subida in a rage; and calling to her chamberlain, she ordered him to go at once to the dwelling of Abu Nowas and see which of the two was dead. ‘And be sure you tell the truth about it,’ added she, ‘or it will be the worse for you.’

As her chamberlain drew near the house, Abu Nowas caught sight of him. ‘There is the Sultana’s chamberlain,’ he exclaimed in a fright. ‘Now it is my turn to die. Be quick and spread the sheet over me.’ And he laid himself on the bed, and held his breath when the chamberlain came in. ‘What are you weeping for?’ asked the man, finding the wife in tears.

‘My husband is dead,’ answered she, pointing to the bed; and the chamberlain drew back the sheet and beheld Abu Nowas lying stiff and motionless. Then he gently replaced the sheet and returned to the palace.

‘Well, have you found out this time?’ asked the Sultan.

‘My lord, it is the husband who is dead.’

‘But I tell you he was with me only a few hours ago,’ cried the Sultan angrily. ‘I must get to the bottom of this before I sleep! Let my golden coach be brought round at once.’

The coach was before the door in another five minutes, and the Sultan and Sultana both got in. Abu Nowas had ceased being a dead man, and was looking into the street when he saw the coach coming. ‘Quick! quick!’ he called to his wife. ‘The Sultan will be here directly, and we must both be dead to receive him.’ So they laid themselves down, and spread the sheet over them, and held their breath. At that instant the Sultan entered, followed by the Sultana and the chamberlain, and he went up to the bed and found the corpses stiff and motionless. ‘I would give a thousand gold pieces to anyone who would tell me the truth about this,’ cried he, and at the words Abu Nowas sat up. ‘Give them to me, then,’ said he, holding out his hand. ‘You cannot give them to anyone who needs them more.’

‘Oh, Abu Nowas, you impudent dog!’ exclaimed the Sultan, bursting into a laugh, in which the Sultana joined. ‘I might have known it was one of your tricks!’ But he sent Abu Nowas the gold he had promised, and let us hope that it did not fly so fast as the last had done.

[From Tunische Mahrchen.]

MOTIRATIKA

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Once upon a time, in a very hot country, a man lived with his wife in a little hut, which was surrounded by grass and flowers. They were perfectly happy together till, by-and-by, the woman fell ill and refused to take any food. The husband tried to persuade her to eat all sorts of delicious fruits that he had found in the forest, but she would have none of them, and grew so thin he feared she would die. ‘Is there nothing you would like?’ he said at last in despair.

‘Yes, I think I could eat some wild honey,’ answered she. The husband was overjoyed, for he thought this sounded easy enough to get, and he went off at once in search of it.

He came back with a wooden pan quite full, and gave it to his wife. ‘I can’t eat that,’ she said, turning away in disgust. ‘Look! there are some dead bees in it! I want honey that is quite pure.’ And the man threw the rejected honey on the grass, and started off to get some fresh. When he got back he offered it to his wife, who treated it as she had done the first bowlful. ‘That honey has got ants in it: throw it away,’ she said, and when he brought her some more, she declared it was full of earth. In his fourth journey he managed to find some that she would eat, and then she begged him to get her some water. This took him some time, but at length he came to a lake whose waters were sweetened with sugar. He filled a pannikin quite full, and carried it home to his wife, who drank it eagerly, and said that she now felt quite well. When she was up and had dressed herself, her husband lay down in her place, saying: ‘You have given me a great deal of trouble, and now it is my turn!’

‘What is the matter with you?’ asked the wife.

‘I am thirsty and want some water,’ answered he; and she took a large pot and carried it to the nearest spring, which was a good way off. ‘Here is the water,’ she said to her husband, lifting the heavy pot from her head; but he turned away in disgust.

‘You have drawn it from the pool that is full of frogs and willows; you must get me some more.’ So the woman set out again and walked still further to another lake.

‘This water tastes of rushes,’ he exclaimed, ‘go and get some fresh.’ But when she brought back a third supply he declared that it seemed made up of water-lilies, and that he must have water that was pure, and not spoilt by willows, or frogs, or rushes. So for the fourth time she put her jug on her head, and passing all the lakes she had hitherto tried, she came to another, where the water was golden like honey. She stooped down to drink, when a horrible head bobbed up on the surface.

‘How dare you steal my water?’ cried the head.

‘It is my husband who has sent me,’ she replied, trembling all over. ‘But do not kill me! You shall have my baby, if you will only let me go.’

‘How am I to know which is your baby?’ asked the Ogre.

‘Oh, that is easily managed. I will shave both sides of his head, and hang some white beads round his neck. And when you come to the hut you have only to call “Motikatika!” and he will run to meet you, and you can eat him.’

‘Very well,’ said the ogre, ‘you can go home.’ And after filling the pot she returned, and told her husband of the dreadful danger she had been in.

Now, though his mother did not know it, the baby was a magician and he had heard all that his mother had promised the ogre; and he laughed to himself as he planned how to outwit her.

The next morning she shaved his head on both sides, and hung the white beads round his neck, and said to him: ‘I am going to the fields to work, but you must stay at home. Be sure you do not go outside, or some wild beast may eat you.’

‘Very well,’ answered he.

As soon as his mother was out of sight, the baby took out some magic bones, and placed them in a row before him. ‘You are my father,’ he told one bone, ‘and you are my mother. You are the biggest,’ he said to the third, ‘so you shall be the ogre who wants to eat me; and you,’ to another, ‘are very little, therefore you shall be me. Now, then, tell me what I am to do.’

‘Collect all the babies in the village the same size as yourself,’ answered the bones; ‘shave the sides of their heads, and hang white beads

round their necks, and tell them that when anybody calls “Motikatika,” they are to answer to it. And be quick for you have no time to lose.’

Motikatika went out directly, and brought back quite a crowd of babies, and shaved their heads and hung white beads round their little black necks, and just as he had finished, the ground began to shake, and the huge ogre came striding along, crying: ‘Motikatika! Motikatika!’

‘Here we are! here we are!’ answered the babies, all running to meet him.

‘It is Motikatika I want,’ said the ogre.

‘We are all Motikatika,’ they replied. And the ogre sat down in bewilderment, for he dared not eat the children of people who had done him no wrong, or a heavy punishment would befall him. The children waited for a little, wondering, and then they went away.

The ogre remained where he was, till the evening, when the woman returned from the fields.

‘I have not seen Motikatika,’ said he.

‘But why did you not call him by his name, as I told you?’ she asked.

‘I did, but all the babies in the village seemed to be named Motikatika,’ answered the ogre; ‘you cannot think the number who came running to me.’

The woman did not know what to make of it, so, to keep him in a good temper, she entered the hut and prepared a bowl of maize, which she brought him.

‘I do not want maize, I want the baby,’ grumbled he ‘and I will have him.’

‘Have patience,’ answered she; ‘I will call him, and you can eat him at once.’ And she went into the hut and cried, ‘Motikatika!’

‘I am coming, mother,’ replied he; but first he took out his bones, and, crouching down on the ground behind the hut, asked them how he should escape the ogre.

‘Change yourself into a mouse,’ said the bones; and so he did, and the ogre grew tired of waiting, and told the woman she must invent some other plan.

‘To-morrow I will send him into the field to pick some beans for me, and you will find him there, and can eat him.’

‘Very well,’ replied the ogre, ‘and this time I will take care to have him,’ and he went back to his lake.

Next morning Motikatika was sent out with a basket, and told to pick some beans for dinner. On the way to the field he took out his bones and asked them what he was to do to escape from the ogre. ‘Change yourself into a bird and snap off the beans,’ said the bones. And the ogre chased away the bird, not knowing that it was Motikatika.

The ogre went back to the hut and told the woman that she had deceived him again, and that he would not be put off any longer.

‘Return here this evening,’ answered she, ‘and you will find him in bed under this white coverlet. Then you can carry him away, and eat him at once.’

But the boy heard, and consulted his bones, which said: ‘Take the red coverlet from your father’s bed, and put yours on his,’ and so he did. And when the ogre came, he seized Motikatika’s father and carried him outside the hut and ate him. When his wife found out the mistake, she cried bitterly; but Motikatika said: ‘It is only just that he should be eaten, and not I; for it was he, and not I, who sent you to fetch the water.’

[Adapted from the Ba-Ronga (H. Junod).]

NIELS AND THE GIANTS

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On one of the great moors over in Jutland, where trees won’t grow because the soil is so sandy and the wind so strong, there once lived a man and his wife, who had a little house and some sheep, and two sons who helped them to herd them. The elder of the two was called Rasmus, and the younger Niels. Rasmus was quite content to look after sheep, as his father had done before him, but Niels had a fancy to be a hunter, and was not happy till he got hold of a gun and learned to shoot. It was only an old muzzle-loading flint-lock after all, but Niels thought it a great prize, and went about shooting at everything he could see. So much did he practice that in the long run he became a wonderful shot, and was heard of even where he had never been seen. Some people said there was very little in him beyond this, but that was an idea they found reason to change in the course of time.

The parents of Rasmus and Niels were good Catholics, and when they were getting old the mother took it into her head that she would like to go to Rome and see the Pope. The others didn’t see much use in this, but she had her way in the end: they sold all the sheep, shut up the house, and set out for Rome on foot. Niels took his gun with him.

‘What do you want with that?’ said Rasmus; ‘we have plenty to carry without it.’ But Niels could not be happy without his gun, and took it all the same.

It was in the hottest part of summer that they began their journey, so hot that they could not travel at all in the middle of the day, and they were afraid to do it by night lest they might lose their way or fall into the hands of robbers. One day, a little before sunset, they came to an inn which lay at the edge of a forest.

‘We had better stay here for the night,’ said Rasmus.

‘What an idea!’ said Niels, who was growing impatient at the slow progress they were making. ‘We can’t travel by day for the heat, and we

remain where we are all night. It will be long enough before we get to Rome if we go on at this rate.'

Rasmus was unwilling to go on, but the two old people sided with Niels, who said, 'The nights aren't dark, and the moon will soon be up. We can ask at the inn here, and find out which way we ought to take.'

So they held on for some time, but at last they came to a small opening in the forest, and here they found that the road split in two. There was no sign-post to direct them, and the people in the inn had not told them which of the two roads to take.

'What's to be done now?' said Rasmus. 'I think we had better have stayed at the inn.'

'There's no harm done,' said Niels. 'The night is warm, and we can wait here till morning. One of us will keep watch till midnight, and then waken the other.'

Rasmus chose to take the first watch, and the others lay down to sleep. It was very quiet in the forest, and Rasmus could hear the deer and foxes and other animals moving about among the rustling leaves. After the moon rose he could see them occasionally, and when a big stag came quite close to him he got hold of Niels' gun and shot it.

Niels was wakened by the report. 'What's that?' he said.

'I've just shot a stag,' said Rasmus, highly pleased with himself.

'That's nothing,' said Niels. 'I've often shot a sparrow, which is a much more difficult thing to do.'

It was now close on midnight, so Niels began his watch, and Rasmus went to sleep. It began to get colder, and Niels began to walk about a little to keep himself warm. He soon found that they were not far from the edge of the forest, and when he climbed up one of the trees there he could see out over the open country beyond. At a little distance he saw a fire, and beside it there sat three giants, busy with broth and beef. They were so huge that the spoons they used were as large as spades, and their forks as big as hay-forks: with these they lifted whole bucketfuls of broth and great joints of meat out of an enormous pot which was set on the ground between them. Niels was startled and rather scared at first, but he comforted himself with the thought that the giants were a good way off, and that if they came nearer he could easily hide among the bushes. After watching them for a little, however, he began to get over his alarm, and

finally slid down the tree again, resolved to get his gun and play some tricks with them.

When he had climbed back to his former position, he took good aim, and waited till one of the giants was just in the act of putting a large piece of meat into his mouth. Bang! went Niels' gun, and the bullet struck the handle of the fork so hard that the point went into the giant's chin, instead of his mouth.

'None of your tricks,' growled the giant to the one who sat next him. 'What do you mean by hitting my fork like that, and making me prick myself?'

'I never touched your fork,' said the other. 'Don't try to get up a quarrel with me.'

'Look at it, then,' said the first. 'Do you suppose I stuck it into my own chin for fun?'

The two got so angry over the matter that each offered to fight the other there and then, but the third giant acted as peace-maker, and they again fell to their eating.

While the quarrel was going on, Niels had loaded the gun again, and just as the second giant was about to put a nice tit-bit into his mouth, bang! went the gun again, and the fork flew into a dozen pieces.

This giant was even more furious than the first had been, and words were just coming to blows, when the third giant again interposed.

'Don't be fools,' he said to them; 'what's the good of beginning to fight among ourselves, when it is so necessary for the three of us to work together and get the upper hand over the king of this country. It will be a hard enough task as it is, but it will be altogether hopeless if we don't stick together. Sit down again, and let us finish our meal; I shall sit between you, and then neither of you can blame the other.'

Niels was too far away to hear their talk, but from their gestures he could guess what was happening, and thought it good fun.

'Thrice is lucky,' said he to himself; 'I'll have another shot yet.'

This time it was the third giant's fork that caught the bullet, and snapped in two.

'Well,' said he, 'if I were as foolish as you two, I would also fly into a rage, but I begin to see what time of day it is, and I'm going off this minute to see who it is that's playing these tricks with us.'

So well had the giant made his observations, that though Niels climbed down the tree as fast as he could, so as to hide among the bushes, he had just got to the ground when the enemy was upon him.

‘Stay where you are,’ said the giant, ‘or I’ll put my foot on you, and there won’t be much of you left after that.’

Niels gave in, and the giant carried him back to his comrades.

‘You don’t deserve any mercy at our hands,’ said his captor ‘but as you are such a good shot you may be of great use to us, so we shall spare your life, if you will do us a service. Not far from here there stands a castle, in which the king’s daughter lives; we are at war with the king, and want to get the upper hand of him by carrying off the princess, but the castle is so well guarded that there is no getting into it. By our skill in magic we have cast sleep on every living thing in the castle, except a little black dog, and, as long as he is awake, we are no better off than before; for, as soon as we begin to climb over the wall, the little dog will hear us, and its barking will waken all the others again. Having got you, we can place you where you will be able to shoot the dog before it begins to bark, and then no one can hinder us from getting the princess into our hands. If you do that, we shall not only let you off, but reward you handsomely.’

Niels had to consent, and the giants set out for the castle at once. It was surrounded by a very high rampart, so high that even the giants could not touch the top of it. ‘How am I to get over that?’ said Niels.

‘Quite easily,’ said the third giant; ‘I’ll throw you up on it.’

‘No, thanks,’ said Niels. ‘I might fall down on the other side, or break my leg or neck, and then the little dog wouldn’t get shot after all.’

‘No fear of that,’ said the giant; ‘the rampart is quite wide on the top, and covered with long grass, so that you will come down as softly as though you fell on a feather-bed.’

Niels had to believe him, and allowed the giant to throw him up. He came down on his feet quite unhurt, but the little black dog heard the dump, and rushed out of its kennel at once. It was just opening its mouth to bark, when Niels fired, and it fell dead on the spot.

‘Go down on the inside now,’ said the giant, ‘and see if you can open the gate to us.’

Niels made his way down into the courtyard, but on his way to the outer gate he found himself at the entrance to the large hall of the castle.

The door was open, and the hall was brilliantly lighted, though there was no one to be seen. Niels went in here and looked round him: on the wall there hung a huge sword without a sheath, and beneath it was a large drinking-horn, mounted with silver. Niels went closer to look at these, and saw that the horn had letters engraved on the silver rim: when he took it down and turned it round, he found that the inscription was:—

Whoever drinks the wine I hold
Can wield the sword that hangs above;
Then let him use it for the right,
And win a royal maiden’s love.

Niels took out the silver stopper of the horn, and drank some of the wine, but when he tried to take down the sword he found himself unable to move it. So he hung up the horn again, and went further in to the castle. ‘The giants can wait a little,’ he said.

Before long he came to an apartment in which a beautiful princess lay asleep in a bed, and on a table by her side there lay a gold-hemmed handkerchief. Niels tore this in two, and put one half in his pocket, leaving the other half on the table. On the floor he saw a pair of gold-embroidered slippers, and one of these he also put in his pocket. After that he went back to the hall, and took down the horn again. ‘Perhaps I have to drink all that is in it before I can move the sword,’ he thought; so he put it to his lips again and drank till it was quite empty. When he had done this, he could wield the sword with the greatest of ease, and felt himself strong enough to do anything, even to fight the giants he had left outside, who were no doubt wondering why he had not opened the gate to them before this time. To kill the giants, he thought, would be using the sword for the right; but as to winning the love of the princess, that was a thing which the son of a poor sheep-farmer need not hope for.

When Niels came to the gate of the castle, he found that there was a large door and a small one, so he opened the latter.

‘Can’t you open the big door?’ said the giants; ‘we shall hardly be able to get in at this one.’

‘The bars are too heavy for me to draw,’ said Niels; ‘if you stoop a little you can quite well come in here.’ The first giant accordingly bent

down and entered in a stooping posture, but before he had time to straighten his back again Niels made a sweep with the sword, and oft went the giant's head. To push the body aside as it fell was quite easy for Niels, so strong had the wine made him, and the second giant as he entered met the same reception. The third was slower in coming, so Niels called out to him: 'Be quick,' he said, 'you are surely the oldest of the three, since you are so slow in your movements, but I can't wait here long; I must get back to my own people as soon as possible.' So the third also came in, and was served in the same way. It appears from the story that giants were not given fair play!

By this time day was beginning to break, and Niels thought that his folks might already be searching for him, so, instead of waiting to see what took place at the castle, he ran off to the forest as fast as he could, taking the sword with him. He found the others still asleep, so he woke them up, and they again set out on their journey. Of the night's adventures he said not a word, and when they asked where he got the sword, he only pointed in the direction of the castle, and said, 'Over that way.' They thought he had found it, and asked no more questions.

When Niels left the castle, he shut the door behind him, and it closed with such a bang that the porter woke up. He could scarcely believe his eyes when he saw the three headless giants lying in a heap in the courtyard, and could not imagine what had taken place. The whole castle was soon aroused, and then everybody wondered at the affair: it was soon seen that the bodies were those of the king's great enemies, but how they came to be there and in that condition was a perfect mystery. Then it was noticed that the drinking-horn was empty and the sword gone, while the princess reported that half of her handkerchief and one of her slippers had been taken away. How the giants had been killed seemed a little clearer now, but who had done it was as great a puzzle as before. The old knight who had charge of the castle said that in his opinion it must have been some young knight, who had immediately set off to the king to claim the hand of the princess. This sounded likely, but the messenger who was sent to the Court returned with the news that no one there knew anything about the matter.

'We must find him, however,' said the princess; 'for if he is willing to marry me I cannot in honour refuse him, after what my father put on the

horn.’ She took council with her father’s wisest men as to what ought to be done, and among other things they advised her to build a house beside the highway, and put over the door this inscription:—‘Whoever will tell the story of his life, may stay here three nights for nothing.’ This was done, and many strange tales were told to the princess, but none of the travellers said a word about the three giants.

In the meantime Niels and the others tramped on towards Rome. Autumn passed, and winter was just beginning when they came to the foot of a great range of mountains, towering up to the sky. ‘Must we go over these?’ said they. ‘We shall be frozen to death or buried in the snow.’

‘Here comes a man,’ said Niels; ‘let us ask him the way to Rome.’ They did so, and were told that there was no other way.

‘And is it far yet?’ said the old people, who were beginning to be worn out by the long journey. The man held up his foot so that they could see the sole of his shoe; it was worn as thin as paper, and there was a hole in the middle of it.

‘These shoes were quite new when I left Rome,’ he said, ‘and look at them now; that will tell you whether you are far from it or not.’

This discouraged the old people so much that they gave up all thought of finishing the journey, and only wished to get back to Denmark as quickly as they could. What with the winter and bad roads they took longer to return than they had taken to go, but in the end they found themselves in sight of the forest where they had slept before.

‘What’s this?’ said Rasmus. ‘Here’s a big house built since we passed this way before.’

‘So it is,’ said Peter; ‘let’s stay all night in it.’

‘No, we can’t afford that,’ said the old people; ‘it will be too dear for the like of us.’

However, when they saw what was written above the door, they were all well pleased to get a night’s lodging for nothing. They were well received, and had so much attention given to them, that the old people were quite put out by it. After they had got time to rest themselves, the princess’s steward came to hear their story.

‘You saw what was written above the door,’ he said to the father. ‘Tell me who you are and what your history has been.’

‘Dear me, I have nothing of any importance to tell you,’ said the old man, ‘and I am sure we should never have made so bold as to trouble you at all if it hadn’t been for the youngest of our two sons here.’

‘Never mind that,’ said the steward; ‘you are very welcome if you will only tell me the story of your life.’

‘Well, well, I will,’ said he, ‘but there is nothing to tell about it. I and my wife have lived all our days on a moor in North Jutland, until this last year, when she took a fancy to go to Rome. We set out with our two sons but turned back long before we got there, and are now on our way home again. That’s all my own story, and our two sons have lived with us all their days, so there is nothing more to be told about them either.’

‘Yes there is,’ said Rasmus; ‘when we were on our way south, we slept in the wood near here one night, and I shot a stag.’

The steward was so much accustomed to hearing stories of no importance that he thought there was no use going further with this, but reported to the princess that the newcomers had nothing to tell.

‘Did you question them all?’ she said.

‘Well, no; not directly,’ said he; ‘but the father said that none of them could tell me any more than he had done.’

‘You are getting careless,’ said the princess; ‘I shall go and talk to them myself.’

Niels knew the princess again as soon as she entered the room, and was greatly alarmed, for he immediately supposed that all this was a device to discover the person who had run away with the sword, the slipper and the half of the handkerchief, and that it would fare badly with him if he were discovered. So he told his story much the same as the others did (Niels was not very particular), and thought he had escaped all further trouble, when Rasmus put in his word. ‘You’ve forgotten something, Niels,’ he said; ‘you remember you found a sword near here that night I shot the stag.’

‘Where is the sword?’ said the princess.

‘I know,’ said the steward, ‘I saw where he laid it down when they came in;’ and off he went to fetch it, while Niels wondered whether he could make his escape in the meantime. Before he had made up his mind, however, the steward was back with the sword, which the princess recognised at once.

‘Where did you get this?’ she said to Niels.

Niels was silent, and wondered what the usual penalty was for a poor sheep-farmer’s son who was so unfortunate as to deliver a princess and carry off things from her bed-room.

‘See what else he has about him,’ said the princess to the steward, and Niels had to submit to be searched: out of one pocket came a gold-embroidered slipper, and out of another the half of a gold-hemmed handkerchief.

‘That is enough,’ said the princess; ‘now we needn’t ask any more questions. Send for my father the king at once.’

‘Please let me go,’ said Niels; ‘I did you as much good as harm, at any rate.’

‘Why, who said anything about doing harm?’ said the princess. ‘You must stay here till my father comes.’

The way in which the princess smiled when she said this gave Niels some hope that things might not be bad for him after all, and he was yet more encouraged when he thought of the words engraver on the horn, though the last line still seemed too good to be true. However, the arrival of the king soon settled the matter: the princess was willing and so was Niels, and in a few days the wedding bells were ringing. Niels was made an earl by that time, and looked as handsome as any of them when dressed in all his robes. Before long the old king died, and Niels reigned after him; but whether his father and mother stayed with him, or went back to the moor in Jutland, or were sent to Rome in a carriage and four, is something that all the historians of his reign have forgotten to mention.

SHEPHERD PAUL

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Once upon a time a shepherd was taking his flock out to pasture, when he found a little baby lying in a meadow, left there by some wicked person, who thought it was too much trouble to look after it. The shepherd was fond of children, so he took the baby home with him and gave it plenty of milk, and by the time the boy was fourteen he could tear up oaks as if they were weeds. Then Paul, as the shepherd had called him, grew tired of living at home, and went out into the world to try his luck.

He walked on for many miles, seeing nothing that surprised him, but in an open space of the wood he was astonished at finding a man combing trees as another man would comb flax.

‘Good morning, friend,’ said Paul; ‘upon my word, you must be a strong man!’

The man stopped his work and laughed. ‘I am Tree Comber,’ he answered proudly; ‘and the greatest wish of my life is to wrestle with Shepherd Paul.’

‘May all your wishes be fulfilled as easily, for I am Shepherd Paul, and can wrestle with you at once,’ replied the lad; and he seized Tree Comber and flung him with such force to the ground that he sank up to his knees in the earth. However, in a moment he was up again, and catching hold of Paul, threw him so that he sank up to his waist; but then it was Paul’s turn again, and this time the man was buried up to his neck. ‘That is enough,’ cried he; ‘I see you are a smart fellow, let us become friends.’

‘Very good,’ answered Paul, and they continued their journey together.

By-and-by they reached a man who was grinding stones to powder in his hands, as if they had been nuts.

‘Good morning,’ said Paul politely; ‘upon my word, you must be a strong fellow!’

‘I am Stone Crusher,’ answered the man, and the greatest wish of my life is to wrestle with Shepherd Paul.’

‘May all your wishes be as easily fulfilled, for I am Shepherd Paul, and will wrestle with you at once,’ and the sport began. After a short time the man declared himself beaten, and begged leave to go with them; so they all three travelled together.

A little further on they came upon a man who was kneading iron as if it had been dough. ‘Good morning,’ said Paul, ‘you must be a strong fellow.’

‘I am Iron Kneader, and should like to fight Shepherd Paul,’ answered he.

‘Let us begin at once then,’ replied Paul; and on this occasion also, Paul got the better of his foe, and they all four continued their journey.

At midday they entered a forest, and Paul stopped suddenly. ‘We three will go and look for game,’ he said, ‘and you, Tree Comber, will stay behind and prepare a good supper for us.’ So Tree Comber set to work to boil and roast, and when dinner was nearly ready, a little dwarf with a pointed beard strolled up to the place. ‘What are you cooking?’ asked he, ‘give me some of it.’

‘I’ll give you some on your back, if you like,’ answered Tree Comber rudely. The dwarf took no notice, but waited patiently till the dinner was cooked, then suddenly throwing Tree Comber on the ground, he ate up the contents of the saucepan and vanished. Tree Comber felt rather ashamed of himself, and set about boiling some more vegetables, but they were still very hard when the hunters returned, and though they complained of his bad cooking, he did not tell them about the dwarf.

Next day Stone Crusher was left behind, and after him Iron Kneader, and each time the dwarf appeared, and they fared no better than Tree Comber had done. The fourth day Paul said to them: ‘My friends, there must be some reason why your cooking has always been so bad, now you shall go and hunt and I will stay behind.’ So they went off, amusing themselves by thinking what was in store for Paul.

He set to work at once, and had just got all his vegetables simmering in the pot when the dwarf appeared as before, and asked to have some of the stew. ‘Be off,’ cried Paul, snatching up the saucepan as he spoke. The dwarf tried to get hold of his collar, but Paul seized him by the beard, and tied him to a big tree so that he could not stir, and went on quietly with his cooking. The hunters came back early, longing to see how Paul had got on, and, to their surprise, dinner was quite ready for them.

‘You are great useless creatures,’ said he, ‘who couldn’t even outwit that little dwarf. When we have finished supper I will show you what I have done with him!’ But when they reached the place where Paul had left the dwarf, neither he nor the tree was to be seen, for the little fellow had pulled it up by the roots and run away, dragging it after him. The four friends followed the track of the tree and found that it ended in a deep hole. ‘He must have gone down here,’ said Paul, ‘and I will go after him. See! there is a basket that will do for me to sit in, and a cord to lower me with. But when I pull the cord again, lose no time in drawing the basket up.’

And he stepped into the basket, which was lowered by his friends.

At last it touched the ground and he jumped out and looked about him. He was in a beautiful valley, full of meadows and streams, with a splendid castle standing by. As the door was open he walked in, but a lovely maiden met him and implored him to go back, for the owner of the castle was a dragon with six heads, who had stolen her from her home and brought her down to this underground spot. But Paul refused to listen to all her entreaties, and declared that he was not afraid of the dragon, and did not care how many heads he had; and he sat down calmly to wait for him.

In a little while the dragon came in, and all the long teeth in his six heads chattered with anger at the sight of the stranger.

‘I am Shepherd Paul,’ said the young man, ‘and I have come to fight you, and as I am in a hurry we had better begin at once.’

‘Very good,’ answered the dragon. ‘I am sure of my supper, but let us have a mouthful of something first, just to give us an appetite.’

Whereupon he began to eat some huge boulders as if they had been cakes, and when he had quite finished, he offered Paul one. Paul was not fond of boulders, but he took a wooden knife and cut one in two, then he snatched up both halves in his hands and threw them with all his strength at the dragon, so that two out of the six heads were smashed in. At this the dragon, with a mighty roar, rushed upon Paul, but he sprang on one side, and with a swinging blow cut off two of the other heads. Then, seizing the monster by the neck, he dashed the remaining heads against the rock.

When the maiden heard that the dragon was dead, she thanked her deliverer with tears in her eyes, but told him that her two younger sisters were in the power of dragons still fiercer and more horrible than this one.

He vowed that his sword should never rest in its sheath till they were set free, and bade the girl come with him, and show him the way.

The maiden gladly consented to go with him, but first she gave him a golden rod, and bade him strike the castle with it. He did so, and it instantly changed into a golden apple, which he put in his pocket. After that, they started on their search.

They had not gone far before they reached the castle where the second girl was confined by the power of the dragon with twelve heads, who had stolen her from her home. She was overjoyed at the sight of her sister and of Paul, and brought him a shirt belonging to the dragon, which made every one who wore it twice as strong as they were before. Scarcely had he put it on when the dragon came back, and the fight began. Long and hard was the struggle, but Paul's sword and his shirt helped him, and the twelve heads lay dead upon the ground.

Then Paul changed the castle into an apple, which he put into his pocket, and set out with the two girls in search of the third castle.

It was not long before they found it, and within the walls was the third sister, who was younger and prettier than either of the other two. Her husband had eighteen heads, but when he quitted the lower regions for the surface of the earth, he left them all at home except one, which he changed for the head of a little dwarf, with a pointed beard.

The moment that Paul knew that this terrible dragon was no other than the dwarf whom he had tied to the tree, he longed more than ever to fly at his throat. But the thought of the eighteen heads warned him to be careful, and the third sister brought him a silk shirt which would make him ten times stronger than he was before.

He had scarcely put it on, when the whole castle began to shake violently, and the dragon flew up the steps into the hall.

'Well, my friend, so we meet once more! Have you forgotten me? I am Shepherd Paul, and I have come to wrestle with you, and to free your wife from your clutches.'

'Ah, I am glad to see you again,' said the dragon. 'Those were my two brothers whom you killed, and now your blood shall pay for them.' And he went into his room to look for his shirt and to drink some magic wine, but the shirt was on Paul's back, and as for the wine, the girl had given a cupful to Paul and then had allowed the rest to run out of the cask.

At this the dragon grew rather frightened, but in a moment had recollected his eighteen heads, and was bold again.

‘Come on,’ he cried, rearing himself up and preparing to dart all his heads at once at Paul. But Paul jumped underneath, and gave an upward cut so that six of the heads went rolling down. They were the best heads too, and very soon the other twelve lay beside them. Then Paul changed the castle into an apple, and put it in his pocket. Afterwards he and the three girls set off for the opening which led upwards to the earth.

The basket was still there, dangling from the rope, but it was only big enough to hold the three girls, so Paul sent them up, and told them to be sure and let down the basket for him. Unluckily, at the sight of the maidens’ beauty, so far beyond anything they had ever seen, the friends forgot all about Paul, and carried the girls straight away into a far country, so that they were not much better off than before. Meanwhile Paul, mad with rage at the ingratitude of the three sisters, vowed he would be revenged upon them, and set about finding some way of getting back to earth. But it was not very easy, and for months, and months, and months, he wandered about underground, and, at the end, seemed no nearer to fulfilling his purpose than he was at the beginning.

At length, one day, he happened to pass the nest of a huge griffin, who had left her young ones all alone. Just as Paul came along a cloud containing fire instead of rain burst overhead, and all the little griffins would certainly have been killed had not Paul spread his cloak over the nest and saved them. When their father returned the young ones told him what Paul had done, and he lost no time in flying after Paul, and asking how he could reward him for his goodness.

‘By carrying me up to the earth,’ answered Paul; and the griffin agreed, but first went to get some food to eat on the way, as it was a long journey.

‘Now get on my back,’ he said to Paul, ‘and when I turn my head to the right, cut a slice off the bullock that hangs on that side, and put it in my mouth, and when I turn my head to the left, draw a cupful of wine from the cask that hangs on that side, and pour it down my throat.’

For three days and three nights Paul and the griffin flew upwards, and on the fourth morning it touched the ground just outside the city where Paul’s friends had gone to live. Then Paul thanked him and bade him farewell, and he returned home again.

At first Paul was too tired to do anything but sleep, but as soon as he was rested he started off in search of the three faithless ones, who almost died from fright at the sight of him, for they had thought he would never come back to reproach them for their wickedness.

‘You know what to expect,’ Paul said to them quietly. ‘You shall never see me again. Off with you!’ He next took the three apples out of his pocket and placed them all in the prettiest places he could find; after which he tapped them with his golden rod, and they became castles again. He gave two of the castles to the eldest sisters, and kept the other for himself and the youngest, whom he married, and there they are living still.

[From Ungarische Mahrchen.]

HOW THE WICKED TANUKI WAS PUNISHED

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The hunters had hunted the wood for so many years that no wild animal was any more to be found in it. You might walk from one end to the other without ever seeing a hare, or a deer, or a boar, or hearing the cooing of the doves in their nest. If they were not dead, they had flown elsewhere. Only three creatures remained alive, and they had hidden themselves in the thickest part of the forest, high up the mountain. These were a grey-furred, long-tailed tanuki, his wife the fox, who was one of his own family, and their little son.

The fox and the tanuki were very clever, prudent beasts, and they also were skilled in magic, and by this means had escaped the fate of their unfortunate friends. If they heard the twang of an arrow or saw the glitter of a spear, ever so far off, they lay very still, and were not to be tempted from their hiding-place, if their hunger was ever so great, or the game ever so delicious. ‘We are not so foolish as to risk our lives,’ they said to each other proudly. But at length there came a day when, in spite of their prudence, they seemed likely to die of starvation, for no more food was to be had. Something had to be done, but they did not know what.

Suddenly a bright thought struck the tanuki. ‘I have got a plan,’ he cried joyfully to his wife. ‘I will pretend to be dead, and you must change yourself into a man, and take me to the village for sale. It will be easy to find a buyer, tanukis’ skins are always wanted; then buy some food with the money and come home again. I will manage to escape somehow, so do not worry about me.’

The fox laughed with delight, and rubbed her paws together with satisfaction. ‘Well, next time I will go,’ she said, ‘and you can sell me.’ And then she changed herself into a man, and picking up the stiff body of the tanuki, set off towards the village. She found him rather heavy, but it would never have done to let him walk through the wood and risk his being seen by somebody.

As the tanaki had foretold, buyers were many, and the fox handed him over to the person who offered the largest price, and hurried to get some food with the money. The buyer took the tanuki back to his house, and throwing him into a corner went out. Directly the tanaki found he was alone, he crept cautiously through a chink of the window, thinking, as he did so, how lucky it was that he was not a fox, and was able to climb. Once outside, he hid himself in a ditch till it grew dusk, and then galloped away into the forest.

While the food lasted they were all three as happy as kings; but there soon arrived a day when the larder was as empty as ever. ‘It is my turn now to pretend to be dead,’ cried the fox. So the tanuki changed himself into a peasant, and started for the village, with his wife’s body hanging over his shoulder. A buyer was not long in coming forward, and while they were making the bargain a wicked thought darted into the tanuki’s head, that if he got rid of the fox there would be more food for him and his son. So as he put the money in his pocket he whispered softly to the buyer that the fox was not really dead, and that if he did not take care she might run away from him. The man did not need twice telling. He gave the poor fox a blow on the head, which put an end to her, and the wicked tanuki went smiling to the nearest shop.

In former times he had been very fond of his little son; but since he had betrayed his wife he seemed to have changed all in a moment, for he would not give him as much as a bite, and the poor little fellow would have starved had he not found some nuts and berries to eat, and he waited on, always hoping that his mother would come back.

At length some notion of the truth began to dawn on him; but he was careful to let the old tanuki see nothing, though in his own mind he turned over plans from morning till night, wondering how best he might avenge his mother.

One morning, as the little tanuki was sitting with his father, he remembered, with a start, that his mother had taught him all she knew of magic, and that he could work spells as well as his father, or perhaps better. ‘I am as good a wizard as you,’ he said suddenly, and a cold chill ran through the tanuki as he heard him, though he laughed, and pretended to think it a joke. But the little tanaki stuck to his point, and at last the father proposed they should have a wager.

‘Change yourself into any shape you like,’ said he, ‘and I will undertake to know you. I will go and wait on the bridge which leads over the river to the village, and you shall transform yourself into anything you please, but I will know you through any disguise.’ The little tanuki agreed, and went down the road which his father had pointed out. But instead of transforming himself into a different shape, he just hid himself in a corner of the bridge, where he could see without being seen.

He had not been there long when his father arrived and took up his place near the middle of the bridge, and soon after the king came by, followed by a troop of guards and all his court.

‘Ah! he thinks that now he has changed himself into a king I shall not know him,’ thought the old tanuki, and as the king passed in his splendid carriage, borne by his servants, he jumped upon it crying: ‘I have won my wager; you cannot deceive me.’ But in reality it was he who had deceived himself. The soldiers, conceiving that their king was being attacked, seized the tanuki by the legs and flung him over into the river, and the water closed over him.

And the little tanoki saw it all, and rejoiced that his mother’s death had been avenged. Then he went back to the forest, and if he has not found it too lonely, he is probably living there still.

[From Japanische Mahrchen.]

THE CRAB AND THE MONKEY

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There was once a crab who lived in a hole on the shady side of a mountain. She was a very good housewife, and so careful and industrious that there was no creature in the whole country whose hole was so neat and clean as hers, and she took great pride in it.

One day she saw lying near the mouth of her hole a handful of cooked rice which some pilgrim must have let fall when he was stopping to eat his dinner. Delighted at this discovery, she hastened to the spot, and was carrying the rice back to her hole when a monkey, who lived in some trees near by, came down to see what the crab was doing. His eyes shone at the sight of the rice, for it was his favourite food, and like the sly fellow he was, he proposed a bargain to the crab. She was to give him half the rice in exchange for the kernel of a sweet red kaki fruit which he had just eaten. He half expected that the crab would laugh in his face at this impudent proposal, but instead of doing so she only looked at him for a moment with her head on one side and then said that she would agree to the exchange. So the monkey went off with his rice, and the crab returned to her hole with the kernel.

For some time the crab saw no more of the monkey, who had gone to pay a visit on the sunny side of the mountain; but one morning he happened to pass by her hole, and found her sitting under the shadow of a beautiful kaki tree.

‘Good day,’ he said politely, ‘you have some very fine fruit there! I am very hungry, could you spare me one or two?’

‘Oh, certainly,’ replied the crab, ‘but you must forgive me if I cannot get them for you myself. I am no tree-climber.’

‘Pray do not apologise,’ answered the monkey. ‘Now that I have your permission I can get them myself quite easily.’ And the crab consented to let him go up, merely saying that he must throw her down half the fruit.

In another moment he was swinging himself from branch to branch, eating all the ripest kakis and filling his pockets with the rest, and the poor

crab saw to her disgust that the few he threw down to her were either not ripe at all or else quite rotten.

‘You are a shocking rogue,’ she called in a rage; but the monkey took no notice, and went on eating as fast as he could. The crab understood that it was no use her scolding, so she resolved to try what cunning would do.

‘Sir Monkey,’ she said, ‘you are certainly a very good climber, but now that you have eaten so much, I am quite sure you would never be able to turn one of your somersaults.’ The monkey prided himself on turning better somersaults than any of his family, so he instantly went head over heels three times on the bough on which he was sitting, and all the beautiful kakis that he had in his pockets rolled to the ground. Quick as lightning the crab picked them up and carried a quantity of them into her house, but when she came up for another the monkey sprang on her, and treated her so badly that he left her for dead. When he had beaten her till his arm ached he went his way.

It was a lucky thing for the poor crab that she had some friends to come to her help or she certainly would have died then and there. The wasp flew to her, and took her back to bed and looked after her, and then he consulted with a rice-mortar and an egg which had fallen out of a nest near by, and they agreed that when the monkey returned, as he was sure to do, to steal the rest of the fruit, that they would punish him severely for the manner in which he had behaved to the crab. So the mortar climbed up to the beam over the front door, and the egg lay quite still on the ground, while the wasp set down the water-bucket in a corner. Then the crab dug itself a deep hole in the ground, so that not even the tip of her claws might be seen.

Soon after everything was ready the monkey jumped down from his tree, and creeping to the door began a long hypocritical speech, asking pardon for all he had done. He waited for an answer of some sort, but none came. He listened, but all was still; then he peeped, and saw no one; then he went in. He peered about for the crab, but in vain; however, his eyes fell on the egg, which he snatched up and set on the fire. But in a moment the egg had burst into a thousand pieces, and its sharp shell struck him in the face and scratched him horribly. Smarting with pain he ran to the bucket and stooped down to throw some water over his head. As he stretched out his hand up started the wasp and stung him on the nose. The monkey

shrieked and ran to the door, but as he passed through down fell the mortar and struck him dead. ‘After that the crab lived happily for many years, and at length died in peace under her own kaki tree.

[From Japanische Mahrchen.]

THE HORSE GULLFAXI AND THE SWORD GUNNFODER

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Many many years ago there lived a king and queen who had one only son, called Sigurd. When the little boy was only ten years old the queen, his mother, fell ill and died, and the king, who loved her dearly, built a splendid monument to his wife's memory, and day after day he sat by it and bewailed his sad loss.

One morning, as he sat by the grave, he noticed a richly dressed lady close to him. He asked her name and she answered that it was Ingiborg, and seemed surprised to see the king there all alone. Then he told her how he had lost his queen, and how he came daily to weep at her grave. In return, the lady informed him that she had lately lost her husband, and suggested that they might both find it a comfort if they made friends.

This pleased the king so much that he invited her to his palace, where they saw each other often; and after a time he married her.

After the wedding was over he soon regained his good spirits, and used to ride out hunting as in old days; but Sigurd, who was very fond of his stepmother, always stayed at home with her.

One evening Ingiborg said to Sigurd: 'To-morrow your father is going out hunting, and you must go with him.' But Sigurd said he would much rather stay at home, and the next day when the king rode off Sigurd refused to accompany him. The stepmother was very angry, but he would not listen, and at last she assured him that he would be sorry for his disobedience, and that in future he had better do as he was told.

After the hunting party had started she hid Sigurd under her bed, and bade him be sure to lie there till she called him.

Sigurd lay very still for a long while, and was just thinking it was no good staying there any more, when he felt the floor shake under him as if there were an earthquake, and peeping out he saw a great giantess wading along ankle deep through the ground and ploughing it up as she walked.

‘Good morning, Sister Ingiborg,’ cried she as she entered the room, ‘is Prince Sigurd at home?’

‘No,’ said Ingiborg; ‘he rode off to the forest with his father this morning.’ And she laid the table for her sister and set food before her. After they had both done eating the giantess said: ‘Thank you, sister, for your good dinner—the best lamb, the best can of beer and the best drink I have ever had; but—is not Prince Sigurd at home?’

Ingiborg again said ‘No’; and the giantess took leave of her and went away. When she was quite out of sight Ingiborg told Sigurd to come out of his hiding-place.

The king returned home at night, but his wife told him nothing of what had happened, and the next morning she again begged the prince to go out hunting with his father. Sigurd, however, replied as before, that he would much rather stay at home.

So once more the king rode off alone. This time Ingiborg hid Sigurd under the table, and scolded him well for not doing as she bade him. For some time he lay quite still, and then suddenly the floor began to shake, and a giantess came along wading half way to her knees through the ground.

As she entered the house she asked, as the first one had done: ‘Well, Sister Ingiborg, is Prince Sigurd at home?’

‘No,’ answered Ingiborg,’ he rode off hunting with his father this morning’; and going to the cupboard she laid the table for her sister. When they had finished their meal the giantess rose and said: ‘Thank you for all these nice dishes, and for the best lamb, the best can of beer and the nicest drink I have ever had; but—is Prince Sigurd really not at home?’

‘No, certainly not!’ replied Ingiborg; and with that they took leave of each other.

When she was well out of sight Sigurd crept from under the table, and his stepmother declared that it was most important that he should not stay at home next day; but he said he did not see what harm could come of it, and he did not mean to go out hunting, and the next morning, when the king prepared to start, Ingiborg implored Sigurd to accompany his father. But it was all no use, he was quite obstinate and would not listen to a word she said. ‘You will have to hide me again,’ said he, so no sooner had the king gone than Ingiborg hid Sigurd between the wall and the panelling, and

by-and-by there was heard once more a sound like an earthquake, as a great giantess, wading knee deep through the ground, came in at the door.

‘Good day, Sister Ingiborg!’ she cried, in a voice like thunder; ‘is Prince Sigurd at home?’

‘Oh, no,’ answered Ingiborg, ‘he is enjoying himself out there in the forest. I expect it will be quite dark before he comes back again.’

‘That’s a lie!’ shouted the giantess. And they squabbled about it till they were tired, after which Ingiborg laid the table; and when the giantess had done eating she said: ‘Well, I must thank you for all these good things, and for the best lamb, the best can of beer and the best drink I have had for a long time; but—are you quite sure Prince Sigurd is not at home?’

‘Quite,’ said Ingiborg. ‘I’ve told you already that he rode off with his father this morning to hunt in the forest.’

At this the giantess roared out with a terrible voice: ‘If he is near enough to hear my words, I lay this spell on him: Let him be half scorched and half withered; and may he have neither rest nor peace till he finds me.’ And with these words she stalked off.

For a moment Ingiborg stood as if turned to stone, then she fetched Sigurd from his hiding-place, and, to her horror, there he was, half scorched and half withered.

‘Now you see what has happened through your own obstinacy,’ said she; ‘but we must lose no time, for your father will soon be coming home.’

Going quickly into the next room she opened a chest and took out a ball of string and three gold rings, and gave them to Sigurd, saying: ‘If you throw this ball on the ground it will roll along till it reaches some high cliffs. There you will see a giantess looking out over the rocks. She will call down to you and say: “Ah, this is just what I wanted! Here is Prince Sigurd. He shall go into the pot to-night”; but don’t be frightened by her. She will draw you up with a long boat-hook, and you must greet her from me, and give her the smallest ring as a present. This will please her, and she will ask you to wrestle with her. When you are exhausted, she will offer you a horn to drink out of, and though she does not know it, the wine will make you so strong that you will easily be able to conquer her. After that she will let you stay there all night. The same thing will happen with my two other sisters. But, above all, remember this: should my little dog come to you and lay his paws on you, with tears running down his face,

then hurry home, for my life will be in danger. Now, good-bye, and don't forget your stepmother.'

Then Ingiborg dropped the ball on the ground, and Sigurd bade her farewell.

That same evening the ball stopped rolling at the foot of some high rocks, and on glancing up, Sigurd saw the giantess looking out at the top.

'Ah, just what I wanted!' she cried out when she saw him; 'here is Prince Sigurd. He shall go into the pot to-night. Come up, my friend, and wrestle with me.'

With these words she reached out a long boat hook and hauled him up the cliff. At first Sigurd was rather frightened, but he remembered what Ingiborg had said, and gave the giantess her sister's message and the ring.

The giantess was delighted, and challenged him to wrestle with her. Sigurd was fond of all games, and began to wrestle with joy; but he was no match for the giantess, and as she noticed that he was getting faint she gave him a horn to drink out of, which was very foolish on her part, as it made Sigurd so strong that he soon overthrew her.

'You may stay here to-night,' said she; and he was glad of the rest.

Next morning Sigurd threw down the ball again and away it rolled for some time, till it stopped at the foot of another high rock. Then he looked up and saw another giantess, even bigger and uglier than the first one, who called out to him: 'Ah, this is just what I wanted! Here is Prince Sigurd. He shall go into the pot to-night. Come up quickly and wrestle with me.' And she lost no time in hauling him up.

The prince gave her his stepmother's message and the second largest ring. The giantess was greatly pleased when she saw the ring, and at once challenged Sigurd to wrestle with her.

They struggled for a long time, till at last Sigurd grew faint; so she handed him a horn to drink from, and when he had drunk he became so strong that he threw her down with one hand.

On the third morning Sigurd once more laid down his ball, and it rolled far away, till at last it stopped under a very high rock indeed, over the top of which the most hideous giantess that ever was seen looked down.

When she saw who was there she cried out: 'Ah, this is just what I wanted! Here comes Prince Sigurd. Into the pot he goes this very night.

Come up here, my friend, and wrestle with me.' And she hauled him up just as her sisters had done.

Sigurd then gave her his stepmother's message and the last and largest ring. The sight of the red gold delighted the giantess, and she challenged Sigurd to a wrestling match. This time the fight was fierce and long, but when at length Sigurd's strength was failing the giantess gave him something to drink, and after he had drunk it he soon brought her to her knees. 'You have beaten me,' she gasped, so now, listen to me. 'Not far from here is a lake. Go there; you will find a little girl playing with a boat. Try to make friends with her, and give her this little gold ring. You are stronger than ever you were, and I wish you good luck.'

With these words they took leave of each other, and Sigurd wandered on till he reached the lake, where he found the little girl playing with a boat, just as he had been told. He went up to her and asked what her name was.

She was called Helga, she answered, and she lived near by.

So Sigurd gave her the little gold ring, and proposed that they should have a game. The little girl was delighted, for she had no brothers or sisters, and they played together all the rest of the day.

When evening came Sigurd asked leave to go home with her, but Helga at first forbade him, as no stranger had ever managed to enter their house without being found out by her father, who was a very fierce giant.

However, Sigurd persisted, and at length she gave way; but when they came near the door she held her glove over him and Sigurd was at once transformed into a bundle of wool. Helga tucked the bundle under her arm and threw it on the bed in her room.

Almost at the same moment her father rushed in and hunted round in every corner, crying out: 'This place smells of men. What's that you threw on the bed, Helga?'

'A bundle of wool,' said she.

'Oh, well, perhaps it was that I smelt,' said the old man, and troubled himself no more.

The following day Helga went out to play and took the bundle of wool with her under her arm. When she reached the lake she held her glove over it again and Sigurd resumed his own shape.

They played the whole day, and Sigurd taught Helga all sorts of games she had never even heard of. As they walked home in the evening she said: ‘We shall be able to play better still to-morrow, for my father will have to go to the town, so we can stay at home.’

When they were near the house Helga again held her glove over Sigurd, and once more he was turned into a bundle of wool, and she carried him in without his being seen.

Very early next morning Helga’s father went to the town, and as soon as he was well out of the way the girl held up her glove and Sigurd was himself again. Then she took him all over the house to amuse him, and opened every room, for her father had given her the keys before he left; but when they came to the last room Sigurd noticed one key on the bunch which had not been used and asked which room it belonged to.’

Helga grew red and did not answer.

‘I suppose you don’t mind my seeing the room which it opens?’ asked Sigurd, and as he spoke he saw a heavy iron door and begged Helga to unlock it for him. But she told him she dared not do so, at least if she did open the door it must only be a very tiny chink; and Sigurd declared that would do quite well.

The door was so heavy, that it took Helga some time to open it, and Sigurd grew so impatient that he pushed it wide open and walked in. There he saw a splendid horse, all ready saddled, and just above it hung a richly ornamented sword on the handle of which was engraved these words: ‘He who rides this horse and wears this sword will find happiness.’

At the sight of the horse Sigurd was so filled with wonder that he was not able to speak, but at last he gasped out: ‘Oh, do let me mount him and ride him round the house! Just once; I promise not to ask any more.’

‘Ride him round the house!’ cried Helga, growing pale at the mere idea. ‘Ride Gullfaxi! Why father would never, never forgive me, if I let you do that.’

‘But it can’t do him any harm,’ argued Sigurd; ‘you don’t know how careful I will be. I have ridden all sorts of horses at home, and have never fallen off not once. Oh, Helga, do!’

‘Well, perhaps, if you come back directly,’ replied Helga, doubtfully; ‘but you must be very quick, or father will find out!’

But, instead of mounting Gullfaxi, as she expected, Sigurd stood still.

‘And the sword,’ he said, looking fondly up to the place where it hung. ‘My father is a king, but he has not got any sword so beautiful as that. Why, the jewels in the scabbard are more splendid than the big ruby in his crown! Has it got a name? Some swords have, you know.’

‘It is called “Gunnfjoder,” the “Battle Plume,”’ answered Helga, ‘and “Gullfaxi” means “Golden Mane.” I don’t suppose, if you are to get on the horse at all, it would matter your taking the sword too. And if you take the sword you will have to carry the stick and the stone and the twig as well.’

‘They are easily carried,’ said Sigurd, gazing at them with scorn; ‘what wretched dried-up things! Why in the world do you keep them?’

‘Bather says that he would rather lose Gullfaxi than lose them,’ replied Helga, ‘for if the man who rides the horse is pursued he has only to throw the twig behind him and it will turn into a forest, so thick that even a bird could hardly fly through. But if his enemy happens to know magic, and can throw down the forest, the man has only to strike the stone with the stick, and hailstones as large as pigeons’ eggs will rain down from the sky and will kill every one for twenty miles round.’

Having said all this she allowed Sigurd to ride ‘just once’ round the house, taking the sword and other things with him. But when he had ridden round, instead of dismounting, he suddenly turned the horse’s head and galloped away.

Soon after this Helga’s father came home and found his daughter in tears. He asked what was the matter, and when he heard all that had happened, he rushed off as fast as he could to pursue Sigurd.

Now, as Sigurd happened to look behind him he saw the giant coming after him with great strides, and in all haste he threw the twig behind him. Immediately such a thick wood sprang up at once between him and his enemy that the giant was obliged to run home for an axe with which to cut his way through.

The next time Sigurd glanced round, the giant was so near that he almost touched Gullfaxi’s tail. In an agony of fear Sigurd turned quickly in his saddle and hit the stone with the stick. No sooner had he done this than a terrible hailstorm burst behind, and the giant was killed on the spot.

But had Sigurd struck the stone without turning round, the hail would have driven right into his face and killed him instead.

After the giant was dead Sigurd rode on towards his own home, and on the way he suddenly met his stepmother’s little dog, running to meet him, with tears pouring down its face. He galloped on as hard as he could, and on arriving found nine men-servants in the act of tying Queen Ingiborg to a post in the courtyard of the palace, where they intended to burn her.

Wild with anger Prince Sigurd sprang from his horse and, sword in hand, fell on the men and killed them all. Then he released his stepmother, and went in with her to see his father.

The king lay in bed sick with sorrow, and neither eating nor drinking, for he thought that his son had been killed by the queen. He could hardly believe his own eyes for joy when he saw the prince, and Sigurd told him all his adventures.

After that Prince Sigurd rode back to fetch Helga, and a great feast was made which lasted three days; and every one said no bride was ever seen so beautiful as Helga, and they lived happily for many, many years, and everybody loved them.

[From Islandische Mahrchen.]

THE STORY OF THE SHAM PRINCE, OR THE AMBITIOUS TAILOR

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Once upon a time there lived a respectable young tailor called Labakan, who worked for a clever master in Alexandria. No one could call Labakan either stupid or lazy, for he could work extremely well and quickly—when he chose; but there was something not altogether right about him. Sometimes he would stitch away as fast as if he had a red-hot needle and a burning thread, and at other times he would sit lost in thought, and with such a queer look about him that his fellow-workmen used to say, ‘Labakan has got on his aristocratic face today.’

On Fridays he would put on his fine robe which he had bought with the money he had managed to save up, and go to the mosque. As he came back, after prayers, if he met any friend who said ‘Good-day,’ or ‘How are you, friend Labakan?’ he would wave his hand graciously or nod in a condescending way; and if his master happened to say to him, as he sometimes did, ‘Really, Labakan, you look like a prince,’ he was delighted, and would answer, ‘Have you noticed it too?’ or ‘Well, so I have long thought.’

Things went on like this for some time, and the master put up with Labakan’s absurdities because he was, on the whole, a good fellow and a clever workman.

One day, the sultan’s brother happened to be passing through Alexandria, and wanted to have one of his state robes altered, so he sent for the master tailor, who handed the robe over to Labakan as his best workman.

In the evening, when every one had left the workshop and gone home, a great longing drove Labakan back to the place where the royal robe hung. He stood a long time gazing at it, admiring the rich material and the splendid embroidery in it. At last he could hold out no longer. He felt he must try it on, and lo! and behold, it fitted as though it had been made for him.

‘Am not I as good a prince as any other?’ he asked himself, as he proudly paced up and down the room. ‘Has not the master often said that I seemed born to be a prince?’

It seemed to him that he must be the son of some unknown monarch, and at last he determined to set out at once and travel in search of his proper rank.

He felt as if the splendid robe had been sent him by some kind fairy, and he took care not to neglect such a precious gift. He collected all his savings, and, concealed by the darkness of the night, he passed through the gates of Alexandria.

The new prince excited a good deal of curiosity where ever he went, for his splendid robe and majestic manner did not seem quite suitable to a person travelling on foot. If anyone asked questions, he only replied with an important air of mystery that he had his own reasons for not riding.

However, he soon found out that walking made him ridiculous, so at last he bought a quiet, steady old horse, which he managed to get cheap.

One day, as he was ambling along upon Murva (that was the horse’s name), a horseman overtook him and asked leave to join him, so that they might both beguile the journey with pleasant talk. The newcomer was a bright, cheerful, good-looking young man, who soon plunged into conversation and asked many questions. He told Labakan that his own name was Omar, that he was a nephew of Elfi Bey, and was travelling in order to carry out a command given him by his uncle on his death bed. Labakan was not quite so open in his confidences, but hinted that he too was of noble birth and was travelling for pleasure.

The two young men took a fancy to each other and rode on together. On the second day of their journey Labakan questioned Omar as to the orders he had to carry out, and to his surprise heard this tale.

Elfi Bey, Pacha of Cairo, had brought up Omar from his earliest childhood, and the boy had never known his parents. On his deathbed Elfi Bey called Omar to him, and then told him that he was not his nephew, but the son of a great king, who, having been warned of coming dangers by his astrologers, had sent the young prince away and made a vow not to see him till his twenty-second birthday.

Elfi Bey did not tell Omar his father’s name, but expressly desired him to be at a great pillar four days’ journey east of Alexandria on the fourth

day of the coming month, on which day he would be twenty-two years old. Here he would meet some men, to whom he was to hand a dagger which Elfi Bey gave him, and to say ‘Here am I for whom you seek.’

If they answered: ‘Praised be the Prophet who has preserved you,’ he was to follow them, and they would take him to his father.

Labakan was greatly surprised and interested by this story, but after hearing it he could not help looking on Prince Omar with envious eyes, angry that his friend should have the position he himself longed so much for. He began to make comparisons between the prince and himself, and was obliged to confess that he was a fine-looking young man with very good manners and a pleasant expression.

At the same time, he felt sure that had he been in the prince’s place any royal father might have been glad to own him.

These thoughts haunted him all day, and he dreamt them all night. He woke very early, and as he saw Omar sleeping quietly, with a happy smile on his face, a wish arose in his mind to take by force or by cunning the things which an unkind fate had denied him.

The dagger which was to act as a passport was sticking in Omar’s girdle. Labakan drew it gently out, and hesitated for a moment whether or not to plunge it into the heart of the sleeping prince. However, he shrank from the idea of murder, so he contented himself with placing the dagger in his own belt, and, saddling Omar’s swift horse for himself, was many miles away before the prince woke up to realise his losses.

For two days Labakan rode on steadily, fearing lest, after all, Omar might reach the meeting place before him. At the end of the second day he saw the great pillar at a distance. It stood on a little hill in the middle of a plain, and could be seen a very long way off. Labakan’s heart beat fast at the sight. Though he had had some time in which to think over the part he meant to play his conscience made him rather uneasy. However, the thought that he must certainly have been born to be a king supported him, and he bravely rode on.

The neighbourhood was quite bare and desert, and it was a good thing that the new prince had brought food for some time with him, as two days were still wanting till the appointed time.

Towards the middle of the next day he saw a long procession of horses and camels coming towards him. It halted at the bottom of the hill, and

some splendid tents were pitched. Everything looked like the escort of some great man. Labakan made a shrewd guess that all these people had come here on his account; but he checked his impatience, knowing that only on the fourth day could his wishes be fulfilled.

The first rays of the rising sun woke the happy tailor. As he began to saddle his horse and prepare to ride to the pillar, he could not help having some remorseful thoughts of the trick he had played and the blighted hopes of the real prince. But the die was cast, and his vanity whispered that he was as fine looking a young man as the proudest king might wish his son to be, and that, moreover, what had happened had happened.

With these thoughts he summoned up all his courage sprang on his horse, and in less than a quarter of an hour was at the foot of the hill. Here he dismounted, tied the horse to a bush, and, drawing out Prince Omar's dagger climbed up the hill.

At the foot of the pillar stood six men round a tall and stately person. His superb robe of cloth of gold was girt round him by a white cashmere shawl, and his white, richly jewelled turban showed that he was a man of wealth and high rank.

Labakan went straight up to him, and, bending low, handed him the dagger, saying: 'Here am I whom you seek.'

'Praised be the Prophet who has preserved you! replied the old man with tears of joy. 'Embrace me, my dear son Omar!'

The proud tailor was deeply moved by these solemn words, and with mingled shame and joy sank into the old king's arms.

But his happiness was not long unclouded. As he raised his head he saw a horseman who seemed trying to urge a tired or unwilling horse across the plain.

Only too soon Labakan recognised his own old horse, Murva, and the real Prince Omar, but having once told a lie he made up his mind not to own his deceit.

At last the horseman reached the foot of the hill. Here he flung himself from the saddle and hurried up to the pillar.

'Stop!' he cried, 'whoever you may be, and do not let a disgraceful impostor take you in. My name is Omar, and let no one attempt to rob me of it.'

This turn of affairs threw the standers-by into great surprise. The old king in particular seemed much moved as he looked from one face to the other. At last Labakan spoke with forced calmness, ‘Most gracious lord and father, do not let yourself be deceived by this man. As far as I know, he is a half-crazy tailor’s apprentice from Alexandria, called Labakan, who really deserves more pity than anger.’

These words infuriated the prince. Foaming with rage, he tried to press towards Labakan, but the attendants threw themselves upon him and held him fast, whilst the king said, ‘Truly, my dear son, the poor fellow is quite mad. Let him be bound and placed on a dromedary. Perhaps we may be able to get some help for him.’

The prince’s first rage was over, and with tears he cried to the king, ‘My heart tells me that you are my father, and in my mother’s name I entreat you to hear me.’

‘Oh! heaven forbid!’ was the reply. ‘He is talking nonsense again. How can the poor man have got such notions into his head?’

With these words the king took Labakan’s arm to support him down the hill. They both mounted richly caparisoned horses and rode across the plain at the head of their followers.

The unlucky prince was tied hand and foot, and fastened on a dromedary, a guard riding on either side and keeping a sharp look-out on him.

The old king was Sached, Sultan of the Wachabites. For many years he had had no children, but at length the son he had so long wished for was born. But the sooth-sayers and magicians whom he consulted as to the child’s future all said that until he was twenty-two years old he stood in danger of being injured by an enemy. So, to make all safe, the sultan had confided the prince to his trusty friend Elfi Bey, and deprived himself of the happiness of seeing him for twenty-two years. All this the sultan told Labakan, and was much pleased by his appearance and dignified manner.

When they reached their own country they were received with every sign of joy, for the news of the prince’s safe return had spread like wildfire, and every town and village was decorated, whilst the inhabitants thronged to greet them with cries of joy and thankfulness. All this filled Labakan’s proud heart with rapture, whilst the unfortunate Omar followed in silent rage and despair.

At length they arrived in the capital, where the public rejoicings were grander and more brilliant than anywhere else. The queen awaited them in the great hall of the palace, surrounded by her entire court. It was getting dark, and hundreds of coloured hanging lamps were lit to turn night into day.

The brightest hung round the throne on which the queen sat, and which stood above four steps of pure gold inlaid with great amethysts. The four greatest nobles in the kingdom held a canopy of crimson silk over the queen, and the Sheik of Medina fanned her with a peacock-feather fan.

In this state she awaited her husband and her son. She, too, had not seen Omar since his birth, but so many dreams had shown her what he would look like that she felt she would know him among a thousand.

And now the sound of trumpets and drums and of shouts and cheers outside announced the long looked for moment. The doors flew open, and between rows of low-bending courtiers and servants the king approached the throne, leading his pretended son by the hand.

‘Here,’ said he, ‘is he for whom you have been longing so many years.’

But the queen interrupted him, ‘That is not my son!’ she cried. ‘That is not the face the Prophet has shown me in my dreams!’

Just as the king was about to reason with her, the door was thrown violently open, and Prince Omar rushed in, followed by his keepers, whom he had managed to get away from. He flung himself down before the throne, panting out, ‘Here will I die; kill me at once, cruel father, for I cannot bear this shame any longer.’

Everyone pressed round the unhappy man, and the guards were about to seize him, when the queen, who at first was dumb with surprise, sprang up from her throne.

‘Hold!’ cried she. ‘This and no other is the right one; this is the one whom my eyes have never yet seen, but whom my heart recognises.’

The guards had stepped back, but the king called to them in a furious voice to secure the madman.

‘It is I who must judge,’ he said in tones of command; ‘and this matter cannot be decided by women’s dreams, but by certain unmistakable signs. This one’ (pointing to Labakan) ‘is my son, for it was he who brought me the token from my friend Elfi—the dagger.’

‘He stole it from me,’ shrieked Omar; ‘he betrayed my unsuspicious confidence.’

But the king would not listen to his son’s voice, for he had always been accustomed to depend on his own judgment. He let the unhappy Omar be dragged from the hall, whilst he himself retired with Labakan to his own rooms, full of anger with the queen his wife, in spite of their many years of happy life together.

The queen, on her side, was plunged in grief, for she felt certain that an impostor had won her husband’s heart and taken the place of her real son.

When the first shock was over she began to think how she could manage to convince the king of his mistake. Of course it would be a difficult matter, as the man who declared he was Omar had produced the dagger as a token, besides talking of all sorts of things which happened when he was a child. She called her oldest and wisest ladies about her and asked their advice, but none of them had any to give. At last one very clever old woman said: ‘Did not the young man who brought the dagger call him whom your majesty believes to be your son Labakan, and say he was a crazy tailor?’

‘Yes,’ replied the queen; ‘but what of that?’

‘Might it not be,’ said the old lady, ‘that the impostor has called your real son by his own name? If this should be the case, I know of a capital way to find out the truth.’

And she whispered some words to the queen, who seemed much pleased, and went off at once to see the king.

Now the queen was a very wise woman, so she pretended to think she might have made a mistake, and only begged to be allowed to put a test to the two young men to prove which was the real prince.

The king, who was feeling much ashamed of the rage he had been in with his dear wife, consented at once, and she said: ‘No doubt others would make them ride or shoot, or something of that sort, but every one learns these things. I wish to set them a task which requires sharp wits and clever hands, and I want them to try which of them can best make a kaftan and pair of trousers.’

The king laughed. ‘No, no, that will never do. Do you suppose my son would compete with that crazy tailor as to which could make the best clothes? Oh, dear, no, that won’t do at all.’

But the queen claimed his promise, and as he was a man of his word the king gave in at last. He went to his son and begged that he would humour his mother, who had set her heart on his making a kaftan.

The worthy Labakan laughed to himself. ‘If that is all she wants,’ thought he, ‘her majesty will soon be pleased to own me.’

Two rooms were prepared, with pieces of material, scissors, needles and threads, and each young man was shut up in one of them.

The king felt rather curious as to what sort of garment his son would make, and the queen, too, was very anxious as to the result of her experiment.

On the third day they sent for the two young men and their work. Labakan came first and spread out his kaftan before the eyes of the astonished king. ‘See, father,’ he said; ‘see, my honoured mother, if this is not a masterpiece of work. I’ll bet the court tailor himself cannot do better.

The queen smiled and turned to Omar: ‘And what have you done, my son?’

Impatiently he threw the stuff and scissors down on the floor. ‘I have been taught how to manage a horse, to draw a sword, and to throw a lance some sixty paces, but I never learnt to sew, and such a thing would have been thought beneath the notice of the pupil of Elfi Bey, the ruler of Cairo.’

‘Ah, true son of your father,’ cried the queen; ‘if only I might embrace you and call you son! Forgive me, my lord and husband,’ she added, turning to the king, ‘for trying to find out the truth in this way. Do you not see yourself now which is the prince and which the tailor? Certainly this kaftan is a very fine one, but I should like to know what master taught this young man how to make clothes.’

The king sat deep in thought, looking now at his wife and now at Labakan, who was doing his best to hide his vexation at his own stupidity. At last the king said: ‘Even this trial does not satisfy me; but happily I know of a sure way to discover whether or not I have been deceived.’

He ordered his swiftest horse to be saddled, mounted, and rode off alone into a forest at some little distance. Here lived a kindly fairy called Adolzaide, who had often helped the kings of his race with her good advice, and to her he betook himself.

In the middle of the forest was a wide open space surrounded by great cedar trees, and this was supposed to be the fairy's favourite spot. When the king reached this place he dismounted, tied his horse to the tree, and standing in the middle of the open place said: 'If it is true that you have helped my ancestors in their time of need, do not despise their descendant, but give me counsel, for that of men has failed me.'

He had hardly finished speaking when one of the cedar trees opened, and a veiled figure all dressed in white stepped from it.

'I know your errand, King Sached,' she said; 'it is an honest one, and I will give you my help. Take these two little boxes and let the two men who claim to be your son choose between them. I know that the real prince will make no mistake.'

She then handed him two little boxes made of ivory set with gold and pearls. On the lid of each (which the king vainly tried to open) was an inscription in diamonds. On one stood the words 'Honour and Glory,' and on the other 'Wealth and Happiness.'

'It would be a hard choice,' thought the king as he rode home.

He lost no time in sending for the queen and for all his court, and when all were assembled he made a sign, and Labakan was led in. With a proud air he walked up to the throne, and kneeling down, asked:

'What does my lord and father command?'

The king replied: 'My son, doubts have been thrown on your claim to that name. One of these boxes contains the proofs of your birth. Choose for yourself. No doubt you will choose right.'

He then pointed to the ivory boxes, which were placed on two little tables near the throne.

Labakan rose and looked at the boxes. He thought for some minutes, and then said: 'My honoured father, what can be better than the happiness of being your son, and what nobler than the riches of your love. I choose the box with the words "Wealth and Happiness."'

'We shall see presently if you have chosen the right one. For the present take a seat there beside the Pacha of Medina,' replied the king.

Omar was next led in, looking sad and sorrowful. He threw himself down before the throne and asked what was the king's pleasure. The king pointed out the two boxes to him, and he rose and went to the tables. He carefully read the two mottoes and said: 'The last few days have shown me

how uncertain is happiness and how easily riches vanish away. Should I lose a crown by it I make my choice of “Honour and Glory.” ’

He laid his hand on the box as he spoke, but the king signed to him to wait, and ordered Labakan to come to the other table and lay his hand on the box he had chosen.

Then the king rose from his throne, and in solemn silence all present rose too, whilst he said: ‘Open the boxes, and may Allah show us the truth.’

The boxes were opened with the greatest ease. In the one Omar had chosen lay a little gold crown and sceptre on a velvet cushion. In Labakan’s box was found—a large needle with some thread!

The king told the two young men to bring him their boxes. They did so. He took the crown in his hand, and as he held it, it grew bigger and bigger, till it was as large as a real crown. He placed it on the head of his son Omar, kissed him on the forehead, and placed him on his right hand. Then, turning to Labakan, he said: ‘There is an old proverb, “The cobbler sticks to his last.” It seems as though you were to stick to your needle. You have not deserved any mercy, but I cannot be harsh on this day. I give you your life, but I advise you to leave this country as fast as you can.’

Full of shame, the unlucky tailor could not answer. He flung himself down before Omar, and with tears in his eyes asked: ‘Can you forgive me, prince?’

‘Go in peace,’ said Omar as he raised him.

‘Oh, my true son!’ cried the king as he clasped the prince in his arms, whilst all the pachas and emirs shouted, ‘Long live Prince Omar!’

In the midst of all the noise and rejoicing Labakan slipped off with his little box under his arm. He went to the stables, saddled his old horse, Murva, and rode out of the gate towards Alexandria. Nothing but the ivory box with its diamond motto was left to show him that the last few weeks had not been a dream.

When he reached Alexandria he rode up to his old master’s door. When he entered the shop, his master came forward to ask what was his pleasure, but as soon as he saw who it was he called his workmen, and they all fell on Labakan with blows and angry words, till at last he fell, half fainting, on a heap of old clothes.

The master then scolded him soundly about the stolen robe, but in vain Labakan told him he had come to pay for it and offered three times its price. They only fell to beating him again, and at last pushed him out of the house more dead than alive.

He could do nothing but remount his horse and ride to an inn. Here he found a quiet place in which to rest his bruised and battered limbs and to think over his many misfortunes. He fell asleep fully determined to give up trying to be great, but to lead the life of an honest workman.

Next morning he set to work to fulfil his good resolutions. He sold his little box to a jeweller for a good price, bought a house and opened a workshop. Then he hung up a sign with, ‘Labakan, Tailor,’ over his door, and sat down to mend his own torn clothes with the very needle which had been in the ivory box.

After a while he was called away, and when he went back to his work he found a wonderful thing had happened! The needle was sewing away all by itself and making the neatest little stitches, such as Labakan had never been able to make even at his best.

Certainly even the smallest gift of a kind fairy is of great value, and this one had yet another advantage, for the thread never came to an end, however much the needle sewed.

Labakan soon got plenty of customers. He used to cut out the clothes, make the first stitch with the magic needle, and then leave it to do the rest. Before long the whole town went to him, for his work was both so good and so cheap. The only puzzle was how he could do so much, working all alone, and also why he worked with closed doors.

And so the promise on the ivory box of ‘Wealth and Happiness’ came true for him, and when he heard of all the brave doings of Prince Omar, who was the pride and darling of his people and the terror of his enemies, the ex-prince thought to himself, ‘After all, I am better off as a tailor, for “Honour and Glory” are apt to be very dangerous things.’

THE COLONY OF CATS

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Long, long ago, as far back as the time when animals spoke, there lived a community of cats in a deserted house they had taken possession of not far from a large town. They had everything they could possibly desire for their comfort, they were well fed and well lodged, and if by any chance an unlucky mouse was stupid enough to venture in their way, they caught it, not to eat it, but for the pure pleasure of catching it. The old people of the town related how they had heard their parents speak of a time when the whole country was so overrun with rats and mice that there was not so much as a grain of corn nor an ear of maize to be gathered in the fields; and it might be out of gratitude to the cats who had rid the country of these plagues that their descendants were allowed to live in peace. No one knows where they got the money to pay for everything, nor who paid it, for all this happened so very long ago. But one thing is certain, they were rich enough to keep a servant; for though they lived very happily together, and did not scratch nor fight more than human beings would have done, they were not clever enough to do the housework themselves, and preferred at all events to have some one to cook their meat, which they would have scorned to eat raw. Not only were they very difficult to please about the housework, but most women quickly tired of living alone with only cats for companions, consequently they never kept a servant long; and it had become a saying in the town, when anyone found herself reduced to her last penny: ‘I will go and live with the cats,’ and so many a poor woman actually did.

Now Lizina was not happy at home, for her mother, who was a widow, was much fonder of her elder daughter; so that often the younger one fared very badly, and had not enough to eat, while the elder could have everything she desired, and if Lizina dared to complain she was certain to have a good beating.

At last the day came when she was at the end of her courage and patience, and exclaimed to her mother and sister:

‘As you hate me so much you will be glad to be rid of me, so I am going to live with the cats!’

‘Be off with you!’ cried her mother, seizing an old broom-handle from behind the door. Poor Lizina did not wait to be told twice, but ran off at once and never stopped till she reached the door of the cats’ house. Their cook had left them that very morning, with her face all scratched, the result of such a quarrel with the head of the house that he had very nearly scratched out her eyes. Lizina therefore was warmly welcomed, and she set to work at once to prepare the dinner, not without many misgivings as to the tastes of the cats, and whether she would be able to satisfy them.

Going to and fro about her work, she found herself frequently hindered by a constant succession of cats who appeared one after another in the kitchen to inspect the new servant; she had one in front of her feet, another perched on the back of her chair while she peeled the vegetables, a third sat on the table beside her, and five or six others prowled about among the pots and pans on the shelves against the wall. The air resounded with their purring, which meant that they were pleased with their new maid, but Lizina had not yet learned to understand their language, and often she did not know what they wanted her to do. However, as she was a good, kindhearted girl, she set to work to pick up the little kittens which tumbled about on the floor, she patched up quarrels, and nursed on her lap a big tabby—the oldest of the community—which had a lame paw. All these kindnesses could hardly fail to make a favourable impression on the cats, and it was even better after a while, when she had had time to grow accustomed to their strange ways. Never had the house been kept so clean, the meats so well served, nor the sick cats so well cared for. After a time they had a visit from an old cat, whom they called their father, who lived by himself in a barn at the top of the hill, and came down from time to time to inspect the little colony. He too was much taken with Lizina, and inquired, on first seeing her: ‘Are you well served by this nice, black-eyed little person?’ and the cats answered with one voice: ‘Oh, yes, Father Gatto, we have never had so good a servant!’

At each of his visits the answer was always the same; but after a time the old cat, who was very observant, noticed that the little maid had grown to look sadder and sadder. ‘What is the matter, my child has any one been unkind to you?’ he asked one day, when he found her crying in her kitchen.

She burst into tears and answered between her sobs: ‘Oh, no! they are all very good to me; but I long for news from home, and I pine to see my mother and my sister.’

Old Gatto, being a sensible old cat, understood the little servant’s feelings. ‘You shall go home,’ he said, ‘and you shall not come back here unless you please. But first you must be rewarded for all your kind services to my children. Follow me down into the inner cellar, where you have never yet been, for I always keep it locked and carry the key away with me.’

Lizina looked round her in astonishment as they went down into the great vaulted cellar underneath the kitchen. Before her stood the big earthenware water jars, one of which contained oil, the other a liquid shining like gold. ‘In which of these jars shall I dip you?’ asked Father Gatto, with a grin that showed all his sharp white teeth, while his moustaches stood out straight on either side of his face. The little maid looked at the two jars from under her long dark lashes: ‘In the oil jar,’ she answered timidly, thinking to herself: ‘I could not ask to be bathed in gold.’

But Father Gatto replied: ‘No, no; you have deserved something better than that.’ And seizing her in his strong paws he plunged her into the liquid gold. Wonder of wonders! when Lizina came out of the jar she shone from head to foot like the sun in the heavens on a fine summer’s day. Her pretty pink cheeks and long black hair alone kept their natural colour, otherwise she had become like a statue of pure gold. Father Gatto purred loudly with satisfaction. ‘Go home,’ he said, ‘and see your mother and sisters; but take care if you hear the cock crow to turn towards it; if on the contrary the ass brays, you must look the other way.’

The little maid, having gratefully kissed the white paw of the old cat, set off for home; but just as she got near her mother’s house the cock crowed, and quickly she turned towards it. Immediately a beautiful golden star appeared on her forehead, crowning her glossy black hair. At the same time the ass began to bray, but Lizina took care not to look over the fence into the field where the donkey was feeding. Her mother and sister, who were in front of their house, uttered cries of admiration and astonishment when they saw her, and their cries became still louder when Lizina, taking her handkerchief from her pocket, drew out also a handful of gold.

For some days the mother and her two daughters lived very happily together, for Lizina had given them everything she had brought away except her golden clothing, for that would not come off, in spite of all the efforts of her sister, who was madly jealous of her good fortune. The golden star, too, could not be removed from her forehead. But all the gold pieces she drew from her pockets had found their way to her mother and sister.

‘I will go now and see what I can get out of the pussies,’ said Peppina, the elder girl, one morning, as she took Lizina’s basket and fastened her pockets into her own skirt. ‘I should like some of the cats’ gold for myself,’ she thought, as she left her mother’s house before the sun rose.

The cat colony had not yet taken another servant, for they knew they could never get one to replace Lizina, whose loss they had not yet ceased to mourn. When they heard that Peppina was her sister, they all ran to meet her. ‘She is not the least like her,’ the kittens whispered among themselves.

‘Hush, be quiet!’ the older cats said; ‘all servants cannot be pretty.’

No, decidedly she was not at all like Lizina. Even the most reasonable and large-minded of the cats soon acknowledged that.

The very first day she shut the kitchen door in the face of the tom-cats who used to enjoy watching Lizina at her work, and a young and mischievous cat who jumped in by the open kitchen window and alighted on the table got such a blow with the rolling-pin that he squalled for an hour.

With every day that passed the household became more and more aware of its misfortune.

The work was as badly done as the servant was surly and disagreeable; in the corners of the rooms there were collected heaps of dust; spiders’ webs hung from the ceilings and in front of the window-panes; the beds were hardly ever made, and the feather beds, so beloved by the old and feeble cats, had never once been shaken since Lizina left the house. At Father Gatto’s next visit he found the whole colony in a state of uproar.

‘Caesar has one paw so badly swollen that it looks as if it were broken,’ said one. ‘Peppina kicked him with her great wooden shoes on. Hector has an abscess in his back where a wooden chair was flung at him; and Agrippina’s three little kittens have died of hunger beside their

mother, because Peppina forgot them in their basket up in the attic. There is no putting up with the creature—do send her away, Father Gatto! Lizina herself would not be angry with us; she must know very well what her sister is like.'

'Come here,' said Father Gatto, in his most severe tones to Peppina. And he took her down into the cellar and showed her the same two great jars that he had showed Lizina. 'In which of these shall I dip you?' he asked; and she made haste to answer: 'In the liquid gold,' for she was no more modest than she was good and kind.

Father Gatto's yellow eyes darted fire. 'You have not deserved it,' he uttered, in a voice like thunder, and seizing her he flung her into the jar of oil, where she was nearly suffocated. When she came to the surface screaming and struggling, the vengeful cat seized her again and rolled her in the ash-heap on the floor; then when she rose, dirty, blinded, and disgusting to behold, he thrust her from the door, saying: 'Begone, and when you meet a braying ass be careful to turn your head towards it.'

Stumbling and raging, Peppina set off for home, thinking herself fortunate to find a stick by the wayside with which to support herself. She was within sight of her mother's house when she heard in the meadow on the right, the voice of a donkey loudly braying. Quickly she turned her head towards it, and at the same time put her hand up to her forehead, where, waving like a plume, was a donkey's tail. She ran home to her mother at the top of her speed, yelling with rage and despair; and it took Lizina two hours with a big basin of hot water and two cakes of soap to get rid of the layer of ashes with which Father Gatto had adorned her. As for the donkey's tail, it was impossible to get rid of that; it was as firmly fixed on her forehead as was the golden star on Lizina's. Their mother was furious. She first beat Lizina unmercifully with the broom, then she took her to the mouth of the well and lowered her into it, leaving her at the bottom weeping and crying for help.

Before this happened, however, the king's son in passing the mother's house had seen Lizina sitting sewing in the parlour, and had been dazzled by her beauty. After coming back two or three times, he at last ventured to approach the window and to whisper in the softest voice: 'Lovely maiden, will you be my bride?' and she had answered: 'I will.'

Next morning, when the prince arrived to claim his bride, he found her wrapped in a large white veil. ‘It is so that maidens are received from their parents’ hands,’ said the mother, who hoped to make the king’s son marry Peppina in place of her sister, and had fastened the donkey’s tail round her head like a lock of hair under the veil. The prince was young and a little timid, so he made no objections, and seated Peppina in the carriage beside him.

> Their way led past the old house inhabited by the cats, who were all at the window, for the report had got about that the prince was going to marry the most beautiful maiden in the world, on whose forehead shone a golden star, and they knew that this could only be their adored Lizina. As the carriage slowly passed in front of the old house, where cats from all parts of world seemed to be gathered a song burst from every throat:
>
> Mew, mew, mew! Prince, look quick behind you!
> In the well is fair Lizina,
> And you’ve got nothing but Peppina.

When he heard this the coachman, who understood the cat’s language better than the prince, his master, stopped his horses and asked:

‘Does your highness know what the grimalkins are saying?’ and the song broke forth again louder than ever.

With a turn of his hand the prince threw back the veil, and discovered the puffed-up, swollen face of Peppina, with the donkey’s tail twisted round her head. ‘Ah, traitress!’ he exclaimed, and ordering the horses to be turned round, he drove the elder daughter, quivering with rage, to the old woman who had sought to deceive him. With his hand on the hilt of his sword he demanded Lizina in so terrific a voice that the mother hastened to the well to draw her prisoner out. Lizina’s clothing and her star shone so brilliantly that when the prince led her home to the king, his father, the whole palace was lit up. Next day they were married, and lived happy ever after; and all the cats, headed by old Father Gatto, were present at the wedding.

HOW TO FIND OUT A TRUE FRIEND

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Once upon a time there lived a king and queen who longed to have a son. As none came, one day they made a vow at the shrine of St. James that if their prayers were granted the boy should set out on a pilgrimage as soon as he had passed his eighteenth birthday. And fancy their delight when one evening the king returned home from hunting and saw a baby lying in the cradle.

All the people came crowding round to peep at it, and declared it was the most beautiful baby that ever was seen. Of course that is what they always say, but this time it happened to be true. And every day the boy grew bigger and stronger till he was twelve years old, when the king died, and he was left alone to take care of his mother.

In this way six years passed by, and his eighteenth birthday drew near. When she thought of this the queen's heart sank within her, for he was the light of her eyes' and how was she to send him forth to the unknown dangers that beset a pilgrim? So day by day she grew more and more sorrowful, and when she was alone wept bitterly.

Now the queen imagined that no one but herself knew how sad she was, but one morning her son said to her, 'Mother, why do you cry the whole day long?'

'Nothing, nothing, my son; there is only one thing in the world that troubles me.'

'What is that one thing?' asked he. 'Are you afraid your property is badly managed? Let me go and look into the matter.'

This pleased the queen, and he rode off to the plain country, where his mother owned great estates; but everything was in beautiful order, and he returned with a joyful heart, and said, 'Now, mother, you can be happy again, for your lands are better managed than anyone else's I have seen. The cattle are thriving; the fields are thick with corn, and soon they will be ripe for harvest.'

‘That is good news indeed,’ answered she; but it did not seem to make any difference to her, and the next morning she was weeping and wailing as loudly as ever.

‘Dear mother,’ said her son in despair, ‘if you will not tell me what is the cause of all this misery I shall leave home and wander far through the world.’

‘Ah, my son, my son,’ cried the queen, ‘it is the thought that I must part from you which causes me such grief; for before you were born we vowed a vow to St. James that when your eighteenth birthday was passed you should make a pilgrimage to his shrine, and very soon you will be eighteen, and I shall lose you. And for a whole year my eyes will never be gladdened by the sight of you, for the shrine is far away.’

‘Will it take no longer than that to reach it?’ said he. ‘Oh, don’t be so wretched; it is only dead people who never return. As long as I am alive you may be sure I will come back to you.’

After this manner he comforted his mother, and on his eighteenth birthday his best horse was led to the door of the palace, and he took leave of the queen in these words, ‘Dear mother, farewell, and by the help of fate I shall return to you as soon as I can.’

The queen burst into tears and wept sore; then amidst her sobs she drew three apples from her pocket and held them out, saying, ‘My son, take these apples and give heed unto my words. You will need a companion in the long journey on which you are going. If you come across a young man who pleases you beg him to accompany you, and when you get to an inn invite him to have dinner with you. After you have eaten cut one of these apples in two unequal parts, and ask him to take one. If he takes the larger bit, then part from him, for he is no true friend to you. But if he takes the smaller bit treat him as your brother, and share with him all you have.’ Then she kissed her son once more, and blessed him, and let him go.

The young man rode a long way without meeting a single creature, but at last he saw a youth in the distance about the same age as himself, and he spurred his horse till he came up with the stranger, who stopped and asked:

‘Where are you going, my fine fellow?’

‘I am making a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James, for before I was born my mother vowed that I should go forth with a thank offering on my

eighteenth birthday.'

'That is my case too,' said the stranger, 'and, as we must both travel in the same direction, let us bear each other company.'

The young man agreed to this proposal, but he took care not to get on terms of familiarity with the new comer until he had tried him with the apple.

By-and-by they reached an inn, and at sight of it the king's son said, 'I am very hungry. Let us enter and order something to eat.' The other consented, and they were soon sitting before a good dinner.

When they had finished the king's son drew an apple from his pocket, and cut it into a big half and a little half, and offered both to the stranger, who took the biggest bit. 'You are no friend of mine,' thought the king's son, and in order to part company with him he pretended to be ill and declared himself unable to proceed on his journey.

'Well, I can't wait for you,' replied the other; 'I am in haste to push on, so farewell.'

'Farewell,' said the king's son, glad in his heart to get rid of him so easily. The king's son remained in the inn for some time, so as to let the young man have a good start; them he ordered his horse and rode after him. But he was very sociable and the way seemed long and dull by himself. 'Oh, if I could only meet with a true friend,' he thought, 'so that I should have some one to speak to. I hate being alone.'

Soon after he came up with a young man, who stopped and asked him, 'Where are you going, my fine fellow?' The king's son explained the object of his journey, and the young man answered, as the other had done, that he also was fulfilling the vow of his mother made at his birth.

'Well, we can ride on together,' said the king's son, and the road seemed much shorter now that he had some one to talk to.

At length they reached an inn, and the king's son exclaimed, 'I am very hungry; let us go in and get something to eat.'

When they had finished the king's son drew an apple out of his pocket and cut it in two; he held the big bit and the little bit out to his companion, who took the big bit at once and soon ate it up. 'You are no friend of mine,' thought the king's son, and began to declare he felt so ill he could not continue his journey. When he had given the young man a good start he set off himself, but the way seemed even longer and duller than before.

‘Oh, if I could only meet with a true friend he should be as a brother to me,’ he sighed sadly; and as the thought passed through his mind, he noticed a youth going the same road as himself.

The youth came up to him and said, ‘Which way are you going, my fine fellow?’ And for the third time the king’s son explained all about his mother’s vow. Why, that is just like me,’ cried the youth.

‘Then let us ride on together,’ answered the king’s son.

Now the miles seemed to slip by, for the new comer was so lively and entertaining that the king’s son could not help hoping that he indeed might prove to be the true friend.

More quickly than he could have thought possible they reached an inn by the road-side, and turning to his companion the king’s son said, ‘I am hungry; let us go in and have something to eat.’ So they went in and ordered dinner, and when they had finished the king’s son drew out of his pocket the last apple, and cut it into two unequal parts, and held both out to the stranger. And the stranger took the little piece, and the heart of the king’s son was glad within him, for at last he had found the friend he had been looking for. ‘Good youth,’ he cried, ‘we will be brothers, and what is mine shall be thine, and what is thine shall be mine. And together we will push on to the shrine, and if one of us dies on the road the other shall carry his body there.’ And the stranger agreed to all he said, and they rode forward together.

It took them a whole year to reach the shrine, and they passed through many different lands on their way. One day they arrived tired and half-starved in a big city, and said to one another, ‘Let us stay here for a little and rest before we set forth again.’ So they hired a small house close to the royal castle, and took up their abode there.

The following morning the king of the country happened to step on to his balcony, and saw the young men in the garden, and said to himself, ‘Dear me, those are wonderfully handsome youths; but one is handsomer than the other, and to him will I give my daughter to wife;’ and indeed the king’s son excelled his friend in beauty.

In order to set about his plan the king asked both the young men to dinner, and when they arrived at the castle he received them with the utmost kindness, and sent for his daughter, who was more lovely than both the sun and moon put together. But at bed-time the king caused the other

young man to be given a poisoned drink, which killed him in a few minutes, for he thought to himself, ‘If his friend dies the other will forget his pilgrimage, and will stay here and marry my daughter.’

When the king’s son awoke the next morning he inquired of the servants where his friend had gone, as he did not see him. ‘He died suddenly last night,’ said they, ‘and is to be buried immediately.’

But the king’s son sprang up, and cried, ‘If my friend is dead I can stay here no longer, and cannot linger an hour in this house.’

‘Oh, give up your journey and remain here,’ exclaimed the king, ‘and you shall have my daughter for your wife.’ ‘No,’ answered the king’s son, ‘I cannot stay; but, I pray you, grant my request, and give me a good horse, and let me go in peace, and when I have fulfilled my vow then I will return and marry your daughter.’

So the king, seeing no words would move him, ordered a horse to be brought round, and the king’s son mounted it, and took his dead friend before him on the saddle, and rode away.

Now the young man was not really dead, but only in a deep sleep.

When the king’s son reached the shrine of St. James he got down from his horse, took his friend in his arms as if he had been a child, and laid him before the altar. ‘St. James,’ he said, ‘I have fulfilled the vow my parents made for me. I have come myself to your shrine, and have brought my friend. I place him in your hands. Restore him to life, I pray, for though he be dead yet has he fulfilled his vow also.’ And, behold! while he yet prayed his friend got up and stood before him as well as ever. And both the young men gave thanks, and set their faces towards home.

When they arrived at the town where the king dwelt they entered the small house over against the castle. The news of their coming spread very soon, and the king rejoiced greatly that the handsome young prince had come back again, and commanded great feasts to be prepared, for in a few days his daughter should marry the king’s son. The young man himself could imagine no greater happiness, and when the marriage was over they spent some months at the court making merry.

At length the king’s son said, ‘My mother awaits me at home, full of care and anxiety. Here I must remain no longer, and to-morrow I will take my wife and my friend and start for home.’ And the king was content that he should do so, and gave orders to prepare for their journey.

Now in his heart the king cherished a deadly hate towards the poor young man whom he had tried to kill, but who had returned to him living, and in order to do him hurt sent him on a message to some distant spot. ‘See that you are quick,’ said he, ‘for your friend will await your return before he starts.’ The youth put spurs to his horse and departed, bidding the prince farewell, so that the king’s message might be delivered the sooner. As soon as he had started the king went to the chamber of the prince, and said to him, ‘If you do not start immediately, you will never reach the place where you must camp for the night.’

‘I cannot start without my friend,’ replied the king’s son.

‘Oh, he will be back in an hour,’ replied the king, ‘and I will give him my best horse, so that he will be sure to catch you up.’ The king’s son allowed himself to be persuaded and took leave of his father-in-law, and set out with his wife on his journey home.

Meanwhile the poor friend had been unable to get through his task in the short time appointed by the king, and when at last he returned the king said to him,

‘Your comrade is a long way off by now; you had better see if you can overtake him.’

So the young man bowed and left the king’s presence, and followed after his friend on foot, for he had no horse. Night and day he ran, till at length he reached the place where the king’s son had pitched his tent, and sank down before him, a miserable object, worn out and covered with mud and dust. But the king’s son welcomed him with joy, and tended him as he would his brother.

And at last they came home again, and the queen was waiting and watching in the palace, as she had never ceased to do since her son had rode away. She almost died of joy at seeing him again, but after a little she remembered his sick friend, and ordered a bed to be made ready and the best doctors in all the country to be sent for. When they heard of the queen’s summons they flocked from all parts, but none could cure him. After everyone had tried and failed a servant entered and informed the queen that a strange old man had just knocked at the palace gate and declared that he was able to heal the dying youth. Now this was a holy man, who had heard of the trouble the king’s son was in, and had come to help.

It happened that at this very time a little daughter was born to the king's son, but in his distress for his friend he had hardly a thought to spare for the baby. He could not be prevailed on to leave the sick bed, and he was bending over it when the holy man entered the room. 'Do you wish your friend to be cured?' asked the new comer of the king's son. 'And what price would you pay?'

'What price?' answered the king's son; 'only tell me what I can do to heal him.'

'Listen to me, then,' said the old man. 'This evening you must take your child, and open her veins, and smear the wounds of your friend with her blood. And you will see, he will get well in an instant.'

At these words the king's son shrieked with horror, for he loved the baby dearly, but he answered, 'I have sworn that I would treat my friend as if he were my brother, and if there is no other way my child must be sacrificed.'

As by this time evening had already fallen he took the child and opened its veins, and smeared the blood over the wounds of the sick man, and the look of death departed from him, and he grew strong and rosy once more. But the little child lay as white and still as if she had been dead. They laid her in the cradle and wept bitterly, for they thought that by the next morning she would be lost to them.

At sunrise the old man returned and asked after the sick man.

'He is as well as ever,' answered the king's son.

'And where is your baby?'

'In the cradle yonder, and I think she is dead,' replied the father sadly.

'Look at her once more,' said the holy man, and as they drew near the cradle there lay the baby smiling up at them.

'I am St. James of Lizia,' said the old man, 'and I have come to help you, for I have seen that you are a true friend. From henceforward live happily, all of you, together, and if troubles should draw near you send for me, and I will aid you to get through them.'

With these words he lifted his hand in blessing and vanished.

And they obeyed him, and were happy and content, and tried to make the people of the land happy and contented too.

[From Sicilianische Mahrehen Gonzenbach.]

CLEVER MARIA

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There was once a merchant who lived close to the royal palace, and had three daughters. They were all pretty, but Maria, the youngest, was the prettiest of the three. One day the king sent for the merchant, who was a widower, to give him directions about a journey he wished the good man to take. The merchant would rather not have gone, as he did not like leaving his daughters at home, but he could not refuse to obey the king's commands, and with a heavy heart he returned home to say farewell to them. Before he left, he took three pots of basil, and gave one to each girl, saying, 'I am going a journey, but I leave these pots. You must let nobody into the house. When I come back, they will tell me what has happened.' 'Nothing will have happened,' said the girls.

The father went away, and the following day the king, accompanied by two friends, paid a visit to the three girls, who were sitting at supper. When they saw who was there, Maria said, 'Let us go and get a bottle of wine from the cellar. I will carry the key, my eldest sister can take the light, while the other brings the bottle.' But the king replied, 'Oh, do not trouble; we are not thirsty.' 'Very well, we will not go,' answered the two elder girls; but Maria merely said, 'I shall go, anyhow.' She left the room, and went to the hall where she put out the light, and putting down the key and the bottle, ran to the house of a neighbour, and knocked at the door. 'Who is there so late?' asked the old woman, thrusting her head out of the window.

'Oh, let me in,' answered Maria. 'I have quarrelled with my eldest sister, and as I do not want to fight any more, I have come to beg you to allow me to sleep with you.'

So the old woman opened the door and Maria slept in her house. The king was very angry at her for playing truant, but when she returned home the next day, she found the plants of her sisters withered away, because they had disobeyed their father. Now the window in the room of the eldest overlooked the gardens of the king, and when she saw how fine and ripe

the medlars were on the trees, she longed to eat some, and begged Maria to scramble down by a rope and pick her a few, and she would draw her up again. Maria, who was good-natured, swung herself into the garden by the rope, and got the medlars, and was just making the rope fast under her arms so as to be hauled up, when her sister cried: ‘Oh, there are such delicious lemons a little farther on. You might bring me one or two.’ Maria turned round to pluck them, and found herself face to face with the gardener, who caught hold of her, exclaiming, ‘What are you doing here, you little thief?’ ‘Don’t call me names,’ she said, ‘or you will get the worst of it,’ giving him as she spoke such a violent push that he fell panting into the lemon bushes. Then she seized the cord and clambered up to the window.

The next day the second sister had a fancy for bananas and begged so hard, that, though Maria had declared she would never do such a thing again, at last she consented, and went down the rope into the king’s garden. This time she met the king, who said to her, ‘Ah, here you are again, cunning one! Now you shall pay for your misdeeds.’

And he began to cross-question her about what she had done. Maria denied nothing, and when she had finished, the king said again, ‘Follow me to the house, and there you shall pay the penalty.’ As he spoke, he started for the house, looking back from time to time to make sure that Maria had not run away. All of a sudden, when he glanced round, he found she had vanished completely, without leaving a trace of where she had gone. Search was made all through the town, and there was not a hole or corner which was not ransacked, but there was no sign of her anywhere. This so enraged the king that he became quite ill, and for many months his life was despaired of.

Meanwhile the two elder sisters had married the two friends of the king, and were the mothers of little daughters. Now one day Maria stole secretly to the house where her elder sister lived, and snatching up the children put them into a beautiful basket she had with her, covered with flowers inside and out, so that no one would ever guess it held two babies. Then she dressed herself as a boy, and placing the basket on her head, she walked slowly past the palace, crying as she went:

‘Who will carry these flowers to the king, who lies sick of love?’

And the king in his bed heard what she said, and ordered one of his attendants to go out and buy the basket. It was brought to his bedside, and as he raised the lid cries were heard, and peeping in he saw two little children. He was furious at this new trick which he felt had been played on him by Maria, and was still looking at them, wondering how he should pay her out, when he was told that the merchant, Maria's father, had finished the business on which he had been sent and returned home. Then the king remembered how Maria had refused to receive his visit, and how she had stolen his fruit, and he determined to be revenged on her. So he sent a message by one of his pages that the merchant was to come to see him the next day, and bring with him a coat made of stone, or else he would be punished. Now the poor man had been very sad since he got home the evening before, for though his daughters had promised that nothing should happen while he was away, he had found the two elder ones married without asking his leave. And now there was this fresh misfortune, for how was he to make a coat of stone? He wrung his hands and declared that the king would be the ruin of him, when Maria suddenly entered. 'Do not grieve about the coat of stone, dear father; but take this bit of chalk, and go to the palace and say you have come to measure the king.' The old man did not see the use of this, but Maria had so often helped him before that he had confidence in her, so he put the chalk in his pocket and went to the palace.

'That is no good,' said the king, when the merchant had told him what he had come for.

'Well, I can't make the coat you want,' replied he.

'Then if you would save your head, hand over to me your daughter Maria.'

The merchant did not reply, but went sorrowfully back to his house, where Maria sat waiting for him.

'Oh, my dear child, why was I born? The king says that, instead of the coat, I must deliver you up to him.'

'Do not be unhappy, dear father, but get a doll made, exactly like me, with a string attached to its head, which I can pull for "Yes" and "No."'

So the old man went out at once to see about it.

The king remained patiently in his palace, feeling sure that this time Maria could not escape him; and he said to his pages, 'If a gentleman

should come here with his daughter and ask to be allowed to speak with me, put the young lady in my room and see she does not leave it.’

When the door was shut on Maria, who had concealed the doll under her cloak, she hid herself under the couch, keeping fast hold of the string which was fastened to its head.

‘Senhora Maria, I hope you are well,’ said the king when he entered the room. The doll nodded. ‘Now we will reckon up accounts,’ continued he, and he began at the beginning, and ended up with the flower-basket, and at each fresh misdeed Maria pulled the string, so that the doll’s head nodded assent. ‘Who-so mocks at me merits death,’ declared the king when he had ended, and drawing his sword, cut off the doll’s head. It fell towards him, and as he felt the touch of a kiss, he exclaimed, ‘Ah, Maria, Maria, so sweet in death, so hard to me in life! The man who could kill you deserves to die!’ And he was about to turn his sword on himself, when the true Maria sprung out from under the bed, and flung herself into his arms. And the next day they were married and lived happily for many years.

[From the Portuguese.]

THE MAGIC KETTLE

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Right in the middle of Japan, high up among the mountains, an old man lived in his little house. He was very proud of it, and never tired of admiring the whiteness of his straw mats, and the pretty papered walls, which in warm weather always slid back, so that the smell of the trees and flowers might come in.

One day he was standing looking at the mountain opposite, when he heard a kind of rumbling noise in the room behind him. He turned round, and in the corner he beheld a rusty old iron kettle, which could not have seen the light of day for many years. How the kettle got there the old man did not know, but he took it up and looked it over carefully, and when he found that it was quite whole he cleaned the dust off it and carried it into his kitchen.

‘That was a piece of luck,’ he said, smiling to himself; ‘a good kettle costs money, and it is as well to have a second one at hand in case of need; mine is getting worn out, and the water is already beginning to come through its bottom.’

Then he took the other kettle off the fire, filled the new one with water, and put it in its place.

No sooner was the water in the kettle getting warm than a strange thing happened, and the man, who was standing by, thought he must be dreaming. First the handle of the kettle gradually changed its shape and became a head, and the spout grew into a tail, while out of the body sprang four paws, and in a few minutes the man found himself watching, not a kettle, but a tanuki! The creature jumped off the fire, and bounded about the room like a kitten, running up the walls and over the ceiling, till the old man was in an agony lest his pretty room should be spoilt. He cried to a neighbour for help, and between them they managed to catch the tanuki, and shut him up safely in a wooden chest. Then, quite exhausted, they sat down on the mats, and consulted together what they should do with this

troublesome beast. At length they decided to sell him, and bade a child who was passing send them a certain tradesman called Jimmu.

When Jimmu arrived, the old man told him that he had something which he wished to get rid of, and lifted the lid of the wooden chest, where he had shut up the tanuki. But, to his surprise, no tanuki was there, nothing but the kettle he had found in the corner. It was certainly very odd, but the man remembered what had taken place on the fire, and did not want to keep the kettle any more, so after a little bargaining about the price, Jimmu went away carrying the kettle with him.

Now Jimmu had not gone very far before he felt that the kettle was getting heavier and heavier, and by the time he reached home he was so tired that he was thankful to put it down in the corner of his room, and then forgot all about it. In the middle of the night, however, he was awakened by a loud noise in the corner where the kettle stood, and raised himself up in bed to see what it was. But nothing was there except the kettle, which seemed quiet enough. He thought that he must have been dreaming, and fell asleep again, only to be roused a second time by the same disturbance. He jumped up and went to the corner, and by the light of the lamp that he always kept burning he saw that the kettle had become a tanuki, which was running round after his tail. After he grew weary of that, he ran on the balcony, where he turned several somersaults, from pure gladness of heart. The tradesman was much troubled as to what to do with the animal, and it was only towards morning that he managed to get any sleep; but when he opened his eyes again there was no tanuki, only the old kettle he had left there the night before.

As soon as he had tidied his house, Jimmu set off to tell his story to a friend next door. The man listened quietly, and did not appear so surprised as Jimmu expected, for he recollected having heard, in his youth, something about a wonder-working kettle. ‘Go and travel with it, and show it off,’ said he, ‘and you will become a rich man; but be careful first to ask the tanuki’s leave, and also to perform some magic ceremonies to prevent him from running away at the sight of the people.’

Jimmu thanked his friend for his counsel, which he followed exactly. The tanuki’s consent was obtained, a booth was built, and a notice was hung up outside it inviting the people to come and witness the most wonderful transformation that ever was seen.

They came in crowds, and the kettle was passed from hand to hand, and they were allowed to examine it all over, and even to look inside. Then Jimmu took it back, and setting it on the platform, commanded it to become a tanuki. In an instant the handle began to change into a head, and the spout into a tail, while the four paws appeared at the sides. ‘Dance,’ said Jimmu, and the tanuki did his steps, and moved first on one side and then on the other, till the people could not stand still any longer, and began to dance too. Gracefully he led the fan dance, and glided without a pause into the shadow dance and the umbrella dance, and it seemed as if he might go on dancing for ever. And so very likely he would, if Jimmu had not declared he had danced enough, and that the booth must now be closed.

Day after day the booth was so full it was hardly possible to enter it, and what the neighbour foretold had come to pass, and Jimmu was a rich man. Yet he did not feel happy. He was an honest man, and he thought that he owed some of his wealth to the man from whom he had bought the kettle. So, one morning, he put a hundred gold pieces into it, and hanging the kettle once more on his arm, he returned to the seller of it. ‘I have no right to keep it any longer,’ he added when he had ended his tale, ‘so I have brought it back to you, and inside you will find a hundred gold pieces as the price of its hire.’

The man thanked Jimmu, and said that few people would have been as honest as he. And the kettle brought them both luck, and everything went well with them till they died, which they did when they were very old, respected by everyone.

[Adapted from Japanische Mahrchen]

THE BROWN FAIRY BOOK

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PREFACE

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The stories in this Fairy Book come from all quarters of the world. For example, the adventures of ‘Ball-Carrier and the Bad One’ are told by Red Indian grandmothers to Red Indian children who never go to school, nor see pen and ink. ‘The Bunyip’ is known to even more uneducated little ones, running about with no clothes at all in the bush, in Australia. You may see photographs of these merry little black fellows before their troubles begin, in ‘Northern Races of Central Australia,’ by Messrs. Spencer and Gillen. They have no lessons except in tracking and catching birds, beasts, fishes, lizards, and snakes, all of which they eat. But when they grow up to be big boys and girls, they are cruelly cut about with stone knives and frightened with sham bogies all for their good’ their parents say and I think they would rather go to school, if they had their choice, and take their chance of being birched and bullied. However, many boys might think it better fun to begin to learn hunting as soon as they can walk. Other stories, like ‘The Sacred Milk of Koumongoe,’ come from the Kaffirs in Africa, whose dear papas are not so poor as those in Australia, but have plenty of cattle and milk, and good mealies to eat, and live in houses like very big bee-hives, and wear clothes of a sort, though not very like our own. ‘Pivi and Kabo’ is a tale from the brown people in the island of New Caledonia, where a boy is never allowed to speak to or even look at his own sisters; nobody knows why, so curious are the manners of this remote island. The story shows the advantages of good manners and pleasant behaviour; and the natives do not now cook and eat each other, but live on fish, vegetables, pork, and chickens, and dwell in houses. ‘What the Rose did to the Cypress,’ is a story from Persia, where the people, of course, are civilised, and much like those of whom you read in ‘The Arabian Nights.’ Then there are tales like ‘The Fox and the Lapp’ from the very north of Europe, where it is dark for half the year and day-light for the other half. The Lapps are a people not fond of soap and water, and very much given to art magic. Then there are tales from India, told to Major Campbell, who

wrote them out, by Hindoos; these stories are ‘Wali Dad the Simple-hearted,’ and ‘The King who would be Stronger than Fate,’ but was not so clever as his daughter. From Brazil, in South America, comes ‘The Tortoise and the Mischievous Monkey,’ with the adventures of other animals. Other tales are told in various parts of Europe, and in many languages; but all people, black, white, brown, red, and yellow, are like each other when they tell stories; for these are meant for children, who like the same sort of thing, whether they go to school and wear clothes, or, on the other hand, wear skins of beasts, or even nothing at all, and live on grubs and lizards and hawks and crows and serpents, like the little Australian blacks.

The tale of ‘What the Rose did to the Cypress,’ is translated out of a Persian manuscript by Mrs. Beveridge. ‘Pivi and Kabo’ is translated by the Editor from a French version; ‘Asmund and Signy’ by Miss Blackley; the Indian stories by Major Campbell, and all the rest are told by Mrs. Lang, who does not give them exactly as they are told by all sorts of outlandish natives, but makes them up in the hope white people will like them, skipping the pieces which they will not like. That is how this Fairy Book was made up for your entertainment.

WHAT THE ROSE DID TO THE CYPRESS[1]

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Once upon a time a great king of the East, named Saman-lalposh,[2] had three brave and clever sons—Tahmasp, Qamas, and Almas-ruh-baksh.[3] One day, when the king was sitting in his hall of audience, his eldest son, Prince Tahmasp, came before him, and after greeting his father with due respect, said: ‘O my royal father! I am tired of the town; if you will give me leave, I will take my servants to-morrow and will go into the country and hunt on the hill-skirts; and when I have taken some game I will come back, at evening-prayer time.’ His father consented, and sent with him some of his own trusted servants, and also hawks, and falcons, hunting dogs, cheetahs and leopards.

At the place where the prince intended to hunt he saw a most beautiful deer. He ordered that it should not be killed, but trapped or captured with a noose. The deer looked about for a place where he might escape from the ring of the beaters, and spied one unwatched close to the prince himself. It bounded high and leaped right over his head, got out of the ring, and tore like the eastern wind into the waste. The prince put spurs to his horse and pursued it; and was soon lost to the sight of his followers. Until the world-lighting sun stood above his head in the zenith he did not take his eyes off the deer; suddenly it disappeared behind some rising ground, and with all his search he could not find any further trace of it. He was now drenched in sweat, and he breathed with pain; and his horse’s tongue hung from its mouth with thirst. He dismounted and toiled on, with bridle on arm, praying and casting himself on the mercy of heaven. Then his horse fell and surrendered its life to God. On and on he went across the sandy waste, weeping and with burning breast, till at length a hill rose into sight. He mustered his strength and climbed to the top, and there he found a giant tree whose foot kept firm the wrinkled earth, and whose crest touched the very heaven. Its branches had put forth a glory of leaves, and there were grass and a spring underneath it, and flowers of many colours.

Gladdened by this sight, he dragged himself to the water's edge, drank his fill, and returned thanks for his deliverance from thirst.

He looked about him and, to his amazement, saw close by a royal seat. While he was pondering what could have brought this into the merciless desert, a man drew near who was dressed like a faqir, and had bare head and feet, but walked with the free carriage of a person of rank. His face was kind, and wise and thoughtful, and he came on and spoke to the prince.

'O good youth! how did you come here? Who are you? Where do you come from?'

The prince told everything just as it had happened to him, and then respectfully added: 'I have made known my own circumstances to you, and now I venture to beg you to tell me your own. Who are you? How did you come to make your dwelling in this wilderness?'

To this the faqir replied: 'O youth! it would be best for you to have nothing to do with me and to know nothing of my fortunes, for my story is fit neither for telling nor for hearing.' The prince, however, pleaded so hard to be told, that at last there was nothing to be done but to let him hear.

'Learn and know, O young man! that I am King Janangir [4] of Babylon, and that once I had army and servants, family and treasure; untold wealth and belongings. The Most High God gave me seven sons who grew up well versed in all princely arts. My eldest son heard from travellers that in Turkistan, on the Chinese frontier, there is a king named Quimus, the son of Timus, and that he has an only child, a daughter named Mihr-afruz, [5] who, under all the azure heaven, is unrivalled for beauty. Princes come from all quarters to ask her hand, and on one and all she imposes a condition. She says to them: "I know a riddle; and I will marry anyone who answers it, and will bestow on him all my possessions. But if a suitor cannot answer my question I cut off his head and hang it on the battlements of the citadel." The riddle she asks is, "What did the rose do to the cypress?"

'Now, when my son heard this tale, he fell in love with that unseen girl, and he came to me lamenting and bewailing himself. Nothing that I could say had the slightest effect on him. I said: "Oh my son! if there must be fruit of this fancy of yours, I will lead forth a great army against King

Quimus. If he will give you his daughter freely, well and good; and if not, I will ravage his kingdom and bring her away by force." This plan did not please him; he said: "It is not right to lay a kingdom waste and to destroy a palace so that I may attain my desire. I will go alone; I will answer the riddle, and win her in this way." At last, out of pity for him, I let him go. He reached the city of King Quimus. He was asked the riddle and could not give the true answer; and his head was cut off and hung upon the battlements. Then I mourned him in black raiment for forty days.

After this another and another of my sons were seized by the same desire, and in the end all my seven sons went, and all were killed. In grief for their death I have abandoned my throne, and I abide here in this desert, withholding my hand from all State business and wearing myself away in sorrow.'

Prince Tahmasp listened to this tale, and then the arrow of love for that unseen girl struck his heart also. Just at this moment of his ill-fate his people came up, and gathered round him like moths round a light. They brought him a horse, fleet as the breeze of the dawn; he set his willing foot in the stirrup of safety and rode off. As the days went by the thorn of love rankled in his heart, and he became the very example of lovers, and grew faint and feeble. At last his confidants searched his heart and lifted the veil from the face of his love, and then set the matter before his father, King Saman-lal-posh. 'Your son, Prince Tahmasp, loves distractedly the Princess Mihr-afruz, daughter of King Quimus, son of Timus.' Then they told the king all about her and her doings. A mist of sadness clouded the king's mind, and he said to his son: 'If this thing is so, I will in the first place send a courier with friendly letters to King Quimus, and will ask the hand of his daughter for you. I will send an abundance of gifts, and a string of camels laden with flashing stones and rubies of Badakhsham In this way I will bring her and her suite, and I will give her to you to be your solace. But if King Quimus is unwilling to give her to you, I will pour a whirlwind of soldiers upon him, and I will bring to you, in this way, that most consequential of girls.' But the prince said that this plan would not be right, and that he would go himself, and would answer the riddle. Then the king's wise men said: 'This is a very weighty matter; it would be best to allow the prince to set out accompanied by some persons in whom you have confidence. Maybe he will repent and come back.' So King Saman

ordered all preparations for the journey to be made, and then Prince Tahmasp took his leave and set out, accompanied by some of the courtiers, and taking with him a string of two-humped and raven-eyed camels laden with jewels, and gold, and costly stuffs.

By stage after stage, and after many days' journeying, he arrived at the city of King Quimus. What did he see? A towering citadel whose foot kept firm the wrinkled earth, and whose battlements touched the blue heaven. He saw hanging from its battlements many heads, but it had not the least effect upon him that these were heads of men of rank; he listened to no advice about laying aside his fancy, but rode up to the gate and on into the heart of the city. The place was so splendid that the eyes of the ages have never seen its like, and there, in an open square, he found a tent of crimson satin set up, and beneath it two jewelled drums with jewelled sticks. These drums were put there so that the suitors of the princess might announce their arrival by beating on them, after which some one would come and take them to the king's presence. The sight of the drums stirred the fire of Prince Tahmasp's love. He dismounted, and moved towards them; but his companions hurried after and begged him first to let them go and announce him to the king, and said that then, when they had put their possessions in a place of security, they would enter into the all important matter of the princess. The prince, however, replied that he was there for one thing only; that his first duty was to beat the drums and announce himself as a suitor, when he would be taken, as such, to the king, who would then give him proper lodgment. So he struck upon the drums, and at once summoned an officer who took him to King Quimus.

When the king saw how very young the prince looked, and that he was still drinking of the fountain of wonder, he said: 'O youth! leave aside this fancy which my daughter has conceived in the pride of her beauty. No one can answer er her riddle, and she has done to death many men who had had no pleasure in life nor tasted its charms. God forbid that your spring also should be ravaged by the autumn winds of martyrdom.' All his urgency, however, had no effect in making the prince withdraw. At length it was settled between them that three days should be given to pleasant hospitality and that then should follow what had to be said and done. Then the prince went to his own quarters and was treated as became his station.

King Quimus now sent for his daughter and for her mother, Gulrukh, [6] and talked to them. He said to Mibrafruz: ‘Listen to me, you cruel flirt! Why do you persist in this folly? Now there has come to ask your hand a prince of the east, so handsome that the very sun grows modest before the splendour of his face; he is rich, and he has brought gold and jewels, all for you, if you will marry him. A better husband you will not find.’

But all the arguments of father and mother were wasted, for her only answer was: ‘O my father! I have sworn to myself that I will not marry, even if a thousand years go by, unless someone answers my riddle, and that I will give myself to that man only who does answer it.’

The three days passed; then the riddle was asked: ‘What did the rose do to the cypress?’ The prince had an eloquent tongue, which could split a hair, and without hesitation he replied to her with a verse: ‘Only the Omnipotent has knowledge of secrets; if any man says, “I know” do not believe him.’

Then a servant fetched in the polluted, blue-eyed headsman, who asked: ‘Whose sun of life has come near its setting?’ took the prince by the arm, placed him upon the cloth of execution, and then, all merciless and stony hearted, cut his head from his body and hung it on the battlements.

The news of the death of Prince Tahmasp plunged his father into despair and stupefaction. He mourned for him in black raiment for forty days; and then, a few days later, his second son, Prince Qamas, extracted from him leave to go too; and he, also, was put to death. One son only now remained, the brave, eloquent, happy-natured Prince Almas-ruh-bakhsh. One day, when his father sat brooding over his lost children, Almas came before him and said: ‘O father mine! the daughter of King Quimus has done my two brothers to death; I wish to avenge them upon her.’ These words brought his father to tears. ‘O light of your father!’ he cried, ‘I have no one left but you, and now you ask me to let you go to your death.’

‘Dear father!’ pleaded the prince, ‘until I have lowered the pride of that beauty, and have set her here before you, I cannot settle down or indeed sit down off my feet.’

In the end he, too, got leave to go; but he went a without a following and alone. Like his brothers, he made the long journey to the city of

Quimus the son of Timus; like them he saw the citadel, but he saw there the heads of Tahmasp and Qamas. He went about in the city, saw the tent and the drums, and then went out again to a village not far off. Here he found out a very old man who had a wife 120 years old, or rather more. Their lives were coming to their end, but they had never beheld face of child of their own. They were glad when the prince came to their house, and they dealt with him as with a son. He put all his belongings into their charge, and fastened his horse in their out-house. Then he asked them not to speak of him to anyone, and to keep his affairs secret. He exchanged his royal dress for another, and next morning, just as the sun looked forth from its eastern oratory, he went again into the city. He turned over in his mind without ceasing how he was to find out the meaning of the riddle, and to give them a right answer, and who could help him, and how to avenge his brothers. He wandered about the city, but heard nothing of service, for there was no one in all that land who understood the riddle of Princess Mihr-afruz.

One day he thought he would go to her own palace and see if he could learn anything there, so he went out to her garden-house. It was a very splendid place, with a wonderful gateway, and walls like Alexander's ramparts. Many gate-keepers were on guard, and there was no chance of passing them. His heart was full of bitterness, but he said to himself: 'All will be well! it is here I shall get what I want.' He went round outside the garden wall hoping to find a gap, and he made supplication in the Court of Supplications and prayed, 'O Holder of the hand of the helpless! show me my way.'

While he prayed he bethought himself that he could get into the garden with a stream of inflowing water. He looked carefully round, fearing to be seen, stripped, slid into the stream and was carried within the great walls. There he hid himself till his loin cloth was dry. The garden was a very Eden, with running water amongst its lawns, with flowers and the lament of doves and the jug-jug of nightingales. It was a place to steal the senses from the brain, and he wandered about and saw the house, but there seemed to be no one there. In the forecourt was a royal seat of polished jasper, and in the middle of the platform was a basin of purest water that flashed like a mirror. He pleased himself with these sights for a while, and then went back to the garden and hid himself from the gardeners and

passed the night. Next morning he put on the appearance of a madman and wandered about till he came to a lawn where several pert-faced girls were amusing themselves. On a throne, jewelled and overspread with silken stuffs, sat a girl the splendour of whose beauty lighted up the place, and whose ambergris and attar perfumed the whole air. ‘That must be Mihrafruz,’ he thought, ‘she is indeed lovely.’ Just then one of the attendants came to the water’s edge to fill a cup, and though the prince was in hiding, his face was reflected in the water. When she saw this image she was frightened, and let her cup fall into the stream, and thought, ‘Is it an angel, or a peri, or a man?’ Fear and trembling took hold of her, and she screamed as women scream. Then some of the other girls came and took her to the princess who asked: ‘What is the matter, pretty one?’

‘O princess! I went for water, and I saw an image, and I was afraid.’ So another girl went to the water and saw the same thing, and came back with the same story. The princess wished to see for herself; she rose and paced to the spot with the march of a prancing peacock. When she saw the image she said to her nurse: ‘Find out who is reflected in the water, and where he lives.’ Her words reached the prince’s ear, he lifted up his head; she saw him and beheld beauty such as she had never seen before. She lost a hundred hearts to him, and signed to her nurse to bring him to her presence. The prince let himself be persuaded to go with the nurse, but when the princess questioned him as to who he was and how he had got into her garden, he behaved like a man out of his mind—sometimes smiling, sometimes crying, and saying: ‘I am hungry,’ Or words misplaced and random, civil mixed with the rude.

‘What a pity!’ said the princess, ‘he is mad!’ As she liked him she said: ‘He is my madman; let no one hurt him.’ She took him to her house and told him not to go away, for that she would provide for all his wants. The prince thought, ‘It would be excellent if here, in her very house, I could get the answer to her riddle; but I must be silent, on pain of death.’

Now in the princess’s household there was a girl called Dil-aram [7]; she it was who had first seen the image of the prince. She came to love him very much, and she spent day and night thinking how she could make her affection known to him. One day she escaped from the princess’s notice and went to the prince, and laid her head on his feet and said: ‘Heaven has

bestowed on you beauty and charm. Tell me your secret; who are you, and how did you come here? I love you very much, and if you would like to leave this place I will go with you. I have wealth equal to the treasure of the miserly Qarun.' But the prince only made answer like a man distraught, and told her nothing. He said to himself, 'God forbid that the veil should be taken in vain from my secret; that would indeed disgrace me.' So, with streaming eyes and burning breast, Dil-aram arose and went to her house and lamented and fretted.

Now whenever the princess commanded the prince's attendance, Dil-aram, of all the girls, paid him attention and waited on him best. The princess noticed this, and said: 'O Dil-aram! you must take my madman into your charge and give him whatever he wants.' This was the very thing Dilaram had prayed for. A little later she took the prince into a private place and she made him take an oath of secrecy, and she herself took one and swore, 'By Heaven! I will not tell your secret. Tell me all about yourself so that I may help you to get what you want.' The prince now recognised in her words the perfume of true love, and he made compact with her. 'O lovely girl! I want to know what the rose did to the cypress. Your mistress cuts off men's heads because of this riddle; what is at the bottom of it, and why does she do it?' Then Dil-aram answered: 'If you will promise to marry me and to keep me always amongst those you favour, I will tell you all I know, and I will keep watch about the riddle.'

'O lovely girl,' rejoined he, 'if I accomplish my purpose, so that I need no longer strive for it, I will keep my compact with you. When I have this woman in my power and have avenged my brothers, I will make you my solace.'

'O wealth of my life and source of my joy!' responded Dil-aram, 'I do not know what the rose did to the cypress; but so much I know that the person who told Mihr-afruz about it is a negro whom she hides under her throne. He fled here from Waq of the Caucasus—it is there you must make inquiry; there is no other way of getting at the truth.'On hearing these words, the prince said to his heart, 'O my heart! your task will yet wear away much of your life.'

He fell into long and far thought, and Dil-aram looked at him and said: 'O my life and my soul! do not be sad. If you would like this woman

killed, I will put poison into her cup so that she will never lift her head from her drugged sleep again.'

'O Dil-aram! such a vengeance is not manly. I shall not rest till I have gone to Waq of the Caucasus and have cleared up the matter.' Then they repeated the agreement about their marriage, and bade one another goodbye.

The prince now went back to the village, and told the old man that he was setting out on a long journey, and begged him not to be anxious, and to keep safe the goods which had been entrusted to him.

The prince had not the least knowledge of the way to Waq of the Caucasus, and was cast down by the sense of his helplessness. He was walking along by his horse's side when there appeared before him an old man of serene countenance, dressed in green and carrying a staff, who resembled Khizr. [8] The prince thanked heaven, laid the hands of reverence on his breast and salaamed. The old man returned the greeting graciously, and asked: 'How fare you? Whither are you bound? You look like a traveller.'

'O revered saint! I am in this difficulty: I do not know the way to Waq of the Caucasus.' The old man of good counsel looked at the young prince and said: 'Turn back from this dangerous undertaking. Do not go; choose some other task! If you had a hundred lives you would not bring one out safe from this journey.' But his words had no effect on the prince's resolve. 'What object have you,' the old man asked, 'in thus consuming your life?'

'I have an important piece of business to do, and only this journey makes it possible. I must go; I pray you, ill God's name, tell me the way.'

When the saint saw that the prince was not to be moved, he said: 'Learn and know, O youth! that Waq of Qaf is in the Caucasus and is a dependency of it. In it there are jins, demons, and peris. You must go on along this road till it forks into three; take neither the right hand nor the left, but the middle path. Follow this for a day and a night. Then you will come to a column on which is a marble slab inscribed with Cufic characters. Do what is written there; beware of disobedience.' Then he gave his good wishes for the journey and his blessing, and the prince

kissed his feet, said good-bye, and, with thanks to the Causer of Causes, took the road.

After a day and a night he saw the column rise in silent beauty to the heavens. Everything was as the wise old man had said it would be, and the prince, who was skilled in all tongues, read the following Cufic inscription: ‘O travellers! be it known to you that this column has been set up with its tablet to give true directions about these roads. If a man would pass his life in ease and pleasantness, let him take the right-hand path. If he take the left, he will have some trouble, but he will reach his goal without much delay. Woe to him who chooses the middle path! if he had a thousand lives he would not save one; it is very hazardous; it leads to the Caucasus, and is an endless road. Beware of it!’

The prince read and bared his head and lifted his hands in supplication to Him who has no needs, and prayed, ‘O Friend of the traveller! I, Thy servant, come to Thee for succour. My purpose lies in the land of Qaf and my road is full of peril. Lead me by it.’ Then he took a handful of earth and cast it on his collar, and said: ‘O earth! be thou my grave; and O vest! tee thou my winding-sheet!’ Then he took the middle road and went along it, day after day, with many a silent prayer, till he saw trees rise from the weary waste of sand. They grew in a garden, and he went up to the gate and found it a slab of beautifully worked marble, and that near it there lay sleeping, with his head on a stone, a negro whose face was so black that it made darkness round him. His upper lip, arched like an eyebrow, curved upwards to his nostrils and his lower hung down like a camel’s. Four millstones formed his shield, and on a box-tree close by hung his giant sword. His loin-cloth was fashioned of twelve skins of beasts, and was bound round his waist by a chain of which each link was as big as an elephant’s thigh.

The prince approached and tied up his horse near the negro’s head. Then he let fall the Bismillah from his lips, entered the garden and walked through it till he came to the private part, delighting in the great trees, the lovely verdure, and the flowery borders. In the inner garden there were very many deer. These signed to him with eye and foot to go back, for that this was enchanted ground; but he did not understand them, and thought their pretty gestures were a welcome. After a while he reached a palace which had a porch more splendid than Caesar’s, and was built of gold and

silver bricks. In its midst was a high seat, overlaid with fine carpets, and into it opened eight doors, each having opposite to it a marble basin.

Banishing care, Prince Almas walked on through the garden, when suddenly a window opened and a girl, who was lovely enough to make the moon writhe with jealousy, put out her head. She lost her heart to the good looks of the prince, and sent her nurse to fetch him so that she might learn where he came from and how he had got into her private garden where even lions and wolves did not venture. The nurse went, and was struck with amazement at the sun-like radiance of his face; she salaamed and said: 'O youth! welcome! the lady of the garden calls you; come!' He went with her and into a palace which was like a house in Paradise, and saw seated on the royal carpets of the throne a girl whose brilliance shamed the shining sun. He salaamed; she rose, took him by the hand and placed him near her. 'O young man! who are you? Where do you come from? How did you get into this garden?' He told her his story from beginning to end, and Lady Latifa [9] replied: 'This is folly! It will make you a vagabond of the earth, and lead you to destruction. Come, cease such talk! No one can go to the Caucasus. Stay with me and be thankful, for here is a throne which you can share with me, and in my society you can enjoy my wealth. I will do whatever you wish; I will bring here King Qulmus and his daughter, and you can deal with them as you will.'

'O Lady Latifa,' he said, 'I have made a compact with heaven not to sit down off my feet till I have been to Waq of Qaf and have cleared up this matter, and have taken Mihrafruz from her father, as brave men take, and have put her in prison. When I have done all this I will come back to you in state and with a great following, and I will marry you according to the law.' Lady Latifa argued and urged her wishes, but in vain; the prince was not to be moved. Then she called to the cupbearers for new wine, for she thought that when his head was hot with it he might consent to stay. The pure, clear wine was brought; she filled a cup and gave to him. He said: 'O most enchanting sweetheart! it is the rule for the host to drink first and then the guest.' So to make him lose his head, she drained the cup; then filled it again and gave him. He drank it off, and she took a lute from one of the singers and played upon it with skill which witched away the sense of all who heard. But it was all in vain; three days passed in such

festivities, and on the fourth the prince said: ‘O joy of my eyes! I beg now that you will bid me farewell, for my way is long and the fire of your love darts flame into the harvest of my heart. By heaven’s grace I may accomplish my purpose, and, if so, I will come back to you.’

Now she saw that she could not in any way change his resolve, she told her nurse to bring a certain casket which contained, she said, something exhilarating which would help the prince on his journey. The box was brought, and she divided off a portion of what was within and gave it to the prince to eat. Then, and while he was all unaware, she put forth her hand to a stick fashioned like a snake; she said some words over it and struck him so sharply on the shoulder that he cried out; then he made a pirouette and found that he was a deer.

When he knew what had been done to him he thought, ‘All the threads of affliction are gathered together; I have lost my last chance!’ He tried to escape, but the magician sent for her goldsmith, who, coming, overlaid the deer-horns with gold and jewels. The kerchief which that day she had had in her hand was then tied round its neck, and this freed it from her attentions.

The prince-deer now bounded into the garden and at once sought some way of escape. It found none, and it joined the other deer, which soon made it their leader. Now, although the prince had been transformed into the form of a deer, he kept his man’s heart and mind. He said to himself, ‘Thank heaven that the Lady Latifa has changed me into this shape, for at least deer are beautiful.’ He remained for some time living as a deer amongst the rest, but at length resolved that an end to such a life must be put ill some way. He looked again for some place by which he could get out of the magic garden. Following round the wall he reached a lower part; he remembered the Divine Names and flung himself over, saying, ‘Whatever happens is by the will of God.’ When he looked about he found that he was in the very same place he had jumped from; there was the palace, there the garden and the deer! Eight times he leaped over the wall and eight times found himself where he had started from; but after the ninth leap there was a change, there was a palace and there was a garden, but the deer were gone.

Presently a girl of such moon-like beauty opened a window that the prince lost to her a hundred hearts. She was delighted with the beautiful

deer, and cried to her nurse: ‘Catch it! if you will I will give you this necklace, every pearl of which is worth a kingdom.’ The nurse coveted the pearls, but as she was three hundred years old she did not know how she could catch a deer. However, she went down into the garden and held out some grass, but when she went near the creature ran away. The girl watched with great excitement from the palace window, and called: ‘O nurse, if you don’t catch it, I will kill you!’ ‘I am killing myself,’ shouted back the old woman. The girl saw that nurse tottering along and went down to help, marching with the gait of a prancing peacock. When she saw the gilded horns and the kerchief she said: ‘It must be accustomed to the hand, and be some royal pet!’ The prince had it in mind that this might be another magician who could give him some other shape, but still it seemed best to allow himself to be caught. So he played about the girl and let her catch him by the neck. A leash was brought, fruits were given, and it was caressed with delight. It was taken to the palace and tied at the foot of the Lady Jamila’s raised seat, but she ordered a longer cord to be brought so that it might be able to jump up beside her.

When the nurse went to fix the cord she saw tears falling from its eyes, and that it was dejected and sorrowful ‘O Lady Jamila! this is a wonderful deer, it is crying; I never saw a deer cry before.’ Jamila darted down like a flash of lightning, and saw that it was so. It rubbed its head on her feet and then shook it so sadly that the girl cried for sympathy. She patted it and said: ‘Why are you sad, my heart? Why do you cry, my soul? Is it because I have caught you? I love you better than my own life.’ But, spite of her comforting, it cried the more. Then Jamila said: ‘Unless I am mistaken, this is the work of my wicked sister Latifa, who by magic art turns servants of God into beasts of the field.’ At these words the deer uttered sounds, and laid its head on her feet. Then Jamila was sure it was a man, and said: ‘Be comforted, I will restore you to your own shape.’ She bathed herself and ordered the deer to be bathed, put on clean raiment, called for a box which stood in an alcove, opened it and gave a portion of what was in it to the deer to eat. Then she slipped her hand under her carpet and produced a stick to which she said something. She struck the deer hard, it pirouetted and became Prince Almas.

The broidered kerchief and the jewels lay upon the ground. The prince prostrated himself in thanks to heaven and Jamila, and said: ‘O delicious

person! O Chinese Venus! how shall I excuse myself for giving you so much trouble? With what words can I thank you?' Then she called for a clothes-wallet and chose out a royal dress of honour. Her attendants dressed him in it, and brought him again before the tender-hearted lady. She turned to him a hundred hearts, took his hand and seated him beside her, and said: 'O youth! tell me truly who you are and where you come from, and how you fell into the power of my sister.'

Even when he was a deer the prince had much admired Jamila now he thought her a thousand times more lovely than before. He judged that in truth alone was safety, and so told her his whole story. Then she asked: 'O Prince Almas-ruh-bakhsh, do you still wish so much to make this journey to Waq of Qaf? What hope is there in it? The road is dangerous even near here, and this is not yet the borderland of the Caucasus. Come, give it up! It is a great risk, and to go is not wise. It would be a pity for a man like you to fall into the hands of jins and demons. Stay with me, and I will do whatever you wish.'

'O most delicious person!' he answered, 'you are very generous, and the choice of my life lies in truth in your hands; but I beg one favour of you. If you love me, so do I too love you. If you really love me, do not forbid me to make this journey, but help me as far as you can. Then it may be that I shall succeed, and if I return with my purpose fulfilled I will marry you according to the law, and take you to my own country, and we will spend the rest of our lives together in pleasure and good companionship. Help me, if you can, and give me your counsel.'

'O very stuff of my life,' replied Jamila 'I will give you things that are not in kings' treasuries, and which will be of the greatest use to you. First, there are the bow and arrows of his Reverence the Prophet Salih. Secondly, there is the Scorpion of Solomon (on whom be peace), which is a sword such as no king has; steel and stone are one to it; if you bring it down on a rock it will not be injured, and it will cleave whatever you strike. Thirdly, there is the dagger which the sage Timus himself made; this is most useful, and the man who wears it would not bend under seven camels' loads. What you have to do first is to get to the home of the Simurgh, [10] and to make friends with him. If he favours you, he will take you to Waq of Qaf; if not, you will never get there, for seven seas are on the way, and

they are such seas that if all the kings of the earth, and all their wazirs, and all their wise men considered for a thousand years, they would not be able to cross them.’

‘O most delicious person! where is the Simurgh’s home? How shall I get there?’

‘O new fruit of life! you must just do what I tell you, and you must use your eyes and your brains, for if you don’t you will find yourself at the place of the negroes, who are a bloodthirsty set; and God forbid they should lay hands on your precious person.’

Then she took the bow and quiver of arrows, the sword, and the dagger out of a box, and the prince let fall a Bismillah, and girt them all on. Then Jamila of the houri-face, produced two saddle-bags of ruby-red silk, one filled with roasted fowl and little cakes, and the other with stones of price. Next she gave him a horse as swift as the breeze of the morning, and she said: ‘Accept all these things from me; ride till you come to a rising ground, at no great distance from here, where there is a spring. It is called the Place of Gifts, and you must stay there one night. There you will see many wild beasts—lions, tigers, leopards, apes, and so on. Before you get there you must capture some game. On the long road beyond there dwells a lion-king, alla if other beasts did not fear him they would ravage the whole country and let no one pass. The lion is a red transgressor, so when he comes rise and do him reverence; take a cloth and rub the dust and earth from his face, then set the game you have taken before him, well cleansed, and lay the hands of respect on your breast. When he wishes to eat, take your knife and cut pieces of the meat and set them before him with a bow. In this way you will enfold that lion-king in perfect friendship, and he will be most useful to you, and you will be safe from molestation by the negroes. When you go on from the Place of Gifts, be sure you do not take the right-hand road; take the left, for the other leads by the negro castle, which is known as the Place of Clashing Swords, and where there are forty negro captains each over three thousand or four thousand more. Their chief is Taramtaq. [11] Further on than this is the home of the Simurgh.’

Having stored these things in the prince’s memory, she said: ‘You will see everything happen just as I have said.’ Then she escorted him a little

way; they parted, and she went home to mourn his absence.

Prince Almas, relying on the Causer of Causes, rode on to the Place of Gifts and dismounted at the platform. Everything happened just as Jamila had foretold; when one or two watches of the night had passed, he saw that the open ground around him was full of such stately and splendid animals as he had never seen before. By-and-by, they made way for a wonderfully big lion, which was eighty yards from nose to tail-tip, and was a magnificent creature. The prince advanced and saluted it; it proudly drooped its head and forelocks and paced to the platform. Seventy or eighty others were with it, and now encircled it at a little distance. It laid its right paw over its left, and the prince took the kerchief Jamila had given him for the purpose, and rubbed the dust and earth from its face; then brought forward the game he had prepared, and crossing his hands respectfully on his breast stood waiting before it. When it wished for food he cut off pieces of the meat and put them in its mouth. The serving lions also came near and the prince would have stayed his hand, but the king-lion signed to him to feed them too. This he did, laying the meat on the platform. Then the king-lion beckoned the prince to come near and said: ‘Sleep at ease; my guards will watch.’. So, surrounded by the lion-guard, he slept till dawn, when the king lion said good-bye, and gave him a few of his own hairs and said: ‘When you are in any difficulty, burn one of these and I will be there.’ Then it went off into the jungle.

Prince Almas immediately started; he rode till he came to the parting of the ways. He remembered quite well that the right-hand way was short and dangerous, but he bethought himself too that whatever was written on his forehead would happen, and took the forbidden road. By-and-by he saw a castle, and knew from what Jamila had told him that it was the Place of Clashing Swords. He would have liked to go back by the way ho had come, but courage forbade, and he said, ‘What has been preordained from eternity will happen to me,’ and went on towards the castle. He was thinking of tying his horse to a tree which grew near the gate when a negro came out and spied him. ‘Ha!’ said the wretch to himself, ‘this is good; Taram-taq has not eaten man-meat for a long time, and is craving for some. I will take this creature to him.’ He took hold of the prince’s reins, and said: ‘Dismount, man-child! Come to my master. He has wanted to eat man-meat this long time back.’ ‘What nonsense are you saying?’ said the

prince, and other such words. When the negro understood that he was being abused, he cried: ‘Come along! I will put you into such a state that the birds of the air will weep for you.’ Then the prince drew the Scorpion of Solomon and struck him—struck him on the leathern belt and shore him through so that the sword came out on the other side. He stood upright for a little while, muttered some words, put out his hand to seize the prince, then fell in two and surrendered his life.

There was water close at hand, and the prince made his ablution, and then said: ‘O my heart! a wonderful task lies upon you.’ A second negro came out of the fort, and seeing what had been done, went back and told his chief. Others wished to be doubled, and went out, and of every one the Scorpion of Solomon made two. Then Taram-taq sent for a giant negro named Chil-maq, who in the day of battle was worth three hundred, and said to him: ‘I shall thank you to fetch me that man.’

Chil-maq went out, tall as a tower, and bearing a shield of eight millstones, and as he walked he shouted: ‘Ho! blunder-head! by what right do you come to our country and kill our people? Come! make two of me.’ As the prince was despicable in his eyes, he tossed aside his club and rushed to grip him with his hands. He caught him by the collar, tucked him under his arm and set off with him to Taram-taq. But the prince drew the dagger of Timus and thrust it upwards through the giant’s armpit, for its full length. This made Chil-maq drop him and try to pick up his club; but when he stooped the mighty sword shore him through at the waist.

When news of his champion’s death reached Taram-taq he put himself at the head of an army of his negroes and led them forth. Many fell before the magic sword, and the prince laboured on in spite of weakness and fatigue till he was almost worn out. In a moment of respite from attack he struck his fire-steel and burned a hair of the king-lion; and he had just succeeded in this when the negroes charged again and all but took him prisoner. Suddenly from behind the distant veil of the desert appeared an army of lions led by their king. ‘What brings these scourges of heaven here?’ cried the negroes. They came roaring up, and put fresh life into the prince. He fought on, and when he struck on a belt the wearer fell in two, and when on a head he cleft to the waist. Then the ten thousand mighty lions joined the fray and tore in pieces man and horse.

Taram-taq was left alone; he would have retired into his fort, but the prince shouted: ‘Whither away, accursed one? Are you fleeing before me?’ At these defiant words the chief shouted back, ‘Welcome, man! Come here and I will soften you to wax beneath my club.’ Then he hurled his club at the prince’s head, but it fell harmless because the prince had quickly spurred his horse forward. The chief, believing he had hit him, was looking down for him, when all at once he came up behind and cleft him to the waist and sent him straight to hell.

The king-lion greatly praised the dashing courage of Prince Almas. They went together into the Castle of Clashing Swords and found it adorned and fitted in princely fashion. In it was a daughter of Taram taq, still a child She sent a message to Prince Almas saying, ‘O king of the world! choose this slave to be your handmaid. Keep her with you; where you go, there she will go!’ He sent for her and she kissed his feet and received the Mussulman faith at his hands. He told her he was going a long journey on important business, and that when he came back he would take her and her possessions to his own country, but that for the present she must stay in the castle. Then he made over the fort and all that was in it to the care of the lion, saying: ‘Guard them, brother! let no one lay a hand on them.’ He said goodbye, chose a fresh horse from the chief’s stable and once again took the road.

After travelling many stages and for many days, he reached a plain of marvellous beauty and refreshment. It was carpeted with flowers—roses, tulips, and clover; it had lovely lawns, and amongst them running water. This choicest place of earth filled him with wonder. There was a tree such as he had never seen before; its branches were alike, but it bore flowers and fruit of a thousand kinds. Near it a reservoir had been fashioned of four sorts of stone—touchstone, pure stone, marble, and loadstone. In and out of it flowed water like attar. The prince felt sure this must be the place of the Simurgh.’ he dismounted, turned his horse loose to graze, ate some of the food Jamila had given him, drank of the stream and lay down to sleep.

He was still dozing when he was aroused by the neighing and pawing of his horse. When he could see clearly he made out a mountain-like dragon whose heavy breast crushed the stones beneath it into putty. He remembered the Thousand Names of God and took the bow of Salih from

its case and three arrows from their quiver. He bound the dagger of Timus firmly to his waist and hung the scorpion of Solomon round his neck. Then he set an arrow on the string and released it with such force that it went in at the monster's eye right up to the notch. The dragon writhed on itself, and belched forth an evil vapour, and beat the ground with its head till the earth quaked. Then the prince took a second arrow and shot into its throat. It drew in its breath and would have sucked the prince into its maw, but when he was within striking distance he drew his sword and, having committed himself to God, struck a mighty blow which cut the creature's neck down to the gullet. The foul vapour of the beast and horror at its strangeness now overcame the prince, and he fainted. When he came to himself he found that he was drenched in the gore of the dead monster. He rose and thanked God for his deliverance.

The nest of the Simurgh was in the wonderful tree above him, and in it were young birds; the parents were away searching for food. They always told the children, before they left them, not to put their heads out of the nest; but, to-day, at the noise of the fight below, they looked down and so saw the whole affair. By the time the dragon had been killed they were very hungry and set up a clamour for food. The prince therefore cut up the dragon and fed them with it, bit by bit, till they had eaten the whole. He then washed himself and lay down to rest, and he was still asleep when the Simurgh came home. As a rule, the young birds raised a clamour of welcome when their parents came near, but on this day they were so full of dragon-meat that they had no choice, they had to go to sleep.

As they flew nearer, the old birds saw the prince lying under the tree and no sign of life in the nest. They thought that the misfortune which for so many earlier years had befallen them had again happened and that their nestlings had disappeared. They had never been able to find out the murderer, and now suspected the prince. 'He has eaten our children and sleeps after it; he must die,' said the father-bird, and flew back to the hills and clawed up a huge stone which he meant to let fall on the prince's head. But his mate said, 'Let us look into the nest first for to kill an innocent person would condemn us at the Day of Resurrection.' They flew nearer, and presently the young birds woke and cried, 'Mother, what have you brought for us?' and they told the whole story of the fight, and of how they were alive only by the favour of the young man under the tree, and of his

cutting up the dragon and of their eating it. The mother-bird then remarked, ‘Truly, father! you were about to do a strange thing, and a terrible sin has been averted from you.’ Then the Simurgh flew off to a distance with the great stone and dropped it. It sank down to the very middle of the earth.

Coming back, the Simurgh saw that a little sunshine fell upon the prince through the leaves, and it spread its wings and shaded him till he woke. When he got up he salaamed to it, who returned his greeting with joy and gratitude, and caressed him and said: ‘O youth, tell me true! who are you, and where are you going? And how did you cross that pitiless desert where never yet foot of man had trod?’ The prince told his story from beginning to end, and finished by saying: ‘Now it is my heart’s wish that you should help me to get to Waq of the Caucasus. Perhaps, by your favour, I shall accomplish my task and avenge my brothers.’ In reply the Simurgh.’ first blessed the deliverer of his children, and then went on: ‘What you have done no child of man has ever done before; you assuredly have a claim on all my help, for every year up till now that dragon has come here and has destroyed my nestlings, and I have never been able to find who was the murderer and to avenge myself. By God’s grace you have removed my children’s powerful foe. I regard you as a child of my own. Stay with me; I will give you everything you desire, and I will establish a city here for you, and will furnish it with every requisite; I will give you the land of the Caucasus, and will make its princes subject to you. Give up the journey to Waq, it is full of risk, and the jins there will certainly kill you.’ But nothing could move the prince, and seeing this the bird went on: ‘Well, so be it! When you wish to set forth you must go into the plain and take seven head of deer, and must make water-tight bags of their hides and keep their flesh in seven portions. Seven seas lie on our way—I will carry you over them; but if I have not food and drink we shall fall into the sea and be drowned. When I ask for it you must put food and water into my mouth. So we shall make the journey safely.’

The prince did all as he was told, then they took flight; they crossed the seven seas, and at each one the prince fed the Simurgh When they alighted on the shore of the last sea, it said: ‘O my son! there lies your road; follow it to the city. Take thee three feathers of mine, and, if you are in a difficulty, burn one and I will be with you in the twinkling of an eye.’

The prince walked on in solitude till he reached the city. He went in and wandered about through all quarters, and through bazaars and lanes and squares, in the least knowing from whom he could ask information about the riddle of Mihr-afruz. He spent seven days thinking it over in silence. From the first day of his coming he had made friends with a young cloth-merchant, and a great liking had sprung up between them. One day he said abruptly to his companion: ‘O dear friend! I wish you would tell me what the rose did to the cypress, and what the sense of the riddle is.’ The merchant started, and exclaimed: ‘If there were not brotherly affection between us, I would cut off your head for asking me this!’ ‘If you meant to kill me,’ retorted the prince, ‘you would still have first to tell me what I want to know.’ When the merchant saw that the prince was in deadly earnest, he said: ‘If you wish to hear the truth of the matter you must wait upon our king. There is no other way; no one else will tell you. I have a well-wisher at the Court, named Farrukh-fal, [12] and will introduce you to him.’ ‘That would be excellent,’ cried the prince. A meeting was arranged between Farrukhfal and Almas, and then the amir took him to the king’s presence and introduced him as a stranger and traveller who had come from afar to sit in the shadow of King Sinaubar.

Now the Simurgh had given the prince a diamond weighing thirty misqals, and he ordered this to the king, who at once recognised its value, and asked where it had been obtained. ‘I, your slave, once had riches and state and power; there are many such stones in my country. On my way here I was plundered at the Castle of Clashing Swords, and I saved this one thing only, hidden in my bathing-cloth.’ In return for the diamond, King Sinaubar showered gifts of much greater value, for he remembered that it was the last possession of the prince. He showed the utmost kindness and hospitality, and gave his wazir orders to instal the prince in the royal guest-house. He took much pleasure in his visitor’s society; they were together every day and spent the time most pleasantly. Several times the king said: ‘Ask me for something, that I may give it you.‘One day he so pressed to know what would pleasure the prince, that the latter said: ‘I have only one wish, and that I will name to you in private.’ The king at once commanded every one to withdraw, and then Prince Almas said: ‘The desire of my life is to know what the rose did to the cypress, and what

meaning there is in the words.' The king was astounded. 'In God's name! if anyone else had said that to me I should have cut off his head instantly.' The prince heard this in silence, and presently so beguiled the king with pleasant talk that to kill him was impossible.

Time flew by, the king again and again begged the prince to ask some gift of him, and always received this same reply: 'I wish for your Majesty's welfare, what more can I desire?' One night there was a banquet, and cupbearers carried round gold and silver cups of sparkling wine, and singers with sweetest voices contended for the prize. The prince drank from the king's own cup, and when his head was hot with wine he took a lute from one of the musicians and placed himself on the carpet border and sang and sang till he witched away the sense of all who listened. Applause and compliments rang from every side. The king filled his cup and called the prince and gave it him and said: 'Name your wish! it is yours.' The prince drained off the wine and answered: 'O king of the world! learn and know that I have only one aim in life, and this is to know what the rose did to the cypress.'

'Never yet,' replied the king, 'has any man come out from that question alive. If this is your only wish, so be it; I will tell you. But I will do this on one condition only, namely, that when you have heard you will submit yourself to death.' To this the prince agreed, and said: 'I set my foot firmly on this compact.'

The king then gave an order to an attendant; a costly carpet overlaid with European velvet was placed near him, and a dog was led in by a golden and jewelled chain and set upon the splendid stuffs. A band of fair girls came in and stood round it in waiting.

Then, with ill words, twelve negroes dragged in a lovely woman, fettered on hands and feet and meanly dressed, and they set her down on the bare floor. She was extraordinarily beautiful, and shamed the glorious sun. The king ordered a hundred stripes to be laid on her tender body; she sighed a long sigh. Food was called for and table-cloths were spread. Delicate meats were set before the dog, and water given it in a royal cup of Chinese crystal. When it had eaten its fill, its leavings were placed before the lovely woman and she was made to eat of them. She wept and her tears were pearls; she smiled and her lips shed roses. Pearls and flowers were gathered up and taken to the treasury.

‘Now,’ said the king, ‘you have seen these things and your purpose is fulfilled.’ ‘Truly,’ said the prince, ‘I have seen things which I have not understood; what do they mean, and what is the story of them? Tell me and kill me.’

Then said the king: ‘The woman you see there in chains is my wife; she is called Gul, the Rose, and I am Sinaubar, the Cypress. One day I was hunting and became very thirsty. After great search I discovered a well in a place so secret that neither bird nor beast nor man could find it without labour. I was alone, I took my turban for a rope and my cap for a bucket. There was a good deal of water, but when I let down my rope, something caught it, and I could not in any way draw it back. I shouted down into the well: “O! servant of God! whoever you are, why do you deal unfairly with me? I am dying of thirst, let go! in God’s name.” A cry came up in answer, “O servant of God! we have been in the well a long time; in God’s name get us out!” After trying a thousand schemes, I drew up two blind women. They said they were peris, and that their king had blinded them in his anger and had left them in the well alone.

‘ “Now,” they said, “if you will get us the cure for our blindness we will devote ourselves to your service, and will do whatever you wish.”

‘ “What is the cure for your blindness?”

‘ “Not far from this place,” they said, “a cow comes up from the great sea to graze; a little of her dung would cure us. We should be eternally your debtors. Do not let the cow see you, or she will assuredly kill you.”

‘With renewed strength and spirit I went to the shore. There I watched the cow come up from the sea, graze, and go back. Then I came out of my hiding, took a little of her dung and conveyed it to the peris. They rubbed it on their eyes, and by the Divine might saw again.

‘They thanked heaven and me, and then considered what they could do to show their gratitude to me. “Our peri-king,” they said, “has a daughter whom he keeps under his own eye and thinks the most lovely girl on earth. In good sooth, she has not her equal! Now we will get you into her house and you must win her heart, and if she has an inclination for another, you must drive it out and win her for yourself. Her mother loves her so dearly that she has no ease but in her presence, and she will give her to no one in marriage. Teach her to love you so that she cannot exist without you. But if the matter becomes known to her mother she will have you burned in the

fire. Then you must beg, as a last favour, that your body may be anointed with oil so that you may burn the more quickly and be spared torture. If the peri-king allows this favour, we two will manage to be your anointers, and we will put an oil on you such that if you were a thousand years in the fire not a trace of burning would remain."

'In the end the two peris took me to the girl's house. I saw her sleeping daintily. She was most lovely, and I was so amazed at the perfection of her beauty that I stood with senses lost, and did not know if she were real or a dream. When at last I saw that she was a real girl, I returned thanks that I, the runner, had come to my goal, and that I, the seeker, had found my treasure.

'When the peri opened her eyes she asked in affright: "Who are you? Have you come to steal? How did you get here? Be quick! save yourself from this whirlpool of destruction, for the demons and peris. who guard me will wake and seize you."

'But love's arrow had struck me deep, and the girl, too, looked kindly on me. I could not go away. For some months I remained hidden in her house. 'We did not dare to let her mother know of our love. Sometimes the girl was very sad and fearful lest her mother should come to know. One day her father said to her: "Sweetheart, for some time I have noticed that your beauty is not what it was. How is this? Has sickness touched you? Tell me that I may seek a cure." Alas! there was now no way of concealing the mingled delight and anguish of our love; from secret it became known. I was put in prison and the world grew dark to my rose, bereft of her lover.

'The peri-king ordered me to be burnt, and said: "Why have you, a man, done this perfidious thing in my house?" His demons and peris. collected amber-wood and made a pile, and would have set me on it, when I remembered the word of life which the two peris. I had rescued had breathed into my ear, and I asked that my body might be rubbed with oil to release me the sooner from torture. This was allowed, and those two contrived to be the anointers. I was put into the fire and it was kept up for seven days and nights. By the will of the Great King it left no trace upon me. At the end of a week the pert-king ordered the ashes to be cast upon the dust-heap, and I was found alive and unharmed.

'Peris who had seen Gul consumed by her love for me now interceded with the king, and said: "It is clear that your daughter's fortunes are bound

up with his, for the fire has not hurt him. It is best to give him the girl, for they love one another. He is King of Waq of Qaf, and you will find none better."

'To this the king agreed, and made formal marriage between Gul and me. You now know the price I paid for this faithless creature. O prince! remember our compact.'

'I remember,' said the prince; 'but tell me what brought Queen Gul to her present pass?'

'One night,' continued King Sinaubar, 'I was aroused by feeling Gul's hands and feet, deadly cold, against my body. I asked her where she had been to get so cold, and she said she had had to go out. Next morning, when I went to my stable I saw that two of my horses, Windfoot and Tiger, were thin and worn out. I reprimanded the groom and beat him. He asked where his fault lay, and said that every night my wife took one or other of these horses and rode away, and came back only just before dawn. A flame kindled in my heart, and I asked myself where she could go and what she could do. I told the groom to be silent, and when next Gul took a horse from the stable to saddle another quickly and bring it to me. That day I did not hunt, but stayed at home to follow the matter up. I lay down as usual at night and pretended to fall asleep. When I seemed safely off Gul got up and went to the stable as her custom was. That night it was Tiger's turn. She rode off on him, and I took Windfoot and followed. With me went that dog you see, a faithful friend who never left me.

'When I came to the foot of those hills which lie outside the city I saw Gul dismount and go towards a house which some negroes have built there. Over against the door was a high seat, and on it lay a giant negro, before whom she salaamed. He got up and beat her till she was marked with weals, but she uttered no complaint. I was dumfounded, for once when I had struck her with a rose stalk she had complained and fretted for three days! Then the negro said to her: "How now, ugly one and shaven head! Why are you so late, and why are you not wearing wedding garments?" She answered him: "That person did not go to sleep quickly, and he stayed at home all day, so that I was not able to adorn myself. I came as soon as I could." In a little while he called her to sit beside him; but this was more than I could bear. I lost control of myself and rushed upon him. He clutched my collar and we grappled in a death struggle.

Suddenly she came behind me, caught my feet and threw me. While he held me on the ground, she drew out my own knife and gave it to him. I should have been killed but for that faithful dog which seized his throat and pulled him down and pinned him to the ground. Then I got up and despatched the wretch. There were four other negroes at the place; three I killed and the fourth got away, and has taken refuge beneath the throne of Mihr-afruz, daughter of King Quimus. I took Gul back to my palace, and from that time till now I have treated her as a dog is treated, and I have cared for my dog as though it were my wife. Now you know what the rose did to the cypress; and now you must keep compact with me.'

'I shall keep my word,' said the prince; 'but may a little water be taken to the roof so that I may make my last ablution?'

To this request the king consented. The prince mounted to the roof, and, getting into a corner, struck his fire-steel and burned one of the Sirurgh's feathers in the flame. Straightway it appeared, and by the majesty of its presence made the city quake. It took the prince on its back and soared away to the zenith.

After a time King Sinaubar said: 'That young man is a long time on the roof; go and bring him here.' But there was no sign of the prince upon the roof; only, far away in the sky, the Simurgh was seen carrying him off. When the king heard of his escape he thanked heaven that his hands were clean of this blood.

Up and up flew the Simurgh, till earth looked like an egg resting on an ocean. At length it dropped straight down to its own place, where the kind prince was welcomed by the young birds and most hospitably entertained. He told the whole story of the rose and the cypress, and then, laden with gifts which the Simurgh had gathered from cities far and near, he set his face for the Castle of Clashing Swords. The king-lion came out to meet him; he took the negro chief's daughter—whose name was also Gul—in lawful marriage, and then marched with her and her possessions and her attendants to the Place of Gifts. Here they halted for a night, and at dawn said good-bye to the king-lion and set out for Jamila's country.

When the Lady Jamila heard that Prince Almas was near, she went out, with many a fair handmaid, to give him loving reception. Their meeting was joyful, and they went together to the garden-palace. Jamila summoned all her notables, and in their presence her marriage with the prince was

solemnised. A few days later she entrusted her affairs to her wazir, and made preparation to go with the prince to his own country. Before she started she restored all the men whom her sister, Latifa, had bewitched, to their own forms, and received their blessings, and set them forward to their homes. The wicked Latifa herself she left quite alone in her garden-house. When all was ready they set out with all her servants and slaves, all her treasure and goods, and journeyed at ease to the city of King Quimus.

When King Quimus heard of the approach of such a great company, he sent out his wazir to give the prince honourable meeting, and to ask what had procured him the favour of the visit. The prince sent back word that he had no thought of war, but he wrote: ‘Learn and know, King Quimus, that I am here to end the crimes of your insolent daughter who has tyrannously done to death many kings and kings sons, and has hung their heads on your citadel. I am here to give her the answer to her riddle.’ Later on he entered the city, beat boldly on the drums, and was conducted to the presence.

The king entreated him to have nothing to do with the riddle, for that no man had come out of it alive. ‘O king!’ replied the prince, ‘it is to answer it that I am here; I will not withdraw.’

Mihr-afruz was told that one man more had staked his head on her question, and that this was one who said he knew the answer. At the request of the prince, all the officers and notables of the land were summoned to hear his reply to the princess. All assembled, and the king and his queen Gul-rakh, and the girl and the prince were there.

The prince addressed Mihr-afruz: ‘What is the question you ask?’

‘What did the rose do to the cypress?’ she rejoined.

The prince smiled, and turned and addressed the assembly.

‘You who are experienced men and versed in affairs, did you ever know or hear and see anything of this matter?’

‘No!’ they answered, ‘no one has ever known or heard or seen aught about it; it is an empty fancy.’

‘From whom, then, did the princess hear of it? This empty fancy it is that has done many a servant of God to death!’

All saw the good sense of his words and showed their approval. Then he turned to the princess: ‘Tell us the truth, princess; who told you of this thing? I know it hair by hair, and in and out; but if I tell you what I know,

who is there that can say I speak the truth? You must produce the person who can confirm my words.'

Her heart sank, for she feared that her long-kept secret was now to be noised abroad. But she said merely: 'Explain yourself.'

'I shall explain myself fully when you bring here the negro whom you hide beneath your throne.'

Here the king shouted in wonderment: 'Explain yourself, young man! What negro does my daughter hide beneath her throne?'

'That,' said the prince, 'you will see if you order to be brought here the negro who will be found beneath the throne of the princess.'

Messengers were forthwith despatched to the garden house, and after awhile they returned bringing a negro whom they had discovered in a secret chamber underneath the throne of Mihr-afruz, dressed in a dress of honour, and surrounded with luxury. The king was overwhelmed with astonishment, but the girl had taken heart again. She had had time to think that perhaps the prince had heard of the presence of the negro, and knew no more. So she said haughtily: 'Prince! you have not answered my riddle.'

'O most amazingly impudent person,' cried he, 'do you not yet repent?'

Then he turned to the people, and told them the whole story of the rose and the cypress, of King Sinaubar and Queen Gul. When he came to the killing of the negroes, he said to the one who stood before them: 'You, too, were present.'

'That is so; all happened as you have told it!'

There was great rejoicing in the court and all through the country over the solving of the riddle, and because now no more kings and princes would be killed. King Quimus made over his daughter to Prince Almas, but the latter refused to marry her, and took her as his captive. He then asked that the heads should be removed from the battlements and given decent burial. This was done. He received from the king everything that belonged to Mihr-afruz; her treasure of gold and silver; her costly stuffs and carpets; her household plenishing; her horses and camels; her servants and slaves.

Then he returned to his camp and sent for Dil-aram, who came bringing her goods and chattels, her gold and her jewels. When all was

ready, Prince Almas set out for home, taking with him Jamila, and Dil-aram and Gul, daughter of Taram-taq, and the wicked Mihr-afruz, and all the belongings of the four, packed on horses and camels, and in carts without number.

As he approached the borders of his father's country word of his coming went before him, and all the city came forth to give him welcome. King Saman-lal-posh—Jessamine, wearer of rubies—had so bewept the loss of his sons that he was now blind. When the prince had kissed his feet and received his blessing, he took from a casket a little collyrium of Solomon, which the Simurgh had given him, and which reveals the hidden things of earth, and rubbed it on his father's eyes. Light came, and the king saw his son.

Mihr-afruz was brought before the king, and the prince said: 'This is the murderer of your sons; do with her as you will.' The king fancied that the prince might care for the girl's beauty, and replied: 'You have humbled her; do with her as you will.'

Upon this the prince sent for four swift and strong horses, and had the negro bound to each one of them; then each was driven to one of the four quarters, and he tore in pieces like muslin.

This frightened Mihr-afruz horribly, for she thought the same thing might be done to herself. She cried out to the prince: 'O Prince Almas! what is hardest to get is most valued. Up till now I have been subject to no man, and no man had had my love. The many kings and kings sons who have died at my hands have died because it was their fate to die like this. In this matter I have not sinned. That was their fate from eternity; and from the beginning it was predestined that my fate should be bound up with yours.'

The prince gave ear to the argument from pre-ordainment, and as she was a very lovely maiden he took her too in lawful marriage. She and Jamila, set up house together, and Dil-aram and Gul set up theirs; and the prince passed the rest of his life with the four in perfect happiness, and in pleasant and sociable entertainment.

Now has been told what the rose did to the cypress.

Finished, finished, finished!

Footnotes:

1. Translated from two Persian MSS. in the possession of the British Museum and the India Office, and adapted, with some reservations, by Annette S. Beveridge.
2. Jessamine, ruby-decked.
3. Life-giving diamond.
4. World-gripper.
5. Love-enkindler.
6. Rose-cheek.
7. Heartsease.
8. Elias.
9. Pleasure.
10. Thirty-birds.
11. Pomp and Pride.
12. Of happy omen.

BALL-CARRIER AND THE BAD ONE

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Far, far in the forest there were two little huts, and in each of them lived a man who was a famous hunter, his wife, and three or four children. Now the children were forbidden to play more than a short distance from the door, as it was known that, away on the other side of the wood near the great river, there dwelt a witch who had a magic ball that she used as a means of stealing children.

Her plan was a very simple one, and had never yet failed. When she wanted a child she just flung her ball in the direction of the child's home, and however far off it might be, the ball was sure to reach it. Then, as soon as the child saw it, the ball would begin rolling slowly back to the witch, just keeping a little ahead of the child, so that he always thought that he could catch it the next minute. But he never did, and, what was more, his parents never saw him again.

Of course you must not suppose that all the fathers and mothers who had lost children made no attempts to find them, but the forest was so large, and the witch was so cunning in knowing exactly where they were going to search, that it was very easy for her to keep out of the way. Besides, there was always the chance that the children might have been eaten by wolves, of which large herds roamed about in winter.

One day the old witch happened to want a little boy, so she threw her ball in the direction of the hunters' huts. A child was standing outside, shooting at a mark with his bow and arrows, but the moment he saw the ball, which was made of glass whose blues and greens and whites, all frosted over, kept changing one into the other, he flung down his bow, and stooped to pick the ball up. But as he did so it began to roll very gently downhill. The boy could not let it roll away, when it was so close to him, so he gave chase. The ball seemed always within his grasp, yet he could never catch it; it went quicker and quicker, and the boy grew more and more excited. That time he almost touched it—no, he missed it by a hair's

breadth! Now, surely, if he gave a spring he could get in front of it! He sprang forward, tripped and fell, and found himself in the witch's house!

'Welcome! welcome! grandson!' said she; 'get up and rest yourself, for you have had a long walk, and I am sure you must be tired!' So the boy sat down, and ate some food which she gave him in a bowl. It was quite different from anything he had tasted before, and he thought it was delicious. When he had eaten up every bit, the witch asked him if he had ever fasted.

'No,' replied the boy, 'at least I have been obliged to sometimes, but never if there was any food to be had.'

'You will have to fast if you want the spirits to make you strong and wise, and the sooner you begin the better.'

'Very well,' said the boy, 'what do I do first?'

'Lie down on those buffalo skins by the door of the hut,' answered she; and the boy lay down, and the squirrels and little bears and the birds came and talked to him.

At the end of ten days the old woman came to him with a bowl of the same food that he had eaten before.

'Get up, my grandson, you have fasted long enough. Have the good spirits visited you, and granted you the strength and wisdom that you desire?'

'Some of them have come, and have given me a portion of both,' answered the boy, 'but many have stayed away from me.'

'Then,' said she, 'you must fast ten days more.'

So the boy lay down again on the buffalo skins, and fasted for ten days, and at the end of that time he turned his face to the wall, and fasted for twenty days longer. At length the witch called to him, and said:

'Come and eat something, my grandson.' At the sound of her voice the boy got up and ate the food she gave him. When he had finished every scrap she spoke as before: 'Tell me, my grandson, have not the good spirits visited you all these many days that you have fasted?'

'Not all, grandmother,' answered he; 'there are still some who keep away from me and say that I have not fasted long enough.'

'Then you must fast again,' replied the old woman, 'and go on fasting till you receive the gifts of all the good spirits. Not one must be missing.'

The boy said nothing, but lay down for the third time on the buffalo skins, and fasted for twenty days more. And at the end of that time the witch thought he was dead, his face was so white and his body so still. But when she had fed him out of the bowl he grew stronger, and soon was able to sit up.

‘You have fasted a long time,’ said she, ‘longer than anyone ever fasted before. Surely the good spirits must be satisfied now?’

‘Yes, grandmother,’ answered the boy, ‘they have all come, and have given me their gifts.’

This pleased the old woman so much that she brought him another basin of food, and while he was eating it she talked to him, and this is what she said: ‘Far away, on the other side of the great river, is the home of the Bad One. In his house is much gold, and what is more precious even than the gold, a little bridge, which lengthens out when the Bad One waves his hand, so that there is no river or sea that he cannot cross. Now I want that bridge and some of the gold for myself, and that is the reason that I have stolen so many boys by means of my ball. I have tried to teach them how to gain the gifts of the good spirits, but none of them would fast long enough, and at last I had to send them away to perform simple, easy little tasks. But you have been strong and faithful, and you can do this thing if you listen to what I tell you! When you reach the river tie this ball to your foot, and it will take you across—you cannot manage it in any other way. But do not be afraid; trust to the ball, and you will be quite safe!’

The boy took the ball and put it in a bag. Then he made himself a club and a bow, and some arrows which would fly further than anyone else’s arrows, because of the strength the good spirits had given him. They had also bestowed on him the power of changing his shape, and had increased the quickness of his eyes and ears so that nothing escaped him. And in some way or other they made him understand that if he needed more help they would give it to him.

When all these things were ready the boy bade farewell to the witch and set out. He walked through the forest for several days without seeing anyone but his friends the squirrels and the bears and the birds, but though he stopped and spoke to them all, he was careful not to let them know where he was going.

At last, after many days, he came to the river, and beyond it he noticed a small hut standing on a hill which he guessed to be the home of the Bad One. But the stream flowed so quickly that he could not see how he was ever to cross it, and in order to test how swift the current really was, he broke a branch from a tree and threw it in. It seemed hardly to touch the water before it was carried away, and even his magic sight could not follow it. He could not help feeling frightened, but he hated giving up anything that he had once undertaken, and, fastening the ball on his right foot, he ventured on the river. To his surprise he was able to stand up; then a panic seized him, and he scrambled up the bank again. In a minute or two he plucked up courage to go a little further into the river, but again its width frightened him, and a second time he turned back. However, he felt rather ashamed of his cowardice, as it was quite clear that his ball could support him, and on his third trial he got safely to the other side.

Once there he replaced the ball in the bag, and looked carefully round him. The door of the Bad One's hut was open, and he saw that the ceiling was supported by great wooden beams, from which hung the bags of gold and the little bridge. He saw, too, the Bad One sitting in the midst of his treasures eating his dinner, and drinking something out of a horn. It was plain to the boy that he must invent some plan of getting the Bad One out of the way, or else he would never be able to steal the gold or the bridge.

What should he do? Give horrible shrieks as if he were in pain? But the Bad One would not care whether he were murdered or not! Call him by his name? But the Bad One was very cunning, and would suspect some trick. He must try something better than that! Then suddenly an idea came to him, and he gave a little jump of joy. 'Oh, how stupid of me not to think of that before!' said he, and he wished with all his might that the Bad One should become very hungry—so hungry that he could not wait a moment for fresh food to be brought to him. And sure enough at that instant the Bad One called out to his servant, 'You did not bring food that would satisfy a sparrow Fetch some more at once, for I am perfectly starving.' Then, without giving the woman time to go to the larder, he got up from his chair, and rolled, staggering from hunger, towards the kitchen.

Directly the door had closed on the Bad One the boy ran in, pulled down a bag of gold from the beam, and tucked it under his left arm. Next he unhooked the little bridge and put it under his right. He did not try to

escape, as most boys of his age would have done, for the wisdom put into his mind by the good spirits taught him that before he could reach the river and make use of the bridge the Bad One would have tracked him by his footsteps and been upon him. So, making himself very small and thin, he hid himself behind a pile of buffalo skins in the corner, first tearing a slit through one of them, so that he could see what was going on.

He had hardly settled himself when the servant entered the room, and, as she did so, the last bag of gold on the beam fell to the ground—for they had begun to fall directly the boy had taken the first one. She cried to her master that someone had stolen both the bag and the bridge, and the Bad One rushed in, mad with anger, and bade her go and seek for footsteps outside, that they might find out where the thief had gone. In a few minutes she returned, saying that he must be in the house, as she could not see any footsteps leading to the river, and began to move all the furniture in the room, without discovering Ball Carrier.

‘But he must be here somewhere,’ she said to herself, examining for the second time the pile of buffalo skins; and Ball-Carrier, knowing that he could not possibly escape now, hastily wished that the Bad One should be unable to eat any more food at present.

‘Ah, there is a slit in this one,’ cried the servant, shaking the skin; ‘and here he is.’ And she pulled out Ball-Carrier, looking so lean and small that he would hardly have made a mouthful for a sparrow.

‘Was it you who took my gold and bridge?’ asked the Bad One.

‘Yes,’ answered Ball-Carrier, ‘it was I who took them.’

The Bad One made a sign to the woman, who inquired where he had hidden them. He lifted his left arm where the gold was, and she picked up a knife and scraped his skin so that no gold should be left sticking to it.

‘What have you done with the bridge?’ said she. And he lifted his right arm, from which she took the bridge, while the Bad One looked on, well pleased. ‘Be sure that he does not run away,’ chuckled he. ‘Boil some water, and get him ready for cooking, while I go and invite my friends the water-demons to the feast.’

The woman seized Ball-Carrier between her finger and thumb, and was going to carry him to the kitchen, when the boy spoke:

‘I am very lean and small now,’ he said, ‘hardly worth the trouble of cooking; but if you were to keep me two days, and gave me plenty of food,

I should get big and fat. As it is, your friends the water-demons would think you meant to laugh at them, when they found that I was the feast.'

'Well, perhaps you are right,' answered the Bad One; 'I will keep you for two days.' And he went out to visit the water-demons.

Meanwhile the servant, whose name was Lung Woman, led him into a little shed, and chained him up to a ring in the wall. But food was given him every hour, and at the end of two days he was as fat and big as a Christmas turkey, and could hardly move his head from one side to the other.

'He will do now,' said the Bad One, who came constantly to see how he was getting on. 'I shall go and tell the water-demons that we expect them to dinner to-night. Put the kettle on the fire, but be sure on no account to taste the broth.'

Lung-Woman lost no time in obeying her orders. She built up the fire, which had got very low, filled the kettle with water, and passing a rope which hung from the ceiling through the handle, swung it over the flames. Then she brought in Ball-Carrier, who, seeing all these preparations, wished that as long as he was in the kettle the water might not really boil, though it would hiss and bubble, and also, that the spirits would turn the water into fat.

The kettle soon began to sing and bubble, and Ball Carrier was lifted in. Very soon the fat which was to make the sauce rose to the surface, and Ball-Carrier, who was bobbing about from one side to the other, called out that Lung-Woman had better taste the broth, as he though that some salt should be added to it. The servant knew quite well that her master had forbidden her to do any thing of the kind, but when once the idea was put into her head, she found the smell from the kettle so delicious that she unhooked a long ladle from the wall and plunged it into the kettle.

'You will spill it all, if you stand so far off,' said the boy; 'why don't you come a little nearer?' And as she did so he cried to the spirits to give him back his usual size and strength and to make the water scalding hot Then he gave the kettle a kick, which upset all the boiling water upon her, and jumping over her body he seized once more the gold and the bridge, picked up his club and bow and arrows, and after setting fire to the Bad One's hut, ran down to the river, which he crossed safely by the help of the bridge.

The hut, which was made of wood, was burned to the ground before the Bad One came back with a large crowd of water-demons. There was not a sign of anyone or anything, so he started for the river, where he saw Ball Carrier sitting quietly on the other side. Then the Bad One knew what had happened, and after telling the water demons that there would be no feast after all, he called to Ball-Carrier, who was eating an apple.

‘I know your name now,’ he said, ‘and as you have ruined me, and I am not rich any more, will you take me as your servant?’

‘Yes, I will, though you have tried to kill me,’ answered Ball-Carrier, throwing the bridge across the water as he spoke. But when the Bad One was in the midst of the stream, the boy wished it to become small; and the Bad One fell into the water and was drowned, and the world was rid of him.

[U.S.. Bureau of Ethnology.]

HOW BALL-CARRIER FINISHED HIS TASK

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After Ball-Carrier had managed to drown the Bad One so that he could not do any more mischief, he forgot the way to his grandmother's house, and could not find it again, though he searched everywhere. During this time he wandered into many strange places, and had many adventures; and one day he came to a hut where a young girl lived. He was tired and hungry and begged her to let him in and rest, and he stayed a long while, and the girl became his wife. One morning he saw two children playing in front of the hut, and went out to speak to them. But as soon as they saw him they set up cries of horror and ran away. 'They are the children of my sister who has been on a long journey,' replied his wife, 'and now that she knows you are my husband she wants to kill you.'

'Oh, well, let her try,' replied Ball-Carrier. 'It is not the first time people have wished to do that. And here I am still, you see!'

'Be careful,' said the wife, 'she is very cunning.' But at this moment the sister-in-law came up.

'How do you do, brother-in-law? I have heard of you so often that I am very glad to meet you. I am told that you are more powerful than any man on earth, and as I am powerful too, let us try which is the strongest.'

'That will be delightful,' answered he. 'Suppose we begin with a short race, and then we will go on to other things.'

'That will suit me very well,' replied the woman, who was a witch. 'And let us agree that the one who wins shall have the right to kill the other.'

'Oh, certainly,' said Ball-Carrier;' and I don't think we shall find a flatter course than the prairie itself—no one knows how many miles it stretches. We will run to the end and back again.'

This being settled they both made ready for the race, and Ball-Carrier silently begged the good spirits to help him, and not to let him fall into the hands of this wicked witch.

‘When the sun touches the trunk of that tree we will start,’ said she, as they both stood side by side. But with the first step Ball-Carrier changed himself into a wolf and for a long way kept ahead. Then gradually he heard her creeping up behind him, and soon she was in front. So Ball-Carrier took the shape of a pigeon and flew rapidly past her, but in a little while she was in front again and the end of the prairie was in sight. ‘A crow can fly faster than a pigeon,’ thought he, and as a crow he managed to pass her and held his ground so long that he fancied she was quite beaten. The witch began to be afraid of it too, and putting out all her strength slipped past him. Next he put on the shape of a hawk, and in this form he reached the bounds of the prairie, he and the witch turning homewards at the moment.

Bird after bird he tried, but every time the witch gained on him and took the lead. At length the goal was in sight, and Ball-Carrier knew that unless he could get ahead now he would be killed before his own door, under the eyes of his wife. His eyes had grown dim from fatigue, his wings flapped wearily and hardly bore him along, while the witch seemed as fresh as ever. What bird was there whose flight was swifter than his? Would not the good spirits tell him? Ah, of course he knew; why had he not thought of it at first and spared himself all that fatigue? And the next instant a humming bird, dressed in green and blue, flashed past the woman and entered the house. The witch came panting up, furious at having lost the race which she felt certain of winning; and Ball-Carrier, who had by this time changed back into his own shape, struck her on the head and killed her.

For a long while Ball-Carrier was content to stay quietly at home with his wife and children, for he was tired of adventures, and only did enough hunting to supply the house with food. But one day he happened to eat some poisonous berries that he had found in the forest, and grew so ill that he felt he was going to die.

‘When I am dead do not bury me in the earth,’ he said, ‘but put me over there, among that clump of trees.’ So his wife and her three children watched by him as long as he was alive, and after he was dead they took him up and laid the body on a platform of stakes which they had prepared in the grove. And as they returned weeping to the hut they caught a glimpse of the ball rolling away down the path back to the old

grandmother. One of the sons sprang forward to stop it, for Ball-Carrier had often told them the tale of how it had helped him to cross the river, but it was too quick for him, and they had to content themselves with the war club and bow and arrows, which were put carefully away.

By-and-by some travellers came past, and the chief among them asked leave to marry Ball-Carrier's daughter. The mother said she must have a little time to think over it, as her daughter was still very young; so it was settled that the man should go away for a month with his friends, and then come back to see if the girl was willing.

Now ever since Ball-Carrier's death the family had been very poor, and often could not get enough to eat. One morning the girl, who had had no supper and no breakfast, wandered off to look for cranberries, and though she was quite near home was astonished at noticing a large hut, which certainly had not been there when last she had come that way. No one was about, so she ventured to peep in, and her surprise was increased at seeing, heaped up in one corner, a quantity of food of all sorts, while a little robin redbreast stood perched on a beam looking down upon her.

'It is my father, I am sure,' she cried; and the bird piped in answer.

From that day, whenever they wanted food they went to the hut, and though the robin could not speak, he would hop on their shoulders and let them feed him with the food they knew he liked best.

When the man came back he found the girl looking so much prettier and fatter than when he had left her, that he insisted that they should be married on the spot. And the mother, who did not know how to get rid of him, gave in.

The husband spent all his time in hunting, and the family had never had so much meat before; but the man, who had seen for himself how poor they were, noticed with amazement that they did not seem to care about it, or to be hungry. 'They must get food from somewhere,' he thought, and one morning, when he pretended to be going out to hunt, he hid in a thicket to watch. Very soon they all left the house together, and walked to the other hut, which the girl's husband saw for the first time, as it was hid in a hollow. He followed, and noticed that each one went up to the redbreast, and shook him by the claw; and he then entered boldly and shook the bird's claw too. The whole party afterwards sat down to dinner, after which they all returned to their own hut.

The next day the husband declared that he was very ill, and could not eat anything; but this was only a presence so that he might get what he wanted. The family were all much distressed, and begged him to tell them what food he fancied.

‘Oh! I could not eat any food,’ he answered every time, and at each answer his voice grew fainter and fainter, till they thought he would die from weakness before their eyes.

‘There must be some thing you could take, if you would only say what it is,’ implored his wife.

‘No, nothing, nothing; except, perhaps—but of course that is impossible!’

‘No, I am sure it is not,’ replied she; ‘you shall have it, I promise—only tell me what it is.’

‘I think—but I could not ask you to do such a thing. Leave me alone, and let me die quietly.’

‘You shall not die,’ cried the girl, who was very fond of her husband, for he did not beat her as most girls’ husbands did. ‘Whatever it is, I will manage to get it for you.’

‘Well, then, I think, if I had that—redbreast, nicely roasted, I could eat a little bit of his wing!’

The wife started back in horror at such a request; but the man turned his face to the wall, and took no notice, as he thought it was better to leave her to herself for a little.

Weeping and wringing her hands, the girl went down to her mother. The brothers were very angry when they heard the story, and declared that, if any one were to die, it certainly should not be the robin. But all that night the man seemed getting weaker and weaker, and at last, quite early, the wife crept out, and stealing to the hut, killed the bird, and brought him home to her husband.

Just as she was going to cook it her two brothers came in. They cried out in horror at the sight, and, rushing out of the hut, declared they would never see her any more. And the poor girl, with a heavy heart, took the body of the redbreast up to her husband.

But directly she entered the room the man told her that he felt a great deal better, and that he would rather have a piece of bear’s flesh, well boiled, than any bird, however tender. His wife felt very miserable to think

that their beloved redbreast had been sacrificed for nothing, and begged him to try a little bit.

‘You felt so sure that it would do you good before,’ said she, ‘that I can’t help thinking it would quite cure you now.’ But the man only flew into a rage, and flung the bird out of the window. Then he got up and went out.

Now all this while the ball had been rolling, rolling, rolling to the old grandmother’s hut on the other side of the world, and directly it rolled into her hut she knew that her grandson must be dead. Without wasting any time she took a fox skin and tied it round her forehead, and fastened another round her waist, as witches always do when they leave their own homes. When she was ready she said to the ball: ‘Go back the way you came, and lead me to my grandson.’ And the ball started with the old woman following.

It was a long journey, even for a witch, but, like other things, it ended at last; and the old woman stood before the platform of stakes, where the body of Ball-Carrier lay.

‘Wake up, my grandson, it is time to go home,’ the witch said. And Ball-Carrier stepped down oft the platform, and brought his club and bow and arrows out of the hut, and set out, for the other side of the world, behind the old woman.

When they reached the hut where Ball-Carrier had fasted so many years ago, the old woman spoke for the first time since they had started on their way.

‘My grandson, did you ever manage to get that gold from the Bad One?’

‘Yes, grandmother, I got it.’

‘Where is it?’ she asked.

‘Here, in my left arm-pit,’ answered he.

So she picked up a knife and scraped away all the gold which had stuck to his skin, and which had been sticking there ever since he first stole it. After she had finished she asked again:

‘My grandson, did you manage to get that bridge from the Bad One?’

‘Yes, grandmother, I got that too,’ answered he.

‘Where is it?’ she asked, and Ball-Carrier lifted his right arm, and pointed to his arm-pit.

‘Here is the bridge, grandmother,’ said he.

Then the witch did something that nobody in the world could have guessed that she would do. First, she took the gold and said to Ball-carrier:

‘My grandson, this gold must be hidden in the earth, for if people think they can get it when they choose, they will become lazy and stupid. But if we take it and bury it in different parts of the world they will have to work for it if they want it, and then will only find a little at a time.’ And as she spoke, she pulled up one of the poles of the hut, and Ball-Carrier saw that underneath was a deep, deep hole, which seemed to have no bottom. Down this hole she poured all the gold, and when it was out of sight it ran about all over the world, where people that dig hard sometimes find it. And after that was done she put the pole back again.

Next she lifted down a spade from a high shelf, where it had grown quite rusty, and dug a very small hole on the opposite side of the hut—very small, but very deep.

‘Give me the bridge,’ said she, ‘for I am going to bury it here. If anyone was to get hold of it, and find that they could cross rivers and seas without any trouble, they would never discover how to cross them for themselves. I am a witch, and if I had chosen I could easily have cast my spells over the Bad One, and have made him deliver them to you the first day you came into my hut. But then you would never have fasted, and never have planned how to get what you wanted, and never have known the good spirits, and would have been fat and idle to the end of your days. And now go; in that hut, which you can just see far away, live your father and mother, who are old people now, and need a son to hunt for them. You have done what you were set to do, and I need you no more.’

Then Ball-Carrier remembered his parents and went back to them.

[From Bureau of Ethnology. ‘Indian Folklore.‘]

THE BUNYIP

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Long, long ago, far, far away on the other side of the world, some young men left the camp where they lived to get some food for their wives and children. The sun was hot, but they liked heat, and as they went they ran races and tried who could hurl his spear the farthest, or was cleverest in throwing a strange weapon called a boomerang, which always returns to the thrower. They did not get on very fast at this rate, but presently they reached a flat place that in time of flood was full of water, but was now, in the height of summer, only a set of pools, each surrounded with a fringe of plants, with bulrushes standing in the inside of all. In that country the people are fond of the roots of bulrushes, which they think as good as onions, and one of the young men said that they had better collect some of the roots and carry them back to the camp. It did not take them long to weave the tops of the willows into a basket, and they were just going to wade into the water and pull up the bulrush roots when a youth suddenly called out: ‘After all, why should we waste our time in doing work that is only fit for women and children? Let them come and get the roots for themselves; but we will fish for eels and anything else we can get.’

This delighted the rest of the party, and they all began to arrange their fishing lines, made from the bark of the yellow mimosa, and to search for bait for their hooks. Most of them used worms, but one, who had put a piece of raw meat for dinner into his skin wallet, cut off a little bit and baited his line with it, unseen by his companions.

For a long time they cast patiently, without receiving a single bite; the sun had grown low in the sky, and it seemed as if they would have to go home empty-handed, not even with a basket of roots to show; when the youth, who had baited his hook with raw meat, suddenly saw his line disappear under the water. Something, a very heavy fish he supposed, was pulling so hard that he could hardly keep his feet, and for a few minutes it seemed either as if he must let go or be dragged into the pool. He cried to his friends to help him, and at last, trembling with fright at what they were

going to see, they managed between them to land on the bank a creature that was neither a calf nor a seal, but something of both, with a long, broad tail. They looked at each other with horror, cold shivers running down their spines; for though they had never beheld it, there was not a man amongst them who did not know what it was—the cub of the awful Bunyip!

All of a sudden the silence was broken by a low wail, answered by another from the other side of the pool, as the mother rose up from her den and came towards them, rage flashing from her horrible yellow eyes. ‘Let it go! let it go!’ whispered the young men to each other; but the captor declared that he had caught it, and was going to keep it. ‘He had promised his sweetheart,’ he said, ‘that he would bring back enough meat for her father’s house to feast on for three days, and though they could not eat the little Bunyip, her brothers and sisters should have it to play with.’ So, flinging his spear at the mother to keep her back, he threw the little Bunyip on to his shoulders, and set out for the camp, never heeding the poor mother’s cries of distress.

By this time it was getting near sunset, and the plain was in shadow, though the tops of the mountains were still quite bright. The youths had all ceased to be afraid, when they were startled by a low rushing sound behind them, and, looking round, saw that the pool was slowly rising, and the spot where they had landed the Bunyip was quite covered. ‘What could it be?’ they asked one of another; ‘there was not a cloud in the sky, yet the water had risen higher already than they had ever known it do before.’ For an instant they stood watching as if they were frozen, then they turned and ran with all their might, the man with the Bunyip running faster than all. When he reached a high peak over-looking all the plain he stopped to take breath, and turned to see if he was safe yet. Safe! why only the tops of the trees remained above that sea of water, and these were fast disappearing. They must run fast indeed if they were to escape. So on they flew, scarcely feeling the ground as they went, till they flung themselves on the ground before the holes scooped out of the earth where they had all been born. The old men were sitting in front, the children were playing, and the women chattering together, when the little Bunyip fell into their midst, and there was scarcely a child among them who did not know that something terrible was upon them. ‘The water! the water!’ gasped one of the young men; and

there it was, slowly but steadily mounting the ridge itself. Parents and children clung together, as if by that means they could drive back the advancing flood; and the youth who had caused all this terrible catastrophe, seized his sweetheart, and cried: ‘I will climb with you to the top of that tree, and there no waters can reach us.’ But, as he spoke, something cold touched him, and quickly he glanced down at his feet. Then with a shudder he saw that they were feet no longer, but bird’s claws. He looked at the girl he was clasping, and beheld a great black bird standing at his side; he turned to his friends, but a flock of great awkward flapping creatures stood in their place He put up his hands to cover his face, but they were no more hands, only the ends of wings; and when he tried to speak, a noise such as he had never heard before seemed to come from his throat, which had suddenly become narrow and slender. Already the water had risen to his waist, and he found himself sitting easily upon it, while its surface reflected back the image of a black swan, one of many.

Never again did the swans become men; but they are still different from other swans, for in the night-time those who listen can hear them talk in a language that is certainly not swan’s language; and there are even sounds of laughing and talking, unlike any noise made by the swans whom we know.

The little Bunyip was carried home by its mother, and after that the waters sank back to their own channels. The side of the pool where she lives is always shunned by everyone, as nobody knows when she may suddenly put out her head and draw him into her mighty jaws. But people say that underneath the black waters of the pool she has a house filled with beautiful things, such as mortals who dwell on the earth have no idea of. Though how they know I cannot tell you, as nobody has ever seen it.

[From Journal of Anthropological-Institute.]

FATHER GRUMBLER

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Once upon a time there lived a man who had nearly as many children as there were sparrows in the garden. He had to work very hard all day to get them enough to eat, and was often tired and cross, and abused everything and everybody, so that people called him ‘Father Grumbler.’

By-and-by he grew weary of always working, and on Sundays he lay a long while in bed, instead of going to church. Then after a time he found it dull to sit so many hours by himself, thinking of nothing but how to pay the rent that was owing, and as the tavern across the road looked bright and cheerful, he walked in one day and sat down with his friends. ‘It was just to chase away Care,’ he said; but when he came out, hours and hours after, Care came out with him.

Father Grumbler entered his house feeling more dismal than when he left it, for he knew that he had wasted both his time and his money.

‘I will go and see the Holy Man in the cave near the well,’ he said to himself, ‘and perhaps he can tell me why all the luck is for other people, and only misfortunes happen to me.’ And he set out at once for the cave.

It was a long way off, and the road led over mountains and through valleys; but at last he reached the cave where the Holy Man dwelt, and knocked at the door.

‘Who is there?’ asked a voice from within.

‘It is I, Holy Man, Father Grumbler, you know, who has as many children as sparrows in the garden.’

‘Well, and what is it that you want?’

‘I want to know why other people have all the luck, and only misfortunes happen to me!’

The Holy Man did not answer, but went into an inner cave, from which he came out bearing something in his hand. ‘Do you see this basket?’ said he. ‘It is a magical basket, and if you are hungry you have only got to say: “Little basket, little basket, do your duty,” and you will eat the best dinner you ever had in your life. But when you have had enough, be sure you

don’t forget to cry out: “That will do for to-day.” Oh!—and one thing more—you need not show it to everybody and declare that I have give it to you. Do you understand?’

Father Grumbler was always accustomed to think of himself as so unlucky that he did not know whether the Holy Man was not playing a trick upon him; but he took the basket without being polite enough to say either ‘Thank you,’ or ‘Good-morning,’ and went away. However, he only waited till he was out of sight of the cave before he stooped down and whispered: ‘Little basket, little basket, do your duty.’

Now the basket had a lid, so that he could not see what was inside, but he heard quite clearly strange noises, as if a sort of scuffling was going on. Then the lid burst open, and a quantity of delicious little white rolls came tumbling out one after the other, followed by a stream of small fishes all ready cooked. What a quantity there were to be sure! The whole road was covered with them, and the banks on each side were beginning to disappear. Father Grumbler felt quite frightened at the torrent, but at last he remembered what the Holy Man had told him, and cried at the top of his voice: ‘Enough! enough! That will do for to-day!’ And the lid of the basket closed with a snap.

Father Grumbler sighed with relief and happiness as he looked around him, and sitting down on a heap of stones, he ate till he could eat no more. Trout, salmon, turbot, soles, and a hundred other fishes whose names he did not know, lay boiled, fried, and grilled within reach of his hands. As the Holy Man had said, he had never eaten such a dinner; still, when he had done, he shook his head, and grumbled; ‘Yes, there is plenty to eat, of course, but it only makes me thirsty, and there is not a drop to drink anywhere.’

Yet, somehow, he could never tell why, he looked up and saw the tavern in front of him, which he thought was miles, and miles, and miles away.

‘Bring the best wine you have got, and two glasses, good mother,’ he said as he entered, ‘and if you are fond of fish there is enough here to feed the house. Only there is no need to chatter about it all over the place. You understand? Eh?’ And without waiting for an answer he whispered to the basket: ‘Little basket, little basket, do your duty.’ The innkeeper and his wife thought that their customer had gone suddenly mad, and watched him

closely, ready to spring on him if he became violent; but both instinctively jumped backwards, nearly into the fire, as rolls and fishes of every kind came tumbling out of the basket, covering the tables and chairs and the floor, and even overflowing into the street.

‘Be quick, be quick, and pick them up,’ cried the man. ‘And if these are not enough, there are plenty more to be had for the asking.’

The innkeeper and his wife did not need telling twice. Down they went on their knees and gathered up everything they could lay hands on. But busy though they seemed, they found time to whisper to each other:

‘If we can only get hold of that basket it will make our fortune!’

So they began by inviting Father Grumbler to sit down to the table, and brought out the best wine in the cellar, hoping it might loosen his tongue. But Father Grumbler was wiser than they gave him credit for, and though they tried in all manner of ways to find out who had given him the basket, he put them off, and kept his secret to himself. Unluckily, though he did not SPEAK, he did drink, and it was not long before he fell fast asleep. Then the woman fetched from her kitchen a basket, so like the magic one that no one, without looking very closely, could tell the difference, and placed it in Father Grumbler’s hand, while she hid the other carefully away.

It was dinner time when the man awoke, and, jumping up hastily, he set out for home, where he found all the children gathered round a basin of thin soup, and pushing their wooden bowls forward, hoping to have the first spoonful. Their father burst into the midst of them, bearing his basket, and crying:

‘Don’t spoil your appetites, children, with that stuff. Do you see this basket? Well, I have only got to say, “Little basket, little basket, do your duty,” and you will see what will happen. Now you shall say it instead of me, for a treat.’

The children, wondering and delighted, repeated the words, but nothing happened. Again and again they tried, but the basket was only a basket, with a few scales of fish sticking to the bottom, for the innkeeper’s wife had taken it to market the day before.

‘What is the matter with the thing?’ cried the father at last, snatching the basket from them, and turning it all over, grumbling and swearing

while he did so, under the eyes of his astonished wife and children, who did not know whether to cry or to laugh.

‘It certainly smells of fish,’ he said, and then he stopped, for a sudden thought had come to him.

‘Suppose it is not mine at all; supposing—Ah, the scoundrels!’

And without listening to his wife and children, who were frightened at his strange conduct and begged him to stay at home, he ran across to the tavern and burst open the door.

‘Can I do anything for you, Father Grumbler?’ asked the innkeeper’s wife in her softest voice.

‘I have taken the wrong basket—by mistake, of course,’ said he. ‘Here is yours, will you give me back my own?’

‘Why, what are you talking about?’ answered she. ‘You can see for yourself that there is no basket here.’

And though Father Grumbler DID look, it was quite true that none was to be seen.

‘Come, take a glass to warm you this cold day,’ said the woman, who was anxious to keep him in a good temper, and as this was an invitation Father Grumbler never refused, he tossed it off and left the house.

He took the road that led to the Holy Man’s cave, and made such haste that it was not long before he reached it.

‘Who is there?’ said a voice in answer to his knock.

‘It is me, it is me, Holy man. You know quite well. Father Grumbler, who has as many children as sparrows in the garden.’

‘But, my good man, it was only yesterday that I gave you a handsome present.’

‘Yes, Holy Man, and here it is. But something has happened, I don’t know what, and it won’t work any more.’

‘Well, put it down. I will go and see if I can find anything for you.’

In a few minutes the Holy Man returned with a cock under his arm.

‘Listen to me,’ he said, ‘whenever you want money, you only have to say: “Show me what you can do, cock,” and you will see some wonderful things. But, remember, it is not necessary to let all the world into the secret.’

‘Oh no, Holy Man, I am not so foolish as that.’

‘Nor to tell everybody that I gave it to you,’ went on the Holy Man. ‘I have not got these treasures by the dozen.’

And without waiting for an answer he shut the door.

As before, the distance seemed to have wonderfully shortened, and in a moment the tavern rose up in front of Father Grumbler. Without stopping to think, he went straight in, and found the innkeeper’s wife in the kitchen making a cake.

‘Where have you come from, with that fine red cock in your basket,’ asked she, for the bird was so big that the lid would not shut down properly.

‘Oh, I come from a place where they don’t keep these things by the dozen,’ he replied, sitting down in front of the table.

The woman said no more, but set before him a bottle of his favourite wine, and soon he began to wish to display his prize.

‘Show me what you can do, cock,’ cried he. And the cock stood up and flapped his wings three times, crowing ‘coquerico’ with a voice like a trumpet, and at each crow there fell from his beak golden drops, and diamonds as large as peas.

This time Father Grumbler did not invite the innkeeper’s wife to pick up his treasures, but put his own hat under the cock’s beak, so as to catch everything he let fall; and he did not see the husband and wife exchanging glances with each other which said, ‘That would be a splendid cock to put with our basket.’

‘Have another glass of wine?’ suggested the innkeeper, when they had finished admiring the beauty of the cock, for they pretended not to have seen the gold or the diamonds. And Father Grumbler, nothing loth, drank one glass after another, till his head fell forward on the table, and once more he was sound asleep. Then the woman gently coaxed the cock from the basket and carried it off to her own poultry yard, from which she brought one exactly like it, and popped it in its place.

Night was falling when the man awoke, and throwing proudly some grains of gold on the table to pay for the wine he had drunk, he tucked the cock comfortably into his basket and set out for home.

His wife and all the children were waiting for him at the door, and as soon as she caught sight of him she broke out:

‘You are a nice man to go wasting your time and your money drinking in that tavern, and leaving us to starve! Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?’

‘You don’t know what you are talking of,’ he answered. ‘Money? Why, I have gold and diamonds now, as much as I want. Do you see that cock? Well, you have only to say to him, “Show me what you can do, cock,” and something splendid will happen.’

Neither wife nor children were inclined to put much faith in him after their last experience; however, they thought it was worth trying, and did as he told them. The cock flew round the room like a mad thing, and crowed till their heads nearly split with the noise; but no gold or diamonds dropped on the brick floor—not the tiniest grain of either.

Father Grumbler stared in silence for an instant, and then he began to swear so loudly that even his family, accustomed as they were to his language, wondered at him.

At last he grew a little quieter, but remained as puzzled as ever.

‘Can I have forgotten the words? But I KNOW that was what he said! And I saw the diamonds with my own eyes!’ Then suddenly he seized the cock, shut it into the basket, and rushed out of the house.

His heavy wooden shoes clattered as he ran along the road, and he made such haste that the stars were only just beginning to come out when he reached the cave of the Holy Man.

‘Who is that knocking?’ asked a voice from within.

‘It is me! It is me! Holy Man! you know! Father—’

‘But, my good fellow, you really should give some one else a chance. This is the third time you have been—and at such an hour, too!’

‘Oh, yes, Holy Man, I know it is very late, but you will forgive me! It is your cock—there is something the matter. It is like the basket. Look!’

‘THAT my cock? THAT my basket? Somebody has played you a trick, my good man!’

‘A trick?’ repeated Father Grumbler, who began to understand what had happened. ‘Then it must have been those two—’

‘I warned you not to show them to anybody,’ said the Holy Man. ‘You deserve—but I will give you one more chance.’ And, turning, he unhooked something from the wall.

‘When you wish to dust your own jacket or those of your friends,’ he said, ‘you have only got to say, “Flack, flick, switch, be quick,” and you

will see what happens. That is all I have to tell you.' And, smiling to himself, the Holy Man pushed Father Grumbler out of the cave.

'Ah, I understand now,' muttered the good man, as he took the road home; 'but I think I have got you two rascals!' and he hurried on to the tavern with his basket under his arm, and the cock and the switch both inside.

'Good evening, friends!' he said, as he entered the inn. 'I am very hungry, and should be glad if you would roast this cock for me as soon as possible. THIS cock and no other—mind what I say,' he went on. 'Oh, and another thing! You can light the fire with this basket. When you have done that I will show you something I have in my bag,' and, as he spoke, he tried to imitate the smile that the Holy Man had given HIM.

These directions made the innkeeper's wife very uneasy. However, she said nothing, and began to roast the cock, while her husband did his best to make the man sleepy with wine, but all in vain.

After dinner, which he did not eat without grumbling, for the cock was very tough, the man struck his hand on the table, and said: 'Now listen to me. Go and fetch my cock and my basket, at once. Do you hear?'

'Your cock, and your basket, Father Grumbler? But you have just—'

'MY cock and MY basket!' interrupted he. 'And, if you are too deaf and too stupid to understand what that means, I have got something which may help to teach you.' And opening the bag, he cried: 'Flack, flick, switch, be quick.'

And flack! flick! like lightening a white switch sprang out of the bag, and gave such hearty blows to the innkeeper and his wife, and to Father Grumbler into the bargain, that they all jumped as high as feathers when a mattress is shaken.

'Stop! stop! make it stop, and you shall have back your cock and basket,' cried the man and his wife. And Father Grumbler, who had no wish to go on, called out between his hops: 'Stop then, can't you? That is enough for to-day!'

But the switch paid no attention, and dealt out its blows as before, and MIGHT have been dealing them to this day, if the Holy Man had not heard their cries and come to the rescue. 'Into the bag, quick!' said he, and the switch obeyed.

‘Now go and fetch me the cock and the basket,’ and the woman went without a word, and placed them on the table.

‘You have all got what you deserved,’ continued the Holy Man, ‘and I have no pity for any of you. I shall take my treasures home, and perhaps some day I may find a man who knows how to make the best of the chances that are given to him. But that will never be YOU,’ he added, turning to Father Grumbler.

[From Contes Populaires.]

THE STORY OF THE YARA

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Down in the south, where the sun shines so hotly that everything and everybody sleeps all day, and even the great forests seem silent, except early in the morning and late in the evening—down in this country there once lived a young man and a maiden. The girl had been born in the town, and had scarcely ever left it; but the young man was a native of another country, and had only come to the city near the great river because he could find no work to do where he was.

A few months after his arrival, when the days were cooler, and the people did not sleep so much as usual, a great feast was held a little way out of the town, and to this feast everyone flocked from thirty miles and more. Some walked and some rode, some came in beautiful golden coaches; but all had on splendid dresses of red or blue, while wreaths of flowers rested on their hair.

It was the first time that the youth had been present on such an occasion, and he stood silently aside watching the graceful dances and the pretty games played by the young people. And as he watched, he noticed one girl, dressed in white with scarlet pomegranates in her hair, who seemed to him lovelier than all the rest.

When the feast was over, and the young man returned home, his manner was so strange that it drew the attention of all his friends.

Through his work next day the youth continued to see the girl’s face, throwing the ball to her companions, or threading her way between them as she danced. At night sleep fled from him, and after tossing for hours on his bed, he would get up and plunge into a deep pool that lay a little way in the forest.

This state of things went on for some weeks, then at last chance favoured him. One evening, as he was passing near the house where she lived, he saw her standing with her back to the wall, trying to beat off with her fan the attacks of a savage dog that was leaping at her throat. Alonzo, for such was his name, sprang forward, and with one blow of his fist

stretched the creature dead upon the road. He then helped the frightened and half-fainting girl into the large cool verandah where her parents were sitting, and from that hour he was a welcome guest in the house, and it was not long before he was the promised husband of Julia.

Every day, when his work was done, he used to go up to the house, half hidden among flowering plants and brilliant creepers, where humming-birds darted from bush to bush, and parrots of all colours, red and green and grey, shrieked in chorus. There he would find the maiden waiting for him, and they would spend an hour or two under the stars, which looked so large and bright that you felt as if you could almost touch them.

‘What did you do last night after you went home?’ suddenly asked the girl one evening.

‘Just the same as I always do,’ answered he. ‘It was too hot to sleep, so it was no use going to bed, and I walked straight of to the forest and bathed in one of those deep dark pools at the edge of the river. I have been there constantly for several months, but last night a strange thing happened. I was taking my last plunge, when I heard—sometimes from one side, and sometimes from another—the sound of a voice singing more sweetly than any nightingale, though I could not catch any words. I left the pool, and, dressing myself as fast as I could, I searched every bush and tree round the water, as I fancied that perhaps it was my friend who was playing a trick on me, but there was not a creature to be seen; and when I reached home I found my friend fast asleep.’

As Julia listened her face grew deadly white, and her whole body shivered as if with cold. From her childhood she had heard stories of the terrible beings that lived in the forests and were hidden under the banks of the rivers, and could only be kept off by powerful charms. Could the voice which had bewitched Alonzo have come from one of these? Perhaps, who knows, it might be the voice of the dreaded Yara herself, who sought young men on the eve of their marriage as her prey.

For a moment the girl sat choked with fear, as these thoughts rushed through her; then she said: ‘Alonzo, will you promise something?’

‘What is that?’ asked he.

‘It is something that has to do with our future happiness.’

‘Oh! it is serious, then? Well, of course I promise. Now tell me!’

‘I want you to promise,’ she answered, lowering her voice to a whisper, ‘never to bathe in those pools again.’

‘But why not, queen of my soul; have I not gone there always, and nothing has harmed me, flower of my heart?’

‘No; but perhaps something will. If you will not promise I shall go mad with fright. Promise me.’

‘Why, what is the matter? You look so pale! Tell me why you are so frightened?’

‘Did you not hear the song?’ she asked, trembling.

‘Suppose I did, how could that hurt me? It was the loveliest song I ever heard!’

‘Yes, and after the song will come the apparition; and after that—after that—’

‘I don’t understand. Well—after that?’

‘After that—death.’

Alonzo stared at her. Had she really gone mad? Such talk was very unlike Julia; but before he could collect his senses the girl spoke again:

‘That is the reason why I implore you never to go there again; at any rate till after we are married.’

‘And what difference will our marriage make?’

‘Oh, there will be no danger then; you can go to bathe as often as you like!’

‘But tell me why you are so afraid?’

‘Because the voice you heard—I know you will laugh, but it is quite true—it was the voice of the Yara.’

At these words Alonzo burst into a shout of laughter; but it sounded so harsh and loud that Julia shrank away shuddering. It seemed as if he could not stop himself, and the more he laughed the paler the poor girl became, murmuring to herself as she watched him:

‘Oh, heaven! you have seen her! you have seen her! what shall I do?’

Faint as was her whisper, it reached the ears of Alonzo, who, though he still could not speak for laughing, shook his head.

‘You may not know it, but it is true. Nobody who has not seen the Yara laughs like that.’ And Julia flung herself on the ground weeping bitterly.

At this sight Alonzo became suddenly grave, and kneeling by her side, gently raised her up.

‘Do not cry so, my angel,’ he said, ‘I will promise anything you please. Only let me see you smile again.’

With a great effort Julia checked her sobs, and rose to her feet.

‘Thank you,’ she answered. ‘My heart grows lighter as you say that! I know you will try to keep your word and to stay away from the forest. But—the power of the Yara is very strong, and the sound of her voice is apt to make men forget everything else in the world. Oh, I have seen it, and more than one betrothed maiden lives alone, broken-hearted. If ever you should return to the pool where you first heard the voice, promise me that you will at least take this with you.’ And opening a curiously carved box, she took out a sea-shell shot with many colours, and sang a song softly into it. ‘The moment you hear the Yara’s voice,’ said she, ‘put this to your ear, and you will hear my song instead. Perhaps—I do not know for certain—but perhaps, I may be stronger than the Yara.’

It was late that night when Alonzo returned home. The moon was shining on the distant river, which looked cool and inviting, and the trees of the forest seemed to stretch out their arms and beckon him near. But the young man steadily turned his face in the other direction, and went home to bed.

The struggle had been hard, but Alonzo had his reward next day in the joy and relief with which Julia greeted him. He assured her that having overcome the temptation once the danger was now over; but she, knowing better than he did the magic of the Yara’s face and voice, did not fail to make him repeat his promise when he went away.

For three nights Alonzo kept his word, not because he believed in the Yara, for he thought that the tales about her were all nonsense, but because he could not bear the tears with which he knew that Julia would greet him, if he confessed that he had returned to the forest. But, in spite of this, the song rang in his ears, and daily grew louder.

On the fourth night the attraction of the forest grew so strong that neither the thought of Julia nor the promises he had made her could hold him back. At eleven o’clock he plunged into the cool darkness of the trees, and took the path that led straight to the river. Yet, for the first time, he found that Julia’s warnings, though he had laughed at her at the moment, had remained in his memory, and he glanced at the bushes with a certain sense of fear which was quite new to him.

When he reached the river he paused and looked round for a moment to make sure that the strange feeling of some one watching him was fancy, and he was really alone. But the moon shone brightly on every tree, and nothing was to be seen but his own shadow; nothing was to be heard but the sound of the rippling stream.

He threw off his clothes, and was just about to dive in headlong, when something—he did not know what—suddenly caused him to look round. At the same instant the moon passed from behind a cloud, and its rays fell on a beautiful golden-haired woman standing half hidden by the ferns.

With one bound he caught up his mantle, and rushed headlong down the path he had come, fearing at each step to feel a hand laid on his shoulder. It was not till he had left the last trees behind him, and was standing in the open plain, that he dared to look round, and then he thought a figure in white was still standing there waving her arms to and fro. This was enough; he ran along the road harder than ever, and never paused till he was save in his own room.

With the earliest rays of dawn he went back to the forest to see whether he could find any traces of the Yara, but though he searched every clump of bushes, and looked up every tree, everything was empty, and the only voices he heard were those of parrots, which are so ugly that they only drive people away.

‘I think I must be mad,’ he said to himself, ‘and have dreamt all that folly’; and going back to the city he began his daily work. But either that was harder than usual, or he must be ill, for he could not fix his mind upon it, and everybody he came across during the day inquired if anything had happened to give him that white, frightened look.

‘I must be feverish,’ he said to himself; ‘after all, it is rather dangerous to take a cold bath when one is feeling so hot.’ Yet he knew, while he said it, that he was counting the hours for night to come, that he might return to the forest.

In the evening he went as usual to the creeper-covered house. But he had better have stayed away, as his face was so pale and his manner so strange, that the poor girl saw that something terrible had occurred. Alonzo, however, refused to answer any of her questions, and all she could get was a promise to hear everything the next day.

On pretence of a violent headache, he left Julia much earlier than usual and hurried quickly home. Taking down a pistol, he loaded it and put it in his belt, and a little before midnight he stole out on the tips of his toes, so as to disturb nobody. Once outside he hastened down the road which led to the forest.

He did not stop till he had reached the river pool, when holding the pistol in his hand, he looked about him. At every little noise—the falling of a leaf, the rustle of an animal in the bushes, the cry of a night-bird—he sprang up and cocked his pistol in the direction of the sound. But though the moon still shone he saw nothing, and by and by a kind of dreamy state seemed to steal over him as he leant against a tree.

How long he remained in this condition he could not have told, but suddenly he awoke with a start, on hearing his name uttered softly.

‘Who is that?’ he cried, standing upright instantly; but only an echo answered him. Then his eyes grew fascinated with the dark waters of the pool close to his feet, and he looked at it as if he could never look away.

He gazed steadily into the depths for some minutes, when he became aware that down in the darkness was a bright spark, which got rapidly bigger and brighter. Again that feeling of awful fear took possession of him, and he tried to turn his eyes from the pool. But it was no use; something stronger than himself compelled him to keep them there.

At last the waters parted softly, and floating on the surface he saw the beautiful woman whom he had fled from only a few nights before. He turned to run, but his feet were glued to the spot.

She smiled at him and held out her arms, but as she did so there came over him the remembrance of Julia, as he had seen her a few hours earlier, and her warnings and fears for the very danger in which he now found himself.

Meanwhile the figure was always drawing nearer, nearer; but, with a violent effort, Alonzo shook off his stupor, and taking aim at her shoulder he pulled the trigger. The report awoke the sleeping echoes, and was repeated all through the forest, but the figure smiled still, and went on advancing. Again Alonzo fired, and a second time the bullet whistled through the air, and the figure advanced nearer. A moment more, and she would be at his side.

Then, his pistol being empty, he grasped the barrel with both hands, and stood ready to use it as a club should the Yara approach and closer. But now it seemed her turn to feel afraid, for she paused an instant while he pressed forward, still holding the pistol above his head, prepared to strike.

In his excitement he had forgotten the river, and it was not till the cold water touched his feet that he stood still by instinct. The Yara saw that he was wavering, and suffering herself to sway gently backwards and forwards on the surface of the river, she began to sing. The song floated through the trees, now far and now near; no one could tell whence it came, the whole air seemed full of it. Alonzo felt his senses going and his will failing. His arms dropped heavily to his side, but in falling struck against the sea shell, which, as he had promised Julia, he had always carried in his coat.

His dimmed mind was just clear enough to remember what she had said, and with trembling fingers, that were almost powerless to grasp, he drew it out. As he did so the song grew sweeter and more tender than before, but he shut his ears to it and bent his head over the shell. Out of its depths arose the voice of Julia singing to him as she had sung when she gave him the shell, and though the notes sounded faint at first, they swelled louder and louder till the mist which had gathered about him was blown away.

Then he raised his head, feeling that he had been through strange places, where he could never wander any more; and he held himself erect and strong, and looked about him. Nothing was to be seen but the shining of the river, and the dark shadows of the trees; nothing was to be heard but the hum of the insects, as they darted through the night.

[Adapted from Folklore Bresilien.]

THE CUNNING HARE

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In a very cold country, far across the seas, where ice and snow cover the ground for many months in the year, there lived a little hare, who, as his father and mother were both dead, was brought up by his grandmother. As he was too young, and she was too old, to work, they were very poor, and often did not have enough to eat.

One day, when the little fellow was hungrier than usual, he asked his grandmother if he might go down to the river and catch a fish for their breakfast, as the thaw had come and the water was flowing freely again. She laughed at him for thinking that any fish would let itself be caught by a hare, especially such a young one; but as she had the rheumatism very badly, and could get no food herself, she let him go. ‘If he does not catch a fish he may find something else,’ she said to herself. So she told her grandson where to look for the net, and how he was to set it across the river; but just as he was starting, feeling himself quite a man, she called him back.

‘After all, I don’t know what is the use of your going, my boy! For even if you should catch a fish, I have no fire to cook it with.’

‘Let me catch my fish, and I will soon make you a fire,’ he answered gaily, for he was young, and knew nothing about the difficulties of fire-making.

It took him some time to haul the net through bushes and over fields, but at length he reached a pool in the river which he had often heard was swarming with fish, and here he set the net, as his grandmother had directed him.

He was so excited that he hardly slept all night, and at the very first streak of dawn he ran as fast as ever he could down to the river. His heart beat as quickly as if he had had dogs behind him, and he hardly dared to look, lest he should be disappointed. Would there be even one fish? And at this thought the pangs of hunger made him feel quite sick with fear. But he need not have been afraid; in every mesh of the net was a fine fat fish, and

of course the net itself was so heavy that he could only lift one corner. He threw some of the fish back into the water, and buried some more in a hole under a stone, where he would be sure to find them. Then he rolled up the net with the rest, put it on his back and carried it home. The weight of the load caused his back to ache, and he was thankful to drop it outside their hut, while he rushed in, full of joy, to tell his grandmother. ‘Be quick and clean them!’ he said, ‘and I will go to those people’s tents on the other side of the water.’

The old woman stared at him in horror as she listened to his proposal. Other people had tried to steal fire before, and few indeed had come back with their lives; but as, contrary to all her expectations, he had managed to catch such a number of fish, she thought that perhaps there was some magic about him which she did not know of, and did not try to hinder him.

When the fish were all taken out, he fetched the net which he had laid out to dry, folded it up very small, and ran down to the river, hoping that he might find a place narrow enough for him to jump over; but he soon saw that it was too wide for even the best jumper in the world. For a few moments he stood there, wondering what was to be done, then there darted into his head some words of a spell which he had once heard a wizard use, while drinking from the river. He repeated them, as well as he could remember, and waited to see what would happen. In five minutes such a grunting and a puffing was heard, and columns of water rose into the air, though he could not tell what had made them. Then round the bend of the stream came fifteen huge whales, which he ordered to place themselves heads to tails, like stepping stones, so that he could jump from one to the other till he landed on the opposite shore. Directly he got there he told the whales that he did not need them any more, and sat down in the sand to rest.

Unluckily some children who were playing about caught sight of him, and one of them, stealing softly up behind him, laid tight hold of his ears. The hare, who had been watching the whales as they sailed down the river, gave a violent start, and struggled to get away; but the boy held on tight, and ran back home, as fast as he could go.

‘Throw it in the pot,’ said the old woman, as soon as he had told his story; ‘put it in that basket, and as soon as the water boils in the pot we will hang it over the fire!’

‘Better kill it first,’ said the old man; and the hare listened, horribly frightened, but still looking secretly to see if there was no hole through which he could escape, if he had a chance of doing so. Yes, there was one, right in the top of the tent, so, shaking himself, as if with fright, he let the end of his net unroll itself a little.

‘I wish that a spark of fire would fall on my net,’ whispered he; and the next minute a great log fell forward into the midst of the tent, causing every one to spring backwards. The sparks were scattered in every direction, and one fell on the net, making a little blaze. In an instant the hare had leaped through the hole, and was racing towards the river, with men, women, and children after him. There was no time to call back the whales, so, holding the net tight in his mouth, he wished himself across the river. Then he jumped high into the air, and landed safe on the other side, and after turning round to be sure that there was no chance of anyone pursuing him, trotted happily home to his grandmother.

‘Didn’t I tell you I would bring you fire?’ said he, holding up his net, which was now burning briskly.

‘But how did you cross the water?’ inquired the old woman.

‘Oh, I just jumped!’ said he. And his grandmother asked him no more questions, for she saw that he was wiser than she.

[‘Indian Folk Tales.’ Bureau of Ethnology.]

The Turtle and His Bride

There was once a turtle who lived among a great many people of different kinds, in a large camp near a big river which was born right up amongst the snows, and flowed straight away south till it reached a sea where the water was always hot.

There were many other turtles in the camp, and this turtle was kind and pleasant to them all, but he did not care for any of them very much, and felt rather lonely.

At last he built himself a hut, and filled it with skins for seats, and made it as comfortable as any hut for miles round; and when it was quite finished he looked about among the young women to see which of them he should ask to be his wife.

It took him some time to make up his mind, for no turtle likes being hurried, but at length he found one girl who seemed prettier and more

industrious than the rest, and one day he entered her home, and said: ‘Will you marry me?’

The young woman was so surprised at this question that she dropped the beaded slipper she was making, and stared at the turtle. She felt inclined to laugh—the idea was so absurd; but she was kind-hearted and polite, so she looked as grave as she could, and answered:

‘But how are you going to provide for a family? Why, when the camp moves, you will not even be able to keep up with the rest!’

‘I can keep up with the best of them,’ replied the turtle, tossing his head. But though he was very much offended he did not let the girl see it, and begged and, prayed her so hard to marry him that, at last, she consented, very unwillingly.

‘You will have to wait till the spring, though,’ she said; ‘I must make a great many slippers and dresses for myself, as I shall not have much time afterwards.’

This did not please the turtle; but he knew it was no use talking, so all he answered was:

‘I shall go to war and take some captives, and I shall be away several months. And when I return I shall expect you to be ready to marry me.’

So he went back to his hut, and at once set about his preparations. The first thing he did was to call all his relations together, and ask them if they would come with him and make war on the people of a neighbouring village. The turtles, who were tired of doing nothing, agreed at once, and next day the whole tribe left the camp. The girl was standing at the door of her hut as they passed, and laughed out loud—they moved so slowly. Her lover, who was marching at the head, grew very angry at this, and cried out:

‘In four days from now you will be weeping instead of laughing, because there will be hundreds of miles between you and me.’

‘In four days,’ replied the girl—who only promised to marry him in order to get rid of him—‘in four days you will hardly be out of sight.’

‘Oh, I did not mean four days, but four YEARS,’ answered the turtle, hastily; ‘whatever happens I shall be back by then.’

The army marched on, till one day, when they felt as if they must have got half round the earth, though they were scarcely four miles from the camp, they found a large tree lying across their path. They looked at it

with dismay, and the oldest among them put their heads together to see what was to be done.

‘Can’t we manage to get past by the top?’ asked one.

‘Why, it would take us YEARS,’ exclaimed another. ‘Just look at all those tall green branches, spreading in every direction. If once we got entangled in THEM, we should never get out again!’

‘Well then, let us go round by the bottom,’ said a third.

‘How are we to do that, when the roots have made a deep hole, and above that is a high bank?’ replied a fourth. ‘No; the only way I can think of, is to burn a large hole in the trunk.’ And this they did, but the trunk was very thick, and would not burn through.

‘It is no use, we must give it up,’ they agreed at last. ‘After all, nobody need ever know! We have been away such a long while that we might easily have had all sorts of adventures.’ And so the whole company turned homewards again.

They took even longer to go back than they had to come, for they were tired and footsore with their journey. When they drew near the camp they plucked up their courage, and began to sing a war-song. At this the villagers came flocking to see what spoils the turtles had won, but, as they approached, each turtle seized some one by the wrist, exclaiming: ‘You are our spoils; you are our prisoners!’

‘Now that I have got you I will keep you,’ said the leader, who had happened to seize his betrothed.

Everybody was naturally very angry at this behaviour, and the girl most of all, and in her secret heart she determined to have her revenge. But, just at present, the turtles were too strong, so the prisoners had to put on their smartest slippers and their brightest clothes, and dance a war dance while the turtles sang. They danced so long that it seemed as if they would never stop, till the turtle who was leading the singing suddenly broke into a loud chant:

Whoever comes here, will die, will die!

At this all the dancers grew so frightened that they burst through the ring of their captors, and ran back to the village, the turtles following—very slowly. On the way the chief turtle met a man, who said to him:

‘That woman who was to have been your wife has married another man!’

‘Is that true?’ said the turtle. ‘Then I must see him.’

But as soon as the villager was out of sight the turtle stopped, and taking a bundle containing fringes and ornaments from his back, he hung them about him, so that they rattled as he walked. When he was quite close to the hut where the woman lived, he cried out:

‘Here I am to claim the woman who promised to be my wife.’

‘Oh, here is the turtle,’ whispered the husband hurriedly; ‘what is to be done now?’

‘Leave that to me; I will manage him,’ replied the wife, and at that moment the turtle came in, and seized her by the wrist. ‘Come with me,’ he said sternly.

‘You broke your promise,’ answered she. ‘You said you would be back soon, and it is more than a year since you went! How was I to know that you were alive?’

At her words the husband took courage, and spoke hastily:

‘Yes, you promised you would go to war and bring back some prisoners, and you have not done it.’

‘I DID go, and made many prisoners,’ retorted the turtle angrily, drawing out his knife. ‘Look here, if she won’t be MY wife, she sha’n’t be YOURS. I will cut her in two; and you shall have one half, and I the other.’

‘But half a woman is no use to me,’ answered the man. ‘If you want her so much you had better take her.’ And the turtle, followed by his relations, carried her off to his own hut.

Now the woman saw she would gain nothing by being sulky, so she pretended to be very glad to have got rid of her husband; but all the while she was trying to invent a plan to deliver herself from the turtle. At length she remembered that one of her friends had a large iron pot, and when the turtle had gone to his room to put away his fringes, she ran over to her neighbour’s and brought it back. Then she filled it with water and hung it over the fire to boil. It was just beginning to bubble and hiss when the turtle entered.

‘What are you doing there?’ asked he, for he was always afraid of things that he did not understand.

‘Just warming some water,’ she answered. ‘Do you know how to swim?’

‘Yes, of course I do. What a question! But what does it matter to you?’ said the turtle, more suspicious than ever.

‘Oh, I only thought that after your long journey you might like to wash. The roads are so muddy, after the winter’s rains. I could rub your shell for you till it was bright and shining again.

‘Well, I AM rather muddy. If one is fighting, you know, one cannot stop to pick one’s way. I should certainly be more comfortable if my back was washed.’

The woman did not wait for him to change his mind. She caught him up by his shell and popped him straight into the pot, where he sank to the bottom, and died instantly.

The other turtles, who were standing at the door, saw their leader disappear, and felt it was their duty as soldiers to follow him; and, springing into the pot, died too. All but one young turtle, who, frightened at not seeing any of his friends come out again, went as fast as he could to a clump of bushes, and from there made his way to the river. His only thought was to get away as far as possible from that dreadful hut; so he let the river carry him where it was going itself, and at last, one day, he found himself in the warm sea, where, if he is not dead, you may meet him still.

[Bureau of Ethnology.]

HOW GEIRALD THE COWARD WAS PUNISHED

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Once upon a time there lived a poor knight who had a great many children, and found it very hard to get enough for them to eat. One day he sent his eldest son, Rosald, a brave and honest youth, to the neighbouring town to do some business, and here Rosald met a young man named Geirald, with whom he made friends.

Now Geirald was the son of a rich man, who was proud of the boy, and had all his life allowed him to do whatever he fancied, and, luckily for the father, he was prudent and sensible, and did not waste money, as many other rich young men might have done. For some time he had set his heart on travelling into foreign countries, and after he had been talking for a little while to Rosald, he asked if his new friend would be his companion on his journey.

‘There is nothing I should like better,’ answered Rosald, shaking his head sorrowfully; ‘but my father is very poor, and he could never give me the money.’

‘Oh, if that is your only difficulty, it is all right,’ cried Geirald. ‘My father has more money than he knows what to do with, and he will give me as much as I want for both of us; only, there is one thing you must promise me, Rosald, that, supposing we have any adventures, you will let the honour and glory of them fall to me.’

‘Yes, of course, that is only fair,’ answered Rosald, who never cared about putting himself forward. ‘But I cannot go without telling my parents. I am sure they will think me lucky to get such a chance.’

As soon as the business was finished, Rosald hastened home. His parents were delighted to hear of his good fortune, and his father gave him his own sword, which was growing rusty for want of use, while his mother saw that his leather jerkin was in order.

‘Be sure you keep the promise you made to Geirald,’ said she, as she bade him good-bye, ‘and, come what may, see that you never betray him.’

Full of joy Rosald rode off, and the next day he and Geirald started off to seek adventures. To their disappointment their own land was so well governed that nothing out of the common was very likely to happen, but directly they crossed the border into another kingdom all seemed lawlessness and confusion.

They had not gone very far, when, riding across a mountain, they caught a glimpse of several armed men hiding amongst some trees in their path, and remembered suddenly some talk they had heard of a band of twelve robbers who lay in wait for rich travellers. The robbers were more like savage beasts than men, and lived somewhere at the top of the mountain in caves and holes in the ground. They were all called ‘Hankur,’ and were distinguished one from another by the name of a colour—blue, grey, red, and so on, except their chief, who was known as Hankur the Tall. All this and more rushed into the minds of the two young men as they saw the flash of their swords in the moonlight.

‘It is impossible to fight them—they are twelve to two,’ whispered Geirald, stopping his horse in the path. ‘We had much better ride back and take the lower road. It would be stupid to throw away our lives like this.’

‘Oh, we can’t turn back,’ answered Rosald, ‘we should be ashamed to look anyone in the face again! And, besides, it is a grand opportunity to show what we are made of. Let us tie up our horses here, and climb up the rocks so that we can roll stones down on them.’

‘Well, we might try that, and then we shall always have our horses,’ said Geirald. So they went up the rocks silently and carefully.

The robbers were lying all ready, expecting every moment to see their victims coming round the corner a few yards away, when a shower of huge stones fell on their heads, killing half the band. The others sprang up the rock, but as they reached the top the sword of Rosald swung round, and one man after another rolled down into the valley. At last the chief managed to spring up, and, grasping Rosald by the waist, flung away his sword, and the two fought desperately, their bodies swaying always nearer the edge. It seemed as if Rosald, being the smaller of the two, MUST fall over, when, with his left hand, he drew the robber’s sword out of its sheath and plunged it into his heart. Then he took from the dead man a beautiful ring set with a large stone, and put it on his own finger.

The fame of this wonderful deed soon spread through the country, and people would often stop Geirald's horse, and ask leave to see the robber's ring, which was said to have been stolen from the father of the reigning king. And Geirald showed them the ring with pride, and listened to their words of praise, and no one would ever have guessed anyone else had destroyed the robbers.

In a few days they left the kingdom and rode on to another, where they thought they would stop through the remainder of the winter, for Geirald liked to be comfortable, and did not care about travelling through ice and snow. But the king would only grant them leave to stop on condition that, before the winter was ended, they should give him some fresh proof of the courage of which he had heard so much. Rosald's heart was glad at the king's message, and as for Geirald, he felt that as long as Rosald was there all would go well. So they both bowed low and replied that it was the king's place to command and theirs to obey.

'Well, then,' said his Majesty, 'this is what I want you to do: In the north-east part of my kingdom there dwells a giant, who has an iron staff twenty yards long, and he is so quick in using it, that even fifty knights have no chance against him. The bravest and strongest young men of my court have fallen under the blows of that staff; but, as you overcame the twelve robbers so easily, I feel that I have reason to hope that you may be able to conquer the giant. In three days from this you will set out.'

'We will be ready, your Majesty,' answered Rosald; but Geirald remained silent.

'How can we possibly fight against a giant that has killed fifty knights?' cried Geirald, when they were outside the castle. 'The king only wants to get rid of us! He won't think about us for the next three days—that is one comfort—so we shall have plenty of time to cross the borders of the kingdom and be out of reach.'

'We mayn't be able to kill the giant, but we certainly can't run away till we have tried,' answered Rosald. 'Besides, think how glorious it will be if we DO manage to kill him! I know what sort of weapon I shall use. Come with me now, and I will see about it.' And, taking his friend by the arm, he led him into a shop where he bought a huge lump of solid iron, so big that they could hardly lift it between them. However, they just managed to carry it to a blacksmith's where Rosald directed that it should

be beaten into a thick club, with a sharp spike at one end. When this was done to his liking he took it home under his arm.

Very early on the third morning the two young men started on their journey, and on the fourth day they reached the giant's cave before he was out of bed. Hearing the sound of footsteps, the giant got up and went to the entrance to see who was coming, and Rosald, expecting something of the sort, struck him such a blow on the forehead that he fell to the ground. Then, before he could rise to his feet again, Rosald drew out his sword and cut off his head.

'It was not so difficult after all, you see,' he said, turning to Geirald. And placing the giant's head in a leathern wallet which was slung over his back, they began their journey to the castle.

As they drew near the gates, Rosald took the head from the wallet and handed it to Geirald, whom he followed into the king's presence.

'The giant will trouble you no more,' said Geirald, holding out the head. And the king fell on his neck and kissed him, and cried joyfully that he was the 'bravest knight in all the world, and that a feast should be made for him and Rosald, and that the great deed should be proclaimed throughout the kingdom.' And Geirald's heart swelled with pride, and he almost forgot that it was Rosald and not he, who had slain the giant.

By-and-by a whisper went round that a beautiful lady who lived in the castle would be present at the feast, with twenty-four lovely maidens, her attendants. The lady was the queen of her own country, but as her father and mother had died when she was a little girl, she had been left in the care of this king who was her uncle.

She was now old enough to govern her own kingdom, but her subjects did not like being ruled by a woman, and said that she must find a husband to help her in managing her affairs. Prince after prince had offered himself, but the young queen would have nothing to say to any of them, and at last told her ministers that if she was to have a husband at all she must choose him for herself, as she would certainly not marry any of those whom they had selected for her. The ministers replied that in that case she had better manage her kingdom alone, and the queen, who knew nothing about business, got things into such a confusion that at last she threw them up altogether, and went off to her uncle.

Now when she heard how the two young men had slain the giant, her heart was filled with admiration of their courage, and she declared that if a feast was held she would certainly be present at it.

And so she was; and when the feast was over she asked the king, her guardian, if he would allow the two heroes who had killed the robbers and slain the giant to fight a tourney the next day with one of her pages. The king gladly gave his consent, and ordered the lists to be made ready, never doubting that two great champions would be eager for such a chance of adding to their fame. Little did he guess that Geirald had done all he could to persuade Rosald to steal secretly out of the castle during the night, ‘for,’ said he, ‘I don’t believe they are pages at all, but well-proved knights, and how can we, so young and untried, stand up against them?’

‘The honour will be all the higher if we gain the day,’ answered Rosald; but Geirald would listen to nothing, and only declared that he did not care about honour, and would rather be alive than have every honour in the world heaped upon him. Go he would, and as Rosald had sworn to give him his company, he must come with him.

Rosald was much grieved when he heard these words, but he knew that it was useless attempting to persuade Geirald, and turned his thoughts to forming some plan to prevent this disgraceful flight. Suddenly his face brightened. ‘Let us change clothes,’ he said, ‘and I will do the fighting, while you shall get the glory. Nobody will ever know.’ And to this Geirald readily consented.

Whether Geirald was right or not in thinking that the so-called page was really a well-proved knight, it is certain that Rosald’s task was a very hard one. Three times they came together with a crash which made their horses reel; once Rosald knocked the helmet off his foe, and received in return such a blow that he staggered in his saddle. Shouts went up from the lookers-on, as first one and then the other seemed gaining the victory; but at length Rosald planted his spear in the armour which covered his adversary’s breast and bore him steadily backward. ‘Unhorsed! unhorsed!’ cried the people; and Rosald then himself dismounted and helped his adversary to rise.

In the confusion that followed it was easy for Rosald to slip away and return Geirald his proper clothes. And in these, torn and dusty with the fight, Geirald answered the king’s summons to come before him.

‘You have done what I expected you to do,’ said he, ‘and now, choose your reward.’

‘Grant me, sire, the hand of the queen, your niece,’ replied the young man, bowing low, ‘and I will defend her kingdom against all her enemies.’

‘She could choose no better husband,’ said the king, ‘and if she consents I do.’ And he turned towards the queen, who had not been present during the fight, but had just slipped into a seat by his right hand. Now the queen’s eyes were very sharp, and it seemed to her that the man who stood before her, tall and handsome though he might be, was different in many slight ways, and in one in particular, from the man who had fought the tourney. How there could be any trickery she could not understand, and why the real victor should be willing to give up his prize to another was still stranger; but something in her heart warned her to be careful. She answered: ‘You may be satisfied, uncle, but I am not. One more proof I must have; let the two young men now fight against each other. The man I marry must be the man who killed the robbers and the giant, and overcame my page.’ Geirald’s face grew pale as he heard these words. He knew there was no escape from him now, though he did not doubt for one moment that Rosald would keep his compact loyally to the last. But how would it be possible that even Rosald should deceive the watchful eyes of the king and his court, and still more those of the young queen whom he felt uneasily had suspected him from the first?

The tourney was fought, and in spite of Geirald’s fears Rosald managed to hang back to make attacks which were never meant to succeed, and to allow strokes which he could easily have parried to attain their end. At length, after a great show of resistance, he fell heavily to the ground. And as he fell he knew that it was not alone the glory that was his rightfully which he gave up, but the hand of the queen that was more precious still.

But Geirald did not even wait to see if he was wounded; he went straight to the wall where the royal banner waved and claimed the reward which was now his.

The crowd of watchers turned towards the queen, expecting to see her stoop and give some token to the victor. Instead, to the surprise of everyone, she merely smiled gracefully, and said that before she bestowed her hand one more test must be imposed, but this should be the last. The

final tourney should be fought; Geirald and Rosald should meet singly two knights of the king's court, and he who could unhorse his foe should be master of herself and of her kingdom. The combat was fixed to take place at ten o'clock the following day.

All night long Geirald walked about his room, not daring to face the fight that lay in front of him, and trying with all his might to discover some means of escaping it. All night long he moved restlessly from door to window; and when the trumpets sounded, and the combatants rode into the field, he alone was missing. The king sent messengers to see what had become of him, and he was found, trembling with fear, hiding under his bed. After that there was no need of any further proof. The combat was declared unnecessary, and the queen pronounced herself quite satisfied, and ready to accept Rosald as her husband.

'You forgot one thing,' she said, when they were alone. 'I recognized my father's ring which Hankur the Tall had stolen, on the finger of your right hand, and I knew that it was you and not Geirald who had slain the robber band. I was the page who fought you, and again I saw the ring on your finger, though it was absent from his when he stood before me to claim the prize. That was why I ordered the combat between you, though your faith to your word prevented my plan being successful, and I had to try another. The man who keeps his promise at all costs to himself is the man I can trust, both for myself and for my people.'

So they were married, and returned to their own kingdom, which they ruled well and happily. And many years after a poor beggar knocked at the palace gates and asked for money, for the sake of days gone by—and this was Geirald.

[From Neuislandischem Volksmarcher.]

HABOGI

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Once upon a time there lived two peasants who had three daughters, and, as generally happens, the youngest was the most beautiful and the best tempered, and when her sisters wanted to go out she was always ready to stay at home and do their work.

Years passed quickly with the whole family, and one day the parents suddenly perceived that all three girls were grown up, and that very soon they would be thinking of marriage.

‘Have you decided what your husband’s name is to be?’ said the father, laughingly, to his eldest daughter, one evening when they were all sitting at the door of their cottage. ‘You know that is a very important point!’

‘Yes; I will never wed any man who is not called Sigmund,’ answered she.

‘Well, it is lucky for you that there are a great many Sigmunds in this part of the world,’ replied her father, ‘so that you can take your choice! And what do YOU say?’ he added, turning to the second.

‘Oh, I think that there is no name so beautiful as Sigurd,’ cried she.

‘Then you won’t be an old maid either,’ answered he. ‘There are seven Sigurds in the next village alone! And you, Helga?’

Helga, who was still the prettiest of the three, looked up. She also had her favourite name, but, just as she was going to say it, she seemed to hear a voice whisper: ‘Marry no one who is not called Habogi.’

The girl had never heard of such a name, and did not like it, so she determined to pay no attention; but as she opened her mouth to tell her father that her husband must be called Njal, she found herself answering instead: ‘If I do marry it will be to no one except Habogi.’

‘Who IS Habogi?’ asked her father and sisters; ‘We never heard of such a person.’

‘All I can tell you is that he will be my husband, if ever I have one,’ returned Helga; and that was all she would say.

Before very long the young men who lived in the neighbouring villages or on the sides of the mountains, had heard of this talk of the three girls, and Sigmunds and Sigurds in scores came to visit the little cottage. There were other young men too, who bore different names, though not one of them was called ‘Habogi,’ and these thought that they might perhaps gain the heart of the youngest. But though there was more than one ‘Njal’ amongst them, Helga’s eyes seemed always turned another way.

At length the two elder sisters made their choice from out of the Sigurds and the Sigmunds, and it was decided that both weddings should take place at the same time. Invitations were sent out to the friends and relations, and when, on the morning of the great day, they were all assembled, a rough, coarse old peasant left the crowd and came up to the brides’ father.

‘My name is Habogi, and Helga must be my wife,’ was all he said. And though Helga stood pale and trembling with surprise, she did not try to run away.

‘I cannot talk of such things just now,’ answered the father, who could not bear the thought of giving his favourite daughter to this horrible old man, and hoped, by putting it off, that something might happen. But the sisters, who had always been rather jealous of Helga, were secretly pleased that their bridegrooms should outshine hers.

When the feast was over, Habogi led up a beautiful horse from a field where he had left it to graze, and bade Helga jump up on its splendid saddle, all embroidered in scarlet and gold. ‘You shall come back again,’ said he; ‘but now you must see the house that you are to live in.’ And though Helga was very unwilling to go, something inside her forced her to obey.

The old man settled her comfortably, then sprang up in front of her as easily as if he had been a boy, and, shaking the reins, they were soon out of sight.

After some miles they rode through a meadow with grass so green that Helga’s eyes felt quite dazzled; and feeding on the grass were a quantity of large fat sheep, with the curliest and whitest wool in the world.

‘What lovely sheep! whose are they?’ cried Helga.

‘Your Habogi’s,’ answered he, ‘all that you see belongs to him; but the finest sheep in the whole herd, which has little golden bells hanging

between its horns, you shall have for yourself.’

This pleased Helga very much, for she had never had anything of her own; and she smiled quite happily as she thanked Habogi for his present.

They soon left the sheep behind them, and entered a large field with a river running through it, where a number of beautiful grey cows were standing by a gate waiting for a milk-maid to come and milk them.

‘Oh, what lovely cows!’ cried Helga again; ‘I am sure their milk must be sweeter than any other cows. How I should like to have some! I wonder to whom they belong?’

‘To your Habogi,’ replied he; ‘and some day you shall have as much milk as you like, but we cannot stop now. Do you see that big grey one, with the silver bells between her horns? That is to be yours, and you can have her milked every morning the moment you wake.’

And Helga’s eyes shone, and though she did not say anything, she thought that she would learn to milk the cow herself.

A mile further on they came to a wide common, with short, springy turf, where horses of all colours, with skins of satin, were kicking up their heels in play. The sight of them so delighted Helga that she nearly sprang from her saddle with a shriek of joy.

‘Whose are they?’ Oh! whose are they?’ she asked. ‘How happy any man must be who is the master of such lovely creatures!’

‘They are your Habogi’s,’ replied he, ‘and the one which you think the most beautiful of all you shall have for yourself, and learn to ride him.’

At this Helga quite forgot the sheep and the cow.

‘A horse of my own!’ said she. ‘Oh, stop one moment, and let me see which I will choose. The white one? No. The chestnut? No. I think, after all, I like the coal-black one best, with the little white star on his forehead. Oh, do stop, just for a minute.’

But Habogi would not stop or listen. ‘When you are married you will have plenty of time to choose one,’ was all he answered, and they rode on two or three miles further.

At length Habogi drew rein before a small house, very ugly and mean-looking, and that seemed on the point of tumbling to pieces.

‘This is my house, and is to be yours,’ said Habogi, as he jumped down and held out his arms to lift Helga from the horse. The girl’s heart sank a little, as she thought that the man who possessed such wonderful sheep,

and cows, and horses, might have built himself a prettier place to live in; but she did not say so. And, taking her arm, he led her up the steps.

But when she got inside, she stood quite bewildered at the beauty of all around her. None of her friends owned such things, not even the miller, who was the richest man she knew. There were carpets everywhere, thick and soft, and of deep rich colours; and the cushions were of silk, and made you sleepy even to look at them; and curious little figures in china were scattered about. Helga felt as if it would take her all her life to see everything properly, and it only seemed a second since she had entered the house, when Habogi came up to her.

‘I must begin the preparations for our wedding at once,’ he said; ‘but my foster-brother will take you home, as I promised. In three days he will bring you back here, with your parents and sisters, and any guests you may invite, in your company. By that time the feast will be ready.’

Helga had so much to think about, that the ride home appeared very short. Her father and mother were delighted to see her, as they did not feel sure that so ugly and cross-looking a man as Habogi might not have played her some cruel trick. And after they had given her some supper they begged her to tell them all she had done. But Helga only told them that they should see for themselves on the third day, when they would come to her wedding.

It was very early in the morning when the party set out, and Helga’s two sisters grew green with envy as they passed the flocks of sheep, and cows, and horses, and heard that the best of each was given to Helga herself; but when they caught sight of the poor little house which was to be her home their hearts grew light again.

‘I should be ashamed of living in such a place,’ whispered each to the other; and the eldest sister spoke of the carved stone over HER doorway, and the second boasted of the number of rooms SHE had. But the moment they went inside they were struck dumb with rage at the splendour of everything, and their faces grew white and cold with fury when they saw the dress which Habogi had prepared for his bride—a dress that glittered like sunbeams dancing upon ice.

‘She SHALL not look so much finer than us,’ they cried passionately to each other as soon as they were alone; and when night came they stole out of their rooms, and taking out the wedding-dress, they laid it in the

ash-pit, and heaped ashes upon it. But Habogi, who knew a little magic, and had guessed what they would do, changed the ashes into roses, and cast a spell over the sisters, so that they could not leave the spot for a whole day, and every one who passed by mocked at them.

The next morning when they all awoke the ugly tumble-down house had disappeared, and in its place stood a splendid palace. The guests' eyes sought in vain for the bridegroom, but could only see a handsome young man, with a coat of blue velvet and silver and a gold crown upon his head.

'Who is that?' they asked Helga.

'That is my Habogi,' said she.

[From Neuislandischem Volksmarcher.]

How the Little Brother Set Free His Big Brothers

In a small hut, right in the middle of the forest, lived a man, his wife, three sons and a daughter. For some reason, all the animals seemed to have left that part of the country, and food grew very scarce; so, one morning, after a night of snow, when the tracks of beasts might be easily seen, the three boys started off to hunt.

They kept together for some time, till they reached a place where the path they had been following split into two, and one of the brothers called his dog and went to the left, while the others took the trail to the right. These had not gone far when their dogs scented a bear, and drove him out from the thicket. The bear ran across a clearing, and the elder brother managed to place an arrow right in his head.

They both took up the bear, and carried it towards home, meeting the third at the spot where they had parted from him. When they reached home they threw the bear down on the floor of the hut saying,

'Father, here is a bear which we killed; now we can have some dinner.'

But the father, who was in a bad temper, only said:

'When I was a young man we used to get two bears in one day.'

The sons were rather disappointed at hearing this, and though there was plenty of meat to last for two or three days, they started off early in the morning down the same trail that they had followed before. As they drew near the fork a bear suddenly ran out from behind a tree, and took the path on the right. The two elder boys and their dogs pursued him, and soon the second son, who was also a good shot, killed him instantly with an arrow. At the fork of the trail, on their way home, they met the youngest,

who had taken the left-hand road, and had shot a bear for himself. But when they threw the two bears triumphantly on the floor of the hut their father hardly looked at them, and only said:

‘When I was a young man I used to get three bears in one day.’

The next day they were luckier than before, and brought back three bears, on which their father told them that HE had always killed four. However, that did not prevent him from skinning the bears and cooking them in a way of his own, which he thought very good, and they all ate an excellent supper.

Now these bears were the servants of the great bear chief who lived in a high mountain a long way off. And every time a bear was killed his shadow returned to the house of the bear chief, with the marks of his wounds plainly to bee seen by the rest.

The chief was furious at the number of bears the hunters had killed, and determined that he would find some way of destroying them. So he called another of his servants, and said to him:

‘Go to the thicket near the fork, where the boys killed your brothers, and directly they or the dogs see you return here as fast as ever you can. The mountain will open to let you in, and the hunters will follow you. Then I shall have them in my power, and be able to revenge myself.’

The servant bowed low, and started at once for the fork, where he hid himself in the bushes.

By-and-by the boys came in sight, but this time there were only two of them, as the youngest had stayed at home. The air was warm and damp, and the snow soft and slushy, and the elder brother’s bowstring hung loose, while the bow of the younger caught in a tree and snapped in half. At that moment the dogs began to bark loudly, and the bear rushed out of the thicket and set off in the direction of the mountain. Without thinking that they had nothing to defend themselves with, should the bear turn and attack them, the boys gave chase. The bear, who knew quite well that he could not be shot, sometimes slackened his pace and let the dogs get quite close; and in this way the elder son reached the mountain without observing it, while his brother, who had hurt his foot, was still far behind.

As he ran up, the mountain opened to admit the bear, and the boy, who was close on his heels, rushed in after him, and did not know where he was till he saw bears sitting on every side of him, holding a council. The

animal he had been chasing sank panting in their midst, and the boy, very much frightened, stood still, letting his bow fall to the ground.

‘Why are you trying to kill all my servants?’ asked the chief. ‘Look round and see their shades, with arrows sticking in them. It was I who told the bear to-day how he was to lure you into my power. I shall take care that you shall not hurt my people any more, because you will become a bear yourself.’

At this moment the second brother came up—for the mountain had been left open on purpose to tempt him also—and cried out breathlessly: ‘Don’t you see that the bear is lying close to you? Why don’t you shoot him?’ And, without waiting for a reply, pressed forward to drive his arrow into the heart of the bear. But the elder one caught his raised arm, and whispered: ‘Be quiet! can’t you tell where you are?’ Then the boy looked up and saw the angry bears about him. On the one side were the servants of the chief, and on the other the servants of the chief’s sister, who was sorry for the two youths, and begged that their lives might be spared. The chief answered that he would not kill them, but only cast a spell over them, by which their heads and bodies should remain as they were, but their arms and legs should change into those of a bear, so that they would go on all fours for the rest of their lives. And, stooping over a spring of water, he dipped a handful of moss in it and rubbed it over the arms and legs of the boys. In an instant the transformation took place, and two creatures, neither beast nor human stood before the chief.

Now the bear chief of course knew that the boys’ father would seek for his sons when they did not return home, so he sent another of his servants to the hiding-place at the fork of the trail to see what would happen. He had not waited long, when the father came in sight, stooping as he went to look for his sons’ tracks in the snow. When he saw the marks of snow-shoes along the path on the right he was filled with joy, not knowing that the servant had made some fresh tracks on purpose to mislead him; and he hastened forward so fast that he fell headlong into a pit, where the bear was sitting. Before he could pick himself up the bear had quietly broken his neck, and, hiding the body under the snow, sat down to see if anyone else would pass that way.

Meanwhile the mother at home was wondering what had become of her two sons, and as the hours went on, and their father never returned, she

made up her mind to go and look for him. The youngest boy begged her to let him undertake the search, but she would not hear of it, and told him he must stay at home and take care of his sister. So, slipping on her snow-shoes, she started on her way.

As no fresh snow had fallen, the trail was quite easy to find, and she walked straight on, till it led her up to the pit where the bear was waiting for her. He grasped her as she fell and broke her neck, after which he laid her in the snow beside her husband, and went back to tell the bear chief.

Hour after hour dragged heavily by in the forest hut, and at last the brother and sister felt quite sure that in some way or other all the rest of the family had perished. Day after day the boy climbed to the top of a tall tree near the house, and sat there till he was almost frozen, looking on all sides through the forest openings, hoping that he might see someone coming along. Very soon all the food in the house was eaten, and he knew he would have to go out and hunt for more. Besides, he wished to seek for his parents.

The little girl did not like being left alone in the hut, and cried bitterly; but her brother told her that there was no use sitting down quietly to starve, and that whether he found any game or not he would certainly be back before the following night. Then he cut himself some arrows, each from a different tree, and winged with the feathers of four different birds. He then made himself a bow, very light and strong, and got down his snow-shoes. All this took some time, and he could not start that day, but early next morning he called his little dog Redmouth, whom he kept in a box, and set out.

After he had followed the trail for a great distance he grew very tired, and sat upon the branch of a tree to rest. But Redmouth barked so furiously that the boy thought that perhaps his parents might have been killed under its branches, and stepping back, shot one of his arrows at the root of the tree. Whereupon a noise like thunder shook it from top to bottom, fire broke out, and in a few minutes a little heap of ashes lay in the place where it had stood.

Not knowing quite what to make of it all, the boy continued on the trail, and went down the right-hand fork till he came to the clump of bushes where the bears used to hide.

Now, as was plain by his being able to change the shape of the two brothers, the bear chief knew a good deal of magic, and he was quite aware that the little boy was following the trail, and he sent a very small but clever bear servant to wait for him in the bushes and to try to tempt him into the mountain. But somehow his spells could not have worked properly that day, as the bear chief did not know that Redmouth had gone with his master, or he would have been more careful. For the moment the dog ran round the bushes barking loudly, the little bear servant rushed out in a fright, and set out for the mountains as fast as he could.

The dog followed the bear, and the boy followed the dog, until the mountain, the house of the great bear chief, came in sight. But along the road the snow was so wet and heavy that the boy could hardly get along, and then the thong of his snow-shoes broke, and he had to stop and mend it, so that the bear and the dog got so far ahead that he could scarcely hear the barking. When the strap was firm again the boy spoke to his snow-shoes and said:

‘Now you must go as fast as you can, or, if not, I shall lose the dog as well as the bear.’ And the snow-shoes sang in answer that they would run like the wind.

As he came along, the bear chief’s sister was looking out of the window, and took pity on this little brother, as she had on the two elder ones, and waited to see what the boy would do, when he found that the bear servant and the dog had already entered the mountain.

The little brother was certainly very much puzzled at not seeing anything of either of the animals, which had vanished suddenly out of his sight. He paused for an instant to think what he should do next, and while he did so he fancied he heard Redmouth’s voice on the opposite side of the mountain. With great difficulty he scrambled over steep rocks, and forced a path through tangled thickets; but when he reached the other side the sound appeared to start from the place from which he had come. Then he had to go all the way back again, and at the very top, where he stopped to rest, the barking was directly beneath him, and he knew in an instant where he was and what had happened.

‘Let my dog out at once, bear chief!’ cried he. ‘If you do not, I shall destroy your palace.’ But the bear chief only laughed, and said nothing.

The boy was very angry at his silence, and aiming one of his arrows at the bottom of the mountain, shot straight through it.

As the arrow touched the ground a rumbling was heard, and with a roar a fire broke out which seemed to split the whole mountain into pieces. The bear chief and all his servants were burnt up in the flames, but his sister and all that belonged to her were spared because she had tried to save the two elder boys from punishment.

As soon as the fire had burnt itself out the little hunter entered what was left of the mountain, and the first thing he saw was his two brothers—half bear, half boy.

‘Oh, help us! help us!’ cried they, standing on their hind legs as they spoke, and stretching out their fore-paws to him.

‘But how am I to help you?’ asked the little brother, almost weeping. ‘I can kill people, and destroy trees and mountains, but I have no power over men.’ And the two elder brothers came up and put their paws on his shoulders, and they all three wept together.

The heart of the bear chief’s sister was moved when she saw their misery, and she came gently up behind, and whispered:

‘Little boy, gather some moss from the spring over there, and let your brothers smell it.’

With a bound all three were at the spring, and as the youngest plucked a handful of wet moss, the two others sniffed at it with all their might. Then the bearskin fell away from them, and they stood upright once more.

‘How can we thank you? how can we thank you?’ they stammered, hardly able to speak; and fell at her feet in gratitude. But the bear’s sister only smiled, and bade them go home and look after the little girl, who had no one else to protect her.

And this the boys did, and took such good care of their sister that, as she was very small, she soon forgot that she had ever had a father and mother.

[From the Bureau of Ethnology, U.S.]

THE SACRED MILK OF KOUMONGOE

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Far way, in a very hot country, there once lived a man and woman who had two children, a son named Koane and a daughter called Thakane.

Early in the morning and late in the evenings the parents worked hard in the fields, resting, when the sun was high, under the shade of some tree. While they were absent the little girl kept house alone, for her brother always got up before the dawn, when the air was fresh and cool, and drove out the cattle to the sweetest patches of grass he could find.

One day, when Koane had slept later than usual, his father and mother went to their work before him, and there was only Thakane to be seen busy making the bread for supper.

‘Thakane,’ he said, ‘I am thirsty. Give me a drink from the tree Koumongoe, which has the best milk in the world.’

‘Oh, Koane,’ cried his sister, ‘you know that we are forbidden to touch that tree. What would father say when he came home? For he would be sure to know.’

‘Nonsense,’ replied Koane, ‘there is so much milk in Koumongoe that he will never miss a little. If you won’t give it to me, I sha’n’t take the cattle out. They will just have to stay all day in the hut, and you know that they will starve.’ And he turned from her in a rage, and sat down in the corner.

After a while Thakane said to him: ‘It is getting hot, had you better drive out the cattle now?’

But Koane only answered sulkily: ‘I told you I am not going to drive them out at all. If I have to do without milk, they shall do without grass.’

Thakane did not know what to do. She was afraid to disobey her parents, who would most likely beat her, yet the beasts would be sure to suffer if they were kept in, and she would perhaps be beaten for that too. So at last she took an axe and a tiny earthen bowl, she cut a very small hole in the side of Koumongoe, and out gushed enough milk to fill the bowl.

‘Here is the milk you wanted,’ said she, going up to Koane, who was still sulking in his corner.

‘What is the use of that?’ grumbled Koane; ‘why, there is not enough to drown a fly. Go and get me three times as much!’

Trembling with fright, Thakane returned to the tree, and struck it a sharp blow with the axe. In an instant there poured forth such a stream of milk that it ran like a river into the hut.

‘Koane! Koane!’ cried she, ‘come and help me to plug up the hole. There will be no milk left for our father and mother.’ But Koane could not stop it any more than Thakane, and soon the milk was flowing through the hut downhill towards their parents in the fields below.

The man saw a white stream a long way off, and guessed what had happened.

‘Wife, wife,’ he called loudly to the woman, who was working at a little distance: ‘Do you see Koumongoe running fast down the hill? That is some mischief of the children’s, I am sure. I must go home and find out what is the matter.’ And they both threw down their hoes and hurried to the side of Koumongoe.

Kneeling on the grass, the man and his wife made a cup of their hands and drank the milk from it. And no sooner had they done this, than Koumongoe flowed back again up the hill, and entered the hut.

‘Thakane,’ said the parents, severely, when they reached home panting from the heat of the sun, ‘what have you been doing? Why did Koumongoe come to us in the fields instead of staying in the garden?’

‘It was Koane’s fault,’ answered Thakane. ‘He would not take the cattle to feed until he drank some of the milk from Koumongoe. So, as I did not know what else to do, I gave it to him.’

The father listened to Thakane’s words, but made no answer. Instead, he went outside and brought in two sheepskins, which he stained red and sent for a blacksmith to forge some iron rings. The rings were then passed over Thakane’s arms and legs and neck, and the skins fastened on her before and behind. When all was ready, the man sent for his servants and said:

‘I am going to get rid of Thakane.’

‘Get rid of your only daughter?’ they answered, in surprise. ‘But why?’

‘Because she has eaten what she ought not to have eaten. She has touched the sacred tree which belongs to her mother and me alone.’ And, turning his back, he called to Thakane to follow him, and they went down the road which led to the dwelling of an ogre.

They were passing along some fields where the corn was ripening, when a rabbit suddenly sprang out at their feet, and standing on its hind legs, it sang:

Why do you give to the ogre Your child, so fair, so fair?

‘You had better ask her,’ replied the man, ‘she is old enough to give you an answer.’

Then, in her turn, Thakane sang:

I gave Koumongoe to Koane, Koumongoe to the keeper of beasts; For without Koumongoe they could not go to the meadows: Without Koumongoe they would starve in the hut; That was why I gave him the Koumongoe of my father.

And when the rabbit heard that, he cried: ‘Wretched man! it is you whom the ogre should eat, and not your beautiful daughter.’

But the father paid no heed to what the rabbit said, and only walked on the faster, bidding Thakane to keep close behind him. By-and-by they met with a troop of great deer, called elands, and they stopped when they saw Thakane and sang:

Why do you give to the ogre Your child, so fair, so fair?

‘You had better ask her, replied the man, ‘she is old enough to give you an answer.’

Then, in her turn, Thakane sang:

I gave Koumongoe to Koane, Koumongoe to the keeper of beasts; For without Koumongoe they could not go to the meadows: Without Koumongoe they would starve in the hut; That was why I gave him the Koumongoe of my father.

And the elands all cried: ‘Wretched man! it is you whom the ogre should eat, and not your beautiful daughter.’

By this time it was nearly dark, and the father said they could travel no further that night, and must go to sleep where they were. Thakane was thankful indeed when she heard this, for she was very tired, and found the two skins fastened round her almost too heavy to carry. So, in spite of her

dread of the ogre, she slept till dawn, when her father woke her, and told her roughly that he was ready to continue their journey.

Crossing the plain, the girl and her father passed a herd of gazelles feeding. They lifted their heads, wondering who was out so early, and when they caught sight of Thakane, they sang:

Why do you give to the ogre Your child, so fair, so fair?

‘You had better ask her, replied the man, ‘she is old enough to answer for herself.’

Then, in her turn, Thakane sang:

I gave Koumongoe to Koane, Koumongoe to the keeper of beasts; For without Koumongoe they could not go to the meadows: Without Koumongoe they would starve in the hut; That was why I gave him the Koumongoe of my father.

And the gazelles all cried: ‘Wretched man! it is you whom the ogre should eat, and not your beautiful daughter.’

At last they arrived at the village where the ogre lived, and they went straight to his hut. He was nowhere to be seen, but in his place was his son Masilo, who was not an ogre at all, but a very polite young man. He ordered his servants to bring a pile of skins for Thakane to sit on, but told her father he must sit on the ground. Then, catching sight of the girl’s face, which she had kept down, he was struck by its beauty, and put the same question that the rabbit, and the elands, and the gazelles had done.

Thakane answered him as before, and he instantly commanded that she should be taken to the hut of his mother, and placed under her care, while the man should be led to his father. Directly the ogre saw him he bade the servant throw him into the great pot which always stood ready on the fire, and in five minutes he was done to a turn. After that the servant returned to Masilo and related all that had happened.

Now Masilo had fallen in loved with Thakane the moment he saw her. At first he did not know what to make of this strange feeling, for all his life he had hated women, and had refused several brides whom his parents had chosen for him. However, they were so anxious that he should marry, that they willingly accepted Thakane as their daughter-in-law, though she did bring any marriage portion with her.

After some time a baby was born to her, and Thakane thought it was the most beautiful baby that ever was seen. But when her mother-in-law

saw it was a girl, she wrung her hands and wept, saying:

‘O miserable mother! Miserable child! Alas for you! why were you not a boy!’

Thakane, in great surprise, asked the meaning of her distress; and the old woman told her that it was the custom in that country that all the girls who were born should be given to the ogre to eat.

Then Thakane clasped the baby tightly in her arms, and cried:

‘But it is not the customer in MY country! There, when children die, they are buried in the earth. No one shall take my baby from me.’

That night, when everyone in the hut was asleep, Thakane rose, and carrying her baby on her back, went down to a place where the river spread itself out into a large lake, with tall willows all round the bank. Here, hidden from everyone, she sat down on a stone and began to think what she should do to save her child.

Suddenly she heard a rustling among the willows, and an old woman appeared before her.

‘What are you crying for, my dear?’ said she.

And Thakane answered: ‘I was crying for my baby—I cannot hide her for ever, and if the ogre sees her, he will eat her; and I would rather she was drowned than that.’

‘What you say is true,’ replied the old woman. ‘Give me your child, and let me take care of it. And if you will fix a day to meet me here I will bring the baby.’

Then Thakane dried her eyes, and gladly accepted the old woman’s offer. When she got home she told her husband she had thrown it in the river, and as he had watched her go in that direction he never thought of doubting what she said.

On the appointed day, Thakane slipped out when everybody was busy, and ran down the path that led to the lake. As soon as she got there, she crouched down among the willows, and sang softly:

Bring to me Dilah, Dilah the rejected one, Dilah, whom her father Masilo cast out!

And in a moment the old woman appeared holding the baby in her arms. Dilah had become so big and strong, that Thakane’s heart was filled with joy and gratitude, and she stayed as long as she dared, playing with her baby. At last she felt she must return to the village, lest she should be

missed, and the child was handed back to the old woman, who vanished with her into the lake.

Children grow up very quickly when they live under water, and in less time than anyone could suppose, Dilah had changed from a baby to a woman. Her mother came to visit her whenever she was able, and one day, when they were sitting talking together, they were spied out by a man who had come to cut willows to weave into baskets. He was so surprised to see how like the face of the girl was to Masilo, that he left his work and returned to the village.

‘Masilo,’ he said, as he entered the hut, ‘I have just beheld your wife near the river with a girl who must be your daughter, she is so like you. We have been deceived, for we all thought she was dead.’

When he heard this, Masilo tried to look shocked because his wife had broken the law; but in his heart he was very glad.

‘But what shall we do now?’ asked he.

‘Make sure for yourself that I am speaking the truth by hiding among the bushes the first time Thakane says she is going to bathe in the river, and waiting till the girl appears.’

For some days Thakane stayed quietly at home, and her husband began to think that the man had been mistaken; but at last she said to her husband: ‘I am going to bathe in the river.’

‘Well, you can go,’ answered he. But he ran down quickly by another path, and got there first, and hid himself in the bushes. An instant later, Thakane arrived, and standing on the bank, she sang:

Bring to me Dilah, Dilah the rejected one, Dilah, whom her father Masilo cast out!

Then the old woman came out of the water, holding the girl, now tall and slender, by the hand. And as Masilo looked, he saw that she was indeed his daughter, and he wept for joy that she was not lying dead in the bottom of the lake. The old woman, however, seemed uneasy, and said to Thakane: ‘I feel as if someone was watching us. I will not leave the girl to-day, but will take her back with me’; and sinking beneath the surface, she drew the girl after her. After they had gone, Thakane returned to the village, which Masilo had managed to reach before her.

All the rest of the day he sat in a corner weeping, and his mother who came in asked: ‘Why are you weeping so bitterly, my son?’

‘My head aches,’ he answered; ‘it aches very badly.’ And his mother passed on, and left him alone.

In the evening he said to his wife: ‘I have seen my daughter, in the place where you told me you had drowned her. Instead, she lives at the bottom of the lake, and has now grown into a young woman.’

‘I don’t know what you are talking about,’ replied Thakane. ‘I buried my child under the sand on the beach.’

Then Masilo implored her to give the child back to him; but she would not listen, and only answered: ‘If I were to give her back you would only obey the laws of your country and take her to your father, the ogre, and she would be eaten.’

But Masilo promised that he would never let his father see her, and that now she was a woman no one would try to hurt her; so Thakane’s heart melted, and she went down to the lake to consult the old woman.

‘What am I to do?’ she asked, when, after clapping her hands, the old woman appeared before her. ‘Yesterday Masilo beheld Dilah, and ever since he has entreated me to give him back his daughter.’

‘If I let her go he must pay me a thousand head of cattle in exchange,’ replied the old woman. And Thakane carried her answer back to Masilo.

‘Why, I would gladly give her two thousand!’ cried he, ‘for she has saved my daughter.’ And he bade messengers hasten to all the neighbouring villages, and tell his people to send him at once all the cattle he possessed. When they were all assembled he chose a thousand of the finest bulls and cows, and drove them down to the river, followed by a great crowd wondering what would happen.

Then Thakane stepped forward in front of the cattle and sang:

Bring to me Dilah, Dilah the rejected one, Dilah, whom her father Masilo cast out!

And Dilah came from the waters holding out her hands to Masilo and Thakane, and in her place the cattle sank into the lake, and were driven by the old woman to the great city filled with people, which lies at the bottom.

[Contes Populaires des Bassoutos.]

THE WICKED WOLVERINE

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One day a wolverine was out walking on the hill-side, when, on turning a corner, he suddenly saw a large rock.

‘Was that you I heard walking about just now?’ he asked, for wolverines are cautious animals, and always like to know the reasons of things.

‘No, certainly not,’ answered the rock; ‘I don’t know how to walk.’

‘But I SAW you walking,’ continued the wolverine.

‘I am afraid that you were not taught to speak the truth,’ retorted the rock.

‘You need not speak like that, for I have SEEN you walking,’ replied the wolverine, ‘though I am quite sure that you could never catch ME!’ and he ran a little distance and then stopped to see if the rock was pursuing him; but, to his vexation, the rock was still in the same place. Then the wolverine went up close, and struck the rock a blow with his paw, saying: ‘Well, will you catch me NOW?’

‘I can’t walk, but I can ROLL,’ answered the rock.

And the wolverine laughed and said: ‘Oh, that will do just as well’; and began to run down the side of the mountain.

At first he went quite slowly, ‘just to give the rock a chance,’ he thought to himself; but soon he quickened his pace, for he found that the rock was almost at his heels. But the faster the wolverine ran, the faster the rock rolled, and by-and-by the little creature began to get very tired, and was sorry he had not left the rock to itself. Thinking that if he could manage to put on a spurt he would reach the forest of great trees at the bottom of the mountain, where the rock could not come, he gathered up all his strength, and instead of running he leaped over sticks and stones, but, whatever he did, the rock was always close behind him. At length he grew so weary that he could not even see where he was going, and catching his foot in a branch he tripped and fell. The rock stopped at once, but there came a shriek from the wolverine:

‘Get off, get off! can’t you see that you are on my legs?’

‘Why did you not leave me alone?’ asked the rock. ‘I did not want to move—I hate moving. But you WOULD have it, and I certainly sha’n’t move now till I am forced to.’

‘I will call my brothers,’ answered the wolverine. ‘There are many of them in the forest, and you will soon see that they are stronger than you.’ And he called, and called, and called, till wolves and foxes and all sorts of other creatures all came running to see what was the matter.

‘How DID you get under that rock?’ asked they, making a ring round him; but they had to repeat their question several times before the wolverine would answer, for he, like many other persons, found it hard to confess that he had brought his troubles on himself.

‘Well, I was dull, and wanted someone to play with me,’ he said at last, in sulky voice, ‘and I challenged the rock to catch me. Of course I thought I could run the fastest; but I tripped, and it rolled on me. It was just an accident.’

‘It serves you right for being so silly,’ said they; but they pushed and hauled at the rock for a long time without making it move an inch.

‘You are no good at all,’ cried the wolverine crossly, for it was suffering great pain, ‘and if you cannot get me free, I shall see what my friends the lightning and thunder can do.’ And he called loudly to the lightning to come and help him as quickly as possible.

In a few minutes a dark cloud came rolling up the sky, giving out such terrific claps of thunder that the wolves and the foxes and all the other creatures ran helter-skelter in all directions. But, frightened though they were, they did not forget to beg the lightning to take off the wolverine’s coat and to free his legs, but to be careful not to hurt him. So the lightning disappeared into the cloud for a moment to gather up fresh strength, and then came rushing down, right upon the rock, which it sent flying in all directions, and took the wolverine’s coat so neatly that, though it was torn into tiny shreds, the wolverine himself was quite unharmed.

‘That was rather clumsy of you,’ said he, standing up naked in his flesh. ‘Surely you could have split the rock without tearing my coat to bits!’ And he stooped down to pick up the pieces. It took him a long time, for there were a great many of them, but at last he had them all in his hand.

‘I’ll go to my sister the frog,’ he thought to himself, ‘and she will sew them together for me’; and he set off at once for the swamp in which his sister lived.

‘Will you sew my coat together? I had an unlucky accident, and it is quite impossible to wear,’ he said, when he found her.

‘With pleasure,’ she answered, for she had always been taught to be polite; and getting her needle and thread she began to fit the pieces. But though she was very good-natured, she was not very clever, and she got some of the bits wrong. When the wolverine, who was very particular about his clothes, came to put it on, he grew very angry.

‘What a useless creature you are!’ cried he. ‘Do you expect me to go about in such a coat as that? Why it bulges all down the back, as if I had a hump, and it is so tight across the chest that I expect it to burst every time I breathe. I knew you were stupid, but I did not think you were as stupid as that.’ And giving the poor frog a blow on her head, which knocked her straight into the water, he walked off in a rage to his younger sister the mouse.

‘I tore my coat this morning,’ he began, when he had found her sitting at the door of her house eating an apple. ‘It was all in little bits, and I took it to our sister the frog to ask her to sew it for me. But just look at the way she has done it! You will have to take it to pieces and fit them together properly, and I hope I shall not have to complain again.’ For as the wolverine was older than the mouse, he was accustomed to speak to her in this manner. However, the mouse was used to it and only answered: ‘I think you had better stay here till it is done, and if there is any alteration needed I can make it.’ So the wolverine sat down on a heap of dry ferns, and picking up the apple, he finished it without even asking the mouse’s leave.

At last the coat was ready, and the wolverine put it on.

‘Yes, it fits very well,’ said he, ‘and you have sewn it very neatly. When I pass this way again I will bring you a handful of corn, as a reward’; and he ran off as smart as ever, leaving the mouse quite grateful behind him.

He wandered about for many days, till he reached a place where food was very scarce, and for a whole week he went without any. He was growing desperate, when he suddenly came upon a bear that was lying

asleep. ‘Ah! here is food at last!’ thought he; but how was he to kill the bear, who was so much bigger than himself? It was no use to try force, he must invent some cunning plan which would get her into his power. At last, after thinking hard, he decided upon something, and going up to the bear, he exclaimed: ‘Is that you, my sister?’

The bear turned round and saw the wolverine, and murmuring to herself, so low that nobody could hear, ‘I never heard before that I had a brother,’ got up and ran quickly to a tree, up which she climbed. Now the wolverine was very angry when he saw his dinner vanishing in front of him, especially as HE could not climb trees like the bear, so he followed, and stood at the foot of the tree, shrieking as loud as he could, ‘Come down, sister; our father has sent me to look for you! You were lost when you were a little girl and went out picking berries, and it was only the other day that we heard from a beaver where you were.’ At these words, the bear came a little way down the tree, and the wolverine, seeing this, went on:

‘Are you not fond of berries? I am! And I know a place where they grow so thick the ground is quite hidden. Why, look for yourself! That hillside is quite red with them!’

‘I can’t see so far,’ answered the bear, now climbing down altogether. ‘You must have wonderfully good eyes! I wish I had; but my sight is very short.’

‘So was mine till my father smashed a pailful of cranberries, and rubbed my eyes with them,’ replied the wolverine. ‘But if you like to go and gather some of the berries I will do just as he did, and you will soon be able to see as far as me.’

It took the bear a long while to gather the berries, for she was slow about everything, and, besides, it made her back ache to stoop. But at last she returned with a sackful, and put them down beside the wolverine. ‘That is splendid, sister!’ cried the wolverine. ‘Now lie flat on the ground with your head on this stone, while I smash them.’

The bear, who was very tired, was only too glad to do as she was bid, and stretched herself comfortably on the grass.

‘I am ready now,’ said the wolverine after a bit; ‘just at first you will find that the berries make your eyes smart, but you must be careful not to

move, or the juice will run out, and then it will have to be done all over again.'

So the bear promised to lie very still; but the moment the cranberries touched her eyes she sprang up with a roar.

'Oh, you mustn't mind a little pain,' said the wolverine, 'it will soon be over, and then you will see all sorts of things you have never dreamt of.' The bear sank down with a groan, and as her eyes were full of cranberry juice, which completely blinded her, the wolverine took up a sharp knife and stabbed her to the heart.

Then he took off the skin, and, stealing some fire from a tent, which his sharp eyes had perceived hidden behind a rock, he set about roasting the bear bit by bit. He thought the meat was the best he ever had tasted, and when dinner was done he made up his mind to try that same trick again, if ever he was hungry.

And very likely he did!

[Adapted from Bureau of Ethnology.]

THE HUSBAND OF THE RAT'S DAUGHTER

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Once upon a time there lived in Japan a rat and his wife who came of an old and noble race, and had one daughter, the loveliest girl in all the rat world. Her parents were very proud of her, and spared no pains to teach her all she ought to know. There was not another young lady in the whole town who was as clever as she was in gnawing through the hardest wood, or who could drop from such a height on to a bed, or run away so fast if anyone was heard coming. Great attention, too, was paid to her personal appearance, and her skin shone like satin, while her teeth were as white as pearls, and beautifully pointed.

Of course, with all these advantages, her parents expected her to make a brilliant marriage, and, as she grew up, they began to look round for a suitable husband.

But here a difficulty arose. The father was a rat from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail, outside as well as in, and desired that his daughter should wed among her own people. She had no lack of lovers, but her father's secret hopes rested on a fine young rat, with moustaches which almost swept the ground, whose family was still nobler and more ancient than his own. Unluckily, the mother had other views for her precious child. She was one of those people who always despise their own family and surroundings, and take pleasure in thinking that they themselves are made of finer material than the rest of the world. 'HER daughter should never marry a mere rat,' she declared, holding her head high. 'With her beauty and talents she had a right to look for someone a little better than THAT.'

So she talked, as mothers will, to anyone that would listen to her. What the girl thought about the matter nobody knew or cared—it was not the fashion in the rat world.

Many were the quarrels which the old rat and his wife had upon the subject, and sometimes they bore on their faces certain marks which looked as if they had not kept to words only.

‘Reach up to the stars is MY motto,’ cried the lady one day, when she was in a greater passion than usual. ‘My daughter’s beauty places her higher than anything upon earth,’ she cried; ‘and I am certainly not going to accept a son-in-law who is beneath her.’

‘Better offer her in marriage to the sun,’ answered her husband impatiently. ‘As far as I know there is nothing greater than he.’

‘Well, I WAS thinking of it,’ replied the wife, ‘and as you are of the same mind, we will pay him a visit to-morrow.’

So the next morning, the two rats, having spent hours in making themselves smart, set out to see the sun, leading their daughter between them.

The journey took some time, but at length they came to the golden palace where the sun lived.

‘Noble king,’ began the mother, ‘behold our daughter! She is so beautiful that she is above everything in the whole world. Naturally, we wish for a son-in-law who, on his side, is greater than all. Therefore we have come to you.’

‘I feel very much flattered,’ replied the sun, who was so busy that he had not the least wish to marry anybody. ‘You do me great honour by your proposal. Only, in one point you are mistaken, and it would be wrong of me to take advantage of your ignorance. There is something greater than I am, and that is the cloud. Look!’ And as he spoke a cloud spread itself over the sun’s face, blotting out his rays.

‘Oh, well, we will speak to the cloud,’ said the mother. And turning to the cloud she repeated her proposal.

‘Indeed I am unworthy of anything so charming,’ answered the cloud; ‘but you make a mistake again in what you say. There is one thing that is even more powerful than I, and that is the wind. Ah, here he comes, you can see for yourself.’

And she DID see, for catching up the cloud as he passed, he threw it on the other side of the sky. Then, tumbling father, mother and daughter down to the earth again, he paused for a moment beside them, his foot on an old wall.

When she had recovered her breath, the mother began her little speech once more.

‘The wall is the proper husband for your daughter,’ answered the wind, whose home consisted of a cave, which he only visited when he was not rushing about elsewhere; ‘you can see for yourself that he is greater than I, for he has power to stop me in my flight.’ And the mother, who did not trouble to conceal her wishes, turned at once to the wall.

Then something happened which was quite unexpected by everyone.

‘I won’t marry that ugly old wall, which is as old as my grandfather,’ sobbed the girl, who had not uttered one word all this time. ‘I would have married the sun, or the cloud, or the wind, because it was my duty, although I love the handsome young rat, and him only. But that horrid old wall—I would sooner die!’

And the wall, rather hurt in his feelings, declared that he had no claim to be the husband of so beautiful a girl.

‘It is quite true,’ he said, ‘that I can stop the wind who can part the clouds who can cover the sun; but there is someone who can do more than all these, and that is the rat. It is the rat who passes through me, and can reduce me to powder, simply with his teeth. If, therefore, you want a son-in-law who is greater than the whole world, seek him among the rats.’

‘Ah, what did I tell you?’ cried the father. And his wife, though for the moment angry at being beaten, soon thought that a rat son-in-law was what she had always desired.

So all three returned happily home, and the wedding was celebrated three days after.

[Contes Populaires.]

The Mermaid and the Boy

Long, long ago, there lived a king who ruled over a country by the sea. When he had been married about a year, some of his subjects, inhabiting a distant group of islands, revolted against his laws, and it became needful for him to leave his wife and go in person to settle their disputes. The queen feared that some ill would come of it, and implored him to stay at home, but he told her that nobody could do his work for him, and the next morning the sails were spread, and the king started on his voyage.

The vessel had not gone very far when she ran upon a rock, and stuck so fast in a cleft that the strength of the whole crew could not get her off again. To make matters worse, the wind was rising too, and it was quite plain that in a few hours the ship would be dashed to pieces and everybody

would be drowned, when suddenly the form of a mermaid was seen dancing on the waves which threatened every moment to overwhelm them.

‘There is only one way to free yourselves,’ she said to the king, bobbing up and down in the water as she spoke, ‘and that is to give me your solemn word that you will deliver to me the first child that is born to you.’

The king hesitated at this proposal. He hoped that some day he might have children in his home, and the thought that he must yield up the heir to his crown was very bitter to him; but just then a huge wave broke with great force on the ship’s side, and his men fell on their knees and entreated him to save them.

So he promised, and this time a wave lifted the vessel clean off the rocks, and she was in the open sea once more.

The affairs of the islands took longer to settle than the king had expected, and some months passed away before he returned to his palace. In his absence a son had been born to him, and so great was his joy that he quite forgot the mermaid and the price he had paid for the safety of his ship. But as the years went on, and the baby grew into a fine big boy, the remembrance of it came back, and one day he told the queen the whole story. From that moment the happiness of both their lives was ruined. Every night they went to bed wondering if they should find his room empty in the morning, and every day they kept him by their sides, expecting him to be snatched away before their very eyes.

At last the king felt that this state of things could not continue, and he said to his wife:

‘After all, the most foolish thing in the world one can do is to keep the boy here in exactly the place in which the mermaid will seek him. Let us give him food and send him on his travels, and perhaps, if the mermaid ever blocs come to seek him, she may be content with some other child.’ And the queen agreed that his plan seemed the wisest.

So the boy was called, and his father told him the story of the voyage, as he had told his mother before him. The prince listened eagerly, and was delighted to think that he was to go away all by himself to see the world, and was not in the least frightened; for though he was now sixteen, he had scarcely been allowed to walk alone beyond the palace gardens. He began busily to make his preparations, and took off his smart velvet coat, putting

on instead one of green cloth, while he refused a beautiful bag which the queen offered him to hold his food, and slung a leather knapsack over his shoulders instead, just as he had seen other travellers do. Then he bade farewell to his parents and went his way.

All through the day he walked, watching with interest the strange birds and animals that darted across his path in the forest or peeped at him from behind a bush. But as evening drew on he became tired, and looked about as he walked for some place where he could sleep. At length he reached a soft mossy bank under a tree, and was just about to stretch himself out on it, when a fearful roar made him start and tremble all over. In another moment something passed swiftly through the air and a lion stood before him.

'What are you doing here?' asked the lion, his eyes glaring fiercely at the boy.

'I am flying from the mermaid,' the prince answered, in a quaking voice.

'Give me some food then,' said the lion, 'it is past my supper time, and I am very hungry.'

The boy was so thankful that the lion did not want to eat him, that he gladly picked up his knapsack which lay on the ground, and held out some bread and a flask of wine.

'I feel better now,' said the lion when he had done, 'so now I shall go to sleep on this nice soft moss, and if you like you can lie down beside me.' So the boy and the lion slept soundly side by side, till the sun rose.

'I must be off now,' remarked the lion, shaking the boy as he spoke; 'but cut off the tip of my ear, and keep it carefully, and if you are in any danger just wish yourself a lion and you will become one on the spot. One good turn deserves another, you know.'

The prince thanked him for his kindness, and did as he was bid, and the two then bade each other farewell.

'I wonder how it feels to be a lion,' thought the boy, after he had gone a little way; and he took out the tip of the ear from the breast of his jacket and wished with all his might. In an instant his head had swollen to several times its usual size, and his neck seemed very hot and heavy; and, somehow, his hands became paws, and his skin grew hairy and yellow. But what pleased him most was his long tail with a tuft at the end, which he

lashed and switched proudly. ‘I like being a lion very much,’ he said to himself, and trotted gaily along the road.

After a while, however, he got tired of walking in this unaccustomed way—it made his back ache and his front paws felt sore. So he wished himself a boy again, and in the twinkling of an eye his tail disappeared and his head shrank, and the long thick mane became short and curly. Then he looked out for a sleeping place, and found some dry ferns, which he gathered and heaped up.

But before he had time to close his eyes there was a great noise in the trees near by, as if a big heavy body was crashing through them. The boy rose and turned his head, and saw a huge black bear coming towards him.

‘What are you doing here?’ cried the bear.

‘I am running away from the mermaid,’ answered the boy; but the bear took no interest in the mermaid, and only said: ‘I am hungry; give me something to eat.’

The knapsack was lying on the ground among the fern, but the prince picked it up, and, unfastening the strap, took out his second flask of wine and another loaf of bread. ‘We will have supper together,’ he remarked politely; but the bear, who had never been taught manners, made no reply, and ate as fast as he could. When he had quite finished, he got up and stretched himself.

‘You have got a comfortable-looking bed there,’ he observed. ‘I really think that, bad sleeper as I am, I might have a good night on it. I can manage to squeeze you in,’ he added; ‘you don’t take up a great deal of room.’ The boy was rather indignant at the bear’s cool way of talking; but as he was too tired to gather more fern, they lay down side by side, and never stirred till sunrise next morning.

‘I must go now,’ said the bear, pulling the sleepy prince on to his feet; ‘but first you shall cut off the tip of my ear, and when you are in any danger just wish yourself a bear and you will become one. One good turn deserves another, you know.’ And the boy did as he was bid, and he and the bear bade each other farewell.

‘I wonder how it feels to be a bear,’ thought he to himself when he had walked a little way; and he took out the tip from the breast of his coat and wished hard that he might become a bear. The next moment his body stretched out and thick black fur covered him all over. As before, his hands

were changed into paws, but when he tried to switch his tail he found to his disgust that it would not go any distance. ‘Why it is hardly worth calling a tail!’ said he. For the rest of the day he remained a bear and continued his journey, but as evening came on the bear-skin, which had been so useful when plunging through brambles in the forest, felt rather heavy, and he wished himself a boy again. He was too much exhausted to take the trouble of cutting any fern or seeking for moss, but just threw himself down under a tree, when exactly above his head he heard a great buzzing as a bumble-bee alighted on a honeysuckle branch. ‘What are you doing here?’ asked the bee in a cross voice; ‘at your age you ought to be safe at home.’

‘I am running away from the mermaid,’ replied the boy; but the bee, like the lion and the bear, was one of those people who never listen to the answers to their questions, and only said: ‘I am hungry. Give me something to eat.’

The boy took his last loaf and flask out of his knapsack and laid them on the ground, and they had supper together. ‘Well, now I am going to sleep,’ observed the bee when the last crumb was gone, ‘but as you are not very big I can make room for you beside me,’ and he curled up his wings, and tucked in his legs, and he and the prince both slept soundly till morning. Then the bee got up and carefully brushed every scrap of dust off his velvet coat and buzzed loudly in the boy’s ear to waken him.

‘Take a single hair from one of my wings,’ said he, ‘and if you are in danger just wish yourself a bee and you will become one. One good turn deserves another, so farewell, and thank you for your supper.’ And the bee departed after the boy had pulled out the hair and wrapped it carefully in a leaf.

‘It must feel quite different to be a bee from what it does to be a lion or bear,’ thought the boy to himself when he had walked for an hour or two. ‘I dare say I should get on a great deal faster,’ so he pulled out his hair and wished himself a bee.

In a moment the strangest thing happened to him. All his limbs seemed to draw together, and his body to become very short and round; his head grew quite tiny, and instead of his white skin he was covered with the richest, softest velvet. Better than all, he had two lovely gauze wings which carried him the whole day without getting tired.

Late in the afternoon the boy fancied he saw a vast heap of stones a long way off, and he flew straight towards it. But when he reached the gates he saw that it was really a great town, so he wished himself back in his own shape and entered the city.

He found the palace doors wide open and went boldly into a sort of hall which was full of people, and where men and maids were gossiping together. He joined their talk and soon learned from them that the king had only one daughter who had such a hatred to men that she would never suffer one to enter her presence. Her father was in despair, and had had pictures painted of the handsomest princes of all the courts in the world, in the hope that she might fall in love with one of them; but it was no use; the princess would not even allow the pictures to be brought into her room.

‘It is late,’ remarked one of the women at last; ‘I must go to my mistress.’ And, turning to one of the lackeys, she bade him find a bed for the youth.

‘It is not necessary,’ answered the prince, ‘this bench is good enough for me. I am used to nothing better.’ And when the hall was empty he lay down for a few minutes. But as soon as everything was quiet in the palace he took out the hair and wished himself a bee, and in this shape he flew upstairs, past the guards, and through the keyhole into the princess’s chamber. Then he turned himself into a man again.

At this dreadful sight the princess, who was broad awake, began to scream loudly. ‘A man! a man!’ cried she; but when the guards rushed in there was only a bumble-bee buzzing about the room. They looked under the bed, and behind the curtains, and into the cupboards, then came to the conclusion that the princess had had a bad dream, and bowed themselves out. The door had scarcely closed on them than the bee disappeared, and a handsome youth stood in his place.

‘I knew a man was hidden somewhere,’ cried the princess, and screamed more loudly than before. Her shrieks brought back the guards, but though they looked in all kinds of impossible places no man was to be seen, and so they told the princess.

‘He was here a moment ago—I saw him with my own eyes,’ and the guards dared not contradict her, though they shook their heads and whispered to each other that the princess had gone mad on this subject,

and saw a man in every table and chair. And they made up their minds that —let her scream as loudly as she might—they would take no notice.

Now the princess saw clearly what they were thinking, and that in future her guards would give her no help, and would perhaps, besides, tell some stories about her to the king, who would shut her up in a lonely tower and prevent her walking in the gardens among her birds and flowers. So when, for the third time, she beheld the prince standing before her, she did not scream but sat up in bed gazing at him in silent terror.

'Do not be afraid,' he said, 'I shall not hurt you'; and he began to praise her gardens, of which he had heard the servants speak, and the birds and flowers which she loved, till the princess's anger softened, and she answered him with gentle words. Indeed, they soon became so friendly that she vowed she would marry no one else, and confided to him that in three days her father would be off to the wars, leaving his sword in her room. If any man could find it and bring it to him he would receive her hand as a reward. At this point a cock crew, and the youth jumped up hastily saying: 'Of course I shall ride with the king to the war, and if I do not return, take your violin every evening to the seashore and play on it, so that the very sea-kobolds who live at the bottom of the ocean may hear it and come to you.'

Just as the princess had foretold, in three days the king set out for the war with a large following, and among them was the young prince, who had presented himself at court as a young noble in search of adventures. They had left the city many miles behind them, when the king suddenly discovered that he had forgotten his sword, and though all his attendants instantly offered theirs, he declared that he could fight with none but his own.

'The first man who brings it to me from my daughter's room,' cried he, 'shall not only have her to wife, but after my death shall reign in my stead.'

At this the Red Knight, the young prince, and several more turned their horses to ride as fast as the wind back to the palace. But suddenly a better plan entered the prince's head, and, letting the others pass him, he took his precious parcel from his breast and wished himself a lion. Then on he bounded, uttering such dreadful roars that the horses were frightened and grew unmanageable, and he easily outstripped them, and soon reached the

gates of the palace. Here he hastily changed himself into a bee, and flew straight into the princess's room, where he became a man again. She showed him where the sword hung concealed behind a curtain, and he took it down, saying as he did so: 'Be sure not to forget what you have promised to do.'

The princess made no reply, but smiled sweetly, and slipping a golden ring from her finger she broke it in two and held half out silently to the prince, while the other half she put in her own pocket. He kissed it, and ran down the stairs bearing the sword with him. Some way off he met the Red Knight and the rest, and the Red Knight at first tried to take the sword from him by force. But as the youth proved too strong for him, he gave it up, and resolved to wait for a better opportunity.

This soon came, for the day was hot and the prince was thirsty. Perceiving a little stream that ran into the sea, he turned aside, and, unbuckling the sword, flung himself on the ground for a long drink. Unluckily, the mermaid happened at that moment to be floating on the water not very far off, and knew he was the boy who had been given her before he was born. So she floated gently in to where he was lying, she seized him by the arm, and the waves closed over them both. Hardly had they disappeared, when the Red Knight stole cautiously up, and could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the king's sword on the bank. He wondered what had become of the youth, who an hour before had guarded his treasure so fiercely; but, after all, that was no affair of his! So, fastening the sword to his belt, he carried it to the king.

The war was soon over, and the king returned to his people, who welcomed him with shouts of joy. But when the princess from her window saw that her betrothed was not among the attendants riding behind her father, her heart sank, for she knew that some evil must have befallen him, and she feared the Red Knight. She had long ago learned how clever and how wicked he was, and something whispered to her that it was he who would gain the credit of having carried back the sword, and would claim her as his bride, though he had never even entered her chamber. And she could do nothing; for although the king loved her, he never let her stand in the way of his plans.

The poor princess was only too right, and everything came to pass exactly as she had foreseen it. The king told her that the Red Knight had

won her fairly, and that the wedding would take place next day, and there would be a great feast after it.

In those days feasts were much longer and more splendid than they are now; and it was growing dark when the princess, tired out with all she had gone through, stole up to her own room for a little quiet. But the moon was shining so brightly over the sea that it seemed to draw her towards it, and taking her violin under her arm, she crept down to the shore.

‘Listen! listen! said the mermaid to the prince, who was lying stretched on a bed of seaweeds at the bottom of the sea. ‘Listen! that is your old love playing, for mermaids know everything that happens upon earth.’

‘I hear nothing,’ answered the youth, who did not look happy. ‘Take me up higher, where the sounds can reach me.’

So the mermaid took him on her shoulders and bore him up midway to the surface. ‘Can you hear now?’ she asked.

‘No,’ answered the prince, ‘I hear nothing but the water rushing; I must go higher still.’

Then the mermaid carried him to the very top. ‘You must surely be able to hear now?’ said she.

‘Nothing but the water,’ repeated the youth. So she took him right to the land.

‘At any rate you can hear now?’ she said again.

‘The water is still rushing in my ears,’ answered he; ‘but wait a little, that will soon pass off.’ And as he spoke he put his hand into his breast, and seizing the hair wished himself a bee, and flew straight into the pocket of the princess. The mermaid looked in vain for him, and coated all night upon the sea; but he never came back, and never more did he gladden her eyes. But the princess felt that something strange was about her, though she knew not what, and returned quickly to the palace, where the young man at once resumed his own shape. Oh, what joy filled her heart at the sight of him! But there was no time to be lost, and she led him right into the hall, where the king and his nobles were still sitting at the feast. ‘Here is a man who boasts that he can do wonderful tricks,’ said she, ‘better even than the Red Knight’s! That cannot be true, of course, but it might be well to give this impostor a lesson. He pretends, for instance, that he can turn himself into a lion; but that I do not believe. I know that you have studied

the art of magic,' she went on, turning to the Red Knight, 'so suppose you just show him how it is done, and bring shame upon him.'

Now the Red Knight had never opened a book of magic in his life; but he was accustomed to think that he could do everything better than other people without any teaching at all. So he turned and twisted himself about, and bellowed and made faces; but he did not become a lion for all that.

'Well, perhaps it is very difficult to change into a lion. Make yourself a bear,' said the princess. But the Red Knight found it no easier to become a bear than a lion.

'Try a bee,' suggested she. 'I have always read that anyone who can do magic at all can do that.' And the old knight buzzed and hummed, but he remained a man and not a bee.

'Now it is your turn,' said the princess to the youth. 'Let us see if you can change yourself into a lion.' And in a moment such a fierce creature stood before them, that all the guests rushed out of the hall, treading each other underfoot in their fright. The lion sprang at the Red Knight, and would have torn him in pieces had not the princess held him back, and bidden him to change himself into a man again. And in a second a man took the place of the lion.

'Now become a bear,' said she; and a bear advanced panting and stretching out his arms to the Red Knight, who shrank behind the princess.

By this time some of the guests had regained their courage, and returned as far as the door, thinking that if it was safe for the princess perhaps it was safe for them. The king, who was braver than they, and felt it needful to set them a good example besides, had never left his seat, and when at a new command of the princess the bear once more turned into a man, he was silent from astonishment, and a suspicion of the truth began to dawn on him. 'Was it he who fetched the sword?' asked the king.

'Yes, it was,' answered the princess; and she told him the whole story, and how she had broken her gold ring and given him half of it. And the prince took out his half of the ring, and the princess took out hers, and they fitted exactly. Next day the Red Knight was hanged, as he richly deserved, and there was a new marriage feast for the prince and princess.

[Lapplandische Mahrchen.]

PIVI AND KABO

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When birds were men, and men were birds, Pivi and Kabo lived in an island far away, called New Claledonia. Pivi was a cheery little bird that chirps at sunset; Kabo was an ugly black fowl that croaks in the darkness. One day Pivi and Kabo thought that they would make slings, and practice slinging, as the people of the island still do. So they went to a banyan tree, and stripped the bark to make strings for their slings, and next they repaired to the river bank to find stones. Kabo stood on the bank of the river, and Pivi went into the water. The game was for Kabo to sling at Pivi, and for Pivi to dodge the stones, if he could. For some time he dodged them cleverly, but at last a stone from Kabo's sling hit poor Pivi on the leg and broke it. Down went Pivi into the stream, and floated along it, till he floated into a big hollow bamboo, which a woman used for washing her sweet potatoes.

'What is that in my bamboo?' said the woman. And she blew in at one end, and blew little Pivi out at the other, like a pea from a pea-shooter.

'Oh!' cried the woman, 'what a state you are in! What have you been doing?'

'It was Kabo who broke my leg at the slinging game,' said Pivi.

'Well, I am sorry for you,' said the woman; 'will you come with me, and do what I tell you?'

'I will!' said Pivi, for the woman was very kind and pretty. She took Pivi into a shed where she kept her fruit laid him on a bed of mats, and made him as comfortable as she could, and attended to his broken leg without cutting off the flesh round the bone, as these people usually do.

'You will be still, won't you, Pivi?' she said. 'If you hear a little noise you will pretend to be dead. It is the Black Ant who will come and creep from your feet up to your head. Say nothing, and keep quiet, won't you, Pivi?'

'Certainly, kind lady,' said Pivi, 'I will lie as still as can be.'

'Next will come the big Red Ant—you know him?'

‘Yes, I know him, with his feet like a grasshopper’s.’

‘He will walk over your body up to your head. Then you must shake all your body. Do you understand, Pivi?’

‘Yes, dear lady, I shall do just as you say.’

‘Very good,’ said the woman, going out and shutting the door.

Pivi lay still under his coverings, then a tiny noise was heard, and the Black Ant began to march over Pivi, who lay quite still. Then came the big Red Ant skipping along his body, and then Pivi shook himself all over. He jumped up quite well again, he ran to the river, he looked into the water and saw that he was changed from a bird into a fine young man!

‘Oh, lady,’ he cried, ‘look at me now! I am changed into a man, and so handsome!’

‘Will you obey me again?’ said the woman.

‘Always; whatever you command I will do it,’ said Pivi, politely.

‘Then climb up that cocoa-nut tree, with your legs only, not using your hands,’ said the woman.

Now the natives can run up cocoa-nut trees like squirrels, some using only one hand; the girls can do that. But few can climb without using their hands at all.

‘At the top of the tree you will find two cocoa-nuts. You must not throw them down, but carry them in your hands; and you must descend as you went up, using your legs only.’

‘I shall try, at least,’ said Pivi. And up he went, but it was very difficult, and down he came.

‘Here are your cocoa-nuts,’ he said, presenting them to the woman.

‘Now, Pivi, put them in the shed where you lay, and when the sun sets to cool himself in the sea and rise again not so hot in the dawn you must go and take the nuts.’

All day Pivi played about in the river, as the natives do, throwing fruit and silvery showers of water at each other. When the sun set he went into the hut. But as he drew near he heard sweet voices talking and laughing within.

‘What is that? People chattering in the hut! Perhaps they have taken my cocoa-nuts,’ said Pivi to himself.

In he went, and there he found two pretty, laughing, teasing girls. He hunted for his cocoanuts, but none were there.

Down he ran to the river. ‘Oh, lady, my nuts have been stolen!’ he cried.

‘Come with me, Pivi, and there will be nuts for you,’ said the woman.

They went back to the hut, where the girls were laughing and playing.

‘Nuts for you?’ said the woman, ‘there are two wives for you, Pivi, take them to your house.’

‘Oh, good lady,’ cried Pivi, ‘how kind you are!’

So they were married and very happy, when in came cross old Kabo.

‘Is this Pivi?’ said he. ‘Yes, it is—no, it isn’t. It is not the same Pivi—but there is a kind of likeness. Tell me, are you Pivi?’

‘Oh, yes!’ said Pivi. ‘But I am much better looking, and there are my two wives, are they not beautiful?’

‘You are mocking me, Pivi! Your wives? How? Where did you get them? You, with wives!’

Then Pivi told Kabo about the kind woman, and all the wonderful things that had happened to him.

‘Well, well!’ said Kabo, ‘but I want to be handsome too, and to have pretty young wives.’

‘But how can we manage that?’ asked Pivi.

‘Oh, we shall do all the same things over again—play at slinging, and, this time, you shall break my leg, Pivi!’

‘With all the pleasure in life,’ said Pivi, who was always ready to oblige.

So they went slinging, and Pivi broke Kabo’s leg, and Kabo fell into the river, and floated into the bamboo, and the woman blew him out, just as before. Then she picked up Kabo, and put him in the shed, and told him what to do when the Black Ant came, and what to do when the Red Ant came. But he didn’t!

When the Black Ant came, he shook himself, and behold, he had a twisted leg, and a hump back, and was as black as the ant.

Then he ran to the woman.

‘Look, what a figure I am!’ he said; but she only told him to climb the tree, as she had told Pivi.

But Kabo climbed with both hands and feet, and he threw down the nuts, instead of carrying them down, and he put them in the hut. And when he went back for them there he found two horrid old black hags,

wrangling, and scolding, and scratching! So back he went to Pivi with his two beautiful wives, and Pivi was very sorry, but what could he do? Nothing, but sit and cry.

So, one day, Kabo came and asked Pivi to sail in his canoe to a place where he knew of a great big shell-fish, enough to feed on for a week. Pivi went, and deep in the clear water they saw a monstrous shell-fish, like an oyster, as big as a rock, with the shell wide open.

‘We shall catch it, and dry it, and kipper it,’ said Pivi, ‘and give a dinner to all our friends!’

‘I shall dive for it, and break it off the rock,’ said Kabo, ‘and then you must help me to drag it up into the canoe.’

There the shell-fish lay and gaped, but Kabo, though he dived in, kept well out of the way of the beast.

Up he came, puffing and blowing: ‘Oh, Pivi,’ he cried, ‘I cannot move it. Jump in and try yourself!’

Pivi dived, with his spear, and the shell-fish opened its shell wider yet, and sucked, and Pivi disappeared into its mouth, and the shell shut up with a snap!

Kabo laughed like a fiend, and then went home.

‘Where is Pivi?’ asked the two pretty girls. Kabo pretended to cry, and told how Pivi had been swallowed.

‘But dry your tears, my darlings,’ said Kabo, ‘I will be your husband, and my wives shall be your slaves. Everything is for the best, in the best of all possible worlds.’

‘No, no!’ cried the girls, ‘we love Pivi. We do not love anyone else. We shall stay at home, and weep for Pivi!’

‘Wretched idiots!’ cried Kabo; ‘Pivi was a scoundrel who broke my leg, and knocked me into the river.’

Then a little cough was heard at the door, and Kabo trembled, for he knew it was the cough of Pivi!

‘Ah, dear Pivi!’ cried Kabo, rushing to the door. ‘What joy! I was trying to console your dear wives.’

Pivi said not one word. He waved his hand, and five and twenty of his friends came trooping down the hill. They cut up Kabo into little pieces. Pivi turned round, and there was the good woman of the river.

‘Pivi,’ she said, ‘how did you get out of the living tomb into which Kabo sent you?’

‘I had my spear with me,’ said Pivi. ‘It was quite dry inside the shell, and I worked away at the fish with my spear, till he saw reason to open his shell, and out I came.’ Then the good woman laughed; and Pivi and his two wives lived happy ever afterwards.

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THE ELF MAIDEN

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Once upon a time two young men living in a small village fell in love with the same girl. During the winter, it was all night except for an hour or so about noon, when the darkness seemed a little less dark, and then they used to see which of them could tempt her out for a sleigh ride with the Northern Lights flashing above them, or which could persuade her to come to a dance in some neighbouring barn. But when the spring began, and the light grew longer, the hearts of the villagers leapt at the sight of the sun, and a day was fixed for the boats to be brought out, and the great nets to be spread in the bays of some islands that lay a few miles to the north. Everybody went on this expedition, and the two young men and the girl went with them.

They all sailed merrily across the sea chattering like a flock of magpies, or singing their favourite songs. And when they reached the shore, what an unpacking there was! For this was a noted fishing ground, and here they would live, in little wooden huts, till autumn and bad weather came round again.

The maiden and the two young men happened to share the same hut with some friends, and fished daily from the same boat. And as time went on, one of the youths remarked that the girl took less notice of him than she did of his companion. At first he tried to think that he was dreaming, and for a long while he kept his eyes shut very tight to what he did not want to see, but in spite of his efforts, the truth managed to wriggle through, and then the young man gave up trying to deceive himself, and set about finding some way to get the better of his rival.

The plan that he hit upon could not be carried out for some months; but the longer the young man thought of it, the more pleased he was with it, so he made no sign of his feelings, and waited patiently till the moment came. This was the very day that they were all going to leave the islands, and sail back to the mainland for the winter. In the bustle and hurry of departure, the cunning fisherman contrived that their boat should be the

last to put off, and when everything was ready, and the sails about to be set, he suddenly called out:

‘Oh, dear, what shall I do! I have left my best knife behind in the hut. Run, like a good fellow, and get it for me, while I raise the anchor and loosen the tiller.’

Not thinking any harm, the youth jumped back on shore and made his way up the steep hank. At the door of the hut he stopped and looked back, then started and gazed in horror. The head of the boat stood out to sea, and he was left alone on the island.

Yes, there was no doubt of it—he was quite alone; and he had nothing to help him except the knife which his comrade had purposely dropped on the ledge of the window. For some minutes he was too stunned by the treachery of his friend to think about anything at all, but after a while he shook himself awake, and determined that he would manage to keep alive somehow, if it were only to revenge himself.

So he put the knife in his pocket and went off to a part of the island which was not so bare as the rest, and had a small grove of trees. From one of these he cut himself a bow, which he strung with a piece of cord that had been left lying about the huts.

When this was ready the young man ran down to the shore and shot one or two sea-birds, which he plucked and cooked for supper.

In this way the months slipped by, and Christmas came round again. The evening before, the youth went down to the rocks and into the copse, collecting all the drift wood the sea had washed up or the gale had blown down, and he piled it up in a great stack outside the door, so that he might not have to fetch any all the next day. As soon as his task was done, he paused and looked out towards the mainland, thinking of Christmas Eve last year, and the merry dance they had had. The night was still and cold, and by the help of the Northern Lights he could almost sea across to the opposite coast, when, suddenly, he noticed a boat, which seemed steering straight for the island. At first he could hardly stand for joy, the chance of speaking to another man was so delightful; but as the boat drew near there was something, he could not tell what, that was different from the boats which he had been used to all his life, and when it touched the shore he saw that the people that filled it were beings of another world than ours.

Then he hastily stepped behind the wood stack, and waited for what might happen next.

The strange folk one by one jumped on to the rocks, each bearing a load of something that they wanted. Among the women he remarked two young girls, more beautiful and better dressed than any of the rest, carrying between them two great baskets full of provisions. The young man peeped out cautiously to see what all this crowd could be doing inside the tiny hut, but in a moment he drew back again, as the girls returned, and looked about as if they wanted to find out what sort of a place the island was.

Their sharp eyes soon discovered the form of a man crouching behind the bundles of sticks, and at first they felt a little frightened, and started as if they would run away. But the youth remained so still, that they took courage and laughed gaily to each other. ‘What a strange creature, let us try what he is made of,’ said one, and she stooped down and gave him a pinch.

Now the young man had a pin sticking in the sleeve of his jacket, and the moment the girl’s hand touched him she pricked it so sharply that the blood came. The girl screamed so loudly that the people all ran out of their huts to see what was the matter. But directly they caught sight of the man they turned and fled in the other direction, and picking up the goods they had brought with them scampered as fast as they could down to the shore. In an instant, boat, people, and goods had vanished completely.

In their hurry they had, however, forgotten two things: a bundle of keys which lay on the table, and the girl whom the pin had pricked, and who now stood pale and helpless beside the wood stack.

‘You will have to make me your wife,’ she said at last, ‘for you have drawn my blood, and I belong to you.’

‘Why not? I am quite willing,’ answered he. ‘But how do you suppose we can manage to live till summer comes round again?’

‘Do not be anxious about that,’ said the girl; ‘if you will only marry me all will be well. I am very rich, and all my family are rich also.’

Then the young man gave her his promise to make her his wife, and the girl fulfilled her part of the bargain, and food was plentiful on the island all through the long winter months, though he never knew how it got there.

And by-and-by it was spring once more, and time for the fisher-folk to sail from the mainland.

‘Where are we to go now?’ asked the girl, one day, when the sun seemed brighter and the wind softer than usual.

‘I do not care where I go,’ answered the young man; ‘what do you think?’

The girl replied that she would like to go somewhere right at the other end of the island, and build a house, far away from the huts of the fishing-folk. And he consented, and that very day they set off in search of a sheltered spot on the banks of a stream, so that it would be easy to get water.

In a tiny bay, on the opposite side of the island they found the very thing, which seemed to have been made on purpose for them; and as they were tired with their long walk, they laid themselves down on a bank of moss among some birches and prepared to have a good night’s rest, so as to be fresh for work next day. But before she went to sleep the girl turned to her husband, and said: ‘If in your dreams you fancy that you hear strange noises, be sure you do not stir, or get up to see what it is.’

‘Oh, it is not likely we shall hear any noises in such a quiet place,’ answered he, and fell sound asleep.

Suddenly he was awakened by a great clatter about his ears, as if all the workmen in the world were sawing and hammering and building close to him. He was just going to spring up and go to see what it meant, when he luckily remembered his wife’s words and lay still. But the time till morning seemed very long, and with the first ray of sun they both rose, and pushed aside the branches of the birch trees. There, in the very place they had chosen, stood a beautiful house—doors and windows, and everything all complete!

‘Now you must fix on a spot for your cow-stalls,’ said the girl, when they had breakfasted off wild cherries; ‘and take care it is the proper size, neither too large nor too small.’ And the husband did as he was bid, though he wondered what use a cow-house could be, as they had no cows to put in it. But as he was a little afraid of his wife, who knew so much more than he, he asked no questions.

This night also he was awakened by the same sounds as before, and in the morning they found, near the stream, the most beautiful cow-house

that ever was seen, with stalls and milk-pails and stools all complete, indeed, everything that a cow-house could possibly want, except the cows. Then the girl bade him measure out the ground for a storehouse, and this, she said, might be as large as he pleased; and when the storehouse was ready she proposed that they should set off to pay her parents a visit.

The old people welcomed them heartily, and summoned their neighbours, for many miles round, to a great feast in their honour. In fact, for several weeks there was no work done on the farm at all; and at length the young man and his wife grew tired of so much play, and declared that they must return to their own home. But, before they started on the journey, the wife whispered to her husband: ‘Take care to jump over the threshold as quick as you can, or it will be the worse for you.’

The young man listened to her words, and sprang over the threshold like an arrow from a bow; and it was well he did, for, no sooner was he on the other side, than his father-in-law threw a great hammer at him, which would have broken both his legs, if it had only touched them.

When they had gone some distance on the road home, the girl turned to her husband and said: ‘Till you step inside the house, be sure you do not look back, whatever you may hear or see.’

And the husband promised, and for a while all was still; and he thought no more about the matter till he noticed at last that the nearer he drew to the house the louder grew the noise of the trampling of feet behind him. As he laid his hand upon the door he thought he was safe, and turned to look. There, sure enough, was a vast herd of cattle, which had been sent after him by his father-in-law when he found that his daughter had been cleverer than he. Half of the herd were already through the fence and cropping the grass on the banks of the stream, but half still remained outside and faded into nothing, even as he watched them.

However, enough cattle were left to make the young man rich, and he and his wife lived happily together, except that every now and then the girl vanished from his sight, and never told him where she had been. For a long time he kept silence about it; but one day, when he had been complaining of her absence, she said to him: ‘Dear husband, I am bound to go, even against my will, and there is only one way to stop me. Drive a nail into the threshold, and then I can never pass in or out.’

And so he did.

[Lapplandische Mahrchen.]

HOW SOME WILD ANIMALS BECAME TAME ONES

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Once upon a time there lived a miller who was so rich that, when he was going to be married, he asked to the feast not only his own friends but also the wild animals who dwelt in the hills and woods round about. The chief of the bears, the wolves, the foxes, the horses, the cows, the goats, the sheep, and the reindeer, all received invitations; and as they were not accustomed to weddings they were greatly pleased and flattered, and sent back messages in the politest language that they would certainly be there.

The first to start on the morning of the wedding-day was the bear, who always liked to be punctual; and, besides, he had a long way to go, and his hair, being so thick and rough, needed a good brushing before it was fit to be seen at a party. However, he took care to awaken very early, and set off down the road with a light heart. Before he had walked very far he met a boy who came whistling along, hitting at the tops of the flowers with a stick.

‘Where are you going?’ said he, looking at the bear in surprise, for he was an old acquaintance, and not generally so smart.

‘Oh, just to the miller’s marriage,’ answered the bear carelessly. ‘Of course, I would much rather stay at home, but the miller was so anxious I should be there that I really could not refuse.’

‘Don’t go, don’t go!’ cried the boy. ‘If you do you will never come back! You have got the most beautiful skin in the world—just the kind that everyone is wanting, and they will be sure to kill you and strip you of it.’

‘I had not thought of that,’ said the bear, whose face turned white, only nobody could see it. ‘If you are certain that they would be so wicked—but perhaps you are jealous because nobody has invited you?’

‘Oh, nonsense!’ replied the boy angrily, ‘do as you see. It is your skin, and not mine; I don’t care what becomes of it!’ And he walked quickly on with his head in the air.

The bear waited until he was out of sight, and then followed him slowly, for he felt in his heart that the boy's advice was good, though he was too proud to say so.

The boy soon grew tired of walking along the road, and turned off into the woods, where there were bushes he could jump and streams he could wade; but he had not gone far before he met the wolf.

'Where are you going?' asked he, for it was not the first time he had seen him.

'Oh, just to the miller's marriage,' answered the wolf, as the bear had done before him. 'It is rather tiresome, of course—weddings are always so stupid; but still one must be good-natured!'

'Don't go!' said the boy again. 'Your skin is so thick and warm, and winter is not far off now. They will kill you, and strip it from you.'

The wolf's jaw dropped in astonishment and terror. 'Do you really think that would happen?' he gasped.

'Yes, to be sure, I do,' answered the boy. 'But it is your affair, not mine. So good-morning,' and on he went. The wolf stood still for a few minutes, for he was trembling all over, and then crept quietly back to his cave.

Next the boy met the fox, whose lovely coat of silvery grey was shining in the sun.

'You look very fine!' said the boy, stopping to admire him, 'are you going to the miller's wedding too?'

'Yes,' answered the fox; 'it is a long journey to take for such a thing as that, but you know what the miller's friends are like—so dull and heavy! It is only kind to go and amuse them a little.'

'You poor fellow,' said the boy pityingly. 'Take my advice and stay at home. If you once enter the miller's gate his dogs will tear you in pieces.'

'Ah, well, such things have occurred, I know,' replied the fox gravely. And without saying any more he trotted off the way he had come.

His tail had scarcely disappeared, when a great noise of crashing branches was heard, and up bounded the horse, his black skin glistening like satin.

'Good-morning,' he called to the boy as he galloped past, 'I can't wait to talk to you now. I have promised the miller to be present at his wedding-feast, and they won't sit down till I come.'

‘Stop! stop!’ cried the boy after him, and there was something in his voice that made the horse pull up. ‘What is the matter?’ asked he.

‘You don’t know what you are doing,’ said the boy. ‘If once you go there you will never gallop through these woods any more. You are stronger than many men, but they will catch you and put ropes round you, and you will have to work and to serve them all the days of your life.’

The horse threw back his head at these words, and laughed scornfully.

‘Yes, I am stronger than many men,’ answered he, ‘and all the ropes in the world would not hold me. Let them bind me as fast as they will, I can always break loose, and return to the forest and freedom.’

And with this proud speech he gave a whisk of his long tail, and galloped away faster than before.

But when he reached the miller’s house everything happened as the boy had said. While he was looking at the guests and thinking how much handsomer and stronger he was than any of them, a rope was suddenly flung over his head, and he was thrown down and a bit thrust between his teeth. Then, in spite of his struggles, he was dragged to a stable, and shut up for several days without any food, till his spirit was broken and his coat had lost its gloss. After that he was harnessed to a plough, and had plenty of time to remember all he had lost through not listening to the counsel of the boy.

When the horse had turned a deaf ear to his words the boy wandered idly along, sometimes gathering wild strawberries from a bank, and sometimes plucking wild cherries from a tree, till he reached a clearing in the middle of the forest. Crossing this open space was a beautiful milk-white cow with a wreath of flowers round her neck.

‘Good-morning,’ she said pleasantly, as she came up to the place where the boy was standing.

‘Good-morning,’ he returned. ‘Where are you going in such a hurry?’

‘To the miller’s wedding; I am rather late already, for the wreath took such a long time to make, so I can’t stop.’

‘Don’t go,’ said the boy earnestly;’ when once they have tasted your milk they will never let you leave them, and you will have to serve them all the days of your life.’

‘Oh, nonsense; what do you know about it?’ answered the cow, who always thought she was wiser than other people. ‘Why, I can run twice as

fast as any of them! I should like to see anybody try to keep me against my will.’ And, without even a polite bow, she went on her way, feeling very much offended.

But everything turned out just as the boy had said. The company had all heard of the fame of the cow’s milk, and persuaded her to give them some, and then her doom was sealed. A crowd gathered round her, and held her horns so that she could not use them, and, like the horse, she was shut in the stable, and only let out in the mornings, when a long rope was tied round her head, and she was fastened to a stake in a grassy meadow.

And so it happened to the goat and to the sheep.

Last of all came the reindeer, looking as he always did, as if some serious business was on hand.

‘Where are you going?’ asked the boy, who by this time was tired of wild cherries, and was thinking of his dinner.

‘I am invited to the wedding,’ answered the reindeer, ‘and the miller has begged me on no account to fail him.’

‘O fool!’ cried the boy, ‘have you no sense at all? Don’t you know that when you get there they will hold you fast, for neither beast nor bird is as strong or as swift as you?’

‘That is exactly why I am quite safe,’ replied the reindeer. ‘I am so strong that no one can bind me, and so swift that not even an arrow can catch me. So, goodbye for the present, you will soon see me back.’

But none of the animals that went to the miller’s wedding ever came back. And because they were self-willed and conceited, and would not listen to good advice, they and their children have been the servants of men to this very day.

[Lapplandische Mahrchen.]

FORTUNE AND THE WOOD-CUTTER

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Several hundreds of years ago there lived in a forest a wood-cutter and his wife and children. He was very poor, having only his axe to depend upon, and two mules to carry the wood he cut to the neighbouring town; but he worked hard, and was always out of bed by five o'clock, summer and winter.

This went on for twenty years, and though his sons were now grown up, and went with their father to the forest, everything seemed to go against them, and they remained as poor as ever. In the end the wood-cutter lost heart, and said to himself:

'What is the good of working like this if I never am a penny the richer at the end? I shall go to the forest no more! And perhaps, if I take to my bed, and do not run after Fortune, one day she may come to me.'

So the next morning he did not get up, and when six o'clock struck, his wife, who had been cleaning the house, went to see what was the matter.

'Are you ill?' she asked wonderingly, surprised at not finding him dressed. 'The cock has crowed ever so often. It is high time for you to get up.'

'Why should I get up?' asked the man, without moving.

'Why? to go to the forest, of course.'

'Yes; and when I have toiled all day I hardly earn enough to give us one meal.'

'But what can we do, my poor husband?' said she. 'It is just a trick of Fortune's, who would never smile upon us.'

'Well, I have had my fill of Fortune's tricks,' cried he. 'If she wants me she can find me here. But I have done with the wood for ever.'

'My dear husband, grief has driven you mad! Do you think Fortune will come to anybody who does not go after her? Dress yourself, and saddle the mules, and begin your work. Do you know that there is not a morsel of bread in the house?'

‘I don’t care if there isn’t, and I am not going to the forest. It is no use your talking; nothing will make me change my mind.’

The distracted wife begged and implored in vain; her husband persisted in staying in bed, and at last, in despair, she left him and went back to her work.

An hour or two later a man from the nearest village knocked at her door, and when she opened it, he said to her: ‘Good-morning, mother. I have got a job to do, and I want to know if your husband will lend me your mules, as I see he is not using them, and can lend me a hand himself?’

‘He is upstairs; you had better ask him,’ answered the woman. And the man went up, and repeated his request.

‘I am sorry, neighbour, but I have sworn not to leave my bed, and nothing will make me break my vow.’

‘Well, then, will you lend me your two mules? I will pay you something for them.’

‘Certainly, neighbour. Take them and welcome.’

So the man left the house, and leading the mules from the stable, placed two sacks on their back, and drove them to a field where he had found a hidden treasure. He filled the sacks with the money, though he knew perfectly well that it belonged to the sultan, and was driving them quietly home again, when he saw two soldiers coming along the road. Now the man was aware that if he was caught he would be condemned to death, so he fled back into the forest. The mules, left to themselves, took the path that led to their master’s stable.

The wood-cutter’s wife was looking out of the window when the mules drew up before the door, so heavily laden that they almost sank under their burdens. She lost no time in calling her husband, who was still lying in bed.

‘Quick! quick! get up as fast as you can. Our two mules have returned with sacks on their backs, so heavily laden with something or other that the poor beasts can hardly stand up.’

‘Wife, I have told you a dozen times already that I am not going to get up. Why can’t you leave me in peace?’

As she found she could get no help from her husband the woman took a large knife and cut the cords which bound the sacks on to the animals’

backs. They fell at once to the ground, and out poured a rain of gold pieces, till the little court-yard shone like the sun.

‘A treasure!’ gasped the woman, as soon as she could speak from surprise. ‘A treasure!’ And she ran off to tell her husband.

‘Get up! get up!’ she cried. ‘You were quite right not to go to the forest, and to await Fortune in your bed; she has come at last! Our mules have returned home laden with all the gold in the world, and it is now lying in the court. No one in the whole country can be as rich as we are!’

In an instant the wood-cutter was on his feet, and running to the court, where he paused dazzled by the glitter of the coins which lay around him.

‘You see, my dear wife, that I was right,’ he said at last. ‘Fortune is so capricious, you can never count on her. Run after her, and she is sure to fly from you; stay still, and she is sure to come.’

[Traditions Populaires de l’Asie Mineure.]

THE ENCHANTED HEAD

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Once upon a time an old woman lived in a small cottage near the sea with her two daughters. They were very poor, and the girls seldom left the house, as they worked all day long making veils for the ladies to wear over their faces, and every morning, when the veils were finished, the other took them over the bridge and sold them in the city. Then she bought the food that they needed for the day, and returned home to do her share of veil-making.

One morning the old woman rose even earlier than usual, and set off for the city with her wares. She was just crossing the bridge when, suddenly, she knocked up against a human head, which she had never seen there before. The woman started back in horror; but what was her surprise when the head spoke, exactly as if it had a body joined on to it.

‘Take me with you, good mother!’ it said imploringly; ‘take me with you back to your house.’

At the sound of these words the poor woman nearly went mad with terror. Have that horrible thing always at home? Never! never! And she turned and ran back as fast as she could, not knowing that the head was jumping, dancing, and rolling after her. But when she reached her own door it bounded in before her, and stopped in front of the fire, begging and praying to be allowed to stay.

All that day there was no food in the house, for the veils had not been sold, and they had no money to buy anything with. So they all sat silent at their work, inwardly cursing the head which was the cause of their misfortunes.

When evening came, and there was no sign of supper, the head spoke, for the first time that day:

‘Good mother, does no one ever eat here? During all the hours I have spent in your house not a creature has touched anything.’

‘No,’ answered the old woman, ‘we are not eating anything.’

‘And why not, good mother?’

‘Because we have no money to buy any food.’

‘Is it your custom never to eat?’

‘No, for every morning I go into the city to sell my veils, and with the few shillings I get for them I buy all we want. To-day I did not cross the bridge, so of course I had nothing for food.’

‘Then I am the cause of your having gone hungry all day?’ asked the head.

‘Yes, you are,’ answered the old woman.

‘Well, then, I will give you money and plenty of it, if you will only do as I tell you. In an hour, as the clock strikes twelve, you must be on the bridge at the place where you met me. When you get there call out “Ahmed,” three times, as loud as you can. Then a negro will appear, and you must say to him: “The head, your master, desires you to open the trunk, and to give me the green purse which you will find in it.”’

‘Very well, my lord,’ said the old woman, ‘I will set off at once for the bridge.’ And wrapping her veil round her she went out.

Midnight was striking as she reached the spot where she had met the head so many hours before.

‘Ahmed! Ahmed! Ahmed!’ cried she, and immediately a huge negro, as tall as a giant, stood on the bridge before her.

‘What do you want?’ asked he.

‘The head, your master, desires you to open the trunk, and to give me the green purse which you will find in it.’

‘I will be back in a moment, good mother,’ said he. And three minutes later he placed a purse full of sequins in the old woman’s hand.

No one can imagine the joy of the whole family at the sight of all this wealth. The tiny, tumble-down cottage was rebuilt, the girls had new dresses, and their mother ceased selling veils. It was such a new thing to them to have money to spend, that they were not as careful as they might have been, and by-and-by there was not a single coin left in the purse. When this happened their hearts sank within them, and their faces fell.

‘Have you spent your fortune?’ asked the head from its corner, when it saw how sad they looked. ‘Well, then, go at midnight, good mother, to the bridge, and call out “Mahomet!” three times, as loud as you can. A negro will appear in answer, and you must tell him to open the trunk, and to give you the red purse which he will find there.’

The old woman did not need twice telling, but set off at once for the bridge.

‘Mahomet! Mahomet! Mahomet!’ cried she, with all her might; and in an instant a negro, still larger than the last, stood before her.

‘What do you want?’ asked he.

‘The head, your master, bids you open the trunk, and to give me the red purse which you will find in it.’

‘Very well, good mother, I will do so,’ answered the negro, and, the moment after he had vanished, he reappeared with the purse in his hand.

This time the money seemed so endless that the old woman built herself a new house, and filled it with the most beautiful things that were to be found in the shops. Her daughters were always wrapped in veils that looked as if they were woven out of sunbeams, and their dresses shone with precious stones. The neighbours wondered where all this sudden wealth had sprung from, but nobody knew about the head.

‘Good mother,’ said the head, one day, ‘this morning you are to go to the city and ask the sultan to give me his daughter for my bride.’

‘Do what?’ asked the old woman in amazement. ‘How can I tell the sultan that a head without a body wishes to become his son-in-law? They will think that I am mad, and I shall be hooted from the palace and stoned by the children.’

‘Do as I bid you,’ replied the head; ‘it is my will.’

The old woman was afraid to say anything more, and, putting on her richest clothes, started for the palace. The sultan granted her an audience at once, and, in a trembling voice, she made her request.

‘Are you mad, old woman?’ said the sultan, staring at her.

‘The wooer is powerful, O Sultan, and nothing is impossible to him.’

‘Is that true?’

‘It is, O Sultan; I swear it,’ answered she.

‘Then let him show his power by doing three things, and I will give him my daughter.’

‘Command, O gracious prince,’ said she.

‘Do you see that hill in front of the palace?’ asked the sultan.

‘I see it,’ answered she.

‘Well, in forty days the man who has sent you must make that hill vanish, and plant a beautiful garden in its place. That is the first thing.

Now go, and tell him what I say.'

So the old woman returned and told the head the sultan's first condition.

'It is well,' he replied; and said no more about it.

For thirty-nine days the head remained in its favourite corner. The old woman thought that the task set before was beyond his powers, and that no more would be heard about the sultan's daughter. But on the thirty-ninth evening after her visit to the palace, the head suddenly spoke.

'Good mother,' he said, 'you must go to-night to the bridge, and when you are there cry "Ali! Ali! Ali!" as loud as you can. A negro will appear before you, and you will tell him that he is to level the hill, and to make, in its place, the most beautiful garden that ever was seen.'

'I will go at once,' answered she.

It did not take her long to reach the bridge which led to the city, and she took up her position on the spot where she had first seen the head, and called loudly 'Ali! Ali! Ali.' In an instant a negro appeared before her, of such a huge size that the old woman was half frightened; but his voice was mild and gentle as he said: 'What is it that you want?'

'Your master bids you level the hill that stands in front of the sultan's palace and in its place to make the most beautiful garden in the world.'

'Tell my master he shall be obeyed,' replied Ali; 'it shall be done this moment.' And the old woman went home and gave Ali's message to the head.

Meanwhile the sultan was in his palace waiting till the fortieth day should dawn, and wondering that not one spadeful of earth should have been dug out of the hill.

'If that old woman has been playing me a trick,' thought he, 'I will hang her! And I will put up a gallows to-morrow on the hill itself.'

But when to-morrow came there was no hill, and when the sultan opened his eyes he could not imagine why the room was so much lighter than usual, and what was the reason of the sweet smell of flowers that filled the air.

'Can there be a fire?' he said to himself; 'the sun never came in at this window before. I must get up and see.' So he rose and looked out, and underneath him flowers from every part of the world were blooming, and creepers of every colour hung in chains from tree to tree.

Then he remembered. ‘Certainly that old woman’s son is a clever magician!’ cried he; ‘I never met anyone as clever as that. What shall I give him to do next? Let me think. Ah! I know.’ And he sent for the old woman, who by the orders of the head, was waiting below.

‘Your son has carried out my wishes very nicely,’ he said. ‘The garden is larger and better than that of any other king. But when I walk across it I shall need some place to rest on the other side. In forty days he must build me a palace, in which every room shall be filled with different furniture from a different country, and each more magnificent than any room that ever was seen.’ And having said this he turned round and went away.

‘Oh! he will never be able to do that,’ thought she; ‘it is much more difficult than the hill.’ And she walked home slowly, with her head bent.

‘Well, what am I to do next?’ asked the head cheerfully. And the old woman told her story.

‘Dear me! is that all? why it is child’s play,’ answered the head; and troubled no more about the palace for thirty-nine days. Then he told the old woman to go to the bridge and call for Hassan.

‘What do you want, old woman?’ asked Hassan, when he appeared, for he was not as polite as the others had been.

‘Your master commands you to build the most magnificent palace that ever was seen,’ replied she; ‘and you are to place it on the borders of the new garden.’

‘He shall be obeyed,’ answered Hassan. And when the sultan woke he saw, in the distance, a palace built of soft blue marble, resting on slender pillars of pure gold.

‘That old woman’s son is certainly all-powerful,’ cried he; ‘what shall I bid him do now?’ And after thinking some time he sent for the old woman, who was expecting the summons.

‘The garden is wonderful, and the palace the finest in the world,’ said he, ‘so fine, that my servants would cut but a sorry figure in it. Let your son fill it with forty slaves whose beauty shall be unequalled, all exactly like each other, and of the same height.’

This time the king thought he had invented something totally impossible, and was quite pleased with himself for his cleverness.

Thirty-nine days passed, and at midnight on the night of the last the old woman was standing on the bridge.

‘Bekir! Bekir! Bekir!’ cried she. And a negro appeared, and inquired what she wanted.

‘The head, your master, bids you find forty slaves of unequalled beauty, and of the same height, and place them in the sultan’s palace on the other side of the garden.’

And when, on the morning of the fortieth day, the sultan went to the blue palace, and was received by the forty slaves, he nearly lost his wits from surprise.

‘I will assuredly give my daughter to the old woman’s son,’ thought he. ‘If I were to search all the world through I could never find a more powerful son-in-law.’

And when the old woman entered his presence he informed her that he was ready to fulfil his promise, and she was to bid her son appear at the palace without delay.

This command did not at all please the old woman, though, of course, she made no objections to the sultan.

‘All has gone well so far,’ she grumbled, when she told her story to the head,’ but what do you suppose the sultan will say, when he sees his daughter’s husband?’

‘Never mind what he says! Put me on a silver dish and carry me to the palace.’

So it was done, though the old woman’s heart beat as she laid down the dish with the head upon it.

At the sight before him the king flew into a violent rage.

‘I will never marry my daughter to such a monster,’ he cried. But the princess placed her head gently on his arm.

‘You have given your word, my father, and you cannot break it,’ said she.

‘But, my child, it is impossible for you to marry such a being,’ exclaimed the sultan.

‘Yes, I will marry him. He had a beautiful head, and I love him already.’

So the marriage was celebrated, and great feasts were held in the palace, though the people wept tears to think of the sad fate of their beloved princess. But when the merry-making was done, and the young couple were alone, the head suddenly disappeared, or, rather, a body was

added to it, and one of the handsomest young men that ever was seen stood before the princess.

‘A wicked fairy enchanted me at my birth,’ he said, ‘and for the rest of the world I must always be a head only. But for you, and you only, I am a man like other men.’

‘And that is all I care about,’ said the princess.

[Traditions populaires de toutes les nations (Asie Mineure)].

THE SISTER OF THE SUN

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A long time ago there lived a young prince whose favourite playfellow was the son of the gardener who lived in the grounds of the palace. The king would have preferred his choosing a friend from the pages who were brought up at court; but the prince would have nothing to say to them, and as he was a spoilt child, and allowed his way in all things, and the gardener's boy was quiet and well-behaved, he was suffered to be in the palace, morning, noon, and night.

The game the children loved the best was a match at archery, for the king had given them two bows exactly alike, and they would spend whole days in trying to see which could shoot the highest. This is always very dangerous, and it was a great wonder they did not put their eyes out; but somehow or other they managed to escape.

One morning, when the prince had done his lessons, he ran out to call his friend, and they both hurried off to the lawn which was their usual playground. They took their bows out of the little hut where their toys were kept, and began to see which could shoot the highest. At last they happened to let fly their arrows both together, and when they fell to earth again the tail feather of a golden hen was found sticking in one. Now the question began to arise whose was the lucky arrow, for they were both alike, and look as closely as you would you could see no difference between them. The prince declared that the arrow was his, and the gardener's boy was quite sure it was HIS—and on this occasion he was perfectly right; but, as they could not decide the matter, they went straight to the king.

When the king had heard the story, he decided that the feather belonged to his son; but the other boy would not listen to this and claimed the feather for himself. At length the king's patience gave way, and he said angrily:

'Very well; if you are so sure that the feather is yours, yours it shall be; only you will have to seek till you find a golden hen with a feather missing

from her tail. And if you fail to find her your head will be the forfeit.'

The boy had need of all his courage to listen silently to the king's words. He had no idea where the golden hen might be, or even, if he discovered that, how he was to get to her. But there was nothing for it but to do the king's bidding, and he felt that the sooner he left the palace the better. So he went home and put some food into a bag, and then set forth, hoping that some accident might show him which path to take.

After walking for several hours he met a fox, who seemed inclined to be friendly, and the boy was so glad to have anyone to talk to that he sat down and entered into conversation.

'Where are you going?' asked the fox.

'I have got to find a golden hen who has lost a feather out of her tail,' answered the boy; 'but I don't know where she lives or how I shall catch her!'

'Oh, I can show you the way!' said the fox, who was really very good-natured. 'Far towards the east, in that direction, lives a beautiful maiden who is called "The Sister of the Sun." She has three golden hens in her house. Perhaps the feather belongs to one of them.'

The boy was delighted at this news, and they walked on all day together, the fox in front, and the boy behind. When evening came they lay down to sleep, and put the knapsack under their heads for a pillow.

Suddenly, about midnight, the fox gave a low whine, and drew nearer to his bedfellow. 'Cousin,' he whispered very low, 'there is someone coming who will take the knapsack away from me. Look over there!' And the boy, peeping through the bushes, saw a man.

'Oh, I don't think he will rob us!' said the boy; and when the man drew near, he told them his story, which so much interested the stranger that he asked leave to travel with them, as he might be of some use. So when the sun rose they set out again, the fox in front as before, the man and boy following.

After some hours they reached the castle of the Sister of the Sun, who kept the golden hens among her treasures. They halted before the gate and took counsel as to which of them should go in and see the lady herself.

'I think it would be best for me to enter and steal the hens,' said the fox; but this did not please the boy at all.

'No, it is my business, so it is right that I should go,' answered he.

‘You will find it a very difficult matter to get hold of the hens,’ replied the fox.

‘Oh, nothing is likely to happen to me,’ returned the boy.

‘Well, go then,’ said the fox, ‘but be careful not to make any mistake. Steal only the hen which has the feather missing from her tail, and leave the others alone.’

The man listened, but did not interfere, and the boy entered the court of the palace.

He soon spied the three hens strutting proudly about, though they were really anxiously wondering if there were not some grains lying on the ground that they might be glad to eat. And as the last one passed by him, he saw she had one feather missing from her tail.

At this sight the youth darted forward and seized the hen by the neck so that she could not struggle. Then, tucking her comfortably under his arm, he made straight for the gate. Unluckily, just as he was about to go through it he looked back and caught a glimpse of wonderful splendours from an open door of the palace. ‘After all, there is no hurry,’ he said to himself; ‘I may as well see something now I AM here,’ and turned back, forgetting all about the hen, which escaped from under his arm, and ran to join her sisters.

He was so much fascinated by the sight of all the beautiful things which peeped through the door that he scarcely noticed that he had lost the prize he had won; and he did not remember there was such a thing as a hen in the world when he beheld the Sister of the Sun sleeping on a bed before him.

For some time he stood staring; then he came to himself with a start, and feeling that he had no business there, softly stole away, and was fortunate enough to recapture the hen, which he took with him to the gate. On the threshold he stopped again. ‘Why should I not look at the Sister of the Sun?’ he thought to himself; ‘she is asleep, and will never know.’ And he turned back for the second time and entered the chamber, while the hen wriggled herself free as before. When he had gazed his fill he went out into the courtyard and picked up his hen who was seeking for corn.

As he drew near the gate he paused. ‘Why did I not give her a kiss?’ he said to himself; ‘I shall never kiss any woman so beautiful.’ And he wrung his hands with regret, so that the hen fell to the ground and ran away.

‘But I can do it still!’ he cried with delight, and he rushed back to the chamber and kissed the sleeping maiden on the forehead. But, alas! when he came out again he found that the hen had grown so shy that she would not let him come near her. And, worse than that, her sisters began to cluck so loud that the Sister of the Sun was awakened by the noise. She jumped up in haste from her bed, and going to the door she said to the boy:

‘You shall never, never, have my hen till you bring me back my sister who was carried off by a giant to his castle, which is a long way off.’

Slowly and sadly the youth left the palace and told his story to his friends, who were waiting outside the gate, how he had actually held the hen three times in his arms and had lost her.

‘I knew that we should not get off so easily,’ said the fox, shaking his head; ‘but there is no more time to waste. Let us set off at once in search of the sister. Luckily, I know the way.’

They walked on for many days, till at length the fox, who, as usual, was going first, stopped suddenly.

‘The giant’s castle is not far now,’ he said, ‘but when we reach it you two must remain outside while I go and fetch the princess. Directly I bring her out you must both catch hold of her tight, and get away as fast as you can; while I return to the castle and talk to the giants—for there are many of them—so that they may not notice the escape of the princess.’

A few minutes later they arrived at the castle, and the fox, who had often been there before, slipped in without difficulty. There were several giants, both young and old, in the hall, and they were all dancing round the princess. As soon as they saw the fox they cried out: ‘Come and dance too, old fox; it is a long time since we have seen you.’

So the fox stood up, and did his steps with the best of them; but after a while he stopped and said:

‘I know a charming new dance that I should like to show you; but it can only be done by two people. If the princess will honour me for a few minutes, you will soon see how it is done.’

‘Ah, that is delightful; we want something new,’ answered they, and placed the princess between the outstretched arms of the fox. In one instant he had knocked over the great stand of lights that lighted the hall, and in the darkness had borne the princess to the gate. His comrades seized hold of her, as they had been bidden, and the fox was back again in the hall

before anyone had missed him. He found the giants busy trying to kindle a fire and get some light; but after a bit someone cried out:

‘Where is the princess?’

‘Here, in my arms,’ replied the fox. ‘Don’t be afraid; she is quite safe.’ And he waited until he thought that his comrades had gained a good start, and put at least five or six mountains between themselves and the giants. Then he sprang through the door, calling, as he went: ‘The maiden is here; take her if you can!’

At these words the giants understood that their prize had escaped, and they ran after the fox as fast as their great legs could carry them, thinking that they should soon come up with the fox, who they supposed had the princess on his back. The fox, on his side, was far too clever to choose the same path that his friends had taken, but would in and out of the forest, till at last even HE was tired out, and fell fast asleep under a tree. Indeed, he was so exhausted with his day’s work that he never heard the approach of the giants, and their hands were already stretched out to seize his tail when his eyes opened, and with a tremendous bound he was once more beyond their reach. All the rest of the night the fox ran and ran; but when bright red spread over the east, he stopped and waited till the giants were close upon him. Then he turned, and said quietly: ‘Look, there is the Sister of the Sun!’

The giants raised their eyes all at once, and were instantly turned into pillars of stone. The fox then made each pillar a low bow, and set off to join his friends.

He knew a great many short cuts across the hills, so it was not long before he came up with them, and all four travelled night and day till they reached the castle of the Sister of the Sun. What joy and feasting there was throughout the palace at the sight of the princess whom they had mourned as dead! and they could not make enough of the boy who had gone through such dangers in order to rescue her. The golden hen was given to him at once, and, more than that, the Sister of the Sun told him that, in a little time, when he was a few years older, she would herself pay a visit to his home and become his wife. The boy could hardly believe his ears when he heard what was in store for him, for his was the most beautiful princess in all the world; and however thick the darkness might be, it fled away at once from the light of a star on her forehead.

So the boy set forth on his journey home, with his friends for company; his heart full of gladness when he thought of the promise of the princess. But, one by one, his comrades dropped off at the places where they had first met him, and he was quite alone when he reached his native town and the gates of the palace. With the golden hen under his arm he presented himself before the king, and told his adventures, and how he was going to have for a wife a princess so wonderful and unlike all other princesses, that the star on her forehead could turn night into day. The king listened silently, and when the boy had done, he said quietly: ‘If I find that your story is not true I will have you thrown into a cask of pitch.’

‘It is true—every word of it,’ answered the boy; and went on to tell that the day and even the hour were fixed when his bride was to come and seek him.

But as the time drew near, and nothing was heard of the princess, the youth became anxious and uneasy, especially when it came to his ears that the great cask was being filled with pitch, and that sticks were laid underneath to make a fire to boil it with. All day long the boy stood at the window, looking over the sea by which the princess must travel; but there were no signs of her, not even the tiniest white sail. And, as he stood, soldiers came and laid hands on him, and led him up to the cask, where a big fire was blazing, and the horrid black pitch boiling and bubbling over the sides. He looked and shuddered, but there was no escape; so he shut his eyes to avoid seeing.

The word was given for him to mount the steps which led to the top of the cask, when, suddenly, some men were seen running with all their might, crying as they went that a large ship with its sails spread was making straight for the city. No one knew what the ship was, or whence it came; but the king declared that he would not have the boy burned before its arrival, there would always be time enough for that.

At length the vessel was safe in port, and a whisper went through the watching crowd that on board was the Sister of the Sun, who had come to marry the young peasant as she had promised. In a few moments more she had landed, and desired to be shown the way to the cottage which her bridegroom had so often described to her; and whither he had been led back by the king’s order at the first sign of the ship.

‘Don’t you know me?’ asked the Sister of the Sun, bending over him where he lay, almost driven out of his senses with terror.

‘No, no; I don’t know you,’ answered the youth, without raising his eyes.

‘Kiss me,’ said the Sister of the Sun; and the youth obeyed her, but still without looking up.

‘Don’t you know me NOW?’ asked she.

‘No, I don’t know you—I don’t know you,’ he replied, with the manner of a man whom fear had driven mad.

At this the Sister of the Sun grew rather frightened, and beginning at the beginning, she told him the story of his meeting with her, and how she had come a long way in order to marry him. And just as she had finished in walked the king, to see if what the boy had said was really true. But hardly had he opened the door of the cottage when he was almost blinded by the light that filled it; and he remembered what he had been told about the star on the forehead of the princess. He staggered back as if he had been struck, then a curious feeling took hold of him, which he had never felt before, and falling on his knees before the Sister of the Sun, he implored her to give up all thought of the peasant boy, and to share his throne. But she laughed, and said she had a finer throne of her own, if she wanted to sit on it, and that she was free to please herself, and would have no husband but the boy whom she would never have seen except for the king himself.

‘I shall marry him to-morrow,’ ended she; and ordered the preparations to be set on foot at once.

When the next day came, however, the bridegroom’s father informed the princess that, by the law of the land, the marriage must take place in the presence of the king; but he hoped his majesty would not long delay his arrival. An hour or two passed, and everyone was waiting and watching, when at last the sound of trumpets was heard and a grand procession was seen marching up the street. A chair covered with velvet had been made ready for the king, and he took his seat upon it, and, looking round upon the assembled company, he said:

‘I have no wish to forbid this marriage; but, before I can allow it to be celebrated, the bridegroom must prove himself worthy of such a bride by

fulfilling three tasks. And the first is that in a single day he must cut down every tree in an entire forest.

The youth stood aghast as the king's words. He had never cut down a tree in his life, and had not the least idea how to begin. And as for a whole forest—! But the princess saw what was passing in his mind, and whispered to him:

'Don't be afraid. In my ship you will find an axe, which you must carry off to the forest. When you have cut down one tree with it just say: "So let the forest fall," and in an instant all the trees will be on the ground. But pick up three chips of the tree you felled, and put them in your pocket.'

And the young man did exactly as he was bid, and soon returned with the three chips safe in his coat.

The following morning the princess declared that she had been thinking about the matter, and that, as she was not a subject of the king, she saw no reason why she should be bound by his laws; and she meant to be married that very day. But the bridegroom's father told her that it was all very well for her to talk like that, but it was quite different for his son, who would pay with his head for any disobedience to the king's commands. However, in consideration of what the youth had done the day before, he hoped his majesty's heart might be softened, especially as he had sent a message that they might expect him at once. With this the bridal pair had to be content, and be as patient as they could till the king's arrival.

He did not keep them long, but they saw by his face that nothing good awaited them.

'The marriage cannot take place,' he said shortly, 'till the youth has joined to their roots all the trees he cut down yesterday.'

This sounded much more difficult than what he had done before, and he turned in despair to the Sister of the Sun.

'It is all right,' she whispered encouragingly. 'Take this water and sprinkle it on one of the fallen trees, and say to it: "So let all the trees of the forest stand upright," and in a moment they will be erect again.'

And the young man did what he was told, and left the forest looking exactly as it had done before.

Now, surely, thought the princess, there was no longer any need to put off the wedding; and she gave orders that all should be ready for the

following day. But again the old man interfered, and declared that without the king's permission no marriage could take place. For the third time his majesty was sent for, and for the third time he proclaimed that he could not give his consent until the bridegroom should have slain a serpent which dwelt in a broad river that flowed at the back of the castle. Everyone knew stories of this terrible serpent, though no one had actually seen it; but from time to time a child strayed from home and never came back, and then mothers would forbid the other children to go near the river, which had juicy fruits and lovely flowers growing along its banks.

So no wonder the youth trembled and turned pale when he heard what lay before him.

'You will succeed in this also,' whispered the Sister of the Sun, pressing his hand, 'for in my ship is a magic sword which will cut through everything. Go down to the river and unfasten a boat which lies moored there, and throw the chips into the water. When the serpent rears up its body you will cut off its three heads with one blow of your sword. Then take the tip of each tongue and go with it to-morrow morning into the king's kitchen. If the king himself should enter, just say to him: "Here are three gifts I offer you in return for the services you demanded of me!" and throw the tips of the serpent's tongues at him, and hasten to the ship as fast as your legs will carry you. But be sure you take great care never to look behind you.'

The young man did exactly what the princess had told him. The three chips which he flung into the river became a boat, and, as he steered across the stream, the serpent put up its head and hissed loudly. The youth had his sword ready, and in another second the three heads were bobbing on the water. Guiding his boat till he was beside them, he stooped down and snipped off the ends of the tongues, and then rowed back to the other bank. Next morning he carried them into the royal kitchen, and when the king entered, as was his custom, to see what he was going to have for dinner, the bridegroom flung them in his face, saying: 'Here is a gift for you in return for the services you asked of me.' And, opening the kitchen door, he fled to the ship. Unluckily he missed the way, and in his excitement ran backwards and forwards, without knowing whither he was going. At last, in despair, he looked round, and saw to his amazement that both the city and palace had vanished completely. Then he turned his eyes in the other

direction, and, far, far away, he caught sight of the ship with her sails spread, and a fair wind behind her.

This dreadful spectacle seemed to take away his senses, and all day long he wandered about, without knowing where he was going, till, in the evening, he noticed some smoke from a little hut of turf near by. He went straight up to it and cried: ‘O mother, let me come in for pity’s sake!’ The old woman who lived in the hut beckoned to him to enter, and hardly was he inside when he cried again: ‘O mother, can you tell me anything of the Sister of the Sun?’

But the woman only shook her head. ‘No, I know nothing of her,’ said she.

The young man turned to leave the hut, but the old woman stopped him, and, giving him a letter, begged him to carry it to her next eldest sister, saying: ‘If you should get tired on the way, take out the letter and rustle the paper.’

This advice surprised the young man a good deal, as he did not see how it could help him; but he did not answer, and went down the road without knowing where he was going. At length he grew so tired he could walk no more; then he remembered what the old woman had said. After he had rustled the leaves only once all fatigue disappeared, and he strode over the grass till he came to another little turf hut.

‘Let me in, I pray you, dear mother,’ cried he. And the door opened in front of him. ‘Your sister has sent you this letter,’ he said, and added quickly: ‘O mother! can you tell me anything of the Sister of the Sun?’

‘No, I know nothing of her,’ answered she. But as he turned hopelessly away, she stopped him.

‘If you happen to pass my eldest sister’s house, will you give her this letter?’ said she. ‘And if you should get tired on the road, just take it out of your pocket and rustle the paper.’

So the young man put the letter in his pocket, and walked all day over the hills till he reached a little turf hut, exactly like the other two.

‘Let me in, I pray you, dear mother,’ cried he. And as he entered he added: ‘Here is a letter from your sister and—can you tell me anything of the Sister of the Sun?’

‘Yes, I can,’ answered the old woman. ‘She lives in the castle on the Banka. Her father lost a battle only a few days ago because you had stolen

his sword from him, and the Sister of the Sun herself is almost dead of grief. But, when you see her, stick a pin into the palm of her hand, and suck the drops of blood that flow. Then she will grow calmer, and will know you again. Only, beware; for before you reach the castle on the Banka fearful things will happen.'

He thanked the old woman with tears of gladness for the good news she had given him, and continued his journey. But he had not gone very far when, at a turn of the road, he met with two brothers, who were quarrelling over a piece of cloth.

'My good men, what are you fighting about?' said he. 'That cloth does not look worth much!'

'Oh, it is ragged enough,' answered they, 'but it was left us by our father, and if any man wraps it round him no one can see him; and we each want it for our own.'

'Let me put it round me for a moment,' said the youth, 'and then I will tell you whose it ought to be!'

The brothers were pleased with this idea, and gave him the stuff; but the moment he had thrown it over his shoulder he disappeared as completely as if he had never been there at all.

Meanwhile the young man walked briskly along, till he came up with two other men, who were disputing over a table-cloth.

'What is the matter?' asked he, stopping in front of them.

'If this cloth is spread on a table,' answered they, 'the table is instantly covered with the most delicious food; and we each want to have it.'

'Let me try the table-cloth,' said the youth, 'and I will tell you whose it ought to be.'

The two men were quite pleased with this idea, and handed him the cloth. He then hastily threw the first piece of stuff round his shoulders and vanished from sight, leaving the two men grieving over their own folly.

The young man had not walked far before he saw two more men standing by the road-side, both grasping the same stout staff, and sometimes one seemed on the point of getting it, and sometimes the other.

'What are you quarrelling about? You could cut a dozen sticks from the wood each just as good as that!' said the young man. And as he spoke the fighters both stopped and looked at him.

‘Ah! you may think so,’ said one, ‘but a blow from one end of this stick will kill a man, while a touch from the other end will bring him back to life. You won’t easily find another stick like that!’

‘No; that is true,’ answered the young man. ‘Let me just look at it, and I will tell you whose it ought to be.’

The men were pleased with the idea, and handed him the staff.

‘It is very curious, certainly,’ said he; ‘but which end is it that restores people to life? After all, anyone can be killed by a blow from a stick if it is only hard enough!’ But when he was shown the end he threw the stuff over his shoulders and vanished.

At last he saw another set of men, who were struggling for the possession of a pair of shoes.

‘Why can’t you leave that pair of old shoes alone?’ said he. ‘Why, you could not walk a yard in them!’

‘Yes, they are old enough,’ answered they; ‘but whoever puts them on and wishes himself at a particular place, gets there without going.’

‘That sounds very clever,’ said the youth. ‘Let me try them, and then I shall be able to tell you whose they ought to be.’

The idea pleased the men, and they handed him the shoes; but the moment they were on his feet he cried:

‘I wish to be in the castle on the Banka!’ And before he knew it, he was there, and found the Sister of the Sun dying of grief. He knelt down by her side, and pulling a pin he stuck it into the palm of her hand, so that a drop of blood gushed out. This he sucked, as he had been told to do by the old woman, and immediately the princess came to herself, and flung her arms round his neck. Then she told him all her story, and what had happened since the ship had sailed away without him. ‘But the worst misfortune of all,’ she added, ‘was a battle which my father lost because you had vanished with his magic sword; and out of his whole army hardly one man was left.’

‘Show me the battle-field,’ said he. And she took him to a wild heath, where the dead were lying as they fell, waiting for burial. One by one he touched them with the end of his staff, till at length they all stood before him. Throughout the kingdom there was nothing but joy; and THIS time the wedding was REALLY celebrated. And the bridal pair lived happily in the castle on the Banka till they died.

[Lapplandische Mahrchen.]

THE PRINCE AND THE THREE FATES

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Once upon a time a little boy was born to a king who ruled over a great country through which ran a wide river. The king was nearly beside himself with joy, for he had always longed for a son to inherit his crown, and he sent messages to beg all the most powerful fairies to come and see this wonderful baby. In an hour or two, so many were gathered round the cradle, that the child seemed in danger of being smothered; but the king, who was watching the fairies eagerly, was disturbed to see them looking grave. ‘Is there anything the matter?’ he asked anxiously.

The fairies looked at him, and all shook their heads at once.

‘He is a beautiful boy, and it is a great pity; but what IS to happen WILL happen,’ said they. ‘It is written in the books of fate that he must die, either by a crocodile, or a serpent, or by a dog. If we could save him we would; but that is beyond our power.’

And so saying they vanished.

For a time the king stood where he was, horror-stricken at what he had heard; but, being of a hopeful nature, he began at once to invent plans to save the prince from the dreadful doom that awaited him. He instantly sent for his master builder, and bade him construct a strong castle on the top of a mountain, which should be fitted with the most precious things from the king’s own palace, and every kind of toy a child could wish to play with. And, besides, he gave the strictest orders that a guard should walk round the castle night and day.

For four or five years the baby lived in the castle alone with his nurses, taking his airings on the broad terraces, which were surrounded by walls, with a moat beneath them, and only a drawbridge to connect them with the outer world.

One day, when the prince was old enough to run quite fast by himself, he looked from the terrace across the moat, and saw a little soft fluffy ball of a dog jumping and playing on the other side. Now, of course, all dogs had been kept from him for fear that the fairies’ prophecy should come

true, and he had never even beheld one before. So he turned to the page who was walking behind him, and said:

‘What is that funny little thing which is running so fast over there?’

‘That is a dog, prince,’ answered the page.

‘Well, bring me one like it, and we will see which can run the faster.’ And he watched the dog till it had disappeared round the corner.

The page was much puzzled to know what to do. He had strict orders to refuse the prince nothing; yet he remembered the prophecy, and felt that this was a serious matter. At last he thought he had better tell the king the whole story, and let him decide the question.

‘Oh, get him a dog if he wants one,’ said the king, ‘he will only cry his heart out if he does not have it.’ So a puppy was found, exactly like the other; they might have been twins, and perhaps they were.

Years went by, and the boy and the dog played together till the boy grew tall and strong. The time came at last when he sent a message to his father, saying:

‘Why do you keep me shut up here, doing nothing? I know all about the prophecy that was made at my birth, but I would far rather be killed at once than live an idle, useless life here. So give me arms, and let me go, I pray you; me and my dog too.’

And again the king listened to his wishes, and he and his dog were carried in a ship to the other side of the river, which was so broad here it might almost have been the sea. A black horse was waiting for him, tied to a tree, and he mounted and rode away wherever his fancy took him, the dog always at his heels. Never was any prince so happy as he, and he rode and rode till at length he came to a king’s palace.

The king who lived in it did not care about looking after his country, and seeing that his people lived cheerful and contented lives. He spent his whole time in making riddles, and inventing plans which he had much better have let alone. At the period when the young prince reached the kingdom he had just completed a wonderful house for his only child, a daughter. It had seventy windows, each seventy feet from the ground, and he had sent the royal herald round the borders of the neighbouring kingdoms to proclaim that whoever could climb up the walls to the window of the princess should win her for his wife.

The fame of the princess's beauty had spread far and wide, and there was no lack of princes who wished to try their fortune. Very funny the palace must have looked each morning, with the dabs of different colour on the white marble as the princes were climbing up the walls. But though some managed to get further than others, nobody was anywhere near the top.

They had already been spending several days in this manner when the young prince arrived, and as he was pleasant to look upon, and civil to talk to, they welcomed him to the house, which had been given to them, and saw that his bath was properly perfumed after his long journey. 'Where do you come from?' they said at last. 'And whose son are you?'

But the young prince had reasons for keeping his own secret, and he answered:

'My father was master of the horse to the king of my country, and after my mother died he married another wife. At first all went well, but as soon as she had babies of her own she hated me, and I fled, lest she should do me harm.'

The hearts of the other young men were touched as soon as they heard this story, and they did everything they could think of to make him forget his past sorrows.

'What are you doing here?' said the youth, one day.

'We spend our whole time climbing up the walls of the palace, trying to reach the windows of the princess,' answered the young men; 'but, as yet, no one has reached within ten feet of them.'

'Oh, let me try too,' cried the prince; 'but to-morrow I will wait and see what you do before I begin.

So the next day he stood where he could watch the young men go up, and he noted the places on the wall that seemed most difficult, and made up his mind that when his turn came he would go up some other way.

Day after day he was to be seen watching the wooers, till, one morning, he felt that he knew the plan of the walls by heart, and took his place by the side of the others. Thanks to what he had learned from the failure of the rest, he managed to grasp one little rough projection after another, till at last, to the envy of his friends, he stood on the sill of the princess's window. Looking up from below, they saw a white hand stretched forth to draw him in.

Then one of the young men ran straight to the king's palace, and said: 'The wall has been climbed, and the prize is won!'

'By whom?' cried the king, starting up from his throne; 'which of the princes may I claim as my son-in-law?'

'The youth who succeeded in climbing to the princess's window is not a prince at all,' answered the young man. 'He is the son of the master of the horse to the great king who dwells across the river, and he fled from his own country to escape from the hatred of his stepmother.'

At this news the king was very angry, for it had never entered his head that anyone BUT a prince would seek to woo his daughter.

'Let him go back to the land whence he came,' he shouted in wrath; 'does he expect me to give my daughter to an exile?' And he began to smash the drinking vessels in his fury; indeed, he quite frightened the young man, who ran hastily home to his friends, and told the youth what the king had said.

Now the princess, who was leaning from her window, heard his words and bade the messenger go back to the king her father and tell him that she had sworn a vow never to eat or drink again if the youth was taken from her. The king was more angry than ever when he received this message, and ordered his guards to go at once to the palace and put the successful wooer to death; but the princess threw herself between him and his murderers.

'Lay a finger on him, and I shall be dead before sunset,' said she; and as they saw that she meant it, they left the palace, and carried the tale to her father.

By this time the king's anger was dying away, and he began to consider what his people would think of him if he broke the promise he had publicly given. So he ordered the princess to be brought before him, and the young man also, and when they entered the throne room he was so pleased with the noble air of the victor that his wrath quite melted away, and he ran to him and embraced him.

'Tell me who you are?' he asked, when he had recovered himself a little, 'for I will never believe that you have not royal blood in your veins.'

But the prince still had his reasons for being silent, and only told the same story. However, the king had taken such a fancy to the youth that he

said no more, and the marriage took place the following day, and great herds of cattle and a large estate were given to the young couple.

After a little while the prince said to his wife: ‘My life is in the hands of three creatures—a crocodile, a serpent, and a dog.’

‘Ah, how rash you are!’ cried the princess, throwing her arms round his neck. ‘If you know that, how can you have that horrid beast about you? I will give orders to have him killed at once.’

But the prince would not listen to her.

‘Kill my dear little dog, who had been my playfellow since he was a puppy?’ exclaimed he. ‘Oh, never would I allow that.’ And all that the princess could get from him was that he would always wear a sword, and have somebody with him when he left the palace.

When the prince and princess had been married a few months, the prince heard that his stepmother was dead, and his father was old and ill, and longing to have his eldest son by his side again. The young man could not remain deaf to such a message, and he took a tender farewell of his wife, and set out on his journey home. It was a long way, and he was forced to rest often on the road, and so it happened that, one night, when he was sleeping in a city on the banks of the great river, a huge crocodile came silently up and made its way along a passage to the prince’s room. Fortunately one of his guards woke up as it was trying to steal past them, and shut the crocodile up in a large hall, where a giant watched over it, never leaving the spot except during the night, when the crocodile slept. And this went on for more than a month.

Now, when the prince found that he was not likely to leave his father’s kingdom again, he sent for his wife, and bade the messenger tell her that he would await her coming in the town on the banks of the great river. This was the reason why he delayed his journey so long, and narrowly escaped being eaten by the crocodile. During the weeks that followed the prince amused himself as best he could, though he counted the minutes to the arrival of the princess, and when she did come, he at once prepared to start for the court. That very night, however, while he was asleep, the princess noticed something strange in one of the corners of the room. It was a dark patch, and seemed, as she looked, to grow longer and longer, and to be moving slowly towards the cushions on which the prince was lying. She shrank in terror, but, slight as was the noise, the thing heard it, and raised

its head to listen. Then she saw it was the long flat head of a serpent, and the recollection of the prophecy rushed into her mind. Without waking her husband, she glided out of bed, and taking up a heavy bowl of milk which stood on a table, laid it on the floor in the path of the serpent—for she knew that no serpent in the world can resist milk. She held her breath as the snake drew near, and watched it throw up its head again as if it was smelling something nice, while its forky tongue darted out greedily. At length its eyes fell upon the milk, and in an instant it was lapping it so fast that it was a wonder the creature did not choke, for it never took its head from the bowl as long as a drop was left in it. After that it dropped on the ground and slept heavily. This was what the princess had been waiting for, and catching up her husband's sword, she severed the snake's head from its body.

The morning after this adventure the prince and princess set out for the king's palace, but found when they reached it, that he was already dead. They gave him a magnificent burial, and then the prince had to examine the new laws which had been made in his absence, and do a great deal of business besides, till he grew quite ill from fatigue, and was obliged to go away to one of his palaces on the banks of the river, in order to rest. Here he soon got better, and began to hunt, and to shoot wild duck with his bow; and wherever he went, his dog, now grown very old, went with him.

One morning the prince and his dog were out as usual, and in chasing their game they drew near the bank of the river. The prince was running at full speed after his dog when he almost fell over something that looked like a log of wood, which was lying in his path. To his surprise a voice spoke to him, and he saw that the thing which he had taken for a branch was really a crocodile.

'You cannot escape from me,' it was saying, when he had gathered his senses again. 'I am your fate, and wherever you go, and whatever you do, you will always find me before you. There is only one means of shaking off my power. If you can dig a pit in the dry sand which will remain full of water, my spell will be broken. If not death will come to you speedily. I give you this one chance. Now go.'

The young man walked sadly away, and when he reached the palace he shut himself into his room, and for the rest of the day refused to see anyone, not even his wife. At sunset, however, as no sound could be heard

through the door, the princess grew quite frightened, and made such a noise that the prince was forced to draw back the bolt and let her come in. ‘How pale you look,’ she cried, ‘has anything hurt you? Tell me, I pray you, what is the matter, for perhaps I can help!’

So the prince told her the whole story, and of the impossible task given him by the crocodile.

‘How can a sand hole remain full of water?’ asked he. ‘Of course, it will all run through. The crocodile called it a “chance”; but he might as well have dragged me into the river at once. He said truly that I cannot escape him.’

‘Oh, if that is all,’ cried the princess, ‘I can set you free myself, for my fairy godmother taught me to know the use of plants and in the desert not far from here there grows a little four-leaved herb which will keep the water in the pit for a whole year. I will go in search of it at dawn, and you can begin to dig the hole as soon as you like.

To comfort her husband, the princess had spoken lightly and gaily; but she knew very well she had no light task before her. Still, she was full of courage and energy, and determined that, one way or another, her husband should be saved.

It was still starlight when she left the palace on a snow-white donkey, and rode away from the river straight to the west. For some time she could see nothing before her but a flat waste of sand, which became hotter and hotter as the sun rose higher and higher. Then a dreadful thirst seized her and the donkey, but there was no stream to quench it, and if there had been she would hardly have had time to stop, for she still had far to go, and must be back before evening, or else the crocodile might declare that the prince had not fulfilled his conditions. So she spoke cheering words to her donkey, who brayed in reply, and the two pushed steadily on.

Oh! how glad they both were when they caught sight of a tall rock in the distance. They forgot that they were thirsty, and that the sun was hot; and the ground seemed to fly under their feet, till the donkey stopped of its own accord in the cool shadow. But though the donkey might rest the princess could not, for the plant, as she knew, grew on the very top of the rock, and a wide chasm ran round the foot of it. Luckily she had brought a rope with her, and making a noose at one end, she flung it across with all her might. The first time it slid back slowly into the ditch, and she had to

draw it up, and throw it again, but at length the noose caught on something, the princess could not see what, and had to trust her whole weight to this little bridge, which might snap and let her fall deep down among the rocks. And in that case her death was as certain as that of the prince.

But nothing so dreadful happened. The princess got safely to the other side, and then became the worst part of her task. As fast as she put her foot on a ledge of the rock the stone broke away from under her, and left her in the same place as before. Meanwhile the hours were passing, and it was nearly noon.

The heart of the poor princess was filled with despair, but she would not give up the struggle. She looked round till she saw a small stone above her which seemed rather stronger than the rest, and by only poising her foot lightly on those that lay between, she managed by a great effort to reach it. In this way, with torn and bleeding hands, she gained the top; but here such a violent wind was blowing that she was almost blinded with dust, and was obliged to throw herself on the ground, and feel about after the precious herb.

For a few terrible moments she thought that the rock was bare, and that her journey had been to no purpose. Feel where she would, there was nothing but grit and stones, when, suddenly, her fingers touched something soft in a crevice. It was a plant, that was clear; but was it the right one? See she could not, for the wind was blowing more fiercely than ever, so she lay where she was and counted the leaves. One, two, three—yes! yes! there were four! And plucking a leaf she held it safe in her hand while she turned, almost stunned by the wind, to go down the rock.

When once she was safely over the side all became still in a moment, and she slid down the rock so fast that it was only a wonder that she did not land in the chasm. However, by good luck, she stopped quite close to her rope bridge and was soon across it. The donkey brayed joyfully at the sight of her, and set off home at his best speed, never seeming to know that the earth under his feet was nearly as hot as the sun above him.

On the bank of the great river he halted, and the princess rushed up to where the prince was standing by the pit he had digged in the dry sand, with a huge water pot beside it. A little way off the crocodile lay blinking in the sun, with his sharp teeth and whity-yellow jaws wide open.

At a signal from the princess the prince poured the water in the hole, and the moment it reached the brim the princess flung in the four-leaved plant. Would the charm work, or would the water trickle away slowly through the sand, and the prince fall a victim to that horrible monster? For half an hour they stood with their eyes rooted to the spot, but the hole remained as full as at the beginning, with the little green leaf floating on the top. Then the prince turned with a shout of triumph, and the crocodile sulkily plunged into the river.

The prince had escape for ever the second of his three fates!

He stood there looking after the crocodile, and rejoicing that he was free, when he was startled by a wild duck which flew past them, seeking shelter among the rushes that bordered the edge of the stream. In another instant his dog dashed by in hot pursuit, and knocked heavily against his master’s legs. The prince staggered, lost his balance and fell backwards into the river, where the mud and the rushes caught him and held him fast. He shrieked for help to his wife, who came running; and luckily brought her rope with her. The poor old dog was drowned, but the prince was pulled to shore. ‘My wife,’ he said, ‘has been stronger than my fate.’

[Adapted from Les Contes Populaires de l’Egypte Ancienne.]

THE FOX AND THE LAPP

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Once upon a time a fox lay peeping out of his hole, watching the road that ran by at a little distance, and hoping to see something that might amuse him, for he was feeling very dull and rather cross. For a long while he watched in vain; everything seemed asleep, and not even a bird stirred overhead. The fox grew crosser than ever, and he was just turning away in disgust from his place when he heard the sound of feet coming over the snow. He crouched eagerly down at the edge of the road and said to himself: ‘I wonder what would happen if I were to pretend to be dead! This is a man driving a reindeer sledge, I know the tinkling of the harness. And at any rate I shall have an adventure, and that is always something!’

So he stretched himself out by the side of the road, carefully choosing a spot where the driver could not help seeing him, yet where the reindeer would not tread on him; and all fell out just as he had expected. The sledge-driver pulled up sharply, as his eyes lighted on the beautiful animal lying stiffly beside him, and jumping out he threw the fox into the bottom of the sledge, where the goods he was carrying were bound tightly together by ropes. The fox did not move a muscle though his bones were sore from the fall, and the driver got back to his seat again and drove on merrily.

But before they had gone very far, the fox, who was near the edge, contrived to slip over, and when the Laplander saw him stretched out on the snow he pulled up his reindeer and put the fox into one of the other sledges that was fastened behind, for it was market-day at the nearest town, and the man had much to sell.

They drove on a little further, when some noise in the forest made the man turn his head, just in time to see the fox fall with a heavy thump on to the frozen snow. ‘That beast is bewitched!’ he said to himself, and then he threw the fox into the last sledge of all, which had a cargo of fishes. This was exactly what the cunning creature wanted, and he wriggled gently to the front and bit the cord which tied the sledge to the one before it so that it remained standing in the middle of the road.

Now there were so many sledges that the Lapp did not notice for a long while that one was missing; indeed, he would have entered the town without knowing if snow had not suddenly begun to fall. Then he got down to secure more firmly the cloths that kept his goods dry, and going to the end of the long row, discovered that the sledge containing the fish and the fox was missing. He quickly unharnessed one of his reindeer and rode back along the way he had come, to find the sledge standing safe in the middle of the road; but as the fox had bitten off the cord close to the noose there was no means of moving it away.

The fox meanwhile was enjoying himself mightily. As soon as he had loosened the sledge, he had taken his favourite fish from among the piles neatly arranged for sale, and had trotted off to the forest with it in his mouth. By-and-by he met a bear, who stopped and said: ‘Where did you find that fish, Mr. Fox?’

‘Oh, not far off,’ answered he; ‘I just stuck my tail in the stream close by the place where the elves dwell, and the fish hung on to it of itself.’

‘Dear me,’ snarled the bear, who was hungry and not in a good temper, ‘if the fish hung on to your tail, I suppose he will hang on to mine.’

‘Yes, certainly, grandfather,’ replied the fox, ‘if you have patience to suffer what I suffered.’

‘Of course I can,’ replied the bear, ‘what nonsense you talk! Show me the way.’

So the fox led him to the bank of a stream, which, being in a warm place, had only lightly frozen in places, and was at this moment glittering in the spring sunshine.

‘The elves bathe here,’ he said, ‘and if you put in your tail the fish will catch hold of it. But it is no use being in a hurry, or you will spoil everything.’

Then he trotted off, but only went out of sight of the bear, who stood still on the bank with his tail deep in the water. Soon the sun set and it grew very cold and the ice formed rapidly, and the bear’s tail was fixed as tight as if a vice had held it; and when the fox saw that everything had happened just as he had planned it, he called out loudly:

‘Be quick, good people, and come with your bows and spears. A bear has been fishing in your brook!’

And in a moment the whole place was full of little creatures each one with a tiny bow and a spear hardly big enough for a baby; but both arrows and spears could sting, as the bear knew very well, and in his fright he gave such a tug to his tail that it broke short off, and he rolled away into the forest as fast as his legs could carry him. At this sight the fox held his sides for laughing, and then scampered away in another direction. By-and-by he came to a fir tree, and crept into a hole under the root. After that he did something very strange.

Taking one of his hind feet between his two front paws, he said softly:

'What would you do, my foot, if someone was to betray me?'

'I would run so quickly that he should not catch you.'

'What would you do, mine ear, if someone was to betray me?'

'I would listen so hard that I should hear all his plans.'

'What would you do, my nose, if someone was to betray me?'

'I would smell so sharply that I should know from afar that he was coming.'

'What would you do, my tail, if someone was to betray me?'

'I would steer you so straight a course that you would soon be beyond his reach. Let us be off; I feel as if danger was near.'

But the fox was comfortable where he was, and did not hurry himself to take his tail's advice. And before very long he found he was too late, for the bear had come round by another path, and guessing where his enemy was began to scratch at the roots of the tree. The fox made himself as small as he could, but a scrap of his tail peeped out, and the bear seized it and held it tight. Then the fox dug his claws into the ground, but he was not strong enough to pull against the bear, and slowly he was dragged forth and his body flung over the bear's neck. In this manner they set out down the road, the fox's tail being always in the bear's mouth.

After they had gone some way, they passed a tree-stump, on which a bright coloured woodpecker was tapping.

'Ah! those were better times when I used to paint all the birds such gay colours,' sighed the fox.

'What are you saying, old fellow?' asked the bear.

'I? Oh, I was saying nothing,' answered the fox drearily. 'Just carry me to your cave and eat me up as quick as you can.'

The bear was silent, and thought of his supper; and the two continued their journey till they reached another tree with a woodpecker tapping on it.

‘Ah! those were better times when I used to paint all the birds such gay colours,’ said the fox again to himself.

‘Couldn’t you paint me too?’ asked the bear suddenly.

But the fox shook his head; for he was always acting, even if no one was there to see him do it.

‘You bear pain so badly,’ he replied, in a thoughtful voice, ‘and you are impatient besides, and could never put up with all that is necessary. Why, you would first have to dig a pit, and then twist ropes of willow, and drive in posts and fill the hole with pitch, and, last of all, set it on fire. Oh, no; you would never be able to do all that.’

‘It does not matter a straw how hard the work is,’ answered the bear eagerly, ‘I will do it every bit.’ And as he spoke he began tearing up the earth so fast that soon a deep pit was ready, deep enough to hold him.

‘That is all right,’ said the fox at last, ‘I see I was mistaken in you. Now sit here, and I will bind you.’ So the bear sat down on the edge of the pit, and the fox sprang on his back, which he crossed with the willow ropes, and then set fire to the pitch. It burnt up in an instant, and caught the bands of willow and the bear’s rough hair; but he did not stir, for he thought that the fox was rubbing the bright colours into his skin, and that he would soon be as beautiful as a whole meadow of flowers. But when the fire grew hotter still he moved uneasily from one foot to the other, saying, imploringly: ‘It is getting rather warm, old man.’ But all the answer he got was: ‘I thought you would never be able to suffer pain like those little birds.’

The bear did not like being told that he was not as brave as a bird, so he set his teeth and resolved to endure anything sooner than speak again; but by this time the last willow band had burned through, and with a push the fox sent his victim tumbling into the grass, and ran off to hide himself in the forest. After a while he stole cautiously and found, as he expected, nothing left but a few charred bones. These he picked up and put in a bag, which he slung over his back.

By-and-by he met a Lapp driving his team of reindeer along the road, and as he drew near, the fox rattled the bones gaily.

‘That sounds like silver or gold,’ thought the man to himself. And he said politely to the fox:

‘Good-day, friend! What have you got in your bag that makes such a strange sound?’

‘All the wealth my father left me,’ answered the fox. ‘Do you feel inclined to bargain?’

‘Well, I don’t mind,’ replied the Lapp, who was a prudent man, and did not wish the fox to think him too eager; ‘but show me first what money you have got.’

‘Ah, but I can’t do that,’ answered the fox, ‘my bag is sealed up. But if you will give me those three reindeer, you shall take it as it is, with all its contents.’

The Lapp did not quite like it, but the fox spoke with such an air that his doubts melted away. He nodded, and stretched out his hand; the fox put the bag into it, and unharnassed the reindeer he had chosen.

‘Oh, I forgot!’ he exclaimed, turning round, as he was about to drive them in the opposite direction, ‘you must be sure not to open the bag until you have gone at least five miles, right on the other side of those hills out there. If you do, you will find that all the gold and silver has changed into a parcel of charred bones.’ Then he whipped up his reindeer, and was soon out of sight.

For some time the Lapp was satisfied with hearing the bones rattle, and thinking to himself what a good bargain he had made, and of all the things he would buy with the money. But, after a bit, this amusement ceased to content him, and besides, what was the use of planning when you did not know for certain how rich you were? Perhaps there might be a great deal of silver and only a little gold in the bag; or a great deal of gold, and only a little silver. Who could tell? He would not, of course, take the money out to count it, for that might bring him bad luck. But there could be no harm in just one peep! So he slowly broke the seal, and untied the strings, and, behold, a heap of burnt bones lay before him! In a minute he knew he had been tricked, and flinging the bag to the ground in a rage, he ran after the fox as fast as his snow-shoes would carry him.

Now the fox had guessed exactly what would happen, and was on the look out. Directly he saw the little speck coming towards him, he wished that the man’s snow-shoes might break, and that very instant the Lapp’s

shoes snapped in two. The Lapp did now know that this was the fox's work, but he had to stop and fetch one of his other reindeer, which he mounted, and set off again in pursuit of his enemy. The fox soon heard him coming, and this time he wished that the reindeer might fall and break its leg. And so it did; and the man felt it was a hopeless chase, and that he was no match for the fox.

So the fox drove on in peace till he reached the cave where all his stores were kept, and then he began to wonder whom he could get to help him kill his reindeer, for though he could steal reindeer he was too small to kill them. 'After all, it will be quite easy,' thought he, and he bade a squirrel, who was watching him on a tree close by, take a message to all the robber beasts of the forest, and in less than half an hour a great crashing of branches was heard, and bears, wolves, snakes, mice, frogs, and other creatures came pressing up to the cave.

When they heard why they had been summoned, they declared themselves ready each one to do his part. The bear took his crossbow from his neck and shot the reindeer in the chin; and, from that day to this, every reindeer has a mark in that same spot, which is always known as the bear's arrow. The wolf shot him in the thigh, and the sign of his arrow still remains; and so with the mouse and the viper and all the rest, even the frog; and at the last the reindeer all died. And the fox did nothing, but looked on.

'I really must go down to the brook and wash myself,' said he (though he was perfectly clean), and he went under the bank and hid himself behind a stone. From there he set up the most frightful shrieks, so that the animals fled away in all directions. Only the mouse and the ermine remained where they were, for they thought that they were much too small to be noticed.

The fox continued his shrieks till he felt sure that the animals must have got to a safe distance; then he crawled out of his hiding-place and went to the bodies of the reindeer, which he now had all to himself. He gathered a bundle of sticks for a fire, and was just preparing to cook a steak, when his enemy, the Lapp, came up, panting with haste and excitement.

'What are you doing there?' cried he; 'why did you palm off those bones on me? And why, when you had got the reindeer, did you kill them?'

‘Dear brother,’ answered the fox with a sob, ‘do not blame me for this misfortune. It is my comrades who have slain them in spite of my prayers.’

The man made no reply, for the white fur of the ermine, who was crouching with the mouse behind some stones, had just caught his eye. He hastily seized the iron hook which hung over the fire and flung it at the little creature; but the ermine was too quick for him, and the hook only touched the top of its tail, and that has remained black to this day. As for the mouse, the Lapp threw a half-burnt stick after him, and though it was not enough to hurt him, his beautiful white skin was smeared all over with it, and all the washing in the world would not make him clean again. And the man would have been wiser if he had let the ermine and the mouse alone, for when he turned round again he found he was alone.

Directly the fox noticed that his enemy’s attention had wandered from himself he watched his chance, and stole softly away till he had reached a clump of thick bushes, when he ran as fast as he could, till he reached a river, where a man was mending his boat.

‘Oh, I wish, I wish, I had a boat to mend too!’ he cried, sitting up on his hind-legs and looking into the man’s face.

‘Stop your silly chatter!’ answered the man crossly, ‘or I will give you a bath in the river.’

‘Oh, I wish, I do wish, I had a boat to mend,’ cried the fox again, as if he had not heard. And the man grew angry and seized him by the tail, and threw him far out in the stream close to the edge of an island; which was just what the fox wanted. He easily scrambled up, and sitting on the top, he called: ‘Hasten, hasten, O fishes, and carry me to the other side!’ And the fishes left the stones where they had been sleeping, and the pools where they had been feeding, and hurried to see who could get to the island first.

‘I have won,’ shouted the pike. ‘Jump on my back, dear fox, and you will find yourself in a trice on the opposite shore.’

‘No, thank you,’ answered the fox, ‘your back is much too weak for me. I should break it.’

‘Try mine,’ said the eel, who had wriggled to the front.

‘No, thank you,’ replied the fox again, ‘I should slip over your head and be drowned.’

‘You won’t slip on MY back,’ said the perch, coming forward.

‘No; but you are really TOO rough,’ returned the fox.

‘Well, you can have no fault to find with ME,’ put in the trout.

‘Good gracious! are YOU here?’ exclaimed the fox. ‘But I’m afraid to trust myself to you either.’

At this moment a fine salmon swam slowly up.

‘Ah, yes, you are the person I want,’ said the fox; ‘but come near, so that I may get on your back, without wetting my feet.’

So the salmon swam close under the island, and when he was touching it the fox seized him in his claws and drew him out of the water, and put him on a spit, while he kindled a fire to cook him by. When everything was ready, and the water in the pot was getting hot, he popped him in, and waited till he thought the salmon was nearly boiled. But as he stooped down the water gave a sudden fizzle, and splashed into the fox’s eyes, blinding him. He started backwards with a cry of pain, and sat still for some minutes, rocking himself to and fro. When he was a little better he rose and walked down a road till he met a grouse, who stopped and asked what was the matter.

‘Have you a pair of eyes anywhere about you?’ asked the fox politely.

‘No, I am afraid I haven’t,’ answered the grouse, and passed on.

A little while after the fox heard the buzzing of an early bee, whom a gleam of sun had tempted out.

‘Do you happen to have an extra pair of eyes anywhere?’ asked the fox.

‘I am sorry to say I have only those I am using,’ replied the bee. And the fox went on till he nearly fell over an asp who was gliding across the road.

‘I should be SO glad if you would tell me where I could get a pair of eyes,’ said the fox. ‘I suppose you don’t happen to have any you could lend me?’

‘Well, if you only want them for a short time, perhaps I could manage,’ answered the asp; ‘but I can’t do without them for long.’

‘Oh, it is only for a very short time that I need them,’ said the fox; ‘I have a pair of my own just behind that hill, and when I find them I will bring yours back to you. Perhaps you will keep these till them.’ So he took the eyes out of his own head and popped them into the head of the asp, and put the asp’s eyes in their place. As he was running off he cried over his

shoulder: ‘As long as the world lasts the asps’ eyes will go down in the heads of foxes from generation to generation.’

And so it has been; and if you look at the eyes of an asp you will see that they are all burnt; and though thousands and thousands of years have gone by since the fox was going about playing tricks upon everybody he met, the asp still bears the traces of the day when the sly creature cooked the salmon.

[Lapplandische Mahrchen.]

KISA THE CAT

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Once upon a time there lived a queen who had a beautiful cat, the colour of smoke, with china-blue eyes, which she was very fond of. The cat was constantly with her, and ran after her wherever she went, and even sat up proudly by her side when she drove out in her fine glass coach.

‘Oh, pussy,’ said the queen one day, ‘you are happier than I am! For you have a dear kitten just like yourself, and I have nobody to play with but you.’

‘Don’t cry,’ answered the cat, laying her paw on her mistress’s arm. ‘Crying never does any good. I will see what can be done.’

The cat was as good as her word. As soon as she returned from her drive she trotted off to the forest to consult a fairy who dwelt there, and very soon after the queen had a little girl, who seemed made out of snow and sunbeams. The queen was delighted, and soon the baby began to take notice of the kitten as she jumped about the room, and would not go to sleep at all unless the kitten lay curled up beside her.

Two or three months went by, and though the baby was still a baby, the kitten was fast becoming a cat, and one evening when, as usual, the nurse came to look for her, to put her in the baby’s cot, she was nowhere to be found. What a hunt there was for that kitten, to be sure! The servants, each anxious to find her, as the queen was certain to reward the lucky man, searched in the most impossible places. Boxes were opened that would hardly have held the kitten’s paw; books were taken from bookshelves, lest the kitten should have got behind them, drawers were pulled out, for perhaps the kitten might have got shut in. But it was all no use. The kitten had plainly run away, and nobody could tell if it would ever choose to come back.

Years passed away, and one day, when the princess was playing ball in the garden, she happened to throw her ball farther than usual, and it fell into a clump of rose-bushes. The princess of course ran after it at once, and she was stooping down to feel if it was hidden in the long grass, when

she heard a voice calling her: ‘Ingibjorg! Ingibjorg!’ it said, ‘have you forgotten me? I am Kisa, your sister!’

‘But I never HAD a sister,’ answered Ingibjorg, very much puzzled; for she knew nothing of what had taken place so long ago.

‘Don’t you remember how I always slept in your cot beside you, and how you cried till I came? But girls have no memories at all! Why, I could find my way straight up to that cot this moment, if I was once inside the palace.’

‘Why did you go away then?’ asked the princess. But before Kisa could answer, Ingibjorg’s attendants arrived breathless on the scene, and were so horrified at the sight of a strange cat, that Kisa plunged into the bushes and went back to the forest.

The princess was very much vexed with her ladies-in-waiting for frightening away her old playfellow, and told the queen who came to her room every evening to bid her good-night.

‘Yes, it is quite true what Kisa said,’ answered the queen; ‘I should have liked to see her again. Perhaps, some day, she will return, and then you must bring her to me.’

Next morning it was very hot, and the princess declared that she must go and play in the forest, where it was always cool, under the big shady trees. As usual, her attendants let her do anything she pleased, and sitting down on a mossy bank where a little stream tinkled by, soon fell sound asleep. The princess saw with delight that they would pay no heed to her, and wandered on and on, expecting every moment to see some fairies dancing round a ring, or some little brown elves peeping at her from behind a tree. But, alas! she met none of these; instead, a horrible giant came out of his cave and ordered her to follow him. The princess felt much afraid, as he was so big and ugly, and began to be sorry that she had not stayed within reach of help; but as there was no use in disobeying the giant, she walked meekly behind.

They went a long way, and Ingibjorg grew very tired, and at length began to cry.

‘I don’t like girls who make horrid noises,’ said the giant, turning round. ‘But if you WANT to cry, I will give you something to cry for.’ And drawing an axe from his belt, he cut off both her feet, which he picked up and put in his pocket. Then he went away.

Poor Ingibjorg lay on the grass in terrible pain, and wondering if she should stay there till she died, as no one would know where to look for her. How long it was since she had set out in the morning she could not tell—it seemed years to her, of course; but the sun was still high in the heavens when she heard the sound of wheels, and then, with a great effort, for her throat was parched with fright and pain, she gave a shout.

‘I am coming!’ was the answer; and in another moment a cart made its way through the trees, driven by Kisa, who used her tail as a whip to urge the horse to go faster. Directly Kisa saw Ingibjorg lying there, she jumped quickly down, and lifting the girl carefully in her two front paws, laid her upon some soft hay, and drove back to her own little hut.

In the corner of the room was a pile of cushions, and these Kisa arranged as a bed. Ingibjorg, who by this time was nearly fainting from all she had gone through, drank greedily some milk, and then sank back on the cushions while Kisa fetched some dried herbs from a cupboard, soaked them in warm water and tied them on the bleeding legs. The pain vanished at once, and Ingibjorg looked up and smiled at Kisa.

‘You will go to sleep now,’ said the cat, ‘and you will not mind if I leave you for a little while. I will lock the door, and no one can hurt you.’ But before she had finished the princess was asleep. Then Kisa got into the cart, which was standing at the door, and catching up the reins, drove straight to the giant’s cave.

Leaving her cart behind some trees, Kisa crept gently up to the open door, and, crouching down, listened to what the giant was telling his wife, who was at supper with him.

‘The first day that I can spare I shall just go back and kill her,’ he said; ‘it would never do for people in the forest to know that a mere girl can defy me!’ And he and his wife were so busy calling Ingibjorg all sorts of names for her bad behaviour, that they never noticed Kisa stealing into a dark corner, and upsetting a whole bag of salt into the great pot before the fire.

‘Dear me, how thirsty I am!’ cried the giant by-and-by.

‘So am I,’ answered the wife. ‘I do wish I had not taken that last spoonful of broth; I am sure something was wrong with it.’

‘If I don’t get some water I shall die,’ went on the giant. And rushing out of the cave, followed by his wife, he ran down the path which led to

the river.

Then Kisa entered the hut, and lost no time in searching every hole till she came upon some grass, under which Ingibjorg's feet were hidden, and putting them in her cart, drove back again to her own hut.

Ingibjorg was thankful to see her, for she had lain, too frightened to sleep, trembling at every noise.

'Oh, is it you?' she cried joyfully, as Kisa turned the key. And the cat came in, holding up the two neat little feet in their silver slippers.

'In two minutes they shall be as tight as they ever were!' said Kisa. And taking some strings of the magic grass which the giant had carelessly heaped on them, she bound the feet on to the legs above.

'Of course you won't be able to walk for some time; you must not expect THAT,' she continued. 'But if you are very good, perhaps, in about a week, I may carry you home again.'

And so she did; and when the cat drove the cart up to the palace gate, lashing the horse furiously with her tail, and the king and queen saw their lost daughter sitting beside her, they declared that no reward could be too great for the person who had brought her out of the giant's hands.

'We will talk about that by-and-by,' said the cat, as she made her best bow, and turned her horse's head.

The princess was very unhappy when Kisa left her without even bidding her farewell. She would neither eat nor drink, nor take any notice of all the beautiful dresses her parents bought for her.

'She will die, unless we can make her laugh,' one whispered to the other. 'Is there anything in the world that we have left untried?'

'Nothing except marriage,' answered the king. And he invited all the handsomest young men he could think of to the palace, and bade the princess choose a husband from among them.

It took her some time to decide which she admired the most, but at last she fixed upon a young prince, whose eyes were like the pools in the forest, and his hair of bright gold. The king and the queen were greatly pleased, as the young man was the son of a neighbouring king, and they gave orders that a splendid feast should be got ready.

When the marriage was over, Kisa suddenly stood before them, and Ingibjorg rushed forward and clasped her in her arms.

‘I have come to claim my reward,’ said the cat. ‘Let me sleep for this night at the foot of your bed.’

‘Is that ALL?’ asked Ingibjorg, much disappointed.

‘It is enough,’ answered the cat. And when the morning dawned, it was no cat that lay upon the bed, but a beautiful princess.

‘My mother and I were both enchanted by a spiteful fairy,’ said she, ‘we could not free ourselves till we had done some kindly deed that had never been wrought before. My mother died without ever finding a chance of doing anything new, but I took advantage of the evil act of the giant to make you as whole as ever.’

Then they were all more delighted than before, and the princess lived in the court until she, too, married, and went away to govern one of her own.

[Adapted from Neuislandischen Volksmarchen.]

THE LION AND THE CAT

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Far away on the other side of the world there lived, long ago, a lion and his younger brother, the wild cat, who were so fond of each other that they shared the same hut. The lion was much the bigger and stronger of the two —indeed, he was much bigger and stronger than any of the beasts that dwelt in the forest; and, besides, he could jump father and run faster than all the rest. If strength and swiftness could gain him a dinner he was sure never to be without one, but when it came to cunning, both the grizzly bear and the serpent could get the better of him, and he was forced to call in the help of the wild cat.

Now the young wild cat had a lovely golden ball, so beautiful that you could hardly look at it except through a piece of smoked glass, and he kept it hidden in the thick fur muff that went round his neck. A very large old animal, since dead, had given it to him when he was hardly more than a baby, and had told him never to part with it, for as long as he kept it no harm could ever come near him.

In general the wild cat did not need to use his ball, for the lion was fond of hunting, and could kill all the food that they needed; but now and then his life would have been in danger had it not been for the golden ball.

One day the two brothers started to hunt at daybreak, but as the cat could not run nearly as fast as the lion, he had quite a long start. At least he THOUGHT it was a long one, but in a very few bounds and springs the lion reached his side.

‘There is a bear sitting on that tree,’ he whispered softly. ‘He is only waiting for us to pass, to drop down on my back.’

‘Ah, you are so big that he does not see I am behind you,’ answered the wild cat. And, touching the ball, he just said: ‘Bear, die!’ And the bear tumbled dead out of the tree, and rolled over just in front of them.

For some time they trotted on without any adventures, till just as they were about to cross a strip of long grass on the edge of the forest, the lion’s quick ears detected a faint rustling noise.

‘That is a snake,’ he cried, stopping short, for he was much more afraid of snakes than of bears.

‘Oh, it is all right,’ answered the cat. ‘Snake, die!’ And the snake died, and the two brothers skinned it. They then folded the skin up into a very small parcel, and the cat tucked it into his mane, for snakes’ skins can do all sorts of wonderful things, if you are lucky enough to have one of them.

All this time they had had no dinner, for the snake’s flesh was not nice, and the lion did not like eating bear—perhaps because he never felt sure that the bear was REALLY dead, and would not jump up alive when his enemy went near him. Most people are afraid of SOME thing, and bears and serpents were the only creatures that caused the lion’s heart to tremble. So the two brothers set off again and soon reached the side of a hill where some fine deer were grazing.

‘Kill one of those deer for your own dinner,’ said the boy-brother, ‘but catch me another alive. I want him.’

The lion at once sprang towards them with a loud roar, but the deer bounded away, and they were all three soon lost to sight. The cat waited for a long while, but finding that the lion did not return, went back to the house where they lived.

It was quite dark when the lion came home, where his brother was sitting curled up in one corner.

‘Did you catch the deer for me?’ asked the boy-brother, springing up.

‘Well, no,’ replied the man-brother. ‘The fact is, that I did not get up to them till we had run half way across the world and left the wind far behind us. Think what a trouble it would have been to drag it here! So—I just ate them both.’

The cat said nothing, but he did not feel that he loved his big brother. He had thought a great deal about that deer, and had meant to get on his back to ride him as a horse, and go to see all the wonderful places the lion talked to him about when he was in a good temper. The more he thought of it the more sulky he grew, and in the morning, when the lion said that it was time for them to start to hunt, the cat told him that he might kill the bear and snake by himself, as HE had a headache, and would rather stay at home. The little fellow knew quite well that the lion would not dare to go out without him and his ball for fear of meeting a bear or a snake.

The quarrel went on, and for many days neither of the brothers spoke to each other, and what made them still more cross was, that they could get very little to eat, and we know that people are often cross when they are hungry. At last it occurred to the lion that if he could only steal the magic ball he could kill bears and snakes for himself, and then the cat might be as sulky as he liked for anything that it would matter. But how was the stealing to be done? The cat had the ball hung round his neck day and night, and he was such a light sleeper that it was useless to think of taking it while he slept. No! the only thing was to get him to lend it of his own accord, and after some days the lion (who was not at all clever) hit upon a plan that he thought would do.

‘Dear me, how dull it is here!’ said the lion one afternoon, when the rain was pouring down in such torrents that, however sharp your eyes or your nose might be, you could not spy a single bird or beast among the bushes. ‘Dear me, how dull, how dreadfully dull I am. Couldn’t we have a game of catch with that golden ball of yours?’

‘I don’t care about playing catch, it does not amuse me,’ answered the cat, who was as cross as ever; for no cat, even to this day, ever forgets an injury done to him.

‘Well, then, lend me the ball for a little, and I will play by myself,’ replied the lion, stretching out a paw as he spoke.

‘You can’t play in the rain, and if you did, you would only lose it in the bushes,’ said the cat.

‘Oh, no, I won’t; I will play in here. Don’t be so ill-natured.’ And with a very bad grace the cat untied the string and threw the golden ball into the lion’s lap, and composed himself to sleep again.

For a long while the lion tossed it up and down gaily, feeling that, however sound asleep the boy-brother might LOOK, he was sure to have one eye open; but gradually he began to edge closer to the opening, and at last gave such a toss that the ball went up high into the air, and he could not see what became of it.

‘Oh, how stupid of me!’ he cried, as the cat sprang up angrily, ‘let us go at once and search for it. It can’t really have fallen very far.’ But though they searched that day and the next, and the next after that, they never found it, because it never came down.

After the loss of his ball the cat refused to live with the lion any longer, but wandered away to the north, always hoping he might meet with his ball again. But months passed, and years passed, and though he travelled over hundreds of miles, he never saw any traces of it.

At length, when he was getting quite old, he came to a place unlike any that he had ever seen before, where a big river rolled right to the foot of some high mountains. The ground all about the river bank was damp and marshy, and as no cat likes to wet its feet, this one climbed a tree that rose high above the water, and thought sadly of his lost ball, which would have helped him out of this horrible place. Suddenly he saw a beautiful ball, for all the world like his own, dangling from a branch of the tree he was on. He longed to get at it; but was the branch strong enough to bear his weight? It was no use, after all he had done, getting drowned in the water. However, it could do no harm, if he was to go a little way; he could always manage to get back somehow.

So he stretched himself at full length upon the branch, and wriggled his body cautiously along. To his delight it seemed thick and stout. Another movement, and, by stretching out his paw, he would be able to draw the string towards him, when the branch gave a loud crack, and the cat made haste to wriggle himself back the way he had come.

But when cats make up their minds to do anything they generally DO it; and this cat began to look about to see if there was really no way of getting at his ball. Yes! there was, and it was much surer than the other, though rather more difficult. Above the bough where the ball was hung was another bough much thicker, which he knew could not break with his weight; and by holding on tight to this with all his four paws, he could just manage to touch the ball with his tail. He would thus be able to whisk the ball to and fro till, by-and-by, the string would become quite loose, and it would fall to the ground. It might take some time, but the lion’s little brother was patient, like most cats.

Well, it all happened just as the cat intended it should, and when the ball dropped on the ground the cat ran down the tree like lightning, and, picking it up, tucked it away in the snake’s skin round his neck. Then he began jumping along the shore of the Big Water from one place to another, trying to find a boat, or even a log of wood, that would take him across. But there was nothing; only, on the other side, he saw two girls cooking,

and though he shouted to them at the top of his voice, they were too far off to hear what he said. And, what was worse, the ball suddenly fell out of its snake's skin bag right into the river.

Now, it is not at all an uncommon thing for balls to tumble into rivers, but in that case they generally either fall to the bottom and stay there, or else bob about on the top of the water close to where they first touched it. But this ball, instead of doing either of these things, went straight across to the other side, and there one of the girls saw it when she stooped to dip some water into her pail.

'Oh! what a lovely ball!' cried she, and tried to catch it in her pail; but the ball always kept bobbing just out of her reach.

'Come and help me!' she called to her sister, and after a long while they had the ball safe inside the pail. They were delighted with their new toy, and one or the other held it in her hand till bedtime came, and then it was a long time before they could make up their minds where it would be safest for the night. At last they locked it in a cupboard in one corner of their room, and as there was no hole anywhere the ball could not possibly get out. After that they went to sleep.

In the morning the first thing they both did was to run to the cupboard and unlock it, but when the door opened they started back, for, instead of the ball, there stood a handsome young man.

'Ladies,' he said, 'how can I thank you for what you have done for me? Long, long ago, I was enchanted by a wicked fairy, and condemned to keep the shape of a ball till I should meet with two maidens, who would take me to their own home. But where was I to meet them? For hundreds of years I have lived in the depths of the forest, where nothing but wild beasts ever came, and it was only when the lion threw me into the sky that I was able to fall to earth near this river. Where there is a river, sooner or later people will come; so, hanging myself on a tree, I watched and waited. For a moment I lost heart when I fell once more into the hands of my old master the wild cat, but my hopes rose again as I saw he was making for the river bank opposite where you were standing. That was my chance, and I took it. And now, ladies, I have only to say that, if ever I can do anything to help you, go to the top of that high mountain and knock three times at the iron door at the north side, and I will come to you.'

So, with a low bow, he vanished from before them, leaving the maidens weeping at having lost in one moment both the ball and the prince.

[Adapted from North American Indian Legends.]

WHICH WAS THE FOOLISHEST?

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In a little village that stood on a wide plain, where you could see the sun from the moment he rose to the moment he set, there lived two couples side by side. The men, who worked under the same master, were quite good friends, but the wives were always quarrelling, and the subject they quarrelled most about was—which of the two had the stupidest husband.

Unlike most women—who think that anything that belongs to them must be better than what belongs to anyone else—each thought her husband the more foolish of the two.

‘You should just see what he does!’ one said to her neighbour. ‘He puts on the baby’s frock upside down, and, one day, I found him trying to feed her with boiling soup, and her mouth was scalded for days after. Then he picks up stones in the road and sows them instead of potatoes, and one day he wanted to go into the garden from the top window, because he declared it was a shorter way than through the door.’

‘That is bad enough, of course,’ answered the other; ‘but it is really NOTHING to what I have to endure every day from MY husband. If, when I am busy, I ask him to go and feed the poultry, he is certain to give them some poisonous stuff instead of their proper food, and when I visit the yard next I find them all dead. Once he even took my best bonnet, when I had gone away to my sick mother, and when I came back I found he had given it to the hen to lay her eggs in. And you know yourself that, only last week, when I sent him to buy a cask of butter, he returned driving a hundred and fifty ducks which someone had induced him to take, and not one of them would lay.’

‘Yes, I am afraid he IS trying,’ replied the first; ‘but let us put them to the proof, and see which of them is the most foolish.’

So, about the time that she expected her husband home from work, she got out her spinning-wheel, and sat busily turning it, taking care not even to look up from her work when the man came in. For some minutes he

stood with his mouth open watching her, and as she still remained silent, he said at last:

‘Have you gone mad, wife, that you sit spinning without anything on the wheel?’

‘YOU may think that there is nothing on it,’ answered she, ‘but I can assure you that there is a large skein of wool, so fine that nobody can see it, which will be woven into a coat for you.’

‘Dear me!’ he replied, ‘what a clever wife I have got! If you had not told me I should never have known that there was any wool on the wheel at all. But now I really do seem to see something.’

The woman smiled and was silent, and after spinning busily for an hour more, she got up from her stoop, and began to weave as fast as she could. At last she got up, and said to her husband: ‘I am too tired to finish it to-night, so I shall go to bed, and to-morrow I shall only have the cutting and stitching to do.’

So the next morning she got up early, and after she had cleaned her house, and fed her chickens, and put everything in its place again, she bent over the kitchen table, and the sound of her big scissors might be heard snip! snap! as far as the garden. Her husband could not see anything to snip at; but then he was so stupid that was not surprising!

After the cutting came the sewing. The woman patted and pinned and fixed and joined, and then, turning to the man, she said:

‘Now it is ready for you to try on.’ And she made him take off his coat, and stand up in front of her, and once more she patted an pinned and fixed and joined, and was very careful in smoothing out every wrinkle.

‘It does not feel very warm,’ observed the man at last, when he had borne all this patiently for a long time.

‘That is because it is so fine,’ answered she; ‘you do not want it to be as thick as the rough clothes you wear every day.’

He DID, but was ashamed to say so, and only answered: ‘Well, I am sure it must be beautiful since you say so, and I shall be smarter than anyone in the whole village. “What a splendid coat!” they will exclaim when they see me. But it is not everybody who has a wife as clever as mine.’

Meanwhile the other wife was not idle. As soon as her husband entered she looked at him with such a look of terror that the poor man was quite

frightened.

‘Why do you stare at me so? Is there anything the matter?’ asked he.

‘Oh! go to bed at once,’ she cried; ‘you must be very ill indeed to look like that!’

The man was rather surprised at first, as he felt particularly well that evening; but the moment his wife spoke he became quite certain that he had something dreadful the matter with him, and grew quite pale.

‘I dare say it would be the best place for me,’ he answered, trembling; and he suffered his wife to take him upstairs, and to help him off with his clothes.

‘If you sleep well during the might there MAY be a chance for you,’ said she, shaking her head, as she tucked him up warmly; ‘but if not—’ And of course the poor man never closed an eye till the sun rose.

‘How do you feel this morning?’ asked the woman, coming in on tip-toe when her house-work was finished.

‘Oh, bad; very bad indeed,’ answered he; ‘I have not slept for a moment. Can you think of nothing to make me better?’

‘I will try everything that is possible,’ said the wife, who did not in the least wish her husband to die, but was determined to show that he was more foolish that the other man. ‘I will get some dried herbs and make you a drink, but I am very much afraid that it is too late. Why did you not tell me before?’

‘I thought perhaps the pain would go off in a day or two; and, besides, I did not want to make you unhappy,’ answered the man, who was by this time quite sure he had been suffering tortures, and had borne them like a hero. ‘Of course, if I had had any idea how ill I really was, I should have spoken at once.’

‘Well, well, I will see what can be done,’ said the wife, ‘but talking is not good for you. Lie still, and keep yourself warm.’

All that day the man lay in bed, and whenever his wife entered the room and asked him, with a shake of the head, how he felt, he always replied that he was getting worse. At last, in the evening, she burst into tears, and when he inquired what was the matter, she sobbed out:

‘Oh, my poor, poor husband, are you really dead? I must go to-morrow and order your coffin.’

Now, when the man heard this, a cold shiver ran through his body, and all at once he knew that he was as well as he had ever been in his life.

‘Oh, no, no!’ he cried, ‘I feel quite recovered! Indeed, I think I shall go out to work.’

‘You will do no such thing,’ replied his wife. ‘Just keep quite quiet, for before the sun rises you will be a dead man.’

The man was very frightened at her words, and lay absolutely still while the undertaker came and measured him for his coffin; and his wife gave orders to the gravedigger about his grave. That evening the coffin was sent home, and in the morning at nine o’clock the woman put him on a long flannel garment, and called to the undertaker’s men to fasten down the lid and carry him to the grave, where all their friends were waiting them. Just as the body was being placed in the ground the other woman’s husband came running up, dressed, as far as anyone could see, in no clothes at all. Everybody burst into shouts of laughter at the sight of him, and the men laid down the coffin and laughed too, till their sides nearly split. The dead man was so astonished at this behaviour, that he peeped out of a little window in the side of the coffin, and cried out:

‘I should laugh as loudly as any of you, if I were not a dead man.’

When they heard the voice coming from the coffin the other people suddenly stopped laughing, and stood as if they had been turned into stone. Then they rushed with one accord to the coffin, and lifted the lid so that the man could step out amongst them.

‘Were you really not dead after all?’ asked they. ‘And if not, why did you let yourself be buried?’

At this the wives both confessed that they had each wished to prove that her husband was stupider than the other. But the villagers declared that they could not decide which was the most foolish—the man who allowed himself to be persuaded that he was wearing fine clothes when he was dressed in nothing, or the man who let himself be buried when he was alive and well.

So the women quarrelled just as much as they did before, and no one ever knew whose husband was the most foolish.

[Adapted from the Neuislandische Volksmarchen.]

Asmund and Signy

Long, long ago, in the days when fairies, witches, giants and ogres still visited the earth, there lived a king who reigned over a great and beautiful country. He was married to a wife whom he dearly loved, and had two most promising children—a son called Asmund, and a daughter who was named Signy.

The king and queen were very anxious to bring their children up well, and the young prince and princess were taught everything likely to make them clever and accomplished. They lived at home in their father's palace, and he spared no pains to make their lives happy.

Prince Asmund dearly loved all outdoor sports and an open-air life, and from his earliest childhood he had longed to live entirely in the forest close by. After many arguments and entreaties he succeeded in persuading the king to give him two great oak trees for his very own.

'Now,' said he to his sister, 'I will have the trees hollowed out, and then I will make rooms in them and furnish them so that I shall be able to live out in the forest.'

'Oh, Asmund!' exclaimed Signy, 'what a delightful idea! Do let me come too, and live in one of your trees. I will bring all my pretty things and ornaments, and the trees are so near home we shall be quite safe in them.'

Asmund, who was extremely fond of his sister, readily consented, and they had a very happy time together, carrying over all their pet treasures, and Signy's jewels and other ornaments, and arranging them in the pretty little rooms inside the trees.

Unfortunately sadder days were to come. A war with another country broke out, and the king had to lead his army against their enemy. During his absence the queen fell ill, and after lingering for some time she died, to the great grief of her children. They made up their minds to live altogether for a time in their trees, and for this purpose they had provisions enough stored up inside to last them a year.

Now, I must tell you, in another country a long way off, there reigned a king who had an only son named Ring. Prince Ring had heard so much about the beauty and goodness of Princess Signy that he determined to marry her if possible. So he begged his father to let him have a ship for the voyage, set sail with a favourable wind, and after a time landed in the country where Signy lived.

The prince lost no time in setting out for the royal palace, and on his way there he met such a wonderfully lovely woman that he felt he had never seen such beauty in all his life. He stopped her and at once asked who she was.

‘I am Signy, the king’s daughter,’ was the reply.

Then the prince inquired why she was wandering about all by herself, and she told him that since her mother’s death she was so sad that whilst her father was away she preferred being alone.

Ring was quite deceived by her, and never guessed that she was not Princess Signy at all, but a strong, gigantic, wicked witch bent on deceiving him under a beautiful shape. He confided to her that he had travelled all the way from his own country for her sake, having fallen in love with the accounts he had heard of her beauty, and he then and there asked her to be his wife.

The witch listened to all he said and, much pleased, ended by accepting his offer; but she begged him to return to his ship for a little while as she wished to go some way further into the forest, promising to join him later on.

Prince Ring did as she wished and went back to his ship to wait, whilst she walked on into the forest till she reached the two oak trees.

Here she resumed her own gigantic shape, tore up the trees by their roots, threw one of them over her back and clasped the other to her breast, carried them down to the shore and waded out with them to the ship.

She took care not to be noticed as she reached the ship, and directly she got on board she once more changed to her former lovely appearance and told the prince that her luggage was now all on board, and that they need wait for nothing more.

The prince gave orders to set sail at once, and after a fine voyage landed in his own country, where his parents and his only sister received him with the greatest joy and affection.

The false Signy was also very kindly welcomed. A beautiful house was got ready for her, and Prince Ring had the two oaks planted in the garden just in front of her windows so that she might have the pleasure of seeing them constantly. He often went to visit the witch, whom he believed to be Princess Signy, and one day he asked: ‘Don’t you think we might be married before long?’

‘Yes,’ said she, quite pleased, ‘I am quite ready to marry you whenever you like.’

‘Then,’ replied Ring, ‘let us decide on this day fortnight. And see, I have brought you some stuff to make your wedding-dress of.’ So saying he gave her a large piece of the most beautiful brocade, all woven over with gold threads, and embroidered with pearls and other jewels.

The prince had hardly left her before the witch resumed her proper shape and tore about the room, raging and storming and flinging the beautiful silk on the floor.

‘What was SHE to do with such things?’ she roared. ‘SHE did not know how to sew or make clothes, and she was sure to die of starvation into the bargain if her brother Ironhead did not come soon and bring her some raw meat and bones, for she really could eat nothing else.’

As she was raving and roaring in this frantic manner part of the floor suddenly opened and a huge giant rose up carrying a great chest in his arms. The witch was enchanted at this sight, and eagerly helped her brother to set down and open the chest, which was full of the ghastly food she had been longing for. The horrid pair set to and greedily devoured it all, and when the chest was quite empty the giant put it on his shoulder and disappeared as he had come, without leaving any trace of his visit.

But his sister did not keep quiet for long, and tore and pulled at the rich brocade as if she wanted to destroy it, stamping about and shouting angrily.

Now, all this time Prince Asmund and his sister sat in their trees just outside the window and saw all that was going on.

‘Dear Signy,’ said Asmund, ‘do try to get hold of that piece of brocade and make the clothes yourself, for really we shall have no rest day or night with such a noise.’

‘I will try,’ said Signy; ‘it won’t be an easy matter, but it’s worth while taking some trouble to have a little peace.’

So she watched for an opportunity and managed to carry off the brocade the first time the witch left her room. Then she set to work, cutting out and sewing as best she could, and by the end of six days she had turned it into an elegant robe with a long train and a mantle. When it was finished she climbed to the top of her tree and contrived to throw the clothes on to a table through the open window.

How delighted the witch was when she found the clothes all finished! The next time Prince Ring came to see her she gave them to him, and he paid her many compliments on her skilful work, after which he took leave of her in the most friendly manner. But he had scarcely left the house when the witch began to rage as furiously as ever, and never stopped till her brother Ironhead appeared.

When Asmund saw all these wild doings from his tree he felt he could no longer keep silence. He went to Prince Ring and said: ‘Do come with me and see the strange things that are happening in the new princess’s room.’

The prince was not a little surprised, but he consented to hide himself with Asmund behind the panelling of the room, from where they could see all that went on through a little slit. The witch was raving and roaring as usual, and said to her brother:

‘Once I am married to the king’s son I shall be better off than now. I shall take care to have all that pack of courtiers put to death, and then I shall send for all my relations to come and live here instead. I fancy the giants will enjoy themselves very much with me and my husband.’

When Prince Ring heard this he fell into such a rage that he ordered the house to be set on fire, and it was burnt to the ground, with the witch and her brother in it.

Asmund then told the prince about the two oak trees and took him to see them. The prince was quite astonished at them and at all their contents, but still more so at the extreme beauty of Signy. He fell in love with her at once, and entreated her to marry him, which, after a time, she consented to do. Asmund, on his side, asked for the hand of Prince Ring’s sister, which was gladly granted him, and the double wedding was celebrated with great rejoicings.

After this Prince Asmund and his bride returned to his country to live with the king his father. The two couples often met, and lived happily for many, many years. And that is the end of the story.

[From Islandische Mahrchen.]

RUBEZAHL

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Over all the vast under-world the mountain Gnome Rubezahl was lord; and busy enough the care of his dominions kept him. There were the endless treasure chambers to be gone through, and the hosts of gnomes to be kept to their tasks. Some built strong barriers to hold back the fiery vapours to change dull stones to precious metal, or were hard at work filling every cranny of the rocks with diamonds and rubies; for Rubezahl loved all pretty things. Sometimes the fancy would take him to leave those gloomy regions, and come out upon the green earth for a while, and bask in the sunshine and hear the birds sing. And as gnomes live many hundreds of years he saw strange things. For, the first time he came up, the great hills were covered with thick forests, in which wild animals roamed, and Rubezahl watched the fierce fights between bear and bison, or chased the grey wolves, or amused himself by rolling great rocks down into the desolate valleys, to hear the thunder of their fall echoing among the hills. But the next time he ventured above ground, what was his surprise to find everything changed! The dark woods were hewn down, and in their place appeared blossoming orchards surrounding cosy-looking thatched cottages; for every chimney the blue smoke curled peacefully into the air, sheep and oxen fed in the flowery meadows, while from the shade of the hedges came the music of the shepherd’s pipe. The strangeness and pleasantness of the sight so delighted the gnome that he never thought of resenting the intrusion of these unexpected guests, who, without saying ‘by your leave’ or ‘with your leave,’ had made themselves so very much at home upon is hills; nor did he wish to interfere with their doings, but left them in quiet possession of their homes, as a good householder leaves in peace the swallows who have built their nests under his eaves. He was indeed greatly minded to make friends with this being called ‘man,’ so, taking the form of an old field labourer, he entered the service of a farmer. Under his care all the crops flourished exceedingly, but the master proved to be wasteful and ungrateful, and Rubezahl soon left him, and went to be

shepherd to his next neighbour. He tended the flock so diligently, and knew so well where to lead the sheep to the sweetest pastures, and where among the hills to look for any who strayed away, that they too prospered under his care, and not one was lost or torn by wolves; but this new master was a hard man, and begrudged him his well-earned wages. So he ran away and went to serve the judge. Here he upheld the law with might and main, and was a terror to thieves and evildoers; but the judge was a bad man, who took bribes, and despised the law. Rubezahl would not be the tool of an unjust man, and so he told his master, who thereupon ordered him to be thrown in prison. Of course that did not trouble the gnome at all, he simply got out through the keyhole, and went away down to his underground palace, very much disappointed by his first experience of mankind. But, as time went on, he forgot the disagreeable things that had happened to him, and thought he would take another look at the upper world.

So he stole into the valley, keeping himself carefully hidden in copse or hedgerow, and very soon met with an adventure; for, peeping through a screen of leaves, he saw before him a green lawn where stood a charming maiden, fresh as the spring, and beautiful to look upon. Around her upon the grass lay her young companions, as if they had thrown themselves down to rest after some merry game. Beyond them flowed a little brook, into which a waterfall leapt from a high rock, filling the air with its pleasant sound, and making a coolness even in the sultry noontide. The sight of the maiden so pleased the gnome that, for the first time, he wished himself a mortal; and, longing for a better view of the gay company, he changed himself into a raven and perched upon an oaktree which overhung the brook. But he soon found that this was not at all a good plan. He could only see with a raven’s eyes, and feel as a raven feels; and a nest of field-mice at the foot of the tree interested him far more than the sport of the maidens. When he understood this he flew down again in a great hurry into the thicket, and took the form of a handsome young man—that was the best way—and he fell in love with the girl then and there. The fair maiden was the daughter of the king of the country, and she often wandered in the forest with her play fellows gathering the wild flowers and fruits, till the midday heat drove the merry band to the shady lawn by the brook to rest, or to bathe in the cool waters. On this particular morning the fancy took them to wander off again into the wood. This was Master Rubezahl’s

opportunity. Stepping out of his hiding-place he stood in the midst of the little lawn, weaving his magic spells, till slowly all about him changed, and when the maidens returned at noon to their favourite resting-place they stood lost in amazement, and almost fancied that they must be dreaming. The red rocks had become white marble and alabaster; the stream that murmured and struggled before in its rocky bed, flowed in silence now in its smooth channel, from which a clear fountain leapt, to fall again in showers of diamond drops, now on this side now on that, as the wandering breeze scattered it.

Daisies and forget-me-nots fringed its brink, while tall hedges of roses and jasmine ringed it round, making the sweetest and daintiest bower imaginable. To the right and left of the waterfall opened out a wonderful grotto, its walls and arches glittering with many-coloured rock-crystals, while in every niche were spread out strange fruits and sweetmeats, the very sight of which made the princess long to taste them. She hesitated a while, however, scarcely able to believe her eyes, and not knowing if she should enter the enchanted spot or fly from it. But at length curiosity prevailed, and she and her companions explored to their heart's content, and tasted and examined everything, running hither and thither in high glee, and calling merrily to each other.

At last, when they were quite weary, the princess cried out suddenly that nothing would content her but to bathe in the marble pool, which certainly did look very inviting; and they all went gaily to this new amusement. The princess was ready first, but scarcely had she slipped over the rim of the pool when down—down—down she sank, and vanished in its depths before her frightened playmates could seize her by so much as a lock of her floating golden hair!

Loudly did they weep and wail, running about the brink of the pool, which looked so shallow and so clear, but which had swallowed up their princess before their eyes. They even sprang into the water and tried to dive after her, but in vain; they only floated like corks in the enchanted pool, and could not keep under water for a second.

They saw at last that there was nothing for it but to carry to the king the sad tidings of his beloved daughter's disappearance. And what great weeping and lamentation there was in the palace when the dreadful news was told! The king tore his robes, dashed his golden crown from his head,

and hid his face in his purple mantle for grief and anguish at the loss of the princess. After the first outburst of wailing, however, he took heart and hurried off to see for himself the scene of this strange adventure, thinking, as people will in sorrow, that there might be some mistake after all. But when he reached the spot, behold, all was changed again! The glittering grotto described to him by the maidens had completely vanished, and so had the marble bath, the bower of jasmine; instead, all was a tangle of flowers, as it had been of old. The king was so much perplexed that he threatened the princess's playfellows with all sorts of punishments if they would not confess something about her disappearance; but as they only repeated the same story he presently put down the whole affair to the work of some sprite or goblin, and tried to console himself for his loss by ordering a grand hunt; for kings cannot bear to be troubled about anything long.

Meanwhile the princess was not at all unhappy in the palace of her elfish lover.

When the water-nymphs, who were hiding in readiness, had caught her and dragged her out of the sight of her terrified maidens, she herself had not had time to be frightened. They swam with her quickly by strange underground ways to a palace so splendid that her father's seemed but a poor cottage in comparison with it, and when she recovered from her astonishment she found herself seated upon a couch, wrapped in a wonderful robe of satin fastened with a silken girdle, while beside her knelt a young man who whispered the sweetest speeches imaginable in her ear. The gnome, for he it was, told her all about himself and his great underground kingdom, and presently led her through the many rooms and halls of the palace, and showed her the rare and wonderful things displayed in them till she was fairly dazzled at the sight of so much splendour. On three sides of the castle lay a lovely garden with masses of gay, sweet flowers, and velvet lawns all cool and shady, which pleased the eye of the princess. The fruit trees were hung with golden and rosy apples, and nightingales sang in every bush, as the gnome and the princess wandered in the leafy alleys, sometimes gazing at the moon, sometimes pausing to gather the rarest flowers for her adornment. And all the time he was thinking to himself that never, during the hundreds of years he had lived, had he seen so charming a maiden. But the princess felt no such

happiness; in spite of all the magic delights around her she was sad, though she tried to seem content for fear of displeasing the gnome. However, he soon perceived her melancholy, and in a thousand ways strove to dispel the cloud, but in vain. At last he said to himself: ‘Men are sociable creatures, like bees or ants. Doubtless this lovely mortal is pining for company. Who is there I can find for her to talk to?’

Thereupon he hastened into the nearest filed and dug up a dozen or so of different roots—carrots, turnips, and radishes—and laying them carefully in an elegant basket brought them to the princess, who sat pensive in the shade of the rose-bower.

‘Loveliest daughter of earth,’ said the gnome, ‘banish all sorrow; no more shall you be lonely in my dwelling. In this basket is all you need to make this spot delightful to you. Take this little many-coloured wand, and with a touch give to each root the form you desire to see.’

With this he left her, and the princess, without an instant’s delay, opened the basket, and touching a turnip, cried eagerly: ‘Brunhilda, my dear Brunhilda! come to me quickly!’ And sure enough there was Brunhilda, joyfully hugging and kissing her beloved princess, and chattering as gaily as in the old days.

This sudden appearance was so delightful that the princess could hardly believe her own eyes, and was quite beside herself with the joy of having her dear playfellow with her once more. Hand in hand they wandered about the enchanted garden, and gathered the golden apples from the trees, and when they were tired of this amusement the princess led her friend through all the wonderful rooms of the palace, until at last they came to the one in which were kept all the marvellous dresses and ornaments the gnome had given to his hoped-for bride. There they found so much to amuse them that the hours passed like minutes. Veils, girdles, and necklaces were tried on and admired, the imitation Brunhilda knew so well how to behave herself, and showed so much taste that nobody would ever have suspected that she was nothing but a turnip after all. The gnome, who had secretly been keeping an eye upon them, was very pleased with himself for having so well understood the heart of a woman; and the princess seemed to him even more charming than before. She did not forget to touch the rest of the roots with her magic wand, and soon had all

her maidens about her, and even, as she had two tiny radishes to spare, her favourite cat, and her little dog whose name was Beni.

And now all went cheerfully in the castle. The princess gave to each of the maidens her task, and never was mistress better served. For a whole week she enjoyed the delight of her pleasant company undisturbed. They all sang, they danced, they played from morning to night; only the princess noticed that day by day the fresh young faces of her maidens grew pale and wan, and the mirror in the great marble hall showed her that she alone still kept her rosy bloom, while Brunhilda and the rest faded visibly. They assured her that all was well with them; but, nevertheless, they continued to waste away, and day by day it became harder to them to take part in the games of the princess, till at last, one fine morning, when the princess started from bed and hastened out to join her gay playfellows, she shuddered and started back at the sight of a group of shrivelled crones, with bent backs and trembling limbs, who supported their tottering steps with staves and crutches, and coughed dismally. A little nearer to the hearth lay the once frolicsome Beni, with all four feet stretched stiffly out, while the sleek cat seemed too weak to raise his head from his velvet cushion.

The horrified princess fled to the door to escape from the sight of this mournful company, and called loudly for the gnome, who appeared at once, humbly anxious to do her bidding.

‘Malicious Sprite,’ she cried, ‘why do you begrudge me my playmates —the greatest delight of my lonely hours? Isn’t this solitary life in such a desert bad enough without your turning the castle into a hospital for the aged? Give my maidens back their youth and health this very minute, or I will never love you!’

‘Sweetest and fairest of damsels,’ cried the gnome, ‘do not be angry; everything that is in my power I will do—but do not ask the impossible. So long as the sap was fresh in the roots the magic staff could keep them in the forms you desired, but as the sap dried up they withered away. But never trouble yourself about that, dearest one, a basket of fresh turnips will soon set matters right, and you can speedily call up again every form you wish to see. The great green patch in the garden will prove you with a more lively company.’

So saying the gnome took himself off. And the princess with her magic wand touched the wrinkled old women, and left them the withered roots they really were, to be thrown upon the rubbish heap; and with light feet skipped off across to the meadow to take possession of the freshly filled basket. But to her surprise she could not find it anywhere. Up and down the garden she searched, spying into every corner, but not a sign of it was to be found. By the trellis of grape vines she met the gnome, who was so much embarrassed at the sight of her that she became aware of his confusion while he was still quite a long way off.

‘You are trying to tease me,’ she cried, as soon as she saw him. ‘Where have you hidden the basket? I have been looking for it at least an hour.’

‘Dear queen of my heart,’ answered he, ‘I pray you to forgive my carelessness. I promised more than I could perform. I have sought all over the land for the roots you desire; but they are gathered in, and lie drying in musty cellars, and the fields are bare and desolate, for below in the valley winter reigns, only here in your presence spring is held fast, and wherever your foot is set the gay flowers bloom. Have patience for a little, and then without fail you shall have your puppets to play with.’

Almost before the gnome had finished, the disappointed princess turned away, and marched off to her own apartments, without deigning to answer him.

The gnome, however, set off above ground as speedily as possible, and disguising himself as a farmer, bought an ass in the nearest market-town, and brought it back loaded with sacks of turnip, carrot, and radish seed. With this he sowed a great field, and sent a vast army of his goblins to watch and tend it, and to bring up the fiery rivers from the heart of the earth near enough to warm and encourage the sprouting seeds. Thus fostered they grew and flourished marvellously, and promised a goodly crop.

The princess wandered about the field day by day, no other plants or fruits in all her wonderful garden pleased her as much as these roots; but still her eyes were full of discontent. And, best of all, she loved to while away the hours in a shady fir-wood, seated upon the bank of a little stream, into which she would cast the flowers she had gathered and watch them float away.

The gnome tried hard by every means in his power to please the princess and win her love, but little did he guess the real reason of his lack of success. He imagined that she was too young and inexperienced to care for him; but that was a mistake, for the truth was that another image already filled her heart. The young Prince Ratibor, whose lands joined her father's, had won the heart of the princess; and the lovers had been looking forward to the coming of their wedding-day when the bride's mysterious disappearance took place. The sad news drove Ratibor distracted, and as the days went on, and nothing could be heard of the princess, he forsook his castle and the society of men, and spent his days in the wild forests, roaming about and crying her name aloud to the trees and rocks. Meanwhile, the maiden, in her gorgeous prison, sighed in secret over her grief, not wishing to arouse the gnome's suspicions. In her own mind she was wondering if by any means she might escape from her captivity, and at last she hit upon a plan.

By this time spring once more reigned in the valley, and the gnome sent the fires back to their places in the deeps of the earth, for the roots which they had kept warm through all the cruel winter hand now come to their full size. Day by day the princess pulled up some of them, and made experiments with them, conjuring up now this longed-for person, and now that, just for the pleasure of seeing them as they appeared; but she really had another purpose in view.

One day she changed a tiny turnip into a bee, and sent him off to bring her some news of her lover.

'Fly, dear little bee, towards the east,' said she, 'to my beloved Ratibor, and softly hum into his ear that I love him only, but that I am a captive in the gnome's palace under the mountains. Do not forget a single word of my greeting, and bring me back a message from my beloved.'

So the bee spread his shining wings and flew away to do as he was bidden; but before he was out of sight a greedy swallow made a snatch at him, and to the great grief of the princess her messenger was eaten up then and there.

After that, by the power of the wonderful wand she summoned a cricket, and taught him this greeting:

'Hop, little cricket, to Ratibor, and chirp in his ear that I love him only, but that I am held captive by the gnome in his palace under the

mountains.’

So the cricket hopped off gaily, determined to do his best to deliver his message; but, alas! a long-legged stork who was prancing along the same road caught him in her cruel beak, and before he could say a word he had disappeared down her throat.

These two unlucky ventures did not prevent the princess from trying once more.

This time she changed the turnip into a magpie.

‘Flutter from tree to tree, chattering bird,’ said she, ‘till you come to Ratibor, my love. Tell him that I am a captive, and bid him come with horses and men, the third day from this, to the hill that rises from the Thorny Valley.’

The magpie listened, hopped awhile from branch to branch, and then darted away, the princess watching him anxiously as far as she could see.

Now Prince Ratibor was still spending his life in wandering about the woods, and not even the beauty of the spring could soothe his grief.

One day, as he sat in the shade of an oak tree, dreaming of his lost princess, and sometimes crying her name aloud, he seemed to hear another voice reply to his, and, starting up, he gazed around him, but he could see no one, and he had just made up his mind that he must be mistaken, when the same voice called again, and, looking up sharply, he saw a magpie which hopped to and fro among the twigs. Then Ratibor heard with surprise that the bird was indeed calling him by name.

‘Poor chatterpie,’ said he; ‘who taught you to say that name, which belongs to an unlucky mortal who wishes the earth would open and swallow up him and his memory for ever?’

Thereupon he caught up a great stone, and would have hurled it at the magpie, if it had not at that moment uttered the name of the princess.

This was so unexpected that the prince’s arm fell helplessly to his side at the sound, and he stood motionless.

But the magpie in the tree, who, like all the rest of his family, was not happy unless he could be for ever chattering, began to repeat the message the princess had taught him; and as soon as he understood it, Prince Ratibor’s heart was filed with joy. All his gloom and misery vanished in a moment, and he anxiously questioned the welcome messenger as to the fate of the princess.

But the magpie knew no more than the lesson he had learnt, so he soon fluttered away; while the prince hurried back to his castle to gather together a troop of horsemen, full of courage for whatever might befall.

The princess meanwhile was craftily pursuing her plan of escape. She left off treating the gnome with coldness and indifference; indeed, there was a look in her eyes which encouraged him to hope that she might some day return his love, and the idea pleased him mightily. The next day, as soon as the sun rose, she made her appearance decked as a bride, in the wonderful robes and jewels which the fond gnome had prepared for her. Her golden hair was braided and crowned with myrtle blossoms, and her flowing veil sparkled with gems. In these magnificent garments she went to meet the gnome upon the great terrace.

‘Loveliest of maidens,’ he stammered, bowing low before her, ‘let me gaze into your dear eyes, and read in them that you will no longer refuse my love, but will make me the happiest being the sun shines upon.’

So saying he would have drawn aside her veil; but the princess only held it more closely about her.

‘Your constancy has overcome me,’ she said; ‘I can no longer oppose your wishes. But believe my words, and suffer this veil still to hide my blushes and tears.’

‘Why tears, beloved one?’ cried the gnome anxiously; ‘every tear of yours falls upon my heart like a drop of molten gold. Greatly as I desire your love, I do not ask a sacrifice.’

‘Ah!’ cried the false princess, ‘why do you misunderstand my tears? My heart answers to your tenderness, and yet I am fearful. A wife cannot always charm, and though YOU will never alter, the beauty of mortals is as a flower that fades. How can I be sure that you will always be as loving and charming as you are now?’

‘Ask some proof, sweetheart,’ said he. ‘Put my obedience and my patience to some test by which you can judge of my unalterable love.’

‘Be it so,’ answered the crafty maiden. ‘Then give me just one proof of your goodness. Go! count the turnips in yonder meadow. My wedding feast must not lack guests. They shall provide me with bride-maidens too. But beware lest you deceive me, and do not miss a single one. That shall be the test of your truth towards me.’

Unwilling as the gnome was to lose sight of his beautiful bride for a moment, he obeyed her commands without delay, and hurried off to begin his task. He skipped along among the turnips as nimble as a grasshopper, and had soon counted them all; but, to be quite certain that he had made no mistake, he thought he would just run over them again. This time, to his great annoyance, the number was different; so he reckoned them for the third time, but now the number was not the same as either of the previous ones! And this was hardly to be wondered at, as his mind was full of the princess's pretty looks and words.

As for the maiden, no sooner was her deluded lover fairly out of sight than she began to prepare for flight. She had a fine fresh turnip hidden close at hand, which she changed into a spirited horse, all saddled and bridled, and, springing upon its back, she galloped away over hill and dale till she reached the Thorny Valley, and flung herself into the arms of her beloved Prince Ratibor.

Meanwhile the toiling gnome went through his task over and over again till his back ached and his head swam, and he could no longer put two and two together; but as he felt tolerably certain of the exact number of turnips in the field, big and little together, he hurried back eager to prove to his beloved one what a delightful and submissive husband he would be. He felt very well satisfied with himself as he crossed the mossy lawn to the place where he had left her; but, alas! she was no longer there.

He searched every thicket and path, he looked behind every tree, and gazed into every pond, but without success; then he hastened into the palace and rushed from room to room, peering into every hole and corner and calling her by name; but only echo answered in the marble halls—there was neither voice nor footstep.

Then he began to perceive that something was amiss, and, throwing off the mortal form that encumbered him, he flew out of the palace, and soared high into the air, and saw the fugitive princess in the far distance just as the swift horse carried her across the boundary of his dominions.

Furiously did the enraged gnome fling two great clouds together, and hurl a thunderbolt after the flying maiden, splintering the rocky barriers which had stood a thousand years. But his fury was vain, the thunderclouds melted away into a soft mist, and the gnome, after flying about for a while in despair, bewailing to the four winds his unhappy fate, went sorrowfully

back to the palace, and stole once more through every room, with many sighs and lamentations. He passed through the gardens which for him had lost their charm, and the sight of the princess's footprints on the golden sand of the pathway renewed his grief. All was lonely, empty, sorrowful; and the forsaken gnome resolved that he would have no more dealings with such false creatures as he had found men to be.

Thereupon he stamped three times upon the earth, and the magic palace, with all its treasures, vanished away into the nothingness out of which he had called it; and the gnome fled once more to the depths of his underground kingdom.

While all this was happening, Prince Ratibor was hurrying away with his prize to a place of safety. With great pomp and triumph he restored the lovely princess to her father, and was then and there married to her, and took her back with him to his own castle.

But long after she was dead, and her children too, the villagers would tell the tale of her imprisonment underground, as they sat carving wood in the winter nights.

[Volksmahrchen der Deutschen.]

Story Of The King Who Would Be Stronger Than Fate

Once upon a time, far away in the east country, there lived a king who loved hunting so much that, when once there was a deer in sight, he was careless of his own safety. Indeed, he often became quite separated from his nobles and attendants, and in fact was particularly fond of lonely adventures. Another of his favourite amusements was to give out that he was not well, and could not be seen; and then, with the knowledge only of his faithful Grand Wazeer, to disguise himself as a pedlar, load a donkey with cheap wares, and travel about. In this way he found out what the common people said about him, and how his judges and governors fulfilled their duties.

One day his queen presented him with a baby daughter as beautiful as the dawn, and the king himself was so happy and delighted that, for a whole week, he forgot to hunt, and spent the time in public and private rejoicing.

Not long afterwards, however, he went out after some deer which were to be found in a far corner of his forests. In the course of the beat his dogs disturbed a beautiful snow-white stag, and directly he saw it the king

determined that he would have it at any cost. So he put the spurs to his horse, and followed it as hard as he could gallop. Of course all his attendants followed at the best speed that they could manage; but the king was so splendidly mounted, and the stag was so swift, that, at the end of an hour, the king found that only his favourite hound and himself were in the chase; all the rest were far, far behind and out of sight.

Nothing daunted, however, he went on and on, till he perceived that he was entering a valley with great rocky mountains on all sides, and that his horse was getting very tired and trembled at every stride. Worse than all evening was already drawing on, and the sun would soon set. In vain had he sent arrow after arrow at the beautiful stag. Every shot fell short, or went wide of the mark; and at last, just as darkness was setting in, he lost sight altogether of the beast. By this time his horse could hardly move from fatigue, his hound staggered panting along beside him, he was far away amongst mountains where he had never been before, and had quite missed his way, and not a human creature or dwelling was in sight.

All this was very discouraging, but the king would not have minded if he had not lost that beautiful stag. That troubled him a good deal, but he never worried over what he could not help, so he got down from his horse, slipped his arm through the bridle, and led the animal along the rough path in hopes of discovering some shepherd's hut, or, at least, a cave or shelter under some rock, where he might pass the night.

Presently he heard the sound of rushing water, and made towards it. He toiled over a steep rocky shoulder of a hill, and there, just below him, was a stream dashing down a precipitous glen, and, almost beneath his feet, twinkling and flickering from the level of the torrent, was a dim light as of a lamp. Towards this light the king with his horse and hound made his way, sliding and stumbling down a steep, stony path. At the bottom the king found a narrow grassy ledge by the brink of the stream, across which the light from a rude lantern in the mount of a cave shed a broad beam of uncertain light. At the edge of the stream sat an old hermit with a long white beard, who neither spoke nor moved as the king approached, but sat throwing into the stream dry leaves which lay scattered about the ground near him.

'Peace be upon you,' said the king, giving the usual country salutation.

‘And upon you peace,’ answered the hermit; but still he never looked up, nor stopped what he was doing.

For a minute or two the king stood watching him. He noticed that the hermit threw two leaves in at a time, and watched them attentively. Sometimes both were carried rapidly down by the stream; sometimes only one leaf was carried off, and the other, after whirling slowly round and round on the edge of the current, would come circling back on an eddy to the hermit’s feet. At other times both leaves were held in the backward eddy, and failed to reach the main current of the noisy stream.

‘What are you doing?’ asked the king at last, and the hermit replied that he was reading the fates of men; every one’s fate, he said, was settled from the beginning, and, whatever it were, there was no escape from it. The king laughed.

‘I care little,’ he said, ‘what my fate may be; but I should be curious to know the fate of my little daughter.’

‘I cannot say,’ answered the hermit.

‘Do you not know, then?’ demanded the king.

‘I might know,’ returned the hermit, ‘but it is not always wisdom to know much.’

But the king was not content with this reply, and began to press the old man to say what he knew, which for a long time he would not do. At last, however, the king urged him so greatly that he said:

‘The king’s daughter will marry the son of a poor slave-girl called Puruna, who belongs to the king of the land of the north. There is no escaping from Fate.’

The king was wild with anger at hearing these words, but he was also very tired; so he only laughed, and answered that he hoped there would be a way out of THAT fate anyhow. Then he asked if the hermit could shelter him and his beasts for the night, and the hermit said ‘Yes’; so, very soon the king had watered and tethered his horse, and, after a supper of bread and parched peas, lay down in the cave, with the hound at his feet, and tried to go to sleep. But instead of sleeping he only lay awake and thought of the hermit’s prophecy; and the more he thought of it the angrier he felt, until he gnashed his teeth and declared that it should never, never come true.

Morning came, and the king got up, pale and sulky, and, after learning from the hermit which path to take, was soon mounted and found his way home without much difficulty. Directly he reached his palace he wrote a letter to the king of the land of the north, begging him, as a favour, to sell him his slave girl Puruna and her son, and saying that, if he consented, he would send a messenger to receive them at the river which divided the kingdoms.

For five days he awaited the reply, and hardly slept or ate, but was as cross as could be all the time. On the fifth day his messenger returned with a letter to say that the king of the land of the north would not sell, but he would give, the king the slave girl and her son. The king was overjoyed. He sent for his Grand Wazeer and told him that he was going on one of his lonely expeditions, and that the Wazeer must invent some excuse to account for his absence. Next he disguised himself as an ordinary messenger, mounted a swift camel, and sped away to the place where the slave girl was to be handed over to him. When he got there he gave the messengers who brought her a letter of thanks and a handsome present for their master and rewards for themselves; and then without delay he took the poor woman and her tiny baby-boy up on to his camel and rode off to a wild desert.

After riding for a day and a night, almost without stopping, he came to a great cave where he made the woman dismount, and, taking her and the baby into the cave, he drew his sword and with one blow chopped her head off. But although his anger made him cruel enough for anything so dreadful, the king felt that he could not turn his great sword on the helpless baby, who he was sure must soon die in this solitary place without its mother; so he left it in the cave where it was, and, mounting his camel, rode home as fast as he could.

Now, in a small village in his kingdom there lived an old widow who had no children or relations of any kind. She made her living mostly by selling the milk of a flock of goats; but she was very, very poor, and not very strong, and often used to wonder how she would live if she got too weak or ill to attend to her goats. Every morning she drove the goats out into the desert to graze on the shrubs and bushes which grew there, and every evening they came home of themselves to be milked and to be shut up safely for the night.

One evening the old woman was astonished to find that her very best nanny-goat returned without a drop of milk. She thought that some naughty boy or girl was playing a trick upon her and had caught the goat on its way home and stolen all the milk. But when evening after evening the goat remained almost dry she determined to find out who the thief was. So the next day she followed the goats at a distance and watched them while they grazed. At length, in the afternoon, the old woman noticed this particular nanny-goat stealing off by herself away from the herd and she at once went after her. On and on the goat walked for some way, and then disappeared into a cave in the rocks. The old woman followed the goat into the cave and then, what should she see but the animal giving her milk to a little boy-baby, whilst on the ground near by lay the sad remains of the baby's dead mother! Wondering and frightened, the old woman thought at last that this little baby might be a son to her in her old age, and that he would grow up and in time to come be her comfort and support. So she carried home the baby to her hut, and next day she took a spade to the cave and dug a grave where she buried the poor mother.

Years passed by, and the baby grew up into a find handsome lad, as daring as he was beautiful, and as industrious as he was brave. One day, when the boy, whom the old woman had named Nur Mahomed, was about seventeen years old, he was coming from his day's work in the fields, when he saw a strange donkey eating the cabbages in the garden which surround their little cottage. Seizing a big stick, he began to beat the intruder and to drive him out of his garden. A neighbour passing by called out to him—'Hi! I say! why are you beating the pedlar's donkey like that?'

'The pedlar should keep him from eating my cabbages,' said Nur Mahomed; 'if he comes this evening here again I'll cut off his tail for him!'

Whereupon he went off indoors, whistling cheerfully. It happened that this neighbour was one of those people who make mischief by talking too much; so, meeting the pedlar in the 'serai,' or inn, that evening, he told him what had occurred, and added: 'Yes; and the young spitfire said that if beating the donkey would not do, he would beat you also, and cut your nose off for a thief!'

A few days later, the pedlar having moved on, two men appeared in the village inquiring who it was who had threatened to ill-treat and to murder

an innocent pedlar. They declared that the pedlar, in fear of his life, had complained to the king; and that they had been sent to bring the lawless person who had said these things before the king himself. Of course they soon found out about the donkey eating Nur Mahomed's cabbages, and about the young man's hot words; but although the lad assured them that he had never said anything about murdering anyone, they replied they were ordered to arrest him, and bring him to take his trial before the king. So, in spite of his protests, and the wails of his mother, he was carried off, and in due time brought before the king. Of course Nur Mahomed never guessed that the supposed pedlar happened to have been the king himself, although nobody knew it.

But as he was very angry at what he had been told, he declared that he was going to make an example of this young man, and intended to teach him that even poor travelling pedlars could get justice in HIS country, and be protected from such lawlessness. However, just as he was going to pronounce some very heavy sentence, there was a stir in the court, and up came Nur Mahomed's old mother, weeping and lamenting, and begging to be heard. The king ordered her to speak, and she began to plead for the boy, declaring how good he was, and how he was the support of her old age, and if he were put in prison she would die. The king asked her who she was. She replied that she was his mother.

'His mother?' said the king; 'you are too old, surely, to have so young a son!'

Then the old woman, in her fright and distress, confessed the whole story of how she found the baby, and how she rescued and brought him up, and ended by beseeching the king for mercy.

It is easy to guess how, as the story came out, the king looked blacker and blacker, and more and more grim, until at last he was half fainting with rage and astonishment. This, then, was the baby he had left to die, after cruelly murdering his mother! Surely fate might have spared him this! He wished he had sufficient excuse to put the boy to death, for the old hermit's prophecy came back to him as strongly as ever; and yet the young man had done nothing bad enough to deserve such a punishment. Everyone would call him a tyrant if he were to give such an order—in fact, he dared not try it!

At length he collected himself enough to say:—‘If this young man will enlist in my army I will let him off. We have need of such as him, and a little discipline will do him good.’ Still the old woman pleaded that she could not live without her son, and was nearly as terrified at the idea of his becoming a soldier as she was at the thought of his being put in prison. But at length the king—determined to get the youth into his clutches—pacified her by promising her a pension large enough to keep her in comfort; and Nur Mahomed, to his own great delight, was duly enrolled in the king’s army.

As a soldier Nur Mahomed seemed to be in luck. He was rather surprised, but much pleased, to find that he was always one of those chosen when any difficult or dangerous enterprise was afoot; and, although he had the narrowest escapes on some occasions, still, the very desperateness of the situations in which he found himself gave him special chances of displaying his courage. And as he was also modest and generous, he became a favourite with his officers and his comrades.

Thus it was not very surprising that, before very long, he became enrolled amongst the picked men of the king’s bodyguard. The fact is, that the king had hoped to have got him killed in some fight or another; but, seeing that, on the contrary, he throve on hard knocks, he was now determined to try more direct and desperate methods.

One day, soon after Nur Mahomed had entered the bodyguard, he was selected to be one of the soldiers told off to escort the king through the city. The procession was marching on quite smoothly, when a man, armed with a dagger, rushed out of an alley straight towards the king. Nur Mahomed, who was the nearest of the guards, threw himself in the way, and received the stab that had been apparently intended for the king. Luckily the blow was a hurried one, and the dagger glanced on is breastbone, so that, although he received a severe wound, his youth and strength quickly got the better of it. The king was, of course, obliged to take some notice of this brave deed, and as a reward made him one of his own attendants.

After this the strange adventures the young man passed through were endless. Officers of the bodyguard were often sent on all sorts of secret and difficult errands, and such errands had a curious way of becoming necessary when Nur Mahomed was on duty. Once, while he was taking a

journey, a foot-bridge gave way under him; once he was attacked by armed robbers; a rock rolled down upon him in a mountain pass; a heavy stone coping fell from a roof at his feet in a narrow city alley. Altogether, Nur Mahomed began to think that, somewhere or other, he had made an enemy; but he was light-hearted, and the thought did not much trouble him. He escaped somehow every time, and felt amused rather than anxious about the next adventure.

It was the custom of that city that the officer for the day of the palace guards should receive all his food direct from the king's kitchen. One day, when Nur Mahomed's turn came to be on duty, he was just sitting down to a delicious stew that had been sent in from the palace, when one of those gaunt, hungry dogs, which, in eastern countries, run about the streets, poked his nose in at the open guard-room door, and looked at Nur Mahomed with mouth watering and nostrils working. The kind-hearted young man picked out a lump of meat, went to the door, and threw it outside to him. The dog pounced upon it, and gulped it down greedily, and was just turning to go, when it staggered, fell, rolled over, and died. Nur Mahomed, who had been lazily watching him, stood still for a moment, then he came back whistling softly. He gathered up the rest of his dinner and carefully wrapped it up to carry away and bury somewhere; and then he sent back the empty plates.

How furious the king was when, at the next morning's durbar, Nur Mahomed appeared before him fresh, alert and smiling as usual. He was determined, however, to try once more, and bidding the young man come into his presence that evening, gave orders that he was to carry a secret despatch to the governor of a distant province. 'Make your preparations at once,' added he, 'and be ready to start in the morning. I myself will deliver you the papers at the last moment.'

Now this province was four or five days' journey from the palace, and the governor of it was the most faithful servant the king had. He could be silent as the grave, and prided himself on his obedience. Whilst he was an old and tried servant of the king's, his wife had been almost a mother to the young princess ever since the queen had died some years before. It happened that, a little before this time, the princess had been sent away for her health to another remote province; and whilst she was there her old

friend, the governor’s wife, had begged her to come and stay with them as soon as she could.

The princess accepted gladly, and was actually staying in the governor’s house at the very time when the king made up his mind to send Nur Mahomed there with the mysterious despatch.

According to orders Nur Mahomed presented himself early the next morning at the king’s private apartments. His best horse was saddled, food placed in is saddle-bag, and with some money tied up in his waist-band, he was ready to start. The king handed over to him a sealed packet, desiring him to give it himself only into the hands of the governor, and to no one else. Nur Mahomed hid it carefully in his turban, swung himself into the saddle, and five minutes later rode out of the city gates, and set out on his long journey.

The weather was very hot; but Nur Mahomed thought that the sooner his precious letter was delivered the better; so that, by dint of riding most of each night and resting only in the hottest part of the day, he found himself, by noon on the third day, approaching the town which was his final destination.

Not a soul was to be seen anywhere; and Nur Mahomed, stiff, dry, thirsty, and tired, looked longingly over the wall into the gardens, and marked the fountains, the green grass, the shady apricot orchards, and giant mulberry trees, and wished he were there.

At length he reached the castle gates, and was at once admitted, as he was in the uniform of the king’s bodyguard. The governor was resting, the soldier said, and could not see him until the evening. So Nur Mahomed handed over his horse to an attendant, and wandered down into the lovely gardens he had seen from the road, and sat down in the shade to rest himself. He flung himself on his back and watched the birds twittering and chattering in the trees above him. Through the branches he could see great patches of sky where the kites wheeled and circled incessantly, with shrill whistling cried. Bees buzzed over the flowers with a soothing sound, and in a few minutes Nur Mahomed was fast asleep.

Every day, through the heat of the afternoon, the governor, and his wife also, used to lie down for two or three hours in their own rooms, and so, for the matter of that, did most people in the palace. But the princess, like many other girls, was restless, and preferred to wander about the garden,

rather than rest on a pile of soft cushions. What a torment her stout old attendants and servants sometime thought her when she insisted on staying awake, and making them chatter or do something, when they could hardly keep their eyes open! Sometimes, however, the princess would pretend to go to sleep, and then, after all her women had gladly followed her example, she would get up and go out by herself, her veil hanging loosely about her. If she was discovered her old hostess scolded her severely; but the princess only laughed, and did the same thing next time.

This very afternoon the princess had left all her women asleep, and, after trying in vain to amuse herself indoors, she had slipped out into the great garden, and rambled about in all her favourite nooks and corners, feeling quite safe as there was not a creature to be seen. Suddenly, on turning a corner, she stopped in surprise, for before her lay a man fast asleep! In her hurry she had almost tripped over him. But there he was, a young man, tanned and dusty with travel, in the uniform of an officer of the king's guard. One of the few faults of this lovely princess was a devouring curiosity, and she lived such an idle life that she had plenty of time to be curious. Out of one of the folds of this young man's turban there peeped the corner of a letter! She wondered what the letter was—whom it was for! She drew her veil a little closer, and stole across on tip-toe and caught hold of the corner of the letter. Then she pulled it a little, and just a little more! A great big seal came into view, which she saw to be her father's, and at the sight of it she paused for a minute half ashamed of what she was doing. But the pleasure of taking a letter which was not meant for her was more than she could resist, and in another moment it was in her hand. All at once she remembered that it would be death to this poor officer if he lost the letter, and that at all hazards she must put it back again. But this was not so easy; and, moreover, the letter in her hand burnt her with longing to read it, and see what was inside. She examined the seal. It was sticky with being exposed to the hot sun, and with a very little effort it parted from the paper. The letter was open and she read it! And this was what was written:

'Behead the messenger who brings this letter secretly and at once. Ask no questions.'

The girl grew pale. What a shame! she thought. SHE would not let a handsome young fellow like that be beheaded; but how to prevent it was

not quite clear at the moment. Some plan must be invented, and she wished to lock herself in where no one could interrupt her, as might easily happen in the garden. So she crept softly to her room, and took a piece of paper and wrote upon it: ‘Marry the messenger who brings this letter to the princess openly at once. Ask no questions.’ And even contrived to work the seals off the original letter and to fix them to this, so that no one could tell, unless they examined it closely, that it had ever been opened. Then she slipped back, shaking with fear and excitement, to where the young officer still lay asleep, thrust the letter into the fold so his turban, and hurried back to her room. It was done!

Late in the afternoon Nur Mahomed woke, and, making sure that the precious despatch was still safe, went off to get ready for his audience with the governor. As soon as he was ushered into his presence he took the letter from his turban and placed it in the governor’s hands according to orders. When he had read it the governor was certainly a little astonished; but he was told in the letter to ‘ask no questions,’ and he knew how to obey orders. He sent for his wife and told her to get the princess ready to be married at once.

‘Nonsense!’ said his wife, ‘what in the world do you mean?’

‘These are the king’s commands,’ he answered; ‘go and do as I bid you. The letter says “at once,” and “ask no questions.” The marriage, therefore, must take place this evening.’

In vain did his wife urge every objection; the more she argued, the more determined was her husband. ‘I know how to obey orders,’ he said, ‘and these are as plain as the nose on my face!’ So the princess was summoned, and, somewhat to their surprise, she seemed to take the news very calmly; next Nur Mahomed was informed, and he was greatly startled, but of course he could but be delighted at the great and unexpected honour which he thought the king had done him. Then all the castle was turned upside down; and when the news spread in the town, THAT was turned upside down too. Everybody ran everywhere, and tried to do everything at once; and, in the middle of it all, the old governor went about with his hair standing on end, muttering something about ‘obeying orders.’

And so the marriage was celebrated, and there was a great feast in the castle, and another in the soldiers’ barracks, and illuminations all over the

town and in the beautiful gardens. And all the people declared that such a wonderful sight had never been seen, and talked about it to the ends of their lives.

The next day the governor despatched the princess and her bridegroom to the king, with a troop of horsemen, splendidly dressed, and he sent a mounted messenger on before them, with a letter giving the account of the marriage to the king.

When the king got the governor's letter, he grew so red in the face that everyone thought he was going to have apoplexy. They were all very anxious to know what had happened, but he rushed off and locked himself into a room, where he ramped and raved until he was tired. Then, after awhile, he began to think he had better make the best of it, especially as the old governor had been clever enough to send him back his letter, and the king was pretty sure that this was in the princess's handwriting. He was fond of his daughter, and though she had behaved badly, he did not wish to cut HER head off, and he did not want people to know the truth because it would make him look foolish. In fact, the more he considered the matter, the more he felt that he would be wise to put a good face on it, and to let people suppose that he had really brought about the marriage of his own free will.

So, when the young couple arrived, the king received them with all state, and gave his son-in-law a province to govern. Nur Mahomed soon proved himself as able and honourable a governor as he was a brave soldier; and, when the old king died, he became king in his place, and reigned long and happily.

Nur Mahomed's old mother lived for a long time in her 'son's' palace, and died in peace. The princess, his wife, although she had got her husband by a trick, found that she could not trick HIM, and so she never tried, but busied herself in teaching her children and scolding her maids. As for the old hermit, no trace of him was ever discovered; but the cave is there, and the leaves lie thick in front of it unto this day.

[Told the writer by an Indian.]

STORY OF WALI DAD THE SIMPLE-HEARTED

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Once upon a time there lived a poor old man whose name was Wali Dad Gunjay, or Wali Dad the Bald. He had no relations, but lived all by himself in a little mud hut some distance from any town, and made his living by cutting grass in the jungle, and selling it as fodder for horses. He only earned by this five halfpence a day; but he was a simple old man, and needed so little out of it, that he saved up one halfpenny daily, and spent the rest upon such food and clothing as he required.

In this way he lived for many years until, one night, he thought that he would count the money he had hidden away in the great earthen pot under the floor of his hut. So he set to work, and with much trouble he pulled the bag out on to the floor, and sat gazing in astonishment at the heap of coins which tumbled out of it. What should he do with them all? he wondered. But he never thought of spending the money on himself, because he was content to pass the rest of his days as he had been doing for ever so long, and he really had no desire for any greater comfort or luxury.

At last he threw all the money into an old sack, which he pushed under his bead, and then, rolled in his ragged old blanket, he went off to sleep.

Early next morning he staggered off with his sack of money to the shop of a jeweller, whom he knew in the town, and bargained with him for a beautiful little gold bracelet. With this carefully wrapped up in his cotton waistband he went to the house of a rich friend, who was a travelling merchant, and used to wander about with his camels and merchandise through many countries. Wali Dad was lucky enough to find him at home, so he sat down, and after a little talk he asked the merchant who was the most virtuous and beautiful lady he had ever met with. The merchant replied that the princess of Khaistan was renowned everywhere as well for the beauty of her person as for the kindness and generosity of her disposition.

‘Then,’ said Wali Dad, ‘next time you go that way, give her this little bracelet, with the respectful compliments of one who admires virtue far more than he desires wealth.’

With that he pulled the bracelet from his waistband, and handed it to his friend. The merchant was naturally much astonished, but said nothing, and made no objection to carrying out his friend’s plan.

Time passed by, and at length the merchant arrived in the course of his travels at the capital of Khaistan. As soon as he had opportunity he presented himself at the palace, and sent in the bracelet, neatly packed in a little perfumed box provided by himself, giving at the same time the message entrusted to him by Wali Dad.

The princess could not think who could have bestowed this present on her, but she bade her servant to tell the merchant that if he would return, after he had finished his business in the city, she would give him her reply. In a few days, therefore, the merchant came back, and received from the princess a return present in the shape of a camel-load or rich silks, besides a present of money for himself. With these he set out on his journey.

Some months later he got home again from his journeyings, and proceeded to take Wali Dad the princess’s present. Great was the perplexity of the good man to find a camel-load of silks tumbled at his door! What was he to do with these costly things? But, presently, after much thought, he begged the merchant to consider whether he did not know of some young prince to whom such treasures might be useful.

‘Of course,’ cried the merchant, greatly amused; ‘from Delhi to Baghdad, and from Constantinople to Lucknow, I know them all; and there lives none worthier than the gallant and wealthy young prince of Nekabad.’

‘Very well, then, take the silks to him, with the blessing of an old man,’ said Wali Dad, much relieved to be rid of them.

So, the next time that the merchant journeyed that way he carried the silks with him, and in due course arrived at Nekabad, and sought an audience of the prince. When he was shown into his presence he produced the beautiful gift of silks that Wali Dad had sent, and begged the young man to accept them as a humble tribute to his worth and greatness. The prince was much touched by the generosity of the giver, and ordered, as a return present, twelve of the finest breed of horses for which his country

was famous to be delivered over to the merchant, to whom also, before he took his leave, he gave a munificent reward for his services.

As before, the merchant at last arrived at home; and next day, he set out for Wali Dad's house with the twelve horses. When the old man saw them coming in the distance he said to himself: 'Here's luck! a troop of horses coming! They are sure to want quantities of grass, and I shall sell all I have without having to drag it to market.' Thereupon he rushed off and cut grass as fast he could. When he got back, with as much grass as he could possibly carry, he was greatly discomfited to find that the horses were all for himself. At first he could not think what to do with them, but, after a little, a brilliant idea struck him! He gave two to the merchant, and begged him to take the rest to the princess of Khaistan, who was clearly the fittest person to possess such beautiful animals.

The merchant departed, laughing. But, true to his old friend's request, he took the horses with him on his next journey, and eventually presented them safely to the princess. This time the princess sent for the merchant, and questioned him about the giver. Now, the merchant was usually a most honest man, but he did not quite like to describe Wali Dad in his true light as an old man whose income was five halfpence a day, and who had hardly clothes to cover him. So he told her that his friend had heard stories of her beauty and goodness, and had longed to lay the best he had at her feet. The princess then took her father into her confidence, and begged him to advise her what courtesy she might return to one who persisted in making her such presents.

'Well,' said the king, 'you cannot refuse them; so the best thing you can do is to send this unknown friend at once a present so magnificent that he is not likely to be able to send you anything better, and so will be ashamed to send anything at all!' Then he ordered that, in place of each of the ten horses, two mules laden with silver should be returned by her.

Thus, in a few hours, the merchant found himself in charge of a splendid caravan; and he had to hire a number of armed men to defend it on the road against the robbers, and he was glad indeed to find himself back again in Wali Dad's hut.

'Well, now,' cried Wali Dad, as he viewed all the wealth laid at his door, 'I can well repay that kind prince for his magnificent present of horses; but to be sure you have been put to great expenses! Still, if you

will accept six mules and their loads, and will take the rest straight to Nekabad, I shall thank you heartily.'

The merchant felt handsomely repaid for his trouble, and wondered greatly how the matter would turn out. So he made no difficulty about it; and as soon as he could get things ready, he set out for Nekabad with this new and princely gift.

This time the prince, too, was embarrassed, and questioned the merchant closely. The merchant felt that his credit was at stake, and whilst inwardly determining that he would not carry the joke any further, could not help describing Wali Dad in such glowing terms that the old man would never have known himself had he heard them. The prince, like the king of Khaistan, determined that he would send in return a gift that would be truly royal, and which would perhaps prevent the unknown giver sending him anything more. So he made up a caravan on twenty splendid horses caparisoned in gold embroidered cloths, with fine morocco saddles and silver bridles and stirrups, also twenty camels of the best breed, which had the speed of race-horses, and could swing along at a trot all day without getting tired; and, lastly, twenty elephants, with magnificent silver howdahs and coverings of silk embroidered with pearls. To take care of these animals the merchant hired a little army of men; and the troop made a great show as they travelled along.

When Wali Dad from a distance saw the cloud of dust which the caravan made, and the glitter of its appointments, he said to himself: 'By Allah! here's a grand crowd coming! Elephants, too! Grass will be selling well to-day!' And with that he hurried off to the jungle and cut grass as fast as he could. As soon as he got back he found the caravan had stopped at his door, and the merchant was waiting, a little anxiously, to tell him the news and to congratulate him upon his riches.

'Riches!' cried Wali Dad, 'what has an old man like me with one foot in the grave to do with riches? That beautiful young princess, now! She'd be the one to enjoy all these fine things! Do you take for yourself two horses, two camels, and two elephants, with all their trappings, and present the rest to her.'

The merchant at first objected to these remarks, and pointed out to Wali Dad that he was beginning to feel these embassies a little awkward. Of course he was himself richly repaid, so far as expenses went; but still

he did not like going so often, and he was getting nervous. At length, however he consented to go once more, but he promised himself never to embark on another such enterprise.

So, after a few days' rest, the caravan started off once more for Khaistan.

The moment the king of Khaistan saw the gorgeous train of men and beasts entering his palace courtyard, he was so amazed that he hurried down in person to inquire about it, and became dumb when he heard that these also were a present from the princely Wali Dad, and were for the princess, his daughter. He went hastily off to her apartments, and said to her: 'I tell you what it is, my dear, this man wants to marry you; that is the meaning of all these presents! There is nothing for it but that we go and pay him a visit in person. He must be a man of immense wealth, and as he is so devoted to you, perhaps you might do worse than marry him!'

The princess agreed with all that her father said, and orders were issued for vast numbers of elephants and camels, and gorgeous tents and flags, and litters for the ladies, and horses for the men, to be prepared without delay, as the king and princess were going to pay a visit to the great and munificent prince Wali Dad. The merchant, the king declared, was to guide the party.

The feelings of the poor merchant in this sore dilemma can hardly be imagined. Willingly would he have run away; but he was treated with so much hospitality as Wali Dad's representative, that he hardly got an instant's real peace, and never any opportunity of slipping away. In fact, after a few days, despair possessed him to such a degree that he made up his mind that all that happened was fate, and that escape was impossible; but he hoped devoutly some turn of fortune would reveal to him a way out of the difficulties which he had, with the best intentions, drawn upon himself.

On the seventh day they all started, amidst thunderous salutes from the ramparts of the city, and much dust, and cheering, and blaring of trumpets.

Day after day they moved on, and every day the poor merchant felt more ill and miserable. He wondered what kind of death the king would invent for him, and went through almost as much torture, as he lay awake nearly the whole of every night thinking over the situation, as he would

have suffered if the king's executioners were already setting to work upon his neck.

At last they were only one day's march from Wali Dad's little mud home. Here a great encampment was made, and the merchant was sent on to tell Wali Dad that the King and Princess of Khaistan had arrived and were seeking an interview. When the merchant arrived he found the poor old man eating his evening meal of onions and dry bread, and when he told him of all that had happened he had not the heart to proceed to load him with the reproaches which rose to his tongue. For Wali Dad was overwhelmed with grief and shame for himself, for his friend, and for the name and honour of the princess; and he wept and plucked at his beard, and groaned most piteously. With tears he begged the merchant to detain them for one day by any kind of excuse he could think of, and to come in the morning to discuss what they should do.

As soon as the merchant was gone Wali Dad made up his mind that there was only one honourable way out of the shame and distress that he had created by his foolishness, and that was—to kill himself. So, without stopping to ask any one's advice, he went off in the middle of the night to a place where the river wound along at the base of steep rocky cliffs of great height, and determined to throw himself down and put an end to his life. When he got to the place he drew back a few paces, took a little run, and at the very edge of that dreadful black gulf he stopped short! He COULD not do it!

From below, unseen in the blackness of the deep night shadows, the water roared and boiled round the jagged rocks—he could picture the place as he knew it, only ten times more pitiless and forbidding in the visionless darkness; the wind soughed through the gorge with fearsome sighs, and rustlings and whisperings, and the bushes and grasses that grew in the ledges of the cliffs seemed to him like living creatures that danced and beckoned, shadowy and indistinct. An owl laughed 'Hoo! hoo!' almost in his face, as he peered over the edge of the gulf, and the old man threw himself back in a perspiration of horror. He was afraid! He drew back shuddering, and covering his face in his hands he wept aloud.

Presently he was aware of a gentle radiance that shed itself before him. Surely morning was not already coming to hasten and reveal his disgrace! He took his hands from before his face, and saw before him two lovely

beings whom his instinct told him were not mortal, but were Peris from Paradise.

‘Why do you weep, old man?’ said one, in a voice as clear and musical as that of the bulbul.

‘I weep for shame,’ replied he.

‘What do you here?’ questioned the other.

‘I came here to die,’ said Wali Dad. And as they questioned him, he confessed all his story.

Then the first stepped forward and laid a hand upon his shoulder, and Wali Dad began to feel that something strange—what, he did not know—was happening to him. His old cotton rags of clothes were changed to beautiful linen and embroidered cloth; on his hard, bare feet were warm, soft shoes, and on his head a great jewelled turban. Round his neck there lay a heavy golden chain, and the little old bent sickle, which he cut grass with, and which hung in his waistband, had turned into a gorgeous scimetar, whose ivory hilt gleamed in the pale light like snow in moonlight. As he stood wondering, like a man in a dream, the other peri waved her hand and bade him turn and see; and, lo! before him a noble gateway stood open. And up an avenue of giant place trees the peris led him, dumb with amazement. At the end of the avenue, on the very spot where his hut had stood, a gorgeous palace appeared, ablaze with myriads of lights. Its great porticoes and verandahs were occupied by hurrying servants, and guards paced to and fro and saluted him respectfully as he drew near, along mossy walks and through sweeping grassy lawns where fountains were playing and flowers scented the air. Wali Dad stood stunned and helpless.

‘Fear not,’ said one of the peris; ‘go to your house, and learn that God rewards the simple-hearted.’

With these words they both disappeared and left him. He walked on, thinking still that he must be dreaming. Very soon he retired to rest in a splendid room, far grander than anything he had ever dreamed of.

When morning dawned he woke, and found that the palace, and himself, and his servants were all real, and that he was not dreaming after all!

If he was dumbfounded, the merchant, who was ushered into his presence soon after sunrise, was much more so. He told Wali Dad that he

had not slept all night, and by the first streak of daylight had started to seek out his friend. And what a search he had had! A great stretch of wild jungle country had, in the night, been changed into parks and gardens; and if it had not been for some of Wali Dad's new servants, who found him and brought him to the palace, he would have fled away under the impression that his trouble had sent him crazy, and that all he saw was only imagination.

Then Wali Dad told the merchant all that had happened. By his advice he sent an invitation to the king and princess of Khaistan to come and be his guests, together with all their retinue and servants, down to the very humblest in the camp.

For three nights and days a great feast was held in honour of the royal guests. Every evening the king and his nobles were served on golden plates and from golden cups; and the smaller people on silver plates and from silver cups; and each evening each guest was requested to keep the places and cups that they had used as a remembrance of the occasion. Never had anything so splendid been seen. Besides the great dinners, there were sports and hunting, and dances, and amusements of all sorts.

On the fourth day the king of Khaistan took his host aside, and asked him whether it was true, as he had suspected, that he wished to marry his daughter. But Wali Dad, after thanking him very much for the compliment, said that he had never dreamed of so great an honour, and that he was far too old and ugly for so fair a lady; but he begged the king to stay with him until he could send for the Prince of Nekabad, who was a most excellent, brave, and honourable young man, and would surely be delighted to try to win the hand of the beautiful princess.

To this the king agreed, and Wali Dad sent the merchant to Nekabad, with a number of attendants, and with such handsome presents that the prince came at once, fell head over ears in love with the princess, and married her at Wali Dad's palace amidst a fresh outburst of rejoicings.

And now the King of Khaistan and the Prince and Princess of Nekabad, each went back to their own country; and Wali Dad lived to a good old age, befriending all who were in trouble and preserving, in his prosperity, the simple-hearted and generous nature that he had when he was only Wali Dad Gunjay, the grass cutter.

[Told the author by an Indian.]

TALE OF A TORTOISE AND OF A MISCHIEVOUS MONKEY

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Once upon a time there was a country where the rivers were larger, and the forests deeper, than anywhere else. Hardly any men came there, and the wild creatures had it all to themselves, and used to play all sorts of strange games with each other. The great trees, chained one to the other by thick flowering plants with bright scarlet or yellow blossoms, were famous hiding-places for the monkeys, who could wait unseen, till a puma or an elephant passed by, and then jump on their backs and go for a ride, swinging themselves up by the creepers when they had had enough. Near the rivers huge tortoises were to be found, and though to our eyes a tortoise seems a dull, slow thing, it is wonderful to think how clever they were, and how often they outwitted many of their livelier friends.

There was one tortoise in particular that always managed to get the better of everybody, and many were the tales told in the forest of his great deeds. They began when he was quite young, and tired of staying at home with his father and mother. He left them one day, and walked off in search of adventures. In a wide open space surrounded by trees he met with an elephant, who was having his supper before taking his evening bath in the river which ran close by. ‘Let us see which of us two is strongest,’ said the young tortoise, marching up to the elephant. ‘Very well,’ replied the elephant, much amused at the impertinence of the little creature; ‘when would you like the trial to be?’

‘In an hour’s time; I have some business to do first,’ answered the tortoise. And he hastened away as fast as his short legs would carry him.

In a pool of the river a whale was resting, blowing water into the air and making a lovely fountain. The tortoise, however, was too young and too busy to admire such things, and he called to the whale to stop, as he wanted to speak to him. ‘Would you like to try which of us is the stronger?’ said he. The whale looked at him, sent up another fountain, and

answered: ‘Oh, yes; certainly. When do you wish to begin? I am quite ready.’

‘Then give me one of your longest bones, and I will fasten it to my leg. When I give the signal, you must pull, and we will see which can pull the hardest.’

‘Very good,’ replied the whale; and he took out one of his bones and passed it to the tortoise.

The tortoise picked up the end of the bone in his mouth and went back to the elephant. ‘I will fasten this to your leg,’ said he, ‘in the same way as it is fastened to mine, and we must both pull as hard as we can. We shall soon see which is the stronger.’ So he wound it carefully round the elephant’s leg, and tied it in a firm knot. ‘Now!’ cried he, plunging into a thick bush behind him.

The whale tugged at one end, and the elephant tugged at the other, and neither had any idea that he had not the tortoise for his foe. When the whale pulled hardest the elephant was dragged into the water; and when the elephant pulled the hardest the whale was hauled on to the land. They were very evenly matched, and the battle was a hard one.

At last they were quite tired, and the tortoise, who was watching, saw that they could play no more. So he crept from his hiding-place, and dipping himself in the river, he went to the elephant and said: ‘I see that you really are stronger than I thought. Suppose we give it up for to-day?’ Then he dried himself on some moss and went to the whale and said: ‘I see that you really are stronger than I thought. Suppose we give it up for to-day?’

The two adversaries were only too glad to be allowed to rest, and believed to the end of their days that, after all, the tortoise was stronger than either of them.

A day or two later the young tortoise was taking a stroll, when he met a fox, and stopped to speak to him. ‘Let us try,’ said he in a careless manner, ‘which of us can lie buried in the ground during seven years.’

‘I shall be delighted,’ answered the fox, ‘only I would rather that you began.’

‘It is all the same to me,’ replied the tortoise; ‘if you come round this way to-morrow you will see that I have fulfilled my part of the bargain.’

So he looked about for a suitable place, and found a convenient hole at the foot of an orange tree. He crept into it, and the next morning the fox heaped up the earth round him, and promised to feed him every day with fresh fruit. The fox so far kept his word that each morning when the sun rose he appeared to ask how the tortoise was getting on. ‘Oh, very well; but I wish you would give me some fruit,’ replied he.

‘Alas! the fruit is not ripe enough yet for you to eat,’ answered the fox, who hoped that the tortoise would die of hunger long before the seven years were over.

‘Oh dear, oh dear! I am so hungry!’ cried the tortoise.

‘I am sure you must be; but it will be all right to-morrow,’ said the fox, trotting off, not knowing that the oranges dropped down the hollow trunk, straight into the tortoise’s hole, and that he had as many as he could possibly eat.

So the seven years went by; and when the tortoise came out of his hole he was as fat as ever.

Now it was the fox’s turn, and he chose his hole, and the tortoise heaped the earth round, promising to return every day or two with a nice young bird for his dinner. ‘Well, how are you getting on?’ he would ask cheerfully when he paid his visits.

‘Oh, all right; only I wish you had brought a bird with you,’ answered the fox.

‘I have been so unlucky, I have never been able to catch one,’ replied the tortoise. ‘However, I shall be more fortunate to-morrow, I am sure.’

But not many to-morrows after, when the tortoise arrived with his usual question: ‘Well, how are you getting on?’ he received no answer, for the fox was lying in his hole quite still, dead of hunger.

By this time the tortoise was grown up, and was looked up to throughout the forest as a person to be feared for his strength and wisdom. But he was not considered a very swift runner, until an adventure with a deer added to his fame.

One day, when he was basking in the sun, a stag passed by, and stopped for a little conversation. ‘Would you care to see which of us can run fastest?’ asked the tortoise, after some talk. The stag thought the question so silly that he only shrugged his shoulders. ‘Of course, the victor would

have the right to kill the other,' went on the tortoise. 'Oh, on that condition I agree,' answered the deer; 'but I am afraid you are a dead man.'

'It is no use trying to frighten me,' replied the tortoise. 'But I should like three days for training; then I shall be ready to start when the sun strikes on the big tree at the edge of the great clearing.'

The first thing the tortoise did was to call his brothers and his cousins together, and he posted them carefully under ferns all along the line of the great clearing, making a sort of ladder which stretched for many miles. This done to his satisfaction, he went back to the starting place.

The stag was quite punctual, and as soon as the sun's rays struck the trunk of the tree the stag started off, and was soon far out of the sight of the tortoise. Every now and then he would turn his head as he ran, and call out: 'How are you getting on?' and the tortoise who happened to be nearest at that moment would answer: 'All right, I am close up to you.'

Full of astonishment, the stag would redouble his efforts, but it was no use. Each time he asked: 'Are you there?' the answer would come: 'Yes, of course, where else should I be?' And the stag ran, and ran, and ran, till he could run no more, and dropped down dead on the grass.

And the tortoise, when he thinks about it, laughs still.

But the tortoise was not the only creature of whose tricks stories were told in the forest. There was a famous monkey who was just as clever and more mischievous, because he was so much quicker on his feet and with his hands. It was quite impossible to catch him and give him the thrashing he so often deserved, for he just swung himself up into a tree and laughed at the angry victim who was sitting below. Sometimes, however, the inhabitants of the forest were so foolish as to provoke him, and then they got the worst of it. This was what happened to the barber, whom the monkey visited one morning, saying that he wished to be shaved. The barber bowed politely to his customer, and begging him to be seated, tied a large cloth round his neck, and rubbed his chin with soap; but instead of cutting off his beard, the barber made a snip at the end of his tail. It was only a very little bit and the monkey started up more in rage than in pain. 'Give me back the end of my tail,' he roared, 'or I will take one of your razors.' The barber refused to give back the missing piece, so the monkey caught up a razor from the table and ran away with it, and no one in the

forest could be shaved for days, as there was not another to be got for miles and miles.

As he was making his way to his own particular palm-tree, where the cocoanuts grew, which were so useful for pelting passers-by, he met a woman who was scaling a fish with a bit of wood, for in this side of the forest a few people lived in huts near the river.

‘That must be hard work,’ said the monkey, stopping to look; ‘try my knife—you will get on quicker.’ And he handed her the razor as he spoke. A few days later he came back and rapped at the door of the hut. ‘I have called for my razor,’ he said, when the woman appeared.

‘I have lost it,’ answered she.

‘If you don’t give it to me at once I will take your sardine,’ replied the monkey, who did not believe her. The woman protested she had not got the knife, so he took the sardine and ran off.

A little further along he saw a baker who was standing at the door, eating one of his loaves. ‘That must be rather dry,’ said the monkey, ‘try my fish’; and the man did not need twice telling. A few days later the monkey stopped again at the baker’s hut. ‘I’ve called for that fish,’ he said.

‘That fish? But I have eaten it!’ exclaimed the baker in dismay.

‘If you have eaten it I shall take this barrel of meal in exchange,’ replied the monkey; and he walked off with the barrel under his arm.

As he went he saw a woman with a group of little girls round her, teaching them how to dress hair. ‘Here is something to make cakes for the children,’ he said, putting down his barrel, which by this time he found rather heavy. The children were delighted, and ran directly to find some flat stones to bake their cakes on, and when they had made and eaten them, they thought they had never tasted anything so nice. Indeed, when they saw the monkey approaching not long after, they rushed to meet him, hoping that he was bringing them some more presents. But he took no notice of their questions, he only said to their mother: ‘I’ve called for my barrel of meal.’

‘Why, you gave it to me to make cakes of!’ cried the mother.

‘If I can’t get my barrel of meal, I shall take one of your children,’ answered the monkey. ‘I am in want of somebody who can bake my bread when I am tired of fruit, and who knows how to make cocoanut cakes.’

‘Oh, leave me my child, and I will find you another barrel of meal,’ wept the mother.

‘I don’t WANT another barrel, I want THAT one,’ answered the monkey sternly. And as the woman stood wringing her hands, he caught up the little girl that he thought the prettiest and took her to his home in the palm tree.

She never went back to the hut, but on the whole she was not much to be pitied, for monkeys are nearly as good as children to play with, and they taught her how to swing, and to climb, and to fly from tree to tree, and everything else they knew, which was a great deal.

Now the monkey’s tiresome tricks had made him many enemies in the forest, but no one hated him so much as the puma. The cause of their quarrel was known only to themselves, but everybody was aware of the fact, and took care to be out of the way when there was any chance of these two meeting. Often and often the puma had laid traps for the monkey, which he felt sure his foe could not escape; and the monkey would pretend that he saw nothing, and rejoice the hidden puma’s heart by seeming to walk straight into the snare, when, lo! a loud laugh would be heard, and the monkey’s grinning face would peer out of a mass of creepers and disappear before his foe could reach him.

This state of things had gone on for quite a long while, when at last there came a season such as the oldest parrot in the forest could never remember. Instead of two or three hundred inches of rain falling, which they were all accustomed to, month after month passed without a cloud, and the rivers and springs dried up, till there was only one small pool left for everyone to drink from. There was not an animal for miles round that did not grieve over this shocking condition of affairs, not one at least except the puma. His only thought for years had been how to get the monkey into his power, and this time he imagined his chance had really arrived. He would hide himself in a thicket, and when the monkey came down to drink—and come he must—the puma would spring out and seize him. Yes, on this occasion there could be no escape!

And no more there would have been if the puma had had greater patience; but in his excitement he moved a little too soon. The monkey, who was stooping to drink, heard a rustling, and turning caught the gleam of two yellow, murderous eyes. With a mighty spring he grasped a creeper

which was hanging above him, and landed himself on the branch of a tree; feeling the breath of the puma on his feet as the animal bounded from is cover. Never had the monkey been so near death, and it was some time before he recovered enough courage to venture on the ground again.

Up there in the shelter of the trees, he began to turn over in his head plans for escaping the snares of the puma. And at length chance helped him. Peeping down to the earth, he saw a man coming along the path carrying on his head a large gourd filled with honey.

He waited till the man was just underneath the tree, then he hung from a bough, and caught the gourd while the man looked up wondering, for he was no tree-climber. Then the monkey rubbed the honey all over him, and a quantity of leaves from a creeper that was hanging close by; he stuck them all close together into the honey, so that he looked like a walking bush. This finished, he ran to the pool to see the result, and, quite pleased with himself, set out in search of adventures.

Soon the report went through the forest that a new animal had appeared from no one knew where, and that when somebody had asked his name, the strange creature had answered that it was Jack-in-the-Green. Thanks to this, the monkey was allowed to drink at the pool as often as he liked, for neither beast nor bird had the faintest notion who he was. And if they made any inquiries the only answer they got was that the water of which he had drunk deeply had turned his hair into leaves, so that they all knew what would happen in case they became too greedy.

By-and-by the great rains began again. The rivers and streams filled up, and there was no need for him to go back to the pool, near the home of his enemy, the puma, as there was a large number of places for him to choose from. So one night, when everything was still and silent, and even the chattering parrots were asleep on one leg, the monkey stole down softly from his perch, and washed off the honey and the leaves, and came out from his bath in his own proper skin. On his way to breakfast he met a rabbit, and stopped for a little talk.

‘I am feeling rather dull,’ he remarked; ‘I think it would do me good to hunt a while. What do you say?’

‘Oh, I am quite willing,’ answered the rabbit, proud of being spoken to by such a large creature. ‘But the question is, what shall we hunt?’

‘There is no credit in going after an elephant or a tiger,’ replied the monkey stroking his chin, ‘they are so big they could not possibly get out of your way. It shows much more skill to be able to catch a small thing that can hide itself in a moment behind a leaf. I’ll tell you what! Suppose I hunt butterflies, and you, serpents.’

The rabbit, who was young and without experience, was delighted with this idea, and they both set out on their various ways.

The monkey quietly climbed up the nearest tree, and ate fruit most of the day, but the rabbit tired himself to death poking his nose into every heap of dried leaves he saw, hoping to find a serpent among them. Luckily for himself the serpents were all away for the afternoon, at a meeting of their own, for there is nothing a serpent likes so well for dinner as a nice plump rabbit. But, as it was, the dried leaves were all empty, and the rabbit at last fell asleep where he was. Then the monkey, who had been watching him, fell down and pulled his ears, to the rage of the rabbit, who vowed vengeance.

It was not easy to catch the monkey off his guard, and the rabbit waited long before an opportunity arrived. But one day Jack-in-the-Green was sitting on a stone, wondering what he should do next, when the rabbit crept softly behind him, and gave his tail a sharp pull. The monkey gave a shriek of pain, and darted up into a tree, but when he saw that it was only the rabbit who had dared to insult him so, he chattered so fast in his anger, and looked so fierce, that the rabbit fled into the nearest hole, and stayed there for several days, trembling with fright.

Soon after this adventure the monkey went away into another part of the country, right on the outskirts of the forest, where there was a beautiful garden full of oranges hanging ripe from the trees. This garden was a favourite place for birds of all kinds, each hoping to secure an orange for dinner, and in order to frighten the birds away and keep a little fruit for himself, the master had fastened a waxen figure on one of the boughs.

Now the monkey was as fond of oranges as any of the birds, and when he saw a man standing in the tree where the largest and sweetest oranges grew, he spoke to him at once. ‘You man,’ he said rudely, ‘throw me down that big orange up there, or I will throw a stone at you.’ The wax figure took no notice of this request, so the monkey, who was easily made angry,

picked up a stone, and flung it with all his force. But instead of falling to the ground again, the stone stuck to the soft wax.

At this moment a breeze shook the tree, and the orange on which the monkey had set his heart dropped from the bough. He picked it up and ate it every bit, including the rind, and it was so good he thought he should like another. So he called again to the wax figure to throw him an orange, and as the figure did not move, he hurled another stone, which stuck to the wax as the first had done. Seeing that the man was quite indifferent to stones, the monkey grew more angry still, and climbing the tree hastily, gave the figure a violent kick. But like the two stones his leg remained stuck to the wax, and he was held fast. ‘Let me go at once, or I will give you another kick,’ he cried, suiting the action to the word, and this time also his foot remained in the grasp of the man. Not knowing what he did, the monkey hit out, first with one hand and then with the other, and when he found that he was literally bound hand and foot, he became so mad with anger and terror that in his struggles he fell to the ground, dragging the figure after him. This freed his hands and feet, but besides the shock of the fall, they had tumbled into a bed of thorns, and he limped away broken and bruised, and groaning loudly; for when monkeys ARE hurt, they take pains that everybody shall know it.

It was a long time before Jack was well enough to go about again; but when he did, he had an encounter with his old enemy the puma. And this was how it came about.

One day the puma invited his friend the stag to go with him and see a comrade, who was famous for the good milk he got from his cows. The stag loved milk, and gladly accepted the invitation, and when the sun began to get a little low the two started on their walk. On the way they arrived on the banks of a river, and as there were no bridges in those days it was necessary to swim across it. The stag was not fond of swimming, and began to say that he was tired, and thought that after all it was not worth going so far to get milk, and that he would return home. But the puma easily saw through these excuses, and laughed at him.

‘The river is not deep at all,’ he said; ‘why, you will never be off your feet. Come, pluck up your courage and follow me.’

The stag was afraid of the river; still, he was much more afraid of being laughed at, and he plunged in after the puma; but in an instant the

current had swept him away, and if it had not borne him by accident to a shallow place on the opposite side, where he managed to scramble up the bank, he would certainly have been drowned. As it was, he scrambled out, shaking with terror, and found the puma waiting for him. ‘You had a narrow escape that time,’ said the puma.

After resting for a few minutes, to let the stag recover from his fright, they went on their way till they came to a grove of bananas.

‘They look very good,’ observed the puma with a longing glance, ‘and I am sure you must be hungry, friend stag? Suppose you were to climb the tree and get some. You shall eat the green ones, they are the best and sweetest; and you can throw the yellow ones down to me. I dare say they will do quite well!’ The stag did as he was bid, though, not being used to climbing, it gave him a deal of trouble and sore knees, and besides, his horns were continually getting entangled in the creepers. What was worse, when once he had tasted the bananas, he found them not at all to his liking, so he threw them all down, green and yellow alike, and let the puma take his choice. And what a dinner he made! When he had QUITE done, they set forth once more.

The path lay through a field of maize, where several men were working. As they came up to them, the puma whispered: ‘Go on in front, friend stag, and just say “Bad luck to all workers!”’ The stag obeyed, but the men were hot and tired, and did not think this a good joke. So they set their dogs at him, and he was obliged to run away as fast as he could.

‘I hope your industry will be rewarded as it deserves,’ said the puma as he passed along; and the men were pleased, and offered him some of their maize to eat.

By-and-by the puma saw a small snake with a beautiful shining skin, lying coiled up at the foot of a tree. ‘What a lovely bracelet that would make for your daughter, friend stag! said he. The stag stooped and picked up the snake, which bit him, and he turned angrily to the puma. ‘Why did you not tell me it would bite?’ he asked.

‘Is it my fault if you are an idiot?’ replied the puma.

At last they reached their journey’s end, but by this time it was late, and the puma’s comrade was ready for bed, so they slung their hammocks in convenient places, and went to sleep. But in the middle of the night the puma rose softly and stole out of the door to the sheep-fold, where he

killed and ate the fattest sheep he could find, and taking a bowl full of its blood, he sprinkled the sleeping stag with it. This done, he returned to bed.

In the morning the shepherd went as usual to let the sheep out of the fold, and found one of them missing. He thought directly of the puma, and ran to accuse him of having eaten the sheep. ‘I, my good man? What had put it into your head to think of such a thing? Have I got any blood about me? If anyone has eaten a sheep it must be my friend the stag.’ Then the shepherd went to examine the sleeping stag, and of course he saw the blood. ‘Ah! I will teach you how to steal!’ cried he, and he hit the stag such a blow on his skull that he died in a moment. The noise awakened the comrade above, and he came downstairs. The puma greeted him with joy, and begged he might have some of the famous milk as soon as possible, for he was very thirsty. A large bucket was set before the puma directly. He drank it to the last drop, and then took leave.

On his way home he met the monkey. ‘Are you fond of milk?’ asked he. ‘I know a place where you get it very nice. I will show you it if you like.’ The monkey knew that the puma was not so good-natured for nothing, but he felt quite able to take care of himself, so he said he should have much pleasure in accompanying his friend.

They soon reached the same river, and, as before, the puma remarked: ‘Friend monkey, you will find it very shallow; there is no cause for fear. Jump in and I will follow.’

‘Do you think you have the stag to deal with?’ asked the monkey, laughing. ‘I should prefer to follow; if not I shall go no further. The puma understood that it was useless trying to make the monkey do as he wished, so he chose a shallow place and began to swim across. The monkey waited till the puma had got to the middle, then he gave a great spring and jumped on his back, knowing quite well that the puma would be afraid to shake him off, lest he should be swept away into deep water. So in this manner they reached the bank.

The banana grove was not far distant, and here the puma thought he would pay the monkey out for forcing him to carry him over the river. ‘Friend monkey, look what fine bananas,’ cried he. ‘You are fond of climbing; suppose you run up and throw me down a few. You can eat the green ones, which are the nicest, and I will be content with the yellow.’

‘Very well,’ answered the monkey, swinging himself up; but he ate all the yellow ones himself, and only threw down the green ones that were left. The puma was furious and cried out: ‘I will punch your head for that.’ But the monkey only answered: ‘If you are gong to talk such nonsense I won’t walk with you.’ And the puma was silent.

In a few minutes more they arrived at the field were the men were reaping the maize, and the puma remarked as he had done before: ‘Friend monkey, if you wish to please these men, just say as you go by: “Bad luck to all workers.”

‘Very well,’ replied the monkey; but, instead, he nodded and smiled, and said: ‘I hope your industry may be rewarded as it deserves.’ The men thanked him heartily, let him pass on, and the puma followed behind him.

Further along the path they saw the shining snake lying on the moss. ‘What a lovely necklace for your daughter,’ exclaimed the puma. ‘Pick it up and take it with you.’

‘You are very kind, but I will leave it for you,’ answered the monkey, and nothing more was said about the snake.

Not long after this they reached the comrade’s house, and found him just ready to go to bed. So, without stopping to talk, the guests slung their hammocks, the monkey taking care to place his so high that no one could get at him. Besides, he thought it would be more prudent not to fall asleep, so he only lay still and snored loudly. When it was quite dark and no sound was to be heard, the puma crept out to the sheep-fold, killed the sheep, and carried back a bowl full of its blood with which to sprinkle the monkey. But the monkey, who had been watching out of the corner of his eye, waited until the puma drew near, and with a violent kick upset the bowl all over the puma himself.

When the puma saw what had happened, he turned in a great hurry to leave the house, but before he could do so, he saw the shepherd coming, and hastily lay down again.

‘This is the second time I have lost a sheep,’ the man said to the monkey; ‘it will be the worse for the thief when I catch him, I can tell you.’ The monkey did not answer, but silently pointed to the puma who was pretending to be asleep. The shepherd stooped and saw the blood, and cried out: ‘Ah! so it is you, is it? then take that!’ and with his stick he gave the puma such a blow on the head that he died then and there.

Then the monkey got up and went to the dairy, and drank all the milk he could find. Afterwards he returned home and married, and that is the last we heard of him.

[Adapted from Folk-lore Bresilien.]

The Knights of the Fish

Once upon a time there lived an old cobbler who worked hard at his trade from morning till night, and scarcely gave himself a moment to eat. But, industrious as he was, he could hardly buy bread and cheese for himself and his wife, and they grew thinner and thinner daily.

For a long while whey pretended to each other that they had no appetite, and that a few blackberries from the hedges were a great deal nicer than a good strong bowl of soup. But at length there came a day when the cobbler could bear it no longer, and he threw away his last, and borrowing a rod from a neighbour he went out to fish.

Now the cobbler was as patient about fishing as he had been about cobbling. From dawn to dark he stood on the banks of the little stream, without hooking anything better than an eel, or a few old shoes, that even he, clever though he was, felt were not worth mending. At length his patience began to give way, and as he undressed one night he said to himself: ‘Well, I will give it one more chance; and if I don’t catch a fish to-morrow, I will go and hang myself.’

He had not cast his line for ten minutes the next morning before he drew from the river the most beautiful fish he had ever seen in his life. But he nearly fell into the water from surprise, when the fish began to speak to him, in a small, squeaky voice:

‘Take me back to your hut and cook me; then cut me up, and sprinkle me over with pepper and salt. Give two of the pieces to your wife, and bury two more in the garden.’

The cobbler did not know what to make of these strange words; but he was wiser than many people, and when he did not understand, he thought it was well to obey. His children wanted to eat all the fish themselves, and begged their father to tell them what to do with the pieces he had put aside; but the cobbler only laughed, and told them it was no business of theirs. And when they were safe in bed he stole out and buried the two pieces in the garden.

By and by two babies, exactly alike, lay in a cradle, and in the garden were two tall plants, with two brilliant shields on the top.

Years passed away, and the babies were almost men. They were tired of living quietly at home, being mistaken for each other by everybody they saw, and determined to set off in different directions, to seek adventures.

So, one fine morning, the two brothers left the hut, and walked together to the place where the great road divided. There they embraced and parted, promising that if anything remarkable had happened to either, he would return to the cross roads and wait till his brother came.

The youth who took the path that ran eastwards arrived presently at a large city, where he found everybody standing at the doors, wringing their hands and weeping bitterly.

‘What is the matter?’ asked he, pausing and looking round. And a man replied, in a faltering voice, that each year a beautiful girl was chosen by lot to be offered up to a dreadful fiery dragon, who had a mother even worse than himself, and this year the lot had fallen on their peerless princess.

‘But where IS the princess?’ said the young man once more, and again the man answered him: ‘She is standing under a tree, a mile away, waiting for the dragon.’

This time the Knight of the Fish did not stop to hear more, but ran off as fast as he could, and found the princess bathed in tears, and trembling from head to foot.

She turned as she heard the sound of his sword, and removed her handkerchief from his eyes.

‘Fly,’ she cried; ‘fly while you have yet time, before that monster sees you.’

She said it, and she mean it; yet, when he had turned his back, she felt more forsaken than before. But in reality it was not more than a few minutes before he came back, galloping furiously on a horse he had borrowed, and carrying a huge mirror across its neck.

‘I am in time, then,’ he cried, dismounting very carefully, and placing the mirror against the trunk of a tree.

‘Give me your veil,’ he said hastily to the princess. And when she had unwound it from her head he covered the mirror with it.

‘The moment the dragon comes near you, you must tear off the veil,’ cried he; ‘and be sure you hide behind the mirror. Have no fear; I shall be at hand.’

He and his horse had scarcely found shelter amongst some rocks, when the flap of the dragon’s wings could be plainly heard. He tossed his head with delight at the sight of her, and approached slowly to the place where she stood, a little in front of the mirror. Then, still looking the monster steadily in the face, she passed one hand behind her back and snatched off the veil, stepping swiftly behind the tree as she did so.

The princess had not known, when she obeyed the orders of the Knight of the Fish, what she expected to happen. Would the dragon with snaky locks be turned to stone, she wondered, like the dragon in an old story her nurse had told her; or would some fiery spark dart from the heart of the mirror, and strike him dead? Neither of these things occurred, but, instead, the dragon stopped short with surprise and rage when he saw a monster before him as big and strong as himself. He shook his mane with rage and fury; the enemy in front did exactly the same. He lashed his tail, and rolled his red eyes, and the dragon opposite was no whit behind him. Opening his mouth to its very widest, he gave an awful roar; but the other dragon only roared back. This was too much, and with another roar which made the princess shake in her shoes, he flung himself upon his foe. In an instant the mirror lay at his feet broken into a thousand pieces, but as every piece reflected part of himself, the dragon thought that he too had been smashed into atoms.

It was the moment for which the Knight of the Fish had watched and waited, and before the dragon could find out that he was not hurt at all, the young man’s lance was down his throat, and he was rolling, dead, on the grass.

Oh! what shouts of joy rang through the great city, when the youth came riding back with the princess sitting behind him, and dragging the horrible monster by a cord. Everybody cried out that the king must give the victor the hand of the princess; and so he did, and no one had ever seen such balls and feasts and sports before. And when they were all over the young couple went to the palace prepared for them, which was so large that it was three miles round.

The first wet day after their marriage the bridegroom begged the bride to show him all the rooms in the palace, and it was so big and took so long that the sun was shining brightly again before they stepped on to the roof to see the view.

‘What castle is that out there,’ asked the knight; ‘it seems to be made of black marble?’

‘It is called the castle of Albatroz,’ answered the princess. ‘It is enchanted, and no one that has tried to enter it has ever come back.’

Her husband said nothing, and began to talk of something else; but the next morning he ordered his horse, took his spear, called his bloodhound, and set off for the castle.

It needed a brave man to approach it, for it made your hair stand on end merely to look at it; it was as dark as the night of a storm, and as silent as the grave. But the Knight of the Fish knew no fear, and had never turned his back on an enemy; so he drew out his horn, and blew a blast.

The sound awoke all the sleeping echoes in the castle, and was repeated now loudly, now softly; now near, and now far. But nobody stirred for all that.

‘Is there anyone inside?’ cried the young man in his loudest voice; ‘anyone who will give a knight hospitality? Neither governor, nor squire, not even a page?’

‘Not even a page!’ answered the echoes. But the young man did not heed them, and only struck a furious blow at the gate.

Then a small grating opened, and there appeared the tip of a huge nose, which belonged to the ugliest old woman that ever was seen.

‘What do you want?’ said she.

‘To enter,’ he answered shortly. ‘Can I rest here this night? Yes or No?’

‘No, No, No!’ repeated the echoes.

Between the fierce sun and his anger at being kept waiting, the Knight of the Fish had grown so hot that he lifted his visor, and when the old woman saw how handsome he was, she began fumbling with the lock of the gate.

‘Come in, come in,’ said she, ‘so fine a gentleman will do us no harm.’

‘Harm!’ repeated the echoes, but again the young man paid no heed.

‘Let us go in, ancient dame,’ but she interrupted him.

‘You must call me the Lady Berberisca,’ she answered, sharply; ‘and this is my castle, to which I bid you welcome. You shall live here with me and be my husband.’ But at these words the knight let his spear fall, so surprised was he.

‘I marry YOU? why you must be a hundred at least!’ cried he. ‘You are mad! All I desire is to inspect the castle and then go.’ As he spoke he heard the voices give a mocking laugh; but the old woman took no notice, and only bade the knight follow her.

Old though she was, it seemed impossible to tire her. There was no room, however small, she did not lead him into, and each room was full of curious things he had never seen before.

At length they came to a stone staircase, which was so dark that you could not see your hand if you held it up before your face.

‘I have kept my most precious treasure till the last,’ said the old woman; ‘but let me go first, for the stairs are steep, and you might easily break your leg.’ So on she went, now and then calling back to the young man in the darkness. But he did not know that she had slipped aside into a recess, till suddenly he put his foot on a trap door which gave way under him, and he fell down, down, as many good knights had done before him, and his voice joined the echoes of theirs.

‘So you would not marry me!’ chuckled the old witch. ‘Ha! ha! Ha! ha!’

Meanwhile his brother had wandered far and wide, and at last he wandered back to the same great city where the other young knight had met with so many adventures. He noticed, with amazement, that as he walked through the streets the guards drew themselves up in line, and saluted him, and the drummers played the royal march; but he was still more bewildered when several servants in livery ran up to him and told him that the princess was sure something terrible had befallen him, and had made herself ill with weeping. At last it occurred to him that once more he had been taken for his brother. ‘I had better say nothing,’ thought he; ‘perhaps I shall be able to help him after all.’

So he suffered himself to be borne in triumph to the palace, where the princess threw herself into his arms.

‘And so you did go to the castle?’ she asked.

‘Yes, of course I did,’ answered he.

‘And what did you see there?’

‘I am forbidden to tell you anything about it, until I have returned there once more,’ replied he.

‘Must you really go back to that dreadful place?’ she asked wistfully. ‘You are the only man who has ever come back from it.’

‘I must,’ was all he answered. And the princess, who was a wise woman, only said: ‘Well, go to bed now, for I am sure you must be very tired.’

But the knight shook his head. ‘I have sworn never to lie in a bed as long as my work in the castle remains standing.’ And the princess again sighed, and was silent.

Early next day the young man started for the castle, feeling sure that some terrible thing must have happened to his brother.

At the blast of his horn the long nose of the old woman appeared at the grating, but the moment she caught sight of his face, she nearly fainted from fright, as she thought it was the ghost of the youth whose bones were lying in the dungeon of the castle.

‘Lady of all the ages,’ cried the new comer, ‘did you not give hospitality to a young knight but a short time ago?’

‘A short time ago!’ wailed the voices.

‘And how have you ill-treated him?’ he went on.

‘Ill-treated him!’ answered the voices. The woman did not stop to hear more; she turned to fly; but the knight’s sword entered her body.

‘Where is my brother, cruel hag?’ asked he sternly.

‘I will tell you,’ said she; ‘but as I feel that I am going to die I shall keep that piece of news to myself, till you have brought me to life again.’

The young man laughed scornfully. ‘How do you propose that I should work that miracle?’

‘Oh, it is quite easy. Go into the garden and gather the flowers of the everlasting plant and some of dragon’s blood. Crush them together and boil them in a large tub of water, and then put me into it.’

The knight did as the old witch bade him, and, sure enough, she came out quite whole, but uglier than ever. She then told the young man what had become of his brother, and he went down into the dungeon, and brought up his body and the bodies of the other victims who lay there, and

when they were all washed in the magic water their strength was restored to them.

And, besides these, he found in another cavern the bodies of the girls who had been sacrificed to the dragon, and brought them back to life also.

As to the old witch, in the end she died of rage at seeing her prey escape her; and at the moment she drew her last breath the castle of Albatroz fell into ruins with a great noise.

[From Cuentos, Oraciones, Adivinas recogidos por Fernan Caballaro.]

THE ORANGE FAIRY BOOK

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PREFACE

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The children who read fairy books, or have fairy books read to them, do not read prefaces, and the parents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, who give fairy books to their daughters, nieces, and cousins, leave prefaces unread. For whom, then, are prefaces written? When an author publishes a book ‘out of his own head,’ he writes the preface for his own pleasure. After reading over his book in print—to make sure that all the ‘u’s’ are not printed as ‘n’s,’ and all the ‘n’s’ as ‘u’s’ in the proper names—then the author says, mildly, in his preface, what he thinks about his own book, and what he means it to prove—if he means it to prove anything—and why it is not a better book than it is. But, perhaps, nobody reads prefaces except other authors; and critics, who hope that they will find enough in the preface to enable them to do without reading any of the book.

This appears to be the philosophy of prefaces in general, and perhaps authors might be more daring and candid than they are with advantage, and write regular criticisms of their own books in their prefaces, for nobody can be so good a critic of himself as the author—if he has a sense of humour. If he has not, the less he says in his preface the better.

These Fairy Books, however, are not written by the Editor, as he has often explained, ‘out of his own head.’ The stories are taken from those told by grannies to grandchildren in many countries and in many languages—French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Gaelic, Icelandic, Cherokee, African, Indian, Australian, Slavonic, Eskimo, and what not. The stories are not literal, or word by word translations, but have been altered in many ways to make them suitable for children. Much has been left out in places, and the narrative has been broken up into conversations, the characters telling each other how matters stand, and speaking for themselves, as children, and some older people, prefer them to do. In many tales, fairly cruel and savage deeds are done, and these have been softened down as much as possible; though it is impossible, even if it were desirable, to conceal the circumstance that popular stories were never intended to be

tracts and nothing else. Though they usually take the side of courage and kindness, and the virtues in general, the old story-tellers admire successful cunning as much as Homer does in the Odyssey. At least, if the cunning hero, human or animal, is the weaker, like Odysseus, Brer Rabbit, and many others, the story-teller sees little in intellect but superior cunning, by which tiny Jack gets the better of the giants. In the fairy tales of no country are ‘improper’ incidents common, which is to the credit of human nature, as they were obviously composed mainly for children. It is not difficult to get rid of this element when it does occur in popular tales.

The old puzzle remains a puzzle—why do the stories of the remotest people so closely resemble each other? Of course, in the immeasurable past, they have been carried about by conquering races, and learned by conquering races from vanquished peoples. Slaves carried far from home brought their stories with them into captivity. Wanderers, travellers, shipwrecked men, merchants, and wives stolen from alien tribes have diffused the stories; gipsies and Jews have passed them about; Roman soldiers of many different races, moved here and there about the Empire, have trafficked in them. From the remotest days men have been wanderers, and wherever they went their stories accompanied them. The slave trade might take a Greek to Persia, a Persian to Greece; an Egyptian woman to Phoenicia; a Babylonian to Egypt; a Scandinavian child might be carried with the amber from the Baltic to the Adriatic; or a Sidonian to Ophir, wherever Ophir may have been; while the Portuguese may have borne their tales to South Africa, or to Asia, and thence brought back other tales to Egypt. The stories wandered wherever the Buddhist missionaries went, and the earliest French voyageurs told them to the Red Indians. These facts help to account for the sameness of the stories everywhere; and the uniformity of human fancy in early societies must be the cause of many other resemblances.

In this volume there are stories from the natives of Rhodesia, collected by Mr. Fairbridge, who speaks the native language, and one is brought by Mr. Cripps from another part of Africa, Uganda. Three tales from the Punjaub were collected and translated by Major Campbell. Various savage tales, which needed a good deal of editing, are derived from the learned pages of the ‘Journal of the Anthropological Institute.’ With these exceptions, and ‘The Magic Book,’ translated by Mrs. Pedersen, from

‘Eventyr fra Jylland,’ by Mr. Ewald Tang Kristensen (Stories from Jutland), all the tales have been done, from various sources, by Mrs. Lang, who has modified, where it seemed desirable, all the narratives.

THE STORY OF THE HERO MAKOMA

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From the Senna (Oral Tradition)

Once upon a time, at the town of Senna on the banks of the Zambesi, was born a child. He was not like other children, for he was very tall and strong; over his shoulder he carried a big sack, and in his hand an iron hammer. He could also speak like a grown man, but usually he was very silent.

One day his mother said to him: ‘My child, by what name shall we know you?’

And he answered: ‘Call all the head men of Senna here to the river’s bank.’ And his mother called the head men of the town, and when they had come he led them down to a deep black pool in the river where all the fierce crocodiles lived.

‘O great men!’ he said, while they all listened, ‘which of you will leap into the pool and overcome the crocodiles?’ But no one would come forward. So he turned and sprang into the water and disappeared.

The people held their breath, for they thought: ‘Surely the boy is bewitched and throws away his life, for the crocodiles will eat him!’ Then suddenly the ground trembled, and the pool, heaving and swirling, became red with blood, and presently the boy rising to the surface swam on shore.

But he was no longer just a boy! He was stronger than any man and very tall and handsome, so that the people shouted with gladness when they saw him.

‘Now, O my people!’ he cried, waving his hand, ‘you know my name—I am Makoma, “the Greater”; for have I not slain the crocodiles into the pool where none would venture?’

Then he said to his mother: ‘Rest gently, my mother, for I go to make a home for myself and become a hero.’ Then, entering his hut he took Nu-endo, his iron hammer, and throwing the sack over his shoulder, he went away.

Makoma crossed the Zambesi, and for many moons he wandered towards the north and west until he came to a very hilly country where, one day, he met a huge giant making mountains.

‘Greeting,’ shouted Makoma, ‘you are you?’

‘I am Chi-eswa-mapiri, who makes the mountains,’ answered the giant; ‘and who are you?’

‘I am Makoma, which signifies “greater,”’ answered he.

‘Greater than who?’ asked the giant.

‘Greater than you!’ answered Makoma.

The giant gave a roar and rushed upon him. Makoma said nothing, but swinging his great hammer, Nu-endo, he struck the giant upon the head.

He struck him so hard a blow that the giant shrank into quite a little man, who fell upon his knees saying: ‘You are indeed greater than I, O Makoma; take me with you to be your slave!’ So Makoma picked him up and dropped him into the sack that he carried upon his back.

He was greater than ever now, for all the giant’s strength had gone into him; and he resumed his journey, carrying his burden with as little difficulty as an eagle might carry a hare.

Before long he came to a country broken up with huge stones and immense clods of earth. Looking over one of the heaps he saw a giant wrapped in dust dragging out the very earth and hurling it in handfuls on either side of him.

‘Who are you,’ cried Makoma, ‘that pulls up the earth in this way?’

‘I am Chi-dubula-taka,’ said he, ‘and I am making the river-beds.’

‘Do you know who I am?’ said Makoma. ‘I am he that is called “greater”!’

‘Greater than who?’ thundered the giant.

‘Greater than you!’ answered Makoma.

With a shout, Chi-dubula-taka seized a great clod of earth and launched it at Makoma. But the hero had his sack held over his left arm and the stones and earth fell harmlessly upon it, and, tightly gripping his iron hammer, he rushed in and struck the giant to the ground. Chi-dubula-taka grovelled before him, all the while growing smaller and smaller; and when he had become a convenient size Makoma picked him up and put him into the sack beside Chi-eswa-mapiri.

He went on his way even greater than before, as all the river-maker's power had become his; and at last he came to a forest of bao-babs and thorn trees. He was astonished at their size, for every one was full grown and larger than any trees he had ever seen, and close by he saw Chi-gwisa-miti, the giant who was planting the forest.

Chi-gwisa-miti was taller than either of his brothers, but Makoma was not afraid, and called out to him: 'Who are you, O Big One?'

'I,' said the giant, 'am Chi-gwisa-miti, and I am planting these bao-babs and thorns as food for my children the elephants.'

'Leave off!' shouted the hero, 'for I am Makoma, and would like to exchange a blow with thee!'

The giant, plucking up a monster bao-bab by the roots, struck heavily at Makoma; but the hero sprang aside, and as the weapon sank deep into the soft earth, whirled Nu-endo the hammer round his head and felled the giant with one blow.

So terrible was the stroke that Chi-gwisa-miti shrivelled up as the other giants had done; and when he had got back his breath he begged Makoma to take him as his servant. 'For,' said he, 'it is honourable to serve a man so great as thou.'

Makoma, after placing him in his sack, proceeded upon his journey, and travelling for many days he at last reached a country so barren and rocky that not a single living thing grew upon it—everywhere reigned grim desolation. And in the midst of this dead region he found a man eating fire.

'What are you doing?' demanded Makoma.

'I am eating fire,' answered the man, laughing; 'and my name is Chi-idea-moto, for I am the flame-spirit, and can waste and destroy what I like.'

'You are wrong,' said Makoma; 'for I am Makoma, who is "greater" than you—and you cannot destroy me!'

The fire-eater laughed again, and blew a flame at Makoma. But the hero sprang behind a rock—just in time, for the ground upon which he had been standing was turned to molten glass, like an overbaked pot, by the heat of the flame-spirit's breath.

Then the hero flung his iron hammer at Chi-idea-moto, and, striking him, it knocked him helpless; so Makoma placed him in the sack, Woro-

nowu, with the other great men that he had overcome.

And now, truly, Makoma was a very great hero; for he had the strength to make hills, the industry to lead rivers over dry wastes, foresight and wisdom in planting trees, and the power of producing fire when he wished.

Wandering on he arrived one day at a great plain, well watered and full of game; and in the very middle of it, close to a large river, was a grassy spot, very pleasant to make a home upon.

Makoma was so delighted with the little meadow that he sat down under a large tree and removing the sack from his shoulder, took out all the giants and set them before him. ‘My friends,’ said he, ‘I have travelled far and am weary. Is not this such a place as would suit a hero for his home? Let us then go, to-morrow, to bring in timber to make a kraal.’

So the next day Makoma and the giants set out to get poles to build the kraal, leaving only Chi-eswa-mapiri to look after the place and cook some venison which they had killed. In the evening, when they returned, they found the giant helpless and tied to a tree by one enormous hair!

‘How is it,’ said Makoma, astonished, ‘that we find you thus bound and helpless?’

‘O Chief,’ answered Chi-eswa-mapiri, ‘at mid-day a man came out of the river; he was of immense statue, and his grey moustaches were of such length that I could not see where they ended! He demanded of me “Who is thy master?” And I answered: “Makoma, the greatest of heroes.” Then the man seized me, and pulling a hair from his moustache, tied me to this tree —even as you see me.’

Makoma was very wroth, but he said nothing, and drawing his finger-nail across the hair (which was as thick and strong as palm rope) cut it, and set free the mountain-maker.

The three following days exactly the same thing happened, only each time with a different one of the party; and on the fourth day Makoma stayed in camp when the others went to cut poles, saying that he would see for himself what sort of man this was that lived in the river and whose moustaches were so long that they extended beyond men’s sight.

So when the giants had gone he swept and tidied the camp and put some venison on the fire to roast. At midday, when the sun was right overhead, he heard a rumbling noise from the river, and looking up he saw the head and shoulders of an enormous man emerging from it. And behold!

right down the river-bed and up the river-bed, till they faded into the blue distance, stretched the giant's grey moustaches!

'Who are you?' bellowed the giant, as soon as he was out of the water.

'I am he that is called Makoma,' answered the hero; 'and, before I slay thee, tell me also what is thy name and what thou doest in the river?'

'My name is Chin-debou Mau-giri,' said the giant. 'My home is in the river, for my moustache is the grey fever-mist that hangs above the water, and with which I bind all those that come unto me so that they die.'

'You cannot bind me!' shouted Makoma, rushing upon him and striking with his hammer. But the river giant was so slimy that the blow slid harmlessly off his green chest, and as Makoma stumbled and tried to regain his balance, the giant swung one of his long hairs around him and tripped him up.

For a moment Makoma was helpless, but remembering the power of the flame-spirit which had entered into him, he breathed a fiery breath upon the giant's hair and cut himself free.

As Chin-debou Mau-giri leaned forward to seize him the hero flung his sack Woronowu over the giant's slippery head, and gripping his iron hammer, struck him again; this time the blow alighted upon the dry sack and Chin-debou Mau-giri fell dead.

When the four giants returned at sunset with the poles, they rejoiced to find that Makoma had overcome the fever-spirit, and they feasted on the roast venison till far into the night; but in the morning, when they awoke, Makoma was already warming his hands to the fire, and his face was gloomy.

'In the darkness of the night, O my friends,' he said presently, 'the white spirits of my fathers came upon me and spoke, saying: "Get thee hence, Makoma, for thou shalt have no rest until thou hast found and fought with Sakatirina, who had five heads, and is very great and strong; so take leave of thy friends, for thou must go alone."'

Then the giants were very sad, and bewailed the loss of their hero; but Makoma comforted them, and gave back to each the gifts he had taken from them. Then bidding them 'Farewell,' he went on his way.

Makoma travelled far towards the west; over rough mountains and water-logged morasses, fording deep rivers, and tramping for days across dry deserts where most men would have died, until at length he arrived at

a hut standing near some large peaks, and inside the hut were two beautiful women.

‘Greeting!’ said the hero. ‘Is this the country of Sakatirina of five heads, whom I am seeking?’

‘We greet you, O Great One!’ answered the women. ‘We are the wives of Sakatirina; your search is at an end, for there stands he whom you seek!’ And they pointed to what Makoma had thought were two tall mountain peaks. ‘Those are his legs,’ they said; ‘his body you cannot see, for it is hidden in the clouds.’

Makoma was astonished when he beheld how tall was the giant; but, nothing daunted, he went forward until he reached one of Sakatirina’s legs, which he struck heavily with Nu-endo. Nothing happened, so he hit again and then again until, presently, he heard a tired, far-away voice saying: ‘Who is it that scratches my feet?’

And Makoma shouted as loud as he could, answering: ‘It is I, Makoma, who is called “Greater”!’ And he listened, but there was no answer.

Then Makoma collected all the dead brushwood and trees that he could find, and making an enormous pile round the giant’s legs, set a light to it.

This time the giant spoke; his voice was very terrible, for it was the rumble of thunder in the clouds. ‘Who is it,’ he said, ‘making that fire smoulder around my feet?’

‘It is I, Makoma!’ shouted the hero. ‘And I have come from far away to see thee, O Sakatirina, for the spirits of my fathers bade me go seek and fight with thee, lest I should grow fat, and weary of myself.’

There was silence for a while, and then the giant spoke softly: ‘It is good, O Makoma!’ he said. ‘For I too have grown weary. There is no man so great as I, therefore I am all alone. Guard thyself!’ and bending suddenly he seized the hero in his hands and dashed him upon the ground. And lo! instead of death, Makoma had found life, for he sprang to his feet mightier in strength and stature than before, and rushing in he gripped the giant by the waist and wrestled with him.

Hour by hour they fought, and mountains rolled beneath their feet like pebbles in a flood; now Makoma would break away, and summoning up his strength, strike the giant with Nu-endo his iron hammer, and Sakatirina would pluck up the mountains and hurl them upon the hero, but neither one could slay the other. At last, upon the second day, they grappled so

strongly that they could not break away; but their strength was failing, and, just as the sun was sinking, they fell together to the ground, insensible.

In the morning when they awoke, Mulimo the Great Spirit was standing by them; and he said: ‘O Makoma and Sakatirina! Ye are heroes so great that no man may come against you. Therefore ye will leave the world and take up your home with me in the clouds.’ And as he spake the heroes became invisible to the people of the Earth, and were no more seen among them.

THE MAGIC MIRROR

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[Native Rhodesian Tale.]

From the Senna

A long, long while ago, before ever the White Men were seen in Senna, there lived a man called Gopani-Kufa.

One day, as he was out hunting, he came upon a strange sight. An enormous python had caught an antelope and coiled itself around it; the antelope, striking out in despair with its horns, had pinned the python's neck to a tree, and so deeply had its horns sunk in the soft wood that neither creature could get away.

'Help!' cried the antelope, 'for I was doing no harm, yet I have been caught, and would have been eaten, had I not defended myself.'

'Help me,' said the python, 'for I am Insato, King of all the Reptiles, and will reward you well!'

Gopani-Kufa considered for a moment, then stabbing the antelope with his assegai, he set the python free.

'I thank you,' said the python; 'come back here with the new moon, when I shall have eaten the antelope, and I will reward you as I promised.'

'Yes,' said the dying antelope, 'he will reward you, and lo! your reward shall be your own undoing!'

Gopani-Kufa went back to his kraal, and with the new moon he returned again to the spot where he had saved the python.

Insato was lying upon the ground, still sleepy from the effects of his huge meal, and when he saw the man he thanked him again, and said: 'Come with me now to Pita, which is my own country, and I will give you what you will of all my possessions.'

Gopani-Kufa at first was afraid, thinking of what the antelope had said, but finally he consented and followed Insato into the forest.

For several days they travelled, and at last they came to a hole leading deep into the earth. It was not very wide, but large enough to admit a man.

‘Hold on to my tail,’ said Insato, ‘and I will go down first, drawing you after me.’ The man did so, and Insato entered.

Down, down, down they went for days, all the while getting deeper and deeper into the earth, until at last the darkness ended and they dropped into a beautiful country; around them grew short green grass, on which browsed herds of cattle and sheep and goats. In the distance Gopani-Kufa saw a great collection of houses all square, built of stone and very tall, and their roofs were shining with gold and burnished iron.

Gopani-Kufa turned to Insato, but found, in the place of the python, a man, strong and handsome, with the great snake’s skin wrapped round him for covering; and on his arms and neck were rings of pure gold.

The man smiled. ‘I am Insato,’ said he, ‘but in my own country I take man’s shape—even as you see me—for this is Pita, the land over which I am king.’ He then took Gopani-Kufa by the hand and led him towards the town.

On the way they passed rivers in which men and women were bathing and fishing and boating; and farther on they came to gardens covered with heavy crops of rice and maize, and many other grains which Gopani-Kufa did not even know the name of. And as they passed, the people who were singing at their work in the fields, abandoned their labours and saluted Insato with delight, bringing also palm wine and green cocoanuts for refreshment, as to one returned from a long journey.

‘These are my children!’ said Insato, waving his hand towards the people. Gopani-Kufa was much astonished at all that he saw, but he said nothing. Presently they came to the town; everything here, too, was beautiful, and everything that a man might desire he could obtain. Even the grains of dust in the streets were of gold and silver.

Insato conducted Gopani-Kufa to the palace, and showing him his rooms, and the maidens who would wait upon him, told him that they would have a great feast that night, and on the morrow he might name his choice of the riches of Pita and it should be given him. Then he was away.

Now Gopani-Kufa had a wasp called Zengi-mizi. Zengi-mizi was not an ordinary wasp, for the spirit of the father of Gopani-Kufa had entered it, so that it was exceedingly wise. In times of doubt Gopani-Kufa always consulted the wasp as to what had better be done, so on this occasion he took it out of the little rush basket in which he carried it, saying: ‘Zengi-

mizi, what gift shall I ask of Insato to-morrow when he would know the reward he shall bestow on me for saving his life?'

'Biz-z-z,' hummed Zengi-mizi, 'ask him for Sipao the Mirror.' And it flew back into its basket.

Gopani-Kufa was astonished at this answer; but knowing that the words of Zengi-mizi were true words, he determined to make the request. So that night they feasted, and on the morrow Insato came to Gopani-Kufa and, giving him greeting joyfully, he said:

'Now, O my friend, name your choice amongst my possessions and you shall have it!'

'O king!' answered Gopani-Kufa, 'out of all your possessions I will have the Mirror, Sipao.'

The king started. 'O friend, Gopani-Kufa,' he said, 'ask anything but that! I did not think that you would request that which is most precious to me.'

'Let me think over it again then, O king,' said Gopani-Kufa, 'and to-morrow I will let you know if I change my mind.'

But the king was still much troubled, fearing the loss of Sipao, for the mirror had magic powers, so that he who owned it had but to ask and his wish would be fulfilled; to it Insato owed all that he possessed.

As soon as the king left him, Gopani-Kufa again took Zengi-mizi, out of his basket. 'Zengi-mizi,' he said, 'the king seems loth to grant my request for the Mirror—is there not some other thing of equal value for which I might ask?'

And the wasp answered: 'There is nothing in the world, O Gopani-Kufa, which is of such value as this Mirror, for it is a Wishing Mirror, and accomplishes the desires of him who owns it. If the king hesitates, go to him the next day, and the day after, and in the end he will bestow the Mirror upon you, for you saved his life.'

And it was even so. For three days Gopani-Kufa returned the same answer to the king, and, at last, with tears in his eyes, Insato gave him the Mirror, which was of polished iron, saying: 'Take Sipao, then, O Gopani-Kufa, and may thy wishes come true. Go back now to thine own country; Sipao will show you the way.'

Gopani-Kufa was greatly rejoiced, and, taking farewell of the king, said to the Mirror:

‘Sipao, Sipao, I wish to be back upon the Earth again!’

Instantly he found himself standing upon the upper earth; but, not knowing the spot, he said again to the Mirror:

‘Sipao, Sipao, I want the path to my own kraal!’

And behold! right before him lay the path!

When he arrived home he found his wife and daughter mourning for him, for they thought that he had been eaten by lions; but he comforted them, saying that while following a wounded antelope he had missed his way and had wandered for a long time before he had found the path again.

That night he asked Zengi-mizi, in whom sat the spirit of his father, what he had better ask Sipao for next?

‘Biz-z-z,’ said the wasp, ‘would you not like to be as great a chief as Insato?’

And Gopani-Kufa smiled, and took the Mirror and said to it:

‘Sipao, Sipao, I want a town as great as that of Insato, the King of Pita; and I wish to be chief over it!’

Then all along the banks of the Zambesi river, which flowed near by, sprang up streets of stone buildings, and their roofs shone with gold and burnished iron like those in Pita; and in the streets men and women were walking, and young boys were driving out the sheep and cattle to pasture; and from the river came shouts and laughter from the young men and maidens who had launched their canoes and were fishing. And when the people of the new town beheld Gopani-Kufa they rejoiced greatly and hailed him as chief.

Gopani-Kufa was now as powerful as Insato the King of the Reptiles had been, and he and his family moved into the palace that stood high above the other buildings right in the middle of the town. His wife was too astonished at all these wonders to ask any questions, but his daughter Shasasa kept begging him to tell her how he had suddenly become so great; so at last he revealed the whole secret, and even entrusted Sipao the Mirror to her care, saying:

‘It will be safer with you, my daughter, for you dwell apart; whereas men come to consult me on affairs of state, and the Mirror might be stolen.’

Then Shasasa took the Magic Mirror and hid it beneath her pillow, and after that for many years Gopani-Kufa ruled his people both well and

wisely, so that all men loved him, and never once did he need to ask Sipao to grant him a wish.

Now it happened that, after many years, when the hair of Gopani-Kufa was turning grey with age, there came white men to that country. Up the Zambesi they came, and they fought long and fiercely with Gopani-Kufa; but, because of the power of the Magic Mirror, he beat them, and they fled to the sea-coast. Chief among them was one Rei, a man of much cunning, who sought to discover whence sprang Gopani-Kufa's power. So one day he called to him a trusty servant named Butou, and said: 'Go you to the town and find out for me what is the secret of its greatness.'

And Butou, dressing himself in rags, set out, and when he came to Gopani-Kufa's town he asked for the chief; and the people took him into the presence of Gopani-Kufa. When the white man saw him he humbled himself, and said: 'O Chief! take pity on me, for I have no home! When Rei marched against you I alone stood apart, for I knew that all the strength of the Zambesi lay in your hands, and because I would not fight against you he turned me forth into the forest to starve!'

And Gopani-Kufa believed the white man's story, and he took him in and feasted him, and gave him a house.

In this way the end came. For the heart of Shasasa, the daughter of Gopani-Kufa, went forth to Butou the traitor, and from her he learnt the secret of the Magic Mirror. One night, when all the town slept, he felt beneath her pillow and, finding the Mirror, he stole it and fled back with it to Rei, the chief of the white men.

So it befell that, one day, as Gopani-Kufa was gazing up at the river from a window of the palace he again saw the war-canoes of the white men; and at the sight his spirit misgave him.

'Shasasa! my daughter!' he cried wildly, 'go fetch me the mirror, for the white men are at hand.'

'Woe is me, my father!' she sobbed. 'The Mirror is gone! For I loved Butou the traitor, and he has stolen Sipao from me!'

Then Gopani-Kufa calmed himself, and drew out Zengi-mizi from its rush basket.

'O spirit of my father!' he said, 'what now shall I do?'

'O Gopani-Kufa!' hummed the wasp, 'there is nothing now that can be done, for the words of the antelope which you slew are being fulfilled.'

‘Alas! I am an old man—I had forgotten!’ cried the chief. ‘The words of the antelope were true words—my reward shall be my undoing—they are being fulfilled!’

Then the white men fell upon the people of Gopani-Kufa and slew them together with the chief and his daughter Shasasa; and since then all the power of the Earth has rested in the hands of the white men, for they have in their possession Sipao, the Magic Mirror.

STORY OF THE KING WHO WOULD SEE PARADISE

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Once upon a time there was king who, one day out hunting, came upon a fakeer in a lonely place in the mountains. The fakeer was seated on a little old bedstead reading the Koran, with his patched cloak thrown over his shoulders.

The king asked him what he was reading; and he said he was reading about Paradise, and praying that he might be worthy to enter there. Then they began to talk, and, by-and-bye, the king asked the fakeer if he could show him a glimpse of Paradise, for he found it very difficult to believe in what he could not see. The fakeer replied that he was asking a very difficult, and perhaps a very dangerous, thing; but that he would pray for him, and perhaps he might be able to do it; only he warned the king both against the dangers of his unbelief, and against the curiosity which prompted him to ask this thing. However, the king was not to be turned from his purpose, and he promised the fakeer always to provided him with food, if he, in return, would pray for him. To this the fakeer agreed, and so they parted.

Time went on, and the king always sent the old fakeer his food according to his promise; but, whenever he sent to ask him when he was going to show him Paradise, the fakeer always replied: ‘Not yet, not yet!’

After a year or two had passed by, the king heard one day that the fakeer was very ill—indeed, he was believed to be dying. Instantly he hurried off himself, and found that it was really true, and that the fakeer was even then breathing his last. There and then the king besought him to remember his promise, and to show him a glimpse of Paradise. The dying fakeer replied that if the king would come to his funeral, and, when the grave was filled in, and everyone else was gone away, he would come and lay his hand upon the grave, he would keep his word, and show him a glimpse of Paradise. At the same time he implored the king not to do this

thing, but to be content to see Paradise when God called him there. Still the king's curiosity was so aroused that he would not give way.

Accordingly, after the fakeer was dead, and had been buried, he stayed behind when all the rest went away; and then, when he was quite alone, he stepped forward, and laid his hand upon the grave! Instantly the ground opened, and the astonished king, peeping in, saw a flight of rough steps, and, at the bottom of them, the fakeer sitting, just as he used to sit, on his rickety bedstead, reading the Koran!

At first the king was so surprised and frightened that he could only stare; but the fakeer beckoned to him to come down, so, mustering up his courage, he boldly stepped down into the grave.

The fakeer rose, and, making a sign to the king to follow, walked a few paces along a dark passage. Then he stopped, turned solemnly to his companion, and, with a movement of his hand, drew aside as it were a heavy curtain, and revealed—what? No one knows what was there shown to the king, nor did he ever tell anyone; but, when the fakeer at length dropped the curtain, and the king turned to leave the place, he had had his glimpse of Paradise! Trembling in every limb, he staggered back along the passage, and stumbled up the steps out of the tomb into the fresh air again.

The dawn was breaking. It seemed odd to the king that he had been so long in the grave. It appeared but a few minutes ago that he had descended, passed along a few steps to the place where he had peeped beyond the veil, and returned again after perhaps five minutes of that wonderful view! And what WAS it he had seen? He racked his brains to remember, but he could not call to mind a single thing! How curious everything looked too! Why, his own city, which by now he was entering, seemed changed and strange to him! The sun was already up when he turned into the palace gate and entered the public durbar hall. It was full; a chamberlain came across and asked him why he sat unbidden in the king's presence. 'But I am the king!' he cried.

'What king?' said the chamberlain.

'The true king of this country,' said he indignantly.

Then the chamberlain went away, and spoke to the king who sat on the throne, and the old king heard words like 'mad,' 'age,' 'compassion.' Then the king on the throne called him to come forward, and, as he went, he caught sight of himself reflected in the polished steel shield of the

bodyguard, and started back in horror! He was old, decrepit, dirty, and ragged! His long white beard and locks were unkempt, and straggled all over his chest and shoulders. Only one sign of royalty remained to him, and that was the signet ring upon his right hand. He dragged it off with shaking fingers and held it up to the king.

‘Tell me who I am,’ he cried; ‘there is my signet, who once sat where you sit—even yesterday!’

The king looked at him compassionately, and examined the signet with curiosity. Then he commanded, and they brought out dusty records and archives of the kingdom, and old coins of previous reigns, and compared them faithfully. At last the king turned to the old man, and said: ‘Old man, such a king as this whose signet thou hast, reigned seven hundred years ago; but he is said to have disappeared, none know whither; where got you the ring?’

Then the old man smote his breast, and cried out with a loud lamentation; for he understood that he, who was not content to wait patiently to see the Paradise of the faithful, had been judged already. And he turned and left the hall without a wor, and went into the jungle, where he lived for twenty-five years a life of prayer and and meditation, until at last the Angel of Death came to him, and mercifully released him, purged and purified through his punishment.

HOW ISURO THE RABBIT TRICKED GUDU

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[A Pathan story told to Major Campbell.]

Far away in a hot country, where the forests are very thick and dark, and the rivers very swift and strong, there once lived a strange pair of friends. Now one of the friends was a big white rabbit named Isuro, and the other was a tall baboon called Gudu, and so fond were they of each other that they were seldom seen apart.

One day, when the sun was hotter even than usual, the rabbit awoke from his midday sleep, and saw Gudu the baboon standing beside him.

‘Get up,’ said Gudu; ‘I am going courting, and you must come with me. So put some food in a bag, and sling it round your neck, for we may not be able to find anything to eat for a long while.’

Then the rabbit rubbed his eyes, and gathered a store of fresh green things from under the bushes, and told Gudu that he was ready for the journey.

They went on quite happily for some distance, and at last they came to a river with rocks scattered here and there across the stream.

‘We can never jump those wide spaces if we are burdened with food,’ said Gudu, ‘we must throw it into the river, unless we wish to fall in ourselves.’ And stooping down, unseen by Isuro, who was in front of him, Gudu picked up a big stone, and threw it into the water with a loud splash.

‘It is your turn now,’ he cried to Isuro. And with a heavy sigh, the rabbit unfastened his bag of food, which fell into the river.

The road on the other side led down an avenue of trees, and before they had gone very far Gudu opened the bag that lay hidden in the thick hair about his neck, and began to eat some delicious-looking fruit.

‘Where did you get that from?’ asked Isuro enviously.

‘Oh, I found after all that I could get across the rocks quite easily, so it seemed a pity not to keep my bag,’ answered Gudu.

‘Well, as you tricked me into throwing away mine, you ought to let me share with you,’ said Isuro. But Gudu pretended not to hear him, and strode along the path.

By-and-bye they entered a wood, and right in front of them was a tree so laden with fruit that its branches swept the ground. And some of the fruit was still green, and some yellow. The rabbit hopped forward with joy, for he was very hungry; but Gudu said to him: ‘Pluck the green fruit, you will find it much the best. I will leave it all for you, as you have had no dinner, and take the yellow for myself.’ So the rabbit took one of the green oranges and began to bite it, but its skin was so hard that he could hardly get his teeth through the rind.

‘It does not taste at all nice,’ he cried, screwing up his face; ‘I would rather have one of the yellow ones.’

‘No! no! I really could not allow that,’ answered Gudu. ‘They would only make you ill. Be content with the green fruit.’ And as they were all he could get, Isuro was forced to put up with them.

After this had happened two or three times, Isuro at last had his eyes opened, and made up his mind that, whatever Gudu told him, he would do exactly the opposite. However, by this time they had reached the village where dwelt Gudu’s future wife, and as they entered Gudu pointed to a clump of bushes, and said to Isuro: ‘Whenever I am eating, and you hear me call out that my food has burnt me, run as fast as you can and gather some of those leaves that they may heal my mouth.’

The rabbit would have liked to ask him why he ate food that he knew would burn him, only he was afraid, and just nodded in reply; but when they had gone on a little further, he said to Gudu:

‘I have dropped my needle; wait here a moment while I go and fetch it.’

‘Be quick then,’ answered Gudu, climbing into a tree. And the rabbit hastened back to the bushes, and gathered a quantity of the leaves, which he hid among his fur, ‘For,’ thought he, ‘if I get them now I shall save myself the trouble of a walk by-and-by.’

When he had plucked as many as he wanted he returned to Gudu, and they went on together. The sun was almost setting by the time they reached their journey’s end and being very tired they gladly sat down by a well. Then Gudu’s betrothed, who had been watching for him, brought out a

pitcher of water—which she poured over them to wash off the dust of the road—and two portions of food. But once again the rabbit's hopes were dashed to the ground, for Gudu said hastily:

'The custom of the village forbids you to eat till I have finished.' And Isuro did not know that Gudu was lying, and that he only wanted more food. So he saw hungrily looking on, waiting till his friend had had enough.

In a little while Gudu screamed loudly: 'I am burnt! I am burnt!' though he was not burnt at all. Now, though Isuro had the leaves about him, he did not dare to produce them at the last moment lest the baboon should guess why he had stayed behind. So he just went round a corner for a short time, and then came hopping back in a great hurry. But, quick though he was, Gudu had been quicker still, and nothing remained but some drops of water.

'How unlucky you are,' said Gudu, snatching the leaves; 'no sooner had you gone than ever so many people arrived, and washed their hands, as you see, and ate your portion.' But, though Isuro knew better than to believe him, he said nothing, and went to bed hungrier than he had ever been in his life.

Early next morning they started for another village, and passed on the way a large garden where people were very busy gathering monkey-nuts.

'You can have a good breakfast at last,' said Gudu, pointing to a heap of empty shells; never doubting but that Isuro would meekly take the portion shown him, and leave the real nuts for himself. But what was his surprise when Isuro answered:

'Thank you; I think I should prefer these.' And, turning to the kernels, never stopped as long as there was one left. And the worst of it was that, with so many people about, Gudu could not take the nuts from him.

It was night when they reached the village where dwelt the mother of Gudu's betrothed, who laid meat and millet porridge before them.

'I think you told me you were fond of porridge,' said Gudu; but Isuro answered: 'You are mistaking me for somebody else, as I always eat meat when I can get it.' And again Gudu was forced to be content with the porridge, which he hated.

While he was eating it, however a sudden thought darted into his mind, and he managed to knock over a great pot of water which was hanging in

front of the fire, and put it quite out.

‘Now,’ said the cunning creature to himself, ‘I shall be able in the dark to steal his meat!’ But the rabbit had grown as cunning as he, and standing in a corner hid the meat behind him, so that the baboon could not find it.

‘O Gudu!’ he cried, laughing aloud, ‘it is you who have taught me to be clever.’ And calling to the people of the house, he bade them kindle the fire, for Gudu would sleep by it, but that he would pass the night with some friends in another hut.

It was still quite dark when Isuro heard his name called very softly, and, on opening his eyes, beheld Gudu standing by him. Laying his finger on his nose, in token of silence, he signed to Isuro to get up and follow him, and it was not until they were some distance from the hut that Gudu spoke.

‘I am hungry and want something to eat better than that nasty porridge that I had for supper. So I am going to kill one of those goats, and as you are a good cook you must boil the flesh for me.’ The rabbit nodded, and Gudu disappeared behind a rock, but soon returned dragging the dead goat with him. The two then set about skinning it, after which they stuffed the skin with dried leaves, so that no one would have guessed it was not alive, and set it up in the middle of a lump of bushes, which kept it firm on its feet. While he was doing this, Isuro collected sticks for a fire, and when it was kindled, Gudu hastened to another hut to steal a pot which he filled with water from the river, and, planting two branches in the ground, they hung the pot with the meat in it over the fire.

‘It will not be fit to eat for two hours at least,’ said Gudu, ‘so we can both have a nap.’ And he stretched himself out on the ground, and pretended to fall fast asleep, but, in reality, he was only waiting till it was safe to take all the meat for himself. ‘Surely I hear him snore,’ he thought; and he stole to the place where Isuro was lying on a pile of wood, but the rabbit’s eyes were wide open.

‘How tiresome,’ muttered Gudu, as he went back to his place; and after waiting a little longer he got up, and peeped again, but still the rabbit’s pink eyes stared widely. If Gudu had only known, Isuro was asleep all the time; but this he never guessed, and by-and-bye he grew so tired with watching that he went to sleep himself. Soon after, Isuro woke up, and he too felt hungry, so he crept softly to the pot and ate all the meat, while he

tied the bones together and hung them in Gudu's fur. After that he went back to the wood-pile and slept again.

In the morning the mother of Gudu's betrothed came out to milk her goats, and on going to the bushes where the largest one seemed entangled, she found out the trick. She made such lament that the people of the village came running, and Gudu and Isuro jumped up also, and pretended to be as surprised and interested as the rest. But they must have looked guilty after all, for suddenly an old man pointed to them, and cried:

'Those are thieves.' And at the sound of his voice the big Gudu trembled all over.

'How dare you say such things? I defy you to prove it,' answered Isuro boldly. And he danced forward, and turned head over heels, and shook himself before them all.

'I spoke hastily; you are innocent,' said the old man; 'but now let the baboon do likewise.' And when Gudu began to jump the goat's bones rattled and the people cried: 'It is Gudu who is the goat-slayer!' But Gudu answered:

'Nay, I did not kill your goat; it was Isuro, and he ate the meat, and hung the bones round my neck. So it is he who should die!' And the people looked at each other, for they knew not what to believe. At length one man said:

'Let them both die, but they may choose their own deaths.'

Then Isuro answered:

'If we must die, put us in the place where the wood is cut, and heap it up all round us, so that we cannot escape, and set fire to the wood; and if one is burned and the other is not, then he that is burned is the goat-slayer.'

And the people did as Isuro had said. But Isuro knew of a hole under the wood-pile, and when the fire was kindled he ran into the hole, but Gudu died there.

When the fire had burned itself out and only ashes were left where the wood had been, Isuro came out of his hole, and said to the people:

'Lo! did I not speak well? He who killed your goat is among those ashes.'

IAN, THE SOLDIER'S SON

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[Mashona Story.]

There dwelt a knight in Grianaig of the land of the West, who had three daughters, and for goodness and beauty they had not their like in all the isles. All the people loved them, and loud was the weeping when one day, as the three maidens sat on the rocks on the edge of the sea, dipping their feet in the water, there arose a great beast from under the waves and swept them away beneath the ocean. And none knew whither they had gone, or how to seek them.

Now there lived in a town a few miles off a soldier who had three sons, fine youths and strong, and the best players at shinny in that country. At Christmastide that year, when families met together and great feasts were held, Ian, the youngest of the three brothers, said:

'Let us have a match at shinny on the lawn of the knight of Grianaig, for his lawn is wider and the grass smoother than ours.'

But the others answered:

'Nay, for he is in sorrow, and he will think of the games that we have played there when his daughters looked on.'

'Let him be pleased or angry as he will,' said Ian; 'we will drive our ball on his lawn to-day.'

And so it was done, and Ian won three games from his brothers. But the knight looked out of his window, and was wroth; and bade his men bring the youths before him. When he stood in his hall and beheld them, his heart was softened somewhat; but his face was angry as he asked:

'Why did you choose to play shinny in front of my castle when you knew full well that the remembrance of my daughters would come back to me? The pain which you have made me suffer you shall suffer also.'

'Since we have done you wrong,' answered Ian, the youngest, 'build us a ship, and we will go and seek your daughters. Let them be to windward, or to leeward, or under the four brown boundaries of the sea, we will find

them before a year and a day goes by, and will carry them back to Grianaig.'

In seven days the ship was built, and great store of food and wine placed in her. And the three brothers put her head to the sea and sailed away, and in seven days the ship ran herself on to a beach of white sand, and they all went ashore. They had none of them ever seen that land before, and looked about them. Then they saw that, a short way from them, a number of men were working on a rock, with one man standing over them.

'What place is this?' asked the eldest brother. And the man who was standing by made answer:

'This is the place where dwell the three daughters of the knight of Grianaig, who are to be wedded to-morrow to three giants.'

'How can we find them?' asked the young man again. And the overlooker answered:

'To reach the daughters of the knight of Grianaig you must get into this basket, and be drawn by a rope up the face of this rock.'

'Oh, that is easily done,' said the eldest brother, jumping into the basket, which at once began to move—up, and up, and up—till he had gone about half-way, when a fat black raven flew at him and pecked him till he was nearly blind, so that he was forced to go back the way he had come.

After that the second brother got into the creel; but he fared no better, for the raven flew upon him, and he returned as his brother had done.

'Now it is my turn,' said Ian. But when he was halfway up the raven set upon him also.

'Quick! quick!' cried Ian to the men who held the rope. 'Quick! quick! or I shall be blinded!' And the men pulled with all their might, and in another moment Ian was on top, and the raven behind him.

'Will you give me a piece of tobacco?' asked the raven, who was now quite quiet.

'You rascal! Am I to give you tobacco for trying to peck my eyes out?' answered Ian.

'That was part of my duty,' replied the raven; 'but give it to me, and I will prove a good friend to you.' So Ian broke off a piece of tobacco and gave it to him. The raven hid it under his wing, and then went on; 'Now I

will take you to the house of the big giant, where the knight's daughter sits sewing, sewing, till even her thimble is wet with tears.' And the raven hopped before him till they reached a large house, the door of which stood open. They entered and passed through one hall after the other, until they found the knight's daughter, as the bird had said.

'What brought you here?' asked she. And Ian made answer:

'Why may I not go where you can go?'

'I was brought hither by a giant,' replied she.

'I know that,' said Ian; 'but tell me where the giant is, that I may find him.'

'He is on the hunting hill,' answered she; 'and nought will bring him home save a shake of the iron chain which hangs outside the gate. But, there, neither to leeward, nor to windward, nor in the four brown boundaries of the sea, is there any man that can hold battle against him, save only Ian, the soldier's son, and he is now but sixteen years old, and how shall he stand against the giant?'

'In the land whence I have come there are many men with the strength of Ian,' answered he. And he went outside and pulled at the chain, but he could not move it, and fell on to his knees. At that he rose swiftly, and gathering up his strength, he seized the chain, and this time he shook it so that the link broke. And the giant heard it on the hunting hill, and lifted his head, thinking—

'It sounds like the noise of Ian, the soldier's son,' said he; 'but as yet he is only sixteen years old. Still, I had better look to it.' And home he came.

'Are you Ian, the soldier's son?' he asked, as he entered the castle.

'No, of a surety,' answered the youth, who had no wish that they should know him.

'Then who are you in the leeward, or in the windward, or in the four brown boundaries of the sea, who are able to move my battle-chain?'

'That will be plain to you after wrestling with me as I wrestle with my mother. And one time she got the better of me, and two times she did not.'

So they wrestled, and twisted and strove with each other till the giant forced Ian to his knee.

'You are the stronger,' said Ian; and the giant answered:

‘All men know that!’ And they took hold of each other once more, and at last Ian threw the giant, and wished that the raven were there to help him. No sooner had he wished his wish than the raven came.

‘Put your hand under my right wing and you will find a knife sharp enough to take off his head,’ said the raven. And the knife was so sharp that it cut off the giant’s head with a blow.

‘Now go and tell the daughter of the king of Grianaig; but take heed lest you listen to her words, and promise to go no further, for she will seek to help you. Instead, seek the middle daughter, and when you have found her, you shall give me a piece of tobacco for reward.’

‘Well have you earned the half of all I have,’ answered Ian. But the raven shook his head.

‘You know only what has passed, and nothing of what lies before. If you would not fail, wash yourself in clean water, and take balsam from a vessel on top of the door, and rub it over your body, and to-morrow you will be as strong as many men, and I will lead you to the dwelling of the middle one.’

Ian did as the raven bade him, and in spite of the eldest daughter’s entreaties, he set out to seek her next sister. He found her where she was seated sewing, her very thimble wet from the tears which she had shed.

‘What brought you here?’ asked the second sister.

‘Why may I not go where you can go?’ answered he; ‘and why are you weeping?’

‘Because in one day I shall be married to the giant who is on the hunting hill.’

‘How can I get him home?’ asked Ian.

‘Nought will bring him but a shake of that iron chain which hangs outside the gate. But there is neither to leeward, nor to westward, nor in the four brown boundaries of the sea, any man that can hold battle with him, save Ian, the soldier’s son, and he is now but sixteen years of age.’

‘In the land whence I have come there are many men with the strength of Ian,’ said he. And he went outside and pulled at the chain, but he could not move it, and fell on his knees. At that he rose to his feet, and gathering up his strength mightily, he seized the chain, and this time he shook it so that three links broke. And the second giant heard it on the hunting hill, and lifted his head, thinking—

‘It sounds like the noise of Ian, the soldier’s son,’ said he; ‘but as yet he is only sixteen years old. Still, I had better look to it.’ And home he came.

‘Are you Ian, the soldier’s son?’ he asked, as he entered the castle.

‘No, of a surety,’ answered the youth, who had no wish that this giant should know him either; ‘but I will wrestle with you as if I were he.’

Then they seized each other by the shoulder, and the giant threw him on his two knees. ‘You are the stronger,’ cried Ian; ‘but I am not beaten yet.’ And rising to his feet, he threw his arms round the giant.

Backwards and forwards they swayed, and first one was uppermost and then the other; but at length Ian worked his leg round the giant’s and threw him to the ground. Then he called to the raven, and the raven came flapping towards him, and said: ‘Put your hand under my right wing, and you will find there a knife sharp enough to take off his head.’ And sharp indeed it was, for with a single blow, the giant’s head rolled from his body.

‘Now wash yourself with warm water, and rub yourself over with oil of balsam, and to-morrow you will be as strong as many men. But beware of the words of the knight’s daughter, for she is cunning, and will try to keep you at her side. So farewell; but first give me a piece of tobacco.’

‘That I will gladly,’ answered Ian breaking off a large bit.

He washed and rubbed himself that night, as the raven had told him, and the next morning he entered the chamber where the knight’s daughter was sitting.

‘Abide here with me,’ she said, ‘and be my husband. There is silver and gold in plenty in the castle.’ But he took no heed, and went on his way till he reached the castle where the knight’s youngest daughter was sewing in the hall. And tears dropped from her eyes on to her thimble.

‘What brought you here?’ asked she. And Ian made answer:

‘Why may I not go where you can go?’

‘I was brought hither by a giant.’

‘I know full well,’ said he.

‘Are you Ian, the soldier’s son?’ asked she again. And again he answered:

‘Yes, I am; but tell me, why are you weeping?’

‘To-morrow the giant will return from the hunting hill, and I must marry him,’ she sobbed. And Ian took no heed, and only said: ‘How can I

bring him home?’

‘Shake the iron chain that hangs outside the gate.’

And Ian went out, and gave such a pull to the chain that he fell down at full length from the force of the shake. But in a moment he was on his feet again, and seized the chain with so much strength that four links came off in his hand. And the giant heard him in the hunting hill, as he was putting the game he had killed into a bag.

‘In the leeward, or the windward, or in the four brown boundaries of the sea, there is none who could give my chain a shake save only Ian, the soldier’s son. And if he has reached me, then he has left my two brothers dead behind him.’ With that he strode back to the castle, the earth trembling under him as he went.

‘Are you Ian, the soldier’s son?’ asked he. And the youth answered:

‘No, of a surety.’

‘Then who are you in the leeward, or the windward, or in the four brown boundaries of the sea, who are able to shake my battle chain? There is only Ian, the soldier’s son, who can do this, and he is but now sixteen years old.

‘I will show you who I am when you have wrestled with me,’ said Ian. And they threw their arms round each other, and the giant forced Ian on to his knees; but in a moment he was up again, and crooking his leg round the shoulders of the giant, he threw him heavily to the ground. ‘Stumpy black raven, come quick!’ cried he; and the raven came, and beat the giant about the head with his wings, so that he could not get up. Then he bade Ian take out a sharp knife from under his feathers, which he carried with him for cutting berries, and Ian smote off the giant’s head with it. And so sharp was that knife that, with one blow, the giant’s head rolled on the ground.

‘Rest now this night also,’ said the raven, ‘and to-morrow you shall take the knight’s three daughters to the edge of the rock that leads to the lower world. But take heed to go down first yourself, and let them follow after you. And before I go you shall give me a piece of tobacco.’

‘Take it all,’ answered Ian, ‘for well have you earned it.’

‘No; give me but a piece. You know what is behind you, but you have no knowledge of what is before you.’ And picking up the tobacco in his beak, the raven flew away.

So the next morning the knight's youngest daughter loaded asses with all the silver and gold to be found in the castle, and she set out with Ian the soldier's son for the house where her second sister was waiting to see what would befall. She also had asses laden with precious things to carry away, and so had the eldest sister, when they reached the castle where she had been kept a prisoner. Together they all rode to the edge of the rock, and then Ian lay down and shouted, and the basket was drawn up, and in it they got one by one, and were let down to the bottom. When the last one was gone, Ian should have gone also, and left the three sisters to come after him; but he had forgotten the raven's warning, and bade them go first, lest some accident should happen. Only, he begged the youngest sister to let him keep the little gold cap which, like the others, she wore on her head; and then he helped them, each in her turn, into the basket.

Long he waited, but wait as he might, the basket never came back, for in their joy at being free the knight's daughters had forgotten all about Ian, and had set sail in the ship that had brought him and his brothers to the land of Grianaig.

At last he began to understand what had happened to him, and while he was taking counsel with himself what had best be done, the raven came to him.

'You did not heed my words,' he said gravely.

'No, I did not, and therefore am I here,' answered Ian, bowing his head.

'The past cannot be undone,' went on the raven. 'He that will not take counsel will take combat. This night, you will sleep in the giant's castle. And now you shall give me a piece of tobacco.'

'I will. But, I pray you, stay in the castle with me.'

'That I may not do, but on the morrow I will come.'

And on the morrow he did, and he bade Ian go to the giant's stable where stood a horse to whom it mattered nothing if she journeyed over land or sea.

'But be careful,' he added, 'how you enter the stable, for the door swings without ceasing to and fro, and if it touches you, it will cause you to cry out. I will go first and show you the way.'

'Go,' said Ian. And the raven gave a bob and a hop, and thought he was quite safe, but the door slammed on a feather of his tail, and he screamed

loudly.

Then Ian took a run backwards, and a run forwards, and made a spring; but the door caught one of his feet, and he fell fainting on the stable floor. Quickly the raven pounced on him, and picked him up in his beak and claws, and carried him back to the castle, where he laid ointments on his foot till it was as well as ever it was.

‘Now come out to walk,’ said the raven, ‘but take heed that you wonder not at aught you may behold; neither shall you touch anything. And, first, give me a piece of tobacco.’

Many strange things did Ian behold in that island, more than he had thought for. In a glen lay three heroes stretched on their backs, done to death by three spears that still stuck in their breasts. But he kept his counsel and spake nothing, only he pulled out the spears, and the men sat up and said:

‘You are Ian the soldier’s son, and a spell is laid upon you to travel in our company, to the cave of the black fisherman.’

So together they went till they reached the cave, and one of the men entered, to see what should be found there. And he beheld a hag, horrible to look upon, seated on a rock, and before he could speak, she struck him with her club, and changed him into a stone; and in like manner she dealt with the other three. At the last Ian entered.

‘These men are under spells,’ said the witch, ‘and alive they can never be till you have anointed them with the water which you must fetch from the island of Big Women. See that you do not tarry.’ And Ian turned away with a sinking heart, for he would fain have followed the youngest daughter of the knight of Grianaig.

‘You did not obey my counsel,’ said the raven, hopping towards him, ‘and so trouble has come upon you. But sleep now, and to-morrow you shall mount the horse which is in the giant’s stable, that can gallop over sea and land. When you reach the island of Big Women, sixteen boys will come to meet you, and will offer the horse food, and wish to take her saddle and bridle from her. But see that they touch her not, and give her food yourself, and yourself lead her into the stable, and shut the door. And be sure that for every turn of the lock given by the sixteen stable lads you give one. And now you shall break me off a piece of tobacco.’

The next morning Ian arose, and led the horse from the stable, without the door hurting him, and he rode across the sea to the island of the Big Women, where the sixteen stable lads met him, and each one offered to take his horse, and to feed her, and to put her into the stable. But Ian only answered:

‘I myself will put her in and will see to her.’ And thus he did. And while he was rubbing her sides the horse said to him:

‘Every kind of drink will they offer you, but see you take none, save whey and water only.’ And so it fell out; and when the sixteen stable-boys saw that he would drink nothing, they drank it all themselves, and one by one lay stretched around the board.

Then Ian felt pleased in his heart that he had withstood their fair words, and he forgot the counsel that the horse had likewise given him saying:

‘Beware lest you fall asleep, and let slip the chance of getting home again’; for while the lads were sleeping sweet music reached his ears, and he slept also.

When this came to pass the steed broke through the stable door, and kicked him and woke him roughly.

‘You did not heed my counsel,’ said she; ‘and who knows if it is not too late to win over the sea? But first take that sword which hangs on the wall, and cut off the heads of the sixteen grooms.’

Filled with shame at being once more proved heedless, Ian arose and did as the horse bade him. Then he ran to the well and poured some of the water into a leather bottle, and jumping on the horse’s back rode over the sea to the island where the raven was waiting for him.

‘Lead the horse into the stable,’ said the raven, ‘and lie down yourself to sleep, for to-morrow you must make the heroes to live again, and must slay the hag. And have a care not to be so foolish to-morrow as you were to-day.’

‘Stay with me for company,’ begged Ian; but the raven shook his head, and flew away.

In the morning Ian awoke, and hastened to the cave where the old hag was sitting, and he struck her dead as she was, before she could cast spells on him. Next he sprinkled the water over the heroes, who came to life

again, and together they all journeyed to the other side of the island, and there the raven met them.

‘At last you have followed the counsel that was given you,’ said the raven; ‘and now, having learned wisdom, you may go home again to Grianaig. There you will find that the knight’s two eldest daughters are to be wedded this day to your two brothers, and the youngest to the chief of the men at the rock. But her gold cap you shall give to me and, if you want it, you have only to think of me and I will bring it to you. And one more warning I give you. If anyone asks you whence you came, answer that you have come from behind you; and if anyone asks you whither you are going, say that you are going before you.’

So Ian mounted the horse and set her face to the sea and her back to the shore, and she was off, away and away till she reached the church of Grianaig, and there, in a field of grass, beside a well of water, he leaped down from his saddle.

‘Now,’ the horse said to him, ‘draw your sword and cut off my head.’ But Ian answered:

‘Poor thanks would that be for all the help I have had from you.’

‘It is the only way that I can free myself from the spells that were laid by the giants on me and the raven; for I was a girl and he was a youth wooing me! So have no fears, but do as I have said.’

Then Ian drew his sword as she bade him, and cut off her head, and went on his way without looking backwards. As he walked he saw a woman standing at her house door. She asked him whence he had come, and he answered as the raven had told him, that he came from behind. Next she inquired whither he was going, and this time he made reply that he was going on before him, but that he was thirsty and would like a drink.

‘You are an impudent fellow,’ said the woman; ‘but you shall have a drink.’ And she gave him some milk, which was all she had till her husband came home.

‘Where is your husband?’ asked Ian, and the woman answered him:

‘He is at the knight’s castle trying to fashion gold and silver into a cap for the youngest daughter, like unto the caps that her sisters wear, such as are not to be found in all this land. But, see, he is returning; and now we shall hear how he has sped.’

At that the man entered the gate, and beholding a strange youth, he said to him: ‘What is your trade, boy?’

‘I am a smith,’ replied Ian. And the man answered:

‘Good luck has befallen me, then, for you can help me to make a cap for the knight’s daughter.’

‘You cannot make that cap, and you know it,’ said Ian.

‘Well, I must try,’ replied the man, ‘or I shall be hanged on a tree; so it were a good deed to help me.’

‘I will help you if I can,’ said Ian; ‘but keep the gold and silver for yourself, and lock me into the smithy to-night, and I will work my spells.’ So the man, wondering to himself, locked him in.

As soon as the key was turned in the lock Ian wished for the raven, and the raven came to him, carrying the cap in his mouth.

‘Now take my head off,’ said the raven. But Ian answered:

‘Poor thanks were that for all the help you have given me.’

‘It is the only thanks you can give me,’ said the raven, ‘for I was a youth like yourself before spells were laid on me.’

Then Ian drew his sword and cut off the head of the raven, and shut his eyes so that he might see nothing. After that he lay down and slept till morning dawned, and the man came and unlocked the door and shook the sleeper.

‘Here is the cap,’ said Ian drowsily, drawing it from under his pillow. And he fell asleep again directly.

The sun was high in the heavens when he woke again, and this time he beheld a tall, brown-haired youth standing by him.

‘I am the raven,’ said the youth, ‘and the spells are broken. But now get up and come with me.’

Then they two went together to the place where Ian had left the dead horse; but no horse was there now, only a beautiful maiden.

‘I am the horse,’ she said, ‘and the spells are broken’; and she and the youth went away together.

In the meantime the smith had carried the cap to the castle, and bade a servant belonging to the knight’s youngest daughter bear it to her mistress. But when the girl’s eyes fell on it, she cried out:

‘He speaks false; and if he does not bring me the man who really made the cap I will hang him on the tree beside my window.’

The servant was filled with fear at her words, and hastened and told the smith, who ran as fast as he could to seek for Ian. And when he found him and brought him into the castle, the girl was first struck dumb with joy; then she declared that she would marry nobody else. At this some one fetched to her the knight of Grianaig, and when Ian had told his tale, he vowed that the maiden was right, and that his elder daughters should never wed with men who had not only taken glory to themselves which did not belong to them, but had left the real doer of the deeds to his fate.

And the wedding guests said that the knight had spoken well; and the two elder brothers were fain to leave the country, for no one would converse with them.

THE FOX AND THE WOLF

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[From Tales of the West Highlands.]

At the foot of some high mountains there was, once upon a time, a small village, and a little way off two roads met, one of them going to the east and the other to the west. The villagers were quiet, hard-working folk, who toiled in the fields all day, and in the evening set out for home when the bell began to ring in the little church. In the summer mornings they led out their flocks to pasture, and were happy and contented from sunrise to sunset.

One summer night, when a round full moon shone down upon the white road, a great wolf came trotting round the corner.

‘I positively must get a good meal before I go back to my den,’ he said to himself; ‘it is nearly a week since I have tasted anything but scraps, though perhaps no one would think it to look at my figure! Of course there are plenty of rabbits and hares in the mountains; but indeed one needs to be a greyhound to catch them, and I am not so young as I was! If I could only dine off that fox I saw a fortnight ago, curled up into a delicious hairy ball, I should ask nothing better; I would have eaten her then, but unluckily her husband was lying beside her, and one knows that foxes, great and small, run like the wind. Really it seems as if there was not a living creature left for me to prey upon but a wolf, and, as the proverb says: “One wolf does not bite another.” However, let us see what this village can produce. I am as hungry as a schoolmaster.’

Now, while these thoughts were running through the mind of the wolf, the very fox he had been thinking of was galloping along the other road.

‘The whole of this day I have listened to those village hens clucking till I could bear it no longer,’ murmured she as she bounded along, hardly seeming to touch the ground. ‘When you are fond of fowls and eggs it is the sweetest of all music. As sure as there is a sun in heaven I will have some of them this night, for I have grown so thin that my very bones

rattle, and my poor babies are crying for food.’ And as she spoke she reached a little plot of grass, where the two roads joined, and flung herself under a tree to take a little rest, and to settle her plans. At this moment the wolf came up.

At the sight of the fox lying within his grasp his mouth began to water, but his joy was somewhat checked when he noticed how thin she was. The fox’s quick ears heard the sound of his paws, though they were soft as velvet, and turning her head she said politely:

‘Is that you, neighbour? What a strange place to meet in! I hope you are quite well?’

‘Quite well as regards my health,’ answered the wolf, whose eye glistened greedily, ‘at least, as well as one can be when one is very hungry. But what is the matter with you? A fortnight ago you were as plump as heart could wish!’

‘I have been ill—very ill,’ replied the fox, ‘and what you say is quite true. A worm is fat in comparison with me.’

‘He is. Still, you are good enough for me; for “to the hungry no bread is hard.” ’

‘Oh, you are always joking! I’m sure you are not half as hungry as I!’

‘That we shall soon see,’ cried the wolf, opening his huge mouth and crouching for a spring.

‘What are you doing?’ exclaimed the fox, stepping backwards.

‘What am I doing? What I am going to do is to make my supper off you, in less time than a cock takes to crow.’

‘Well, I suppose you must have your joke,’ answered the fox lightly, but never removing her eye from the wolf, who replied with a snarl which showed all his teeth:

‘I don’t want to joke, but to eat!’

‘But surely a person of your talents must perceive that you might eat me to the very last morsel and never know that you had swallowed anything at all!’

‘In this world the cleverest people are always the hungriest,’ replied the wolf.

‘Ah! how true that is; but—’

‘I can’t stop to listen to your “buts” and “yets,” ’ broke in the wolf rudely; ‘let us get to the point, and the point is that I want to eat you and

not talk to you.’

‘Have you no pity for a poor mother?’ asked the fox, putting her tail to her eyes, but peeping slily out of them all the same.

‘I am dying of hunger,’ answered the wolf, doggedly; ‘and you know,’ he added with a grin, ‘that charity begins at home.’

‘Quite so,’ replied the fox; ‘it would be unreasonable of me to object to your satisfying your appetite at my expense. But if the fox resigns herself to the sacrifice, the mother offers you one last request.’

‘Then be quick and don’t waste my time, for I can’t wait much longer. What is it you want?’

‘You must know,’ said the fox, ‘that in this village there is a rich man who makes in the summer enough cheeses to last him for the whole year, and keeps them in an old well, now dry, in his courtyard. By the well hang two buckets on a pole that were used, in former days, to draw up water. For many nights I have crept down to the palace, and have lowered myself in the bucket, bringing home with me enough cheese to feed the children. All I beg of you is to come with me, and, instead of hunting chickens and such things, I will make a good meal off cheese before I die.’

‘But the cheeses may be all finished by now?’

‘If you were only to see the quantities of them!’ laughed the fox. ‘And even if they were finished, there would always be ME to eat.’

‘Well, I will come. Lead the way, but I warn you that if you try to escape or play any tricks you are reckoning without your host—that is to say, without my legs, which are as long as yours!’

All was silent in the village, and not a light was to be seen but that of the moon, which shone bright and clear in the sky. The wolf and the fox crept softly along, when suddenly they stopped and looked at each other; a savoury smell of frying bacon reached their noses, and reached the noses of the sleeping dogs, who began to bark greedily.

‘Is it safe to go on, think you?’ asked the wolf in a whisper. And the fox shook her head.

‘Not while the dogs are barking,’ said she; ‘someone might come out to see if anything was the matter.’ And she signed to the wolf to curl himself up in the shadow beside her.

In about half an hour the dogs grew tired of barking, or perhaps the bacon was eaten up and there was no smell to excite them. Then the wolf

and the fox jumped up, and hastened to the foot of the wall.

‘I am lighter than he is,’ thought the fox to herself, ‘and perhaps if I make haste I can get a start, and jump over the wall on the other side before he manages to spring over this one.’ And she quickened her pace. But if the wolf could not run he could jump, and with one bound he was beside his companion.

‘What were you going to do, comrade?’

‘Oh, nothing,’ replied the fox, much vexed at the failure of her plan.

‘I think if I were to take a bit out of your haunch you would jump better,’ said the wolf, giving a snap at her as he spoke. The fox drew back uneasily.

‘Be careful, or I shall scream,’ she snarled. And the wolf, understanding all that might happen if the fox carried out her threat, gave a signal to his companion to leap on the wall, where he immediately followed her.

Once on the top they crouched down and looked about them. Not a creature was to be seen in the courtyard, and in the furthest corner from the house stood the well, with its two buckets suspended from a pole, just as the fox had described it. The two thieves dragged themselves noiselessly along the wall till they were opposite the well, and by stretching out her neck as far as it would go the fox was able to make out that there was only very little water in the bottom, but just enough to reflect the moon, big, and round and yellow.

‘How lucky!’ cried she to the wolf. ‘There is a huge cheese about the size of a mill wheel. Look! look! did you ever see anything so beautiful!’

‘Never!’ answered the wolf, peering over in his turn, his eyes glistening greedily, for he imagined that the moon’s reflection in the water was really a cheese.

‘And now, unbeliever, what have you to say?’ and the fox laughed gently.

‘That you are a woman—I mean a fox—of your word,’ replied the wolf.

‘Well, then, go down in that bucket and eat your fill,’ said the fox.

‘Oh, is that your game?’ asked the wolf, with a grin. ‘No! no! The person who goes down in the bucket will be you! And if you don’t go down your head will go without you!’

‘Of course I will go down, with the greatest pleasure,’ answered the fox, who had expected the wolf’s reply.

‘And be sure you don’t eat all the cheese, or it will be the worse for you,’ continued the wolf. But the fox looked up at him with tears in her eyes.

‘Farewell, suspicious one!’ she said sadly. And climbed into the bucket.

In an instant she had reached the bottom of the well, and found that the water was not deep enough to cover her legs.

‘Why, it is larger and richer than I thought,’ cried she, turning towards the wolf, who was leaning over the wall of the well.

‘Then be quick and bring it up,’ commanded the wolf.

‘How can I, when it weighs more than I do?’ asked the fox.

‘If it is so heavy bring it in two bits, of course,’ said he.

‘But I have no knife,’ answered the fox. ‘You will have to come down yourself, and we will carry it up between us.’

‘And how am I to come down?’ inquired the wolf.

‘Oh, you are really very stupid! Get into the other bucket that is nearly over your head.’

The wolf looked up, and saw the bucket hanging there, and with some difficulty he climbed into it. As he weighed at least four times as much as the fox the bucket went down with a jerk, and the other bucket, in which the fox was seated, came to the surface.

As soon as he understood what was happening, the wolf began to speak like an angry wolf, but was a little comforted when he remembered that the cheese still remained to him.

‘But where is the cheese?’ he asked of the fox, who in her turn was leaning over the parapet watching his proceedings with a smile.

‘The cheese?’ answered the fox; ‘why I am taking it home to my babies, who are too young to get food for themselves.’

‘Ah, traitor!’ cried the wolf, howling with rage. But the fox was not there to hear this insult, for she had gone off to a neighbouring fowl-house, where she had noticed some fat young chickens the day before.

‘Perhaps I did treat him rather badly,’ she said to herself. ‘But it seems getting cloudy, and if there should be heavy rain the other bucket will fill and sink to the bottom, and his will go up—at least it may!’

HOW IAN DIREACH GOT THE BLUE FALCON

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[From Cuentos Populares, por Antonio de Trueba.]

Long ago a king and queen ruled over the islands of the west, and they had one son, whom they loved dearly. The boy grew up to be tall and strong and handsome, and he could run and shoot, and swim and dive better than any lad of his own age in the country. Besides, he knew how to sail about, and sing songs to the harp, and during the winter evenings, when everyone was gathered round the huge hall fire shaping bows or weaving cloth, Ian Direach would tell them tales of the deeds of his fathers.

So the time slipped by till Ian was almost a man, as they reckoned men in those days, and then his mother the queen died. There was great mourning throughout all the isles, and the boy and his father mourned her bitterly also; but before the new year came the king had married another wife, and seemed to have forgotten his old one. Only Ian remembered.

On a morning when the leaves were yellow in the trees of the glen, Ian slung his bow over his shoulder, and filling his quiver with arrows, went on to the hill in search of game. But not a bird was to be seen anywhere, till at length a blue falcon flew past him, and raising his bow he took aim at her. His eye was straight and his hand steady, but the falcon's flight was swift, and he only shot a feather from her wing. As the sun was now low over the sea he put the feather in his game bag, and set out homewards.

'Have you brought me much game to-day?' asked his stepmother as he entered the hall.

'Nought save this,' he answered, handing her the feather of the blue falcon, which she held by the tip and gazed at silently. Then she turned to Ian and said:

'I am setting it on you as crosses and as spells, and as the fall of the year! That you may always be cold, and wet and dirty, and that your shoes

may ever have pools in them, till you bring me hither the blue falcon on which that feather grew.'

'If it is spells you are laying I can lay them too,' answered Ian Direach; 'and you shall stand with one foot on the great house and another on the castle, till I come back again, and your face shall be to the wind, from wheresoever it shall blow.' Then he went away to seek the bird, as his stepmother bade him; and, looking homewards from the hill, he saw the queen standing with one foot on the great house, and the other on the castle, and her face turned towards whatever tempest should blow.

On he journeyed, over hills, and through rivers till he reached a wide plain, and never a glimpse did he catch of the falcon. Darker and darker it grew, and the small birds were seeking their nests, and at length Ian Direach could see no more, and he lay down under some bushes and sleep came to him. And in his dream a soft nose touched him, and a warm body curled up beside him, and a low voice whispered to him:

'Fortune is against you, Ian Direach; I have but the cheek and the hoof of a sheep to give you, and with these you must be content.' With that Ian Direach awoke, and beheld Gille Mairtean the fox.

Between them they kindled a fire, and ate their supper. Then Gille Mairtean the fox bade Ian Direach lie down as before, and sleep till morning. And in the morning, when he awoke, Gille Mairtean said:

'The falcon that you seek is in the keeping of the Giant of the Five Heads, and the Five Necks, and the Five Humps. I will show you the way to his house, and I counsel you to do his bidding, nimbly and cheerfully, and, above all, to treat his birds kindly, for in this manner he may give you his falcon to feed and care for. And when this happens, wait till the giant is out of his house; then throw a cloth over the falcon and bear her away with you. Only see that not one of her feathers touches anything within the house, or evil will befall you.'

'I thank you for your counsel,' spake Ian Direach, 'and I will be careful to follow it.' Then he took the path to the giant's house.

'Who is there?' cried the giant, as someone knocked loudly on the door of his house.

'One who seeks work as a servant,' answered Ian Direach.

'And what can you do?' asked the giant again.

‘I can feed birds and tend pigs; I can feed and milk a cow, and also goats and sheep, if you have any of these,’ replied Ian Direach.

‘Then enter, for I have great need of such a one,’ said the giant.

So Ian Direach entered, and tended so well and carefully all the birds and beasts, that the giant was better satisfied than ever he had been, and at length he thought that he might even be trusted to feed the falcon. And the heart of Ian was glad, and he tended the blue falcon till his fathers shone like the sky, and the giant was well pleased; and one day he said to him:

‘For long my brothers on the other side of the mountain have besought me to visit them, but never could I go for fear of my falcon. Now I think I can leave her with you for one day, and before nightfall I shall be back again.’

Scarcely was the giant out of sight next morning when Ian Direach seized the falcon, and throwing a cloth over her head hastened with her to the door. But the rays of the sun pierced through the thickness of the cloth, and as they passed the doorpost she gave a spring, and the tip of one of her feathers touched the post, which gave a scream, and brought the giant back in three strides. Ian Direach trembled as he saw him; but the giant only said:

‘If you wish for my falcon you must first bring me the White Sword of Light that is in the house of the Big Women of Dhiurradh.’

‘And where do they live?’ asked Ian. But the giant answered:

‘Ah, that is for you to discover.’ And Ian dared say no more, and hastened down to the waste. There, as he hoped, he met his friend Gille Mairtean the fox, who bade him eat his supper and lie down to sleep. And when he had wakened next morning the fox said to him:

‘Let us go down to the shore of the sea.’ And to the shore of the sea they went. And after they had reached the shore, and beheld the sea stretching before them, and the isle of Dhiurradh in the midst of it, the soul of Ian sank, and he turned to Gille Mairtean and asked why he had brought him thither, for the giant, when he had sent him, had known full well that without a boat he could never find the Big Women.

‘Do not be cast down,’ answered the fox, ‘it is quite easy! I will change myself into a boat, and you shall go on board me, and I will carry you over the sea to the Seven Big Women of Dhiurradh. Tell them that you are skilled in brightening silver and gold, and in the end they will take you as

servant, and if you are careful to please them they will give you the White Sword of Light to make bright and shining. But when you seek to steal it, take heed that its sheath touches nothing inside the house, or ill will befall you.'

So Ian Direach did all things as the fox had told him, and the Seven Big Women of Dhiurradh took him for their servant, and for six weeks he worked so hard that his seven mistresses said to each other: 'Never has a servant had the skill to make all bright and shining like this one. Let us give him the White Sword of Light to polish like the rest.'

Then they brought forth the White Sword of Light from the iron closet where it hung, and bade him rub it till he could see his face in the shining blade; and he did so. But one day, when the Seven Big Women were out of the way, he bethought him that the moment had come for him to carry off the sword, and, replacing it in its sheath, he hoisted it on his shoulder. But just as he was passing through the door the tip of the sheath touched it, and the door gave a loud shriek. And the Big Women heard it, and came running back, and took the sword from him, and said:

'If it is our sword you want, you must first bring us the bay colt of the King of Erin.'

Humbled and ashamed, Ian Direach left the house, and sat by the side of the sea, and soon Gille Mairtean the fox came to him.

'Plainly I see that you have taken no heed to my words, Ian Direach,' spoke the fox. 'But eat first, and yet once more will I help you.'

At these words the heart returned again to Ian Direach, and he gathered sticks and made a fire and ate with Gille Mairtean the fox, and slept on the sand. At dawn next morning Gille Mairtean said to Ian Direach:

'I will change myself into a ship, and will bear you across the seas to Erin, to the land where dwells the king. And you shall offer yourself to serve in his stable, and to tend his horses, till at length so well content is he, that he gives you the bay colt to wash and brush. But when you run away with her see that nought except the soles of her hoofs touch anything within the palace gates, or it will go ill with you.'

After he had thus counselled Ian Direach, the fox changed himself into a ship, and set sail for Erin. And the king of that country gave into Ian Direach's hands the care of his horses, and never before did their skins

shine so brightly or was their pace so swift. And the king was well pleased, and at the end of a month he sent for Ian and said to him:

‘You have given me faithful service, and now I will entrust you with the most precious thing that my kingdom holds.’ And when he had spoken, he led Ian Direach to the stable where stood the bay colt. And Ian rubbed her and fed her, and galloped with her all round the country, till he could leave one wind behind him and catch the other which was in front.

‘I am going away to hunt,’ said the king one morning while he was watching Ian tend the bay colt in her stable. ‘The deer have come down from the hill, and it is time for me to give them chase.’ Then he went away; and when he was no longer in sight, Ian Direach led the bay colt out of the stable, and sprang on her back. But as they rode through the gate, which stood between the palace and the outer world, the colt swished her tail against the post, which shrieked loudly. In a moment the king came running up, and he seized the colt’s bridle.

‘If you want my bay colt, you must first bring me the daughter of the king of the Franks.’

With slow steps went Ian Direach down to the shore where Gille Mairtean the fox awaited him.

‘Plainly I see that you have not done as I bid you, nor will you ever do it,’ spoke Gille Mairtean the fox; ‘but I will help you yet again for a third time I will change myself into a ship, and we will sail to France.’

And to France they sailed, and, as he was the ship, the Gille Mairtean sailed where he would, and ran himself into the cleft of a rock, high on to the land. Then, he commanded Ian Direach to go up to the king’s palace, saying that he had been wrecked, that his ship was made fast in a rock, and that none had been saved but himself only.

Ian Direach listened to the words of the fox, and he told a tale so pitiful, that the king and queen, and the princess their daughter, all came out to hear it. And when they had heard, nought would please them except to go down to the shore and visit the ship, which by now was floating, for the tide was up. Torn and battered was she, as if she had passed through many dangers, yet music of a wondrous sweetness poured forth from within.

‘Bring hither a boat,’ cried the princess, ‘that I may go and see for myself the harp that gives forth such music.’ And a boat was brought, and

Ian Direach stepped in to row it to the side of the ship.

To the further side he rowed, so that none could see, and when he helped the princess on board he gave a push to the boat, so that she could not get back to it again. And the music sounded always sweeter, though they could never see whence it came, and sought it from one part of the vessel to another. When at last they reached the deck and looked around them, nought of land could they see, or anything save the rushing waters.

The princess stood silent, and her face grew grim. At last she said:

‘An ill trick have you played me! What is this that you have done, and whither are we going?’

‘It is a queen you will be,’ answered Ian Direach, ‘for the king of Erin has sent me for you, and in return he will give me his bay colt, that I may take him to the Seven Big Women of Dhiurradh, in exchange for the White Sword of Light. This I must carry to the giant of the Five Heads and Five Necks and Five Humps, and, in place of it, he will bestow on me the blue falcon, which I have promised my stepmother, so that she may free me from the spell which she has laid on me.’

‘I would rather be wife to you,’ answered the princess.

By-and-by the ship sailed into a harbour on the coast of Erin, and cast anchor there. And Gille Mairtean the fox bade Ian Direach tell the princess that she must bide yet a while in a cave amongst the rocks, for they had business on land, and after a while they would return to her. Then they took a boat and rowed up to some rocks, and as they touched the land Gille Mairtean changed himself into a fair woman, who laughed, and said to Ian Direach, ‘I will give the king a fine wife.’

Now the king of Erin had been hunting on the hill, and when he saw a strange ship sailing towards the harbour, he guessed that it might be Ian Direach, and left his hunting, and ran down to the hill to the stable. Hastily he led the bay colt from his stall, and put the golden saddle on her back, and the silver bridle over his head, and with the colt’s bridle in his hand, he hurried to meet the princess.

‘I have brought you the king of France’s daughter,’ said Ian Direach. And the king of Erin looked at the maiden, and was well pleased, not knowing that it was Gille Mairtean the fox. And he bowed low, and besought her to do him the honour to enter the palace; and Gille Mairtean, as he went in, turned to look back at Ian Direach, and laughed.

In the great hall the king paused and pointed to an iron chest which stood in a corner.

‘In that chest is the crown that has waited for you for many years,’ he said, ‘and at last you have come for it.’ And he stooped down to unlock the box.

In an instant Gille Mairtean the fox had sprung on his back, and gave him such a bite that he fell down unconscious. Quickly the fox took his own shape again, and galloped away to the sea shore, where Ian Direach and the princess and the bay colt awaited him.

‘I will become a ship,’ cried Gille Mairtean, ‘and you shall go on board me.’ And so he did, and Ian Direach let the bay colt into the ship and the princess went after them, and they set sail for Dhiurradh. The wind was behind them, and very soon they saw the rocks of Dhiurradh in front. Then spoke Gille Mairtean the fox:

‘Let the bay colt and the king’s daughter hide in these rocks, and I will change myself into the colt, and go with you to the house of the Seven Big Women.’

Joy filed the hearts of the Big Women when they beheld the bay colt led up to their door by Ian Direach. And the youngest of them fetched the White Sword of Light, and gave it into the hands of Ian Direach, who took off the golden saddle and the silver bridle, and went down the hill with the sword to the place where the princess and the real colt awaited him.

‘Now we shall have the ride that we have longed for!’ cried the Seven Big Women; and they saddled and bridled the colt, and the eldest one got upon the saddle. Then the second sister sat on the back of the first, and the third on the back of the second, and so on for the whole seven. And when they were all seated, the eldest struck her side with a whip and the colt bounded forward. Over the moors she flew, and round and round the mountains, and still the Big Women clung to her and snorted with pleasure. At last she leapt high in the air, and came down on top of Monadh the high hill, where the crag is. And she rested her fore feet on the crag, and threw up her hind legs, and the Seven Big Women fell over the crag, and were dead when they reached the bottom. And the colt laughed, and became a fox again and galloped away to the sea shore, where Ian Direach, and the princess and the real colt and the White Sword of Light were awaiting him.

‘I will make myself into a ship,’ said Gille Mairtean the fox, ‘and will carry you and the princess, and the bay colt and the White Sword of Light, back to the land.’ And when the shore was reached, Gille Mairtean the fox took back his own shape, and spoke to Ian Direach in this wise:

‘Let the princess and the White Sword of Light, and the bay colt, remain among the rocks, and I will change myself into the likeness of the White Sword of Light, and you shall bear me to the giant, and, instead, he will give you the blue falcon.’ And Ian Direach did as the fox bade him, and set out for the giant’s castle. From afar the giant beheld the blaze of the White Sword of Light, and his heart rejoiced; and he took the blue falcon and put it in a basket, and gave it to Ian Direach, who bore it swiftly away to the place where the princess, and the bay colt, and the real Sword of Light were awaiting him.

So well content was the giant to possess the sword he had coveted for many a year, that he began at once to whirl it through the air, and to cut and slash with it. For a little while Gille Mairtean let the giant play with him in this manner; then he turned in the giant’s hand, and cut through the Five Necks, so that the Five Heads rolled on the ground. Afterwards he went back to Ian Direach and said to him:

‘Saddle the colt with the golden saddle, and bridle her with the silver bridle, and sling the basket with the falcon over your shoulders, and hold the White Sword of Light with its back against your nose. Then mount the colt, and let the princess mount behind you, and ride thus to your father’s palace. But see that the back of the sword is ever against your nose, else when your stepmother beholds you, she will change you into a dry faggot. If, however, you do as I bid you, she will become herself a bundle of sticks.’

Ian Direach hearkened to the words of Gille Mairtean, and his stepmother fell as a bundle of sticks before him; and he set fire to her, and was free from her spells for ever. After that he married the princess, who was the best wife in all the islands of the West. Henceforth he was safe from harm, for had he not the bay colt who could leave one wind behind her and catch the other wind, and the blue falcon to bring him game to eat, and the White Sword of Light to pierce through his foes?

And Ian Direach knew that all this he owed to Gille Mairtean the fox, and he made a compact with him that he might choose any beast out of his

herds, whenever hunger seized him, and that henceforth no arrow should be let fly at him or at any of his race. But Gille Mairtean the fox would take no reward for the help he had given to Ian Direach, only his friendship. Thus all things prospered with Ian Direach till he died.

THE UGLY DUCKLING

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[From Tales of the West Highlands.]

It was summer in the land of Denmark, and though for most of the year the country looks flat and ugly, it was beautiful now. The wheat was yellow, the oats were green, the hay was dry and delicious to roll in, and from the old ruined house which nobody lived in, down to the edge of the canal, was a forest of great burdocks, so tall that a whole family of children might have dwelt in them and never have been found out.

It was under these burdocks that a duck had built herself a warm nest, and was not sitting all day on six pretty eggs. Five of them were white, but the sixth, which was larger than the others, was of an ugly grey colour. The duck was always puzzled about that egg, and how it came to be so different from the rest. Other birds might have thought that when the duck went down in the morning and evening to the water to stretch her legs in a good swim, some lazy mother might have been on the watch, and have popped her egg into the nest. But ducks are not clever at all, and are not quick at counting, so this duck did not worry herself about the matter, but just took care that the big egg should be as warm as the rest.

This was the first set of eggs that the duck had ever laid, and, to begin with, she was very pleased and proud, and laughed at the other mothers, who were always neglecting their duties to gossip with each other or to take little extra swims besides the two in the morning and evening that were necessary for health. But at length she grew tired of sitting there all day. ‘Surely eggs take longer hatching than they did,’ she said to herself; and she pined for a little amusement also. Still, she knew that if she left her eggs and the ducklings in them to die none of her friends would ever speak to her again; so there she stayed, only getting off the eggs several times a day to see if the shells were cracking—which may have been the very reason why they did not crack sooner.

She had looked at the eggs at least a hundred and fifty times, when, to her joy, she saw a tiny crack on two of them, and scrambling back to the nest she drew the eggs closer the one to the other, and never moved for the whole of that day. Next morning she was rewarded by noticing cracks in the whole five eggs, and by midday two little yellow heads were poking out from the shells. This encouraged her so much that, after breaking the shells with her bill, so that the little creatures could get free of them, she sat steadily for a whole night upon the nest, and before the sun arose the five white eggs were empty, and ten pairs of eyes were gazing out upon the green world.

Now the duck had been carefully brought up, and did not like dirt, and, besides, broken shells are not at all comfortable things to sit or walk upon; so she pushed the rest out over the side, and felt delighted to have some company to talk to till the big egg hatched. But day after day went on, and the big egg showed no signs of cracking, and the duck grew more and more impatient, and began to wish to consult her husband, who never came.

‘I can’t think what is the matter with it,’ the duck grumbled to her neighbour who had called in to pay her a visit. ‘Why I could have hatched two broods in the time that this one has taken!’

‘Let me look at it,’ said the old neighbour. ‘Ah, I thought so; it is a turkey’s egg. Once, when I was young, they tricked me to sitting on a brood of turkey’s eggs myself, and when they were hatched the creatures were so stupid that nothing would make them learn to swim. I have no patience when I think of it.’

‘Well, I will give it another chance,’ sighed the duck, ‘and if it does not come out of its shell in another twenty-four hours, I will just leave it alone and teach the rest of them to swim properly and to find their own food. I really can’t be expected to do two things at once.’ And with a fluff of her feathers she pushed the egg into the middle of the nest.

All through the next day she sat on, giving up even her morning bath for fear that a blast of cold might strike the big egg. In the evening, when she ventured to peep, she thought she saw a tiny crack in the upper part of the shell. Filled with hope, she went back to her duties, though she could hardly sleep all night for excitement. When she woke with the first steaks

of light she felt something stirring under her. Yes, there it was at last; and as she moved, a big awkward bird tumbled head foremost on the ground.

There was no denying it was ugly, even the mother was forced to admit that to herself, though she only said it was ‘large’ and ‘strong.’ ‘You won’t need any teaching when you are once in the water,’ she told him, with a glance of surprise at the dull brown which covered his back, and at his long naked neck. And indeed he did not, though he was not half so pretty to look at as the little yellow balls that followed her.

When they returned they found the old neighbour on the bank waiting for them to take them into the duckyard. ‘No, it is not a young turkey, certainly,’ whispered she in confidence to the mother, ‘for though it is lean and skinny, and has no colour to speak of, yet there is something rather distinguished about it, and it holds its head up well.’

‘It is very kind of you to say so,’ answered the mother, who by this time had some secret doubts of its loveliness. ‘Of course, when you see it by itself it is all right, though it is different, somehow, from the others. But one cannot expect all one’s children to be beautiful!’

By this time they had reached the centre of the yard, where a very old duck was sitting, who was treated with great respect by all the fowls present.

‘You must go up and bow low before her,’ whispered the mother to her children, nodding her head in the direction of the old lady, ‘and keep your legs well apart, as you see me do. No well-bred duckling turns in its toes. It is a sign of common parents.’

The little ducks tried hard to make their small fat bodies copy the movements of their mother, and the old lady was quite pleased with them; but the rest of the ducks looked on discontentedly, and said to each other:

‘Oh, dear me, here are ever so many more! The yard is full already; and did you ever see anything quite as ugly as that great tall creature? He is a disgrace to any brood. I shall go and chase him out!’ So saying she put up her feathers, and running to the big duckling bit his neck.

The duckling gave a loud quack; it was the first time he had felt any pain, and at the sound his mother turned quickly.

‘Leave him alone,’ she said fiercely, ‘or I will send for his father. He was not troubling you.’

‘No; but he is so ugly and awkward no one can put up with him,’ answered the stranger. And though the duckling did not understand the meaning of the words, he felt he was being blamed, and became more uncomfortable still when the old Spanish duck who ruled the fowlyard struck in:

‘It certainly is a great pity he is so different from these beautiful darlings. If he could only be hatched over again!’

The poor little fellow drooped his head, and did not know where to look, but was comforted when his mother answered:

‘He may not be quite as handsome as the others, but he swims better, and is very strong; I am sure he will make his way in the world as well as anybody.’

‘Well, you must feel quite at home here,’ said the old duck waddling off. And so they did, all except the duckling, who was snapped at by everyone when they thought his mother was not looking. Even the turkey-cock, who was so big, never passed him without mocking words, and his brothers and sisters, who would not have noticed any difference unless it had been put into their heads, soon became as rude and unkind as the rest.

At last he could bear it no longer, and one day he fancied he saw signs of his mother turning against him too; so that night, when the ducks and hens were still asleep, he stole away through an open door, and under cover of the burdock leaves scrambled on by the bank of the canal, till he reached a wide grassy moor, full of soft marshy places where the reeds grew. Here he lay down, but he was too tired and too frightened to fall asleep, and with the earliest peep of the sun the reeds began to rustle, and he saw that he had blundered into a colony of wild ducks. But as he could not run away again he stood up and bowed politely.

‘You are ugly,’ said the wild ducks, when they had looked him well over; ‘but, however, it is no business of ours, unless you wish to marry one of our daughters, and that we should not allow.’ And the duckling answered that he had no idea of marrying anybody, and wanted nothing but to be left alone after his long journey.

So for two whole days he lay quietly among the reeds, eating such food as he could find, and drinking the water of the moorland pool, till he felt himself quite strong again. He wished he might stay were he was for ever,

he was so comfortable and happy, away from everyone, with nobody to bite him and tell him how ugly he was.

He was thinking these thoughts, when two young ganders caught sight of him as they were having their evening splash among the reeds, looking for their supper.

‘We are getting tired of this moor,’ they said, ‘and to-morrow we think of trying another, where the lakes are larger and the feeding better. Will you come with us?’

‘Is it nicer than this?’ asked the duckling doubtfully. And the words were hardly out of his mouth, when ‘Pif! pah!’ and the two new-comers were stretched dead beside him.

At the sound of the gun the wild ducks in the rushes flew into the air, and for a few minutes the firing continued.

Luckily for himself the duckling could not fly, and he floundered along through the water till he could hide himself amidst some tall ferns which grew in a hollow. But before he got there he met a huge creature on four legs, which he afterwards knew to be a dog, who stood and gazed at him with a long red tongue hanging out of his mouth. The duckling grew cold with terror, and tried to hide his head beneath his little wings; but the dog snuffed at him and passed on, and he was able to reach his place of shelter.

‘I am too ugly even for a dog to eat,’ said he to himself. ‘Well, that is a great mercy.’ And he curled himself up in the soft grass till the shots died away in the distance.

When all had been quiet for a long time, and there were only stars to see him, he crept out and looked about him.

He would never go near a pool again, never, thought he; and seeing that the moor stretched far away in the opposite direction from which he had come, he marched bravely on till he got to a small cottage, which seemed too tumbledown for the stones to hold together many hours longer. Even the door only hung upon one hinge, and as the only light in the room sprang from a tiny fire, the duckling edged himself cautiously in, and lay down under a chair close to the broken door, from which he could get out if necessary. But no one seemed to see him or smell him; so he spend the rest of the night in peace.

Now in the cottage dwelt an old woman, her cat, and a hen; and it was really they, and not she, who were masters of the house. The old woman,

who passed all her days in spinning yarn, which she sold at the nearest town, loved both the cat and the hen as her own children, and never contradicted them in any way; so it was their grace, and not hers, that the duckling would have to gain.

It was only next morning, when it grew light, that they noticed their visitor, who stood trembling before them, with his eye on the door ready to escape at any moment. They did not, however, appear very fierce, and the duckling became less afraid as they approached him.

‘Can you lay eggs?’ asked the hen. And the duckling answered meekly:

‘No; I don’t know how.’ Upon which the hen turned her back, and the cat came forward.

‘Can you ruffle your fur when you are angry, or purr when you are pleased?’ said she. And again the duckling had to admit that he could do nothing but swim, which did not seem of much use to anybody.

So the cat and the hen went straight off to the old woman, who was still in bed.

‘Such a useless creature has taken refuge here,’ they said. ‘It calls itself a duckling; but it can neither lay eggs nor purr! What had we better do with it?’

‘Keep it, to be sure!’ replied the old woman briskly. ‘It is all nonsense about it not laying eggs. Anyway, we will let it stay here for a bit, and see what happens.’

So the duckling remained for three weeks, and shared the food of the cat and the hen; but nothing in the way of eggs happened at all. Then the sun came out, and the air grew soft, and the duckling grew tired of being in a hut, and wanted with all his might to have a swim. And one morning he got so restless that even his friends noticed it.

‘What is the matter?’ asked the hen; and the duckling told her.

‘I am so longing for the water again. You can’t think how delicious it is to put your head under the water and dive straight to the bottom.’

‘I don’t think I should enjoy it,’ replied the hen doubtfully. ‘And I don’t think the cat would like it either.’ And the cat, when asked, agreed there was nothing she would hate so much.

‘I can’t stay here any longer, I Must get to the water,’ repeated the duck. And the cat and the hen, who felt hurt and offended, answered shortly:

‘Very well then, go.’

The duckling would have liked to say good-bye, and thank them for their kindness, as he was polite by nature; but they had both turned their backs on him, so he went out of the rickety door feeling rather sad. But, in spite of himself, he could not help a thrill of joy when he was out in the air and water once more, and cared little for the rude glances of the creatures he met. For a while he was quite happy and content; but soon the winter came on, and snow began to fall, and everything to grow very wet and uncomfortable. And the duckling soon found that it is one thing to enjoy being in the water, and quite another to like being damp on land.

The sun was setting one day, like a great scarlet globe, and the river, to the duckling’s vast bewilderment, was getting hard and slippery, when he heard a sound of whirring wings, and high up in the air a flock of swans were flying. They were as white as snow which had fallen during the night, and their long necks with yellow bills were stretched southwards, for they were going—they did not quite know whither—but to a land where the sun shone all day. Oh, if he only could have gone with them! But that was not possible, of course; and besides, what sort of companion could an ugly thing like him be to those beautiful beings? So he walked sadly down to a sheltered pool and dived to the very bottom, and tried to think it was the greatest happiness he could dream of. But, all the same, he knew it wasn’t!

And every morning it grew colder and colder, and the duckling had hard work to keep himself warm. Indeed, it would be truer to say that he never was warm at all; and at last, after one bitter night, his legs moved so slowly that the ice crept closer and closer, and when the morning light broke he was caught fast, as in a trap; and soon his senses went from him.

A few hours more and the poor duckling’s life had been ended. But, by good fortune, a man was crossing the river on his way to his work, and saw in a moment what had happened. He had on thick wooden shoes, and he went and stamped so hard on the ice that it broke, and then he picked up the duckling and tucked him under his sheepskin coat, where his frozen bones began to thaw a little.

Instead of going on his work, the man turned back and took the bird to his children, who gave him a warm mess to eat and put him in a box by the fire, and when they came back from school he was much more comfortable than he had been since he had left the old woman’s cottage.

They were kind little children, and wanted to play with him; but, alas! the poor fellow had never played in his life, and thought they wanted to tease him, and flew straight into the milk-pan, and then into the butter-dish, and from that into the meal-barrel, and at last, terrified at the noise and confusion, right out of the door, and hid himself in the snow amongst the bushes at the back of the house.

He never could tell afterwards exactly how he had spent the rest of the winter. He only knew that he was very miserable and that he never had enough to eat. But by-and-by things grew better. The earth became softer, the sun hotter, the birds sang, and the flowers once more appeared in the grass. When he stood up, he felt different, somehow, from what he had done before he fell asleep among the reeds to which he had wandered after he had escaped from the peasant's hut. His body seemed larger, and his wings stronger. Something pink looked at him from the side of a hill. He thought he would fly towards it and see what it was.

Oh, how glorious it felt to be rushing through the air, wheeling first one way and then the other! He had never thought that flying could be like that! The duckling was almost sorry when he drew near the pink cloud and found it was made up of apple blossoms growing beside a cottage whose garden ran down to the banks of the canal. He fluttered slowly to the ground and paused for a few minutes under a thicket of syringas, and while he was gazing about him, there walked slowly past a flock of the same beautiful birds he had seen so many months ago. Fascinated, he watched them one by one step into the canal, and float quietly upon the waters as if they were part of them.

'I will follow them,' said the duckling to himself; 'ugly though I am, I would rather be killed by them than suffer all I have suffered from cold and hunger, and from the ducks and fowls who should have treated me kindly.' And flying quickly down to the water, he swam after them as fast as he could.

It did not take him long to reach them, for they had stopped to rest in a green pool shaded by a tree whose branches swept the water. And directly they saw him coming some of the younger ones swam out to meet him with cries of welcome, which again the duckling hardly understood. He approached them glad, yet trembling, and turning to one of the older birds, who by this time had left the shade of the tree, he said:

‘If I am to die, I would rather you should kill me. I don’t know why I was ever hatched, for I am too ugly to live.’ And as he spoke, he bowed his head and looked down into the water.

Reflected in the still pool he saw many white shapes, with long necks and golden bills, and, without thinking, he looked for the dull grey body and the awkward skinny neck. But no such thing was there. Instead, he beheld beneath him a beautiful white swan!

‘The new one is the best of all,’ said the children when they came down to feed the swans with biscuit and cake before going to bed. ‘His feathers are whiter and his beak more golden than the rest.’ And when he heard that, the duckling thought that it was worth while having undergone all the persecution and loneliness that he had passed through, as otherwise he would never have known what it was to be really happy.

THE TWO CASKETS

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[Hans Andersen.]

Far, far away, in the midst of a pine forest, there lived a woman who had both a daughter and a stepdaughter. Ever since her own daughter was born the mother had given her all that she cried for, so she grew up to be as cross and disagreeable as she was ugly. Her stepsister, on the other hand, had spent her childhood in working hard to keep house for her father, who died soon after his second marriage; and she was as much beloved by the neighbours for her goodness and industry as she was for her beauty.

As the years went on, the difference between the two girls grew more marked, and the old woman treated her stepdaughter worse than ever, and was always on the watch for some pretext for beating her, or depriving her of her food. Anything, however foolish, was good enough for this, and one day, when she could think of nothing better, she set both the girls to spin while sitting on the low wall of the well.

‘And you had better mind what you do,’ said she, ‘for the one whose thread breaks first shall be thrown to the bottom.’

But of course she took good care that her own daughter’s flax was fine and strong, while the stepsister had only some coarse stuff, which no one would have thought of using. As might be expected, in a very little while the poor girl’s thread snapped, and the old woman, who had been watching from behind a door, seized her stepdaughter by her shoulders, and threw her into the well.

‘That is an end of you!’ she said. But she was wrong, for it was only the beginning.

Down, down, down went the girl—it seemed as if the well must reach to the very middle of the earth; but at last her feet touched the ground, and she found herself in a field more beautiful than even the summer pastures of her native mountains. Trees waved in the soft breeze, and flowers of the brightest colours danced in the grass. And though she was quite alone, the

girl’s heart danced too, for she felt happier than she had since her father died. So she walked on through the meadow till she came to an old tumbledown fence—so old that it was a wonder it managed to stand up at all, and it looked as if it depended for support on the old man’s beard that climbed all over it.

The girl paused for a moment as she came up, and gazed about for a place where she might safely cross. But before she could move a voice cried from the fence:

‘Do not hurt me, little maiden; I am so old, so old, I have not much longer to live.’

And the maiden answered:

‘No, I will not hurt you; fear nothing.’ And then seeing a spot where the clematis grew less thickly than in other places, she jumped lightly over.

‘May all go well with thee,’ said the fence, as the girl walked on.

She soon left the meadow and turned into a path which ran between two flowery hedges. Right in front of her stood an oven, and through its open door she could see a pile of white loaves.

‘Eat as many loaves as you like, but do me no harm, little maiden,’ cried the oven. And the maiden told her to fear nothing, for she never hurt anything, and was very grateful for the oven’s kindness in giving her such a beautiful white loaf. When she had finished it, down to the last crumb, she shut the oven door and said: ‘Good-morning.’

‘May all go well with thee,’ said the oven, as the girl walked on.

By-and-by she became very thirsty, and seeing a cow with a milk-pail hanging on her horn, turned towards her.

‘Milk me and drink as much as you will, little maiden,’ cried the cow, ‘but be sure you spill none on the ground; and do me no harm, for I have never harmed anyone.’

‘Nor I,’ answered the girl; ‘fear nothing.’ So she sat down and milked till the pail was nearly full. Then she drank it all up except a little drop at the bottom.

‘Now throw any that is left over my hoofs, and hang the pail on my horns again,’ said the cow. And the girl did as she was bid, and kissed the cow on her forehead and went her way.

Many hours had now passed since the girl had fallen down the well, and the sun was setting.

‘Where shall I spend the night?’ thought she. And suddenly she saw before her a gate which she had not noticed before, and a very old woman leaning against it.

‘Good evening,’ said the girl politely; and the old woman answered:

‘Good evening, my child. Would that everyone was as polite as you. Are you in search of anything?’

‘I am in search of a place,’ replied the girl; and the woman smiled and said:

‘Then stop a little while and comb my hair, and you shall tell me all the things you can do.’

‘Willingly, mother,’ answered the girl. And she began combing out the old woman’s hair, which was long and white.

Half an hour passed in this way, and then the old woman said:

‘As you did not think yourself too good to comb me, I will show you where you may take service. Be prudent and patient and all will go well.’

So the girl thanked her, and set out for a farm at a little distance, where she was engaged to milk the cows and sift the corn.

As soon as it was light next morning the girl got up and went into the cow-house. ‘I’m sure you must be hungry,’ said she, patting each in turn. And then she fetched hay from the barn, and while they were eating it, she swept out the cow-house, and strewed clean straw upon the floor. The cows were so pleased with the care she took of them that they stood quite still while she milked them, and did not play any of the tricks on her that they had played on other dairymaids who were rough and rude. And when she had done, and was going to get up from her stool, she found sitting round her a whole circle of cats, black and white, tabby and tortoise-shell, who all cried with one voice:

‘We are very thirsty, please give us some milk!’

‘My poor little pussies,’ said she, ‘of course you shall have some.’ And she went into the dairy, followed by all the cats, and gave each one a little red saucerful. But before they drank they all rubbed themselves against her knees and purred by way of thanks.

The next thing the girl had to do was to go to the storehouse, and to sift the corn through a sieve. While she was busy rubbing the corn she heard a

whirr of wings, and a flock of sparrows flew in at the window.

‘We are hungry; give us some corn! give us some corn!’ cried they; and the girl answered:

‘You poor little birds, of course you shall have some!’ and scattered a fine handful over the floor. When they had finished they flew on her shoulders and flapped their wings by way of thanks.

Time went by, and no cows in the whole country-side were so fat and well tended as hers, and no dairy had so much milk to show. The farmer’s wife was so well satisfied that she gave her higher wages, and treated her like her own daughter. At length, one day, the girl was bidden by her mistress to come into the kitchen, and when there, the old woman said to her: ‘I know you can tend cows and keep a diary; now let me see what you can do besides. Take this sieve to the well, and fill it with water, and bring it home to me without spilling one drop by the way.’

The girl’s heart sank at this order; for how was it possible for her to do her mistress’s bidding? However, she was silent, and taking the sieve went down to the well with it. Stopping over the side, she filled it to the brim, but as soon as she lifted it the water all ran out of the holes. Again and again she tried, but not a drop would remaining in the sieve, and she was just turning away in despair when a flock of sparrows flew down from the sky.

‘Ashes! ashes!’ they twittered; and the girl looked at them and said:

‘Well, I can’t be in a worse plight than I am already, so I will take your advice.’ And she ran back to the kitchen and filled her sieve with ashes. Then once more she dipped the sieve into the well, and, behold, this time not a drop of water disappeared!

‘Here is the sieve, mistress,’ cried the girl, going to the room where the old woman was sitting.

‘You are cleverer than I expected,’ answered she; ‘or else someone helped you who is skilled in magic.’ But the girl kept silence, and the old woman asked her no more questions.

Many days passed during which the girl went about her work as usual, but at length one day the old woman called her and said:

‘I have something more for you to do. There are here two yarns, the one white, the other black. What you must do is to wash them in the river till the black one becomes white and the white black.’ And the girl took

them to the river and washed hard for several hours, but wash as she would they never changed one whit.

‘This is worse than the sieve,’ thought she, and was about to give up in despair when there came a rush of wings through the air, and on every twig of the birch trees which grew by the bank was perched a sparrow.

‘The black to the east, the white to the west!’ they sang, all at once; and the girl dried her tears and felt brave again. Picking up the black yarn, she stood facing the east and dipped it in the river, and in an instant it grew white as snow, then turning to the west, she held the white yarn in the water, and it became as black as a crow’s wing. She looked back at the sparrows and smiled and nodded to them, and flapping their wings in reply they flew swiftly away.

At the sight of the yarn the old woman was struck dumb; but when at length she found her voice she asked the girl what magician had helped her to do what no one had done before. But she got no answer, for the maiden was afraid of bringing trouble on her little friends.

For many weeks the mistress shut herself up in her room, and the girl went about her work as usual. She hoped that there was an end to the difficult tasks which had been set her; but in this she was mistaken, for one day the old woman appeared suddenly in the kitchen, and said to her:

‘There is one more trial to which I must put you, and if you do not fail in that you will be left in peace for evermore. Here are the yarns which you washed. Take them and weave them into a web that is as smooth as a king’s robe, and see that it is spun by the time that the sun sets.’

‘This is the easiest thing I have been set to do,’ thought the girl, who was a good spinner. But when she began she found that the skein tangled and broke every moment.

‘Oh, I can never do it!’ she cried at last, and leaned her head against the loom and wept; but at that instant the door opened, and there entered, one behind another, a procession of cats.

‘What is the matter, fair maiden?’ asked they. And the girl answered:

‘My mistress has given me this yarn to weave into a piece of cloth, which must be finished by sunset, and I have not even begun yet, for the yarn breaks whenever I touch it.’

‘If that is all, dry your eyes,’ said the cats; ‘we will manage it for you.’ And they jumped on the loom, and wove so fast and so skilfully that in a

very short time the cloth was ready and was as fine as any king ever wore. The girl was so delighted at the sight of it that she gave each cat a kiss on his forehead as they left the room behind one the other as they had come.

‘Who has taught you this wisdom?’ asked the old woman, after she had passed her hands twice or thrice over the cloth and could find no roughness anywhere. But the girl only smiled and did not answer. She had learned early the value of silence.

After a few weeks the old woman sent for her maid and told her that as her year of service was now up, she was free to return home, but that, for her part, the girl had served her so well that she hoped she might stay with her. But at these words the maid shook her head, and answered gently:

‘I have been happy here, Madam, and I thank you for your goodness to me; but I have left behind me a stepsister and a stepmother, and I am fain to be with them once more.’ The old woman looked at her for a moment, and then she said:

‘Well, that must be as you like; but as you have worked faithfully for me I will give you a reward. Go now into the loft above the store house and there you will find many caskets. Choose the one which pleases you best, but be careful not to open it till you have set it in the place where you wish it to remain.’

The girl left the room to go to the loft, and as soon as she got outside, she found all the cats waiting for her. Walking in procession, as was their custom, they followed her into the loft, which was filled with caskets big and little, plain and splendid. She lifted up one and looked at it, and then put it down to examine another yet more beautiful. Which should she choose, the yellow or the blue, the red or the green, the gold or the silver? She hesitated long, and went first to one and then to another, when she heard the cats’ voices calling: ‘Take the black! take the black!’

The words make her look round—she had seen no black casket, but as the cats continued their cry she peered into several corners that had remained unnoticed, and at length discovered a little black box, so small and so black, that it might easily have been passed over.

‘This is the casket that pleases me best, mistress,’ said the girl, carrying it into the house. And the old woman smiled and nodded, and bade her go her way. So the girl set forth, after bidding farewell to the cows and the cats and the sparrows, who all wept as they said good-bye.

She walked on and on and on, till she reached the flowery meadow, and there, suddenly, something happened, she never knew what, but she was sitting on the wall of the well in her stepmother's yard. Then she got up and entered the house.

The woman and her daughter stared as if they had been turned into stone; but at length the stepmother gasped out:

'So you are alive after all! Well, luck was ever against me! And where have you been this year past?' Then the girl told how she had taken service in the under-world, and, beside her wages, had brought home with her a little casket, which she would like to set up in her room.

'Give me the money, and take the ugly little box off to the outhouse,' cried the woman, beside herself with rage, and the girl, quite frightened at her violence, hastened away, with her precious box clasped to her bosom.

The outhouse was in a very dirty state, as no one had been near it since the girl had fallen down the well; but she scrubbed and swept till everything was clean again, and then she placed the little casket on a small shelf in the corner.

'Now I may open it,' she said to herself; and unlocking it with the key which hung to its handle, she raised the lid, but started back as she did so, almost blinded by the light that burst upon her. No one would ever have guessed that that little black box could have held such a quantity of beautiful things! Rings, crowns, girdles, necklaces—all made of wonderful stones; and they shone with such brilliance that not only the stepmother and her daughter but all the people round came running to see if the house was on fire. Of course the woman felt quite ill with greed and envy, and she would have certainly taken all the jewels for herself had she not feared the wrath of the neighbours, who loved her stepdaughter as much as they hated her.

But if she could not steal the casket and its contents for herself, at least she could get another like it, and perhaps a still richer one. So she bade her own daughter sit on the edge of the well, and threw her into the water, exactly as she had done to the other girl; and, exactly as before, the flowery meadow lay at the bottom.

Every inch of the way she trod the path which her stepsister had trodden, and saw the things which she had seen; but there the likeness ended. When the fence prayed her to do it no harm, she laughed rudely,

and tore up some of the stakes so that she might get over the more easily; when the oven offered her bread, she scattered the loaves onto the ground and stamped on them; and after she had milked the cow, and drunk as much as she wanted, she threw the rest on the grass, and kicked the pail to bits, and never heard them say, as they looked after her: ‘You shall not have done this to me for nothing!’

Towards evening she reached the spot where the old woman was leaning against the gate-post, but she passed her by without a word.

‘Have you no manners in your country?’ asked the crone.

‘I can’t stop and talk; I am in a hurry,’ answered the girl. ‘It is getting late, and I have to find a place.’

‘Stop and comb my hair for a little,’ said the old woman, ‘and I will help you to get a place.’

‘Comb your hair, indeed! I have something better to do than that!’ And slamming the gate in the crone’s face she went her way. And she never heard the words that followed her: ‘You shall not have done this to me for nothing!’

By-and-by the girl arrived at the farm, and she was engaged to look after the cows and sift the corn as her stepsister had been. But it was only when someone was watching her that she did her work; at other times the cow-house was dirty, and the cows ill-fed and beaten, so that they kicked over the pail, and tried to butt her; and everyone said they had never seen such thin cows or such poor milk. As for the cats, she chased them away, and ill-treated them, so that they had not even the spirit to chase the rats and mice, which nowadays ran about everywhere. And when the sparrows came to beg for some corn, they fared no better than the cows and the cats, for the girl threw her shoes at them, till they flew in a fright to the woods, and took shelter amongst the trees.

Months passed in this manner, when, one day, the mistress called the girl to her.

‘All that I have given you to do you have done ill,’ said she, ‘yet will I give you another chance. For though you cannot tend cows, or divide the grain from the chaff, there may be other things that you can do better. Therefore take this sieve to the well, and fill it with water, and see that you bring it back without spilling a drop.’

The girl took the sieve and carried it to the well as her sister had done; but no little birds came to help her, and after dipping it in the well two or three times she brought it back empty.

‘I thought as much,’ said the old woman angrily; ‘she that is useless in one thing is useless in another.’

Perhaps the mistress may have thought that the girl had learnt a lesson, but, if she did, she was quite mistaken, as the work was no better done than before. By-and-by she sent for her again, and gave her maid the black and white yarn to wash in the river; but there was no one to tell her the secret by which the black would turn white, and the white black; so she brought them back as they were. This time the old woman only looked at her grimly but the girl was too well pleased with herself to care what anyone thought about her.

After some weeks her third trial came, and the yarn was given her to spin, as it had been given to her stepsister before her.

But no procession of cats entered the room to weave a web of fine cloth, and at sunset she only brought back to her mistress an armful of dirty, tangled wool.

‘There seems nothing in the world you can do,’ said the old woman, and left her to herself.

Soon after this the year was up, and the girl went to her mistress to tell her that she wished to go home.

‘Little desire have I to keep you,’ answered the old woman, ‘for no one thing have you done as you ought. Still, I will give you some payment, therefore go up into the loft, and choose for yourself one of the caskets that lies there. But see that you do not open it till you place it where you wish it to stay.’

This was what the girl had been hoping for, and so rejoiced was she, that, without even stopping to thank the old woman, she ran as fast as she could to the loft. There were the caskets, blue and red, green and yellow, silver and gold; and there in the corner stood a little black casket just like the one her stepsister had brought home.

‘If there are so many jewels in that little black thing, this big red one will hold twice the number,’ she said to herself; and snatching it up she set off on her road home without even going to bid farewell to her mistress.

‘See, mother, see what I have brought!’ cried she, as she entered the cottage holding the casket in both hands.

‘Ah! you have got something very different from that little black box,’ answered the old woman with delight. But the girl was so busy finding a place for it to stand that she took little notice of her mother.

‘It will look best here—no, here,’ she said, setting it first on one piece of furniture and then on another. ‘No, after all it is to fine to live in a kitchen, let us place it in the guest chamber.’

So mother and daughter carried it proudly upstairs and put it on a shelf over the fireplace; then, untying the key from the handle, they opened the box. As before, a bright light leapt out directly the lid was raised, but it did not spring from the lustre of jewels, but from hot flames, which darted along the walls and burnt up the cottage and all that was in it and the mother and daughter as well.

As they had done when the stepdaughter came home, the neighbours all hurried to see what was the matter; but they were too late. Only the hen-house was left standing; and, in spite of her riches, there the stepdaughter lived happily to the end of her days.

THE GOLDSMITH'S FORTUNE

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[From Thorpe's Yule-Tide Stories.]

Once upon a time there was a goldsmith who lived in a certain village where the people were as bad and greedy, and covetous, as they could possibly be; however, in spite of his surroundings, he was fat and prosperous. He had only one friend whom he liked, and that was a cowherd, who looked after cattle for one of the farmers in the village. Every evening the goldsmith would walk across to the cowherd's house and say: 'Come, let's go out for a walk!'

Now the cowherd didn't like walking in the evening, because, he said, he had been out grazing the cattle all day, and was glad to sit down when night came; but the goldsmith always worried him so that the poor man had to go against his will. This at last so annoyed him that he tried to think how he could pick a quarrel with the goldsmith, so that he should not beg him to walk with him any more. He asked another cowherd for advice, and he said the best thing he could do was to go across and kill the goldsmith's wife, for then the goldsmith would be sure to regard him as an enemy; so, being a foolish person, and there being no laws in that country by which a man would be certainly punished for such a crime, the cowherd one evening took a big stick and went across to the goldsmith's house when only Mrs. Goldsmith was at home, and banged her on the head so hard that she died then and there.

When the goldsmith came back and found his wife dead he said nothing, but just took her outside into the dark lane and propped her up against the wall of his house, and then went into the courtyard and waited. Presently a rich stranger came along the lane, and seeing someone there, as he supposed, he said:

'Good-evening, friend! a fine night to-night!' But the goldsmith's wife said nothing. The man then repeated his words louder; but still there was no reply. A third time he shouted:

‘Good-evening, friend! are you deaf?’ but the figure never replied. Then the stranger, being angry at what he thought very rude behaviour, picked up a big stone and threw it at Mrs. Goldsmith, crying:

‘Let that teach you manners!’

Instantly poor Mrs. Goldsmith tumbled over; and the stranger, horrified at seeing what he had done, was immediately seized by the goldsmith, who ran out screaming:

‘Wretch! you have killed my wife! Oh, miserable one; we will have justice done to thee!’

With many protestations and reproaches they wrangled together, the stranger entreating the goldsmith to say nothing and he would pay him handsomely to atone for the sad accident. At last the goldsmith quieted down, and agreed to accept one thousand gold pieces from the stranger, who immediately helped him to bury his poor wife, and then rushed off to the guest house, packed up his things and was off by daylight, lest the goldsmith should repent and accuse him as the murderer of his wife. Now it very soon appeared that the goldsmith had a lot of extra money, so that people began to ask questions, and finally demanded of him the reason for his sudden wealth.

‘Oh,’ said he, ‘my wife died, and I sold her.’

‘You sold your dead wife?’ cried the people.

‘Yes,’ said the goldsmith.

‘For how much?’

‘A thousand gold pieces,’ replied the goldsmith.

Instantly the villagers went away and each caught hold of his own wife and throttled her, and the next day they all went off to sell their dead wives. Many a weary mile did they tramp, but got nothing but hard words or laughter, or directions to the nearest cemetery, from people to whom they offered dead wives for sale. At last they perceived that they had been cheated somehow by that goldsmith. So off they rushed home, seized the unhappy man, and, without listening to his cries and entreaties, hurried him down to the river bank and flung him—plop!—into the deepest, weediest, and nastiest place they could find.

‘That will teach him to play tricks on us,’ said they. ‘For as he can’t swim he’ll drown, and we sha’n’t have any more trouble with him!’

Now the goldsmith really could not swim, and as soon as he was thrown into the deep river he sank below the surface; so his enemies went away believing that they had seen the last of him. But, in reality, he was carried down, half drowned, below the next bend in the river, where he fortunately came across a ‘snag’ floating in the water (a snag is, you know, a part of a tree or bush which floats very nearly under the surface of the water); and he held on to this snag, and by great good luck eventually came ashore some two or three miles down the river. At the place where he landed he came across a fine fat cow buffalo, and immediately he jumped on her back and rode home. When the village people saw him, they ran out in surprise, and said:

‘Where on earth do you come from, and where did you get that buffalo?’

‘Ah!’ said the goldsmith, ‘you little know what delightful adventures I have had! Why, down in that place in the river where you threw me in I found meadows, and trees, and fine pastures, and buffaloes, and all kinds of cattle. In fact, I could hardly tear myself away; but I thought that I must really let you all know about it.’

‘Oh, oh!’ thought the greedy village people; ‘if there are buffaloes to be had for the taking we’ll go after some too.’ Encouraged by the goldsmith they nearly all ran off the very next morning to the river; and, in order that they might get down quickly to the beautiful place the goldsmith told them of, they tied great stones on to their feet and their necks, and one after another they jumped into the water as fast as the could, and were drowned. And whenever any one of them waved his hands about and struggled the goldsmith would cry out:

‘Look! he’s beckoning the rest of you to come; he’s got a fine buffalo!’ And others who were doubtful would jump in, until not one was left. Then the cunning goldsmith went back and took all the village for himself, and became very rich indeed. But do you think he was happy? Not a bit. Lies never made a man happy yet. Truly, he got the better of a set of wicked and greedy people, but only by being wicked and greedy himself; and, as it turned out, when he got so rich he got very fat; and at last was so fat that he couldn’t move, and one day he got the apoplexy and died, and no one in the world cared the least bit.

THE ENCHANTED WREATH

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[Told by a Pathan to Major Campbell.]

Once upon a time there lived near a forest a man and his wife and two girls; one girl was the daughter of the man, and the other the daughter of his wife; and the man's daughter was good and beautiful, but the woman's daughter was cross and ugly. However, her mother did not know that, but thought her the most bewitching maiden that ever was seen.

One day the man called to his daughter and bade her come with him into the forest to cut wood. They worked hard all day, but in spite of the chopping they were very cold, for it rained heavily, and when they returned home, they were wet through. Then, to his vexation, the man found that he had left his axe behind him, and he knew that if it lay all night in the mud it would become rusty and useless. So he said to his wife:

'I have dropped my axe in the forest, bid your daughter go and fetch it, for mine has worked hard all day and is both wet and weary.'

But the wife answered:

'If your daughter is wet already, it is all the more reason that she should go and get the axe. Besides, she is a great strong girl, and a little rain will not hurt her, while my daughter would be sure to catch a bad cold.'

By long experience the man knew there was no good saying any more, and with a sigh he told the poor girl she must return to the forest for the axe.

The walk took some time, for it was very dark, and her shoes often stuck in the mud, but she was brave as well as beautiful and never thought of turning back merely because the path was both difficult and unpleasant. At last, with her dress torn by brambles that she could not see, and her fact scratched by the twigs on the trees, she reached the spot where she and her father had been cutting in the morning, and found the axe in the place he

had left it. To her surprise, three little doves were sitting on the handle, all of them looking very sad.

‘You poor little things,’ said the girl, stroking them. ‘Why do you sit there and get wet? Go and fly home to your nest, it will be much warmer than this; but first eat this bread, which I saved from my dinner, and perhaps you will feel happier. It is my father’s axe you are sitting on, and I must take it back as fast as I can, or I shall get a terrible scolding from my stepmother.’ She then crumbled the bread on the ground, and was pleased to see the doves flutter quite cheerfully towards it.

‘Good-bye,’ she said, picking up the axe, and went her way homewards.

By the time they had finished all the crumbs the doves felt must better, and were able to fly back to their nest in the top of a tree.

‘That is a good girl,’ said one; ‘I really was too weak to stretch out a wing before she came. I should like to do something to show how grateful I am.’

‘Well, let us give her a wreath of flowers that will never fade as long as she wears it,’ cried another.

‘And let the tiniest singing birds in the world sit amongst the flowers,’ rejoined the third.

‘Yes, that will do beautifully,’ said the first. And when the girl stepped into her cottage a wreath of rosebuds was on her head, and a crowd of little birds were singing unseen.

The father, who was sitting by the fire, thought that, in spite of her muddy clothes, he had never seen his daughter looking so lovely; but the stepmother and the other girl grew wild with envy.

‘How absurd to walk about on such a pouring night, dressed up like that,’ she remarked crossly, and roughly pulled off the wreath as she spoke, to place it on her own daughter. As she did so the roses became withered and brown, and the birds flew out of the window.

‘See what a trumpery thing it is!’ cried the stepmother; ‘and now take your supper and go to bed, for it is near upon midnight.’

But though she pretended to despise the wreath, she longed none the less for her daughter to have one like it.

Now it happened that the next evening the father, who had been alone in the forest, came back a second time without his axe. The stepmother’s

heart was glad when she saw this, and she said quite mildly:

‘Why, you have forgotten your axe again, you careless man! But now your daughter shall stay at home, and mine shall go and bring it back’; and throwing a cloak over the girl’s shoulders, she bade her hasten to the forest.

With a very ill grace the damsel set forth, grumbling to herself as she went; for though she wished for the wreath, she did not at all want the trouble of getting it.

By the time she reached the spot where her stepfather had been cutting the wood the girl was in a very bad temper indeed, and when she caught sight of the axe, there were the three little doves, with drooping heads and soiled, bedraggled feathers, sitting on the handle.

‘You dirty creatures,’ cried she, ‘get away at once, or I will throw stones at you! And the doves spread their wings in a fright and flew up to the very top of a tree, their bodies shaking with anger.

‘What shall we do to revenge ourselves on her?’ asked the smallest of the doves, ‘we were never treated like that before.’

‘Never,’ said the biggest dove. ‘We must find some way of paying her back in her own coin!’

‘I know,’ answered the middle dove; ‘she shall never be able to say anything but “dirty creatures” to the end of her life.’

‘Oh, how clever of you! That will do beautifully,’ exclaimed the other two. And they flapped their wings and clucked so loud with delight, and made such a noise, that they woke up all the birds in the trees close by.

‘What in the world is the matter?’ asked the birds sleepily.

‘That is our secret,’ said the doves.

Meanwhile the girl had reached home crosser than ever; but as soon as her mother heard her lift the latch of the door she ran out to hear her adventures. ‘Well, did you get the wreath?’ cried she.

‘Dirty creatures!’ answered her daughter.

‘Don’t speak to me like that! What do you mean?’ asked the mother again.

‘Dirty creatures!’ repeated the daughter, and nothing else could she say.

Then the woman saw that something evil had befallen her, and turned in her rage to her stepdaughter.

‘You are at the bottom of this, I know,’ she cried; and as the father was out of the way she took a stick and beat the girl till she screamed with pain and went to bed sobbing.

If the poor girl’s life had been miserable before, it was ten times worse now, for the moment her father’s back was turned the others teased and tormented her from morning till night; and their fury was increased by the sight of her wreath, which the doves had placed again on her head.

Things went on like this for some weeks, when, one day, as the king’s son was riding through the forest, he heard some strange birds singing more sweetly than birds had ever sung before. He tied his horse to a tree, and followed where the sound led him, and, to his surprise, he saw before him a beautiful girl chopping wood, with a wreath of pink rose-buds, out of which the singing came. Standing in the shelter of a tree, he watched her a long while, and then, hat in hand, he went up and spoke to her.

‘Fair maiden, who are you, and who gave you that wreath of singing roses?’ asked he, for the birds were so tiny that till you looked closely you never saw them.

‘I live in a hut on the edge of the forest,’ she answered, blushing, for she had never spoken to a prince before. ‘As to the wreath, I know not how it came there, unless it may be the gift of some doves whom I fed when they were starving! The prince was delighted with this answer, which showed the goodness of the girl’s heart, and besides he had fallen in love with her beauty, and would not be content till she promised to return with him to the palace, and become his bride. The old king was naturally disappointed at his son’s choice of a wife, as he wished him to marry a neighbouring princess; but as from his birth the prince had always done exactly as he like, nothing was said and a splendid wedding feast was got ready.

The day after her marriage the bride sent a messenger, bearing handsome presents to her father, and telling him of the good fortune which had befallen her. As may be imagined, the stepmother and her daughter were so filled with envy that they grew quite ill, and had to take to their beds, and nobody would have been sorry it they had never got up again; but that did not happen. At length, however, they began to feel better, for the mother invented a plan by which she could be revenged on the girl who had never done her any harm.

Her plan was this. In the town where she had lived before she was married there was an old witch, who had more skill in magic that any other witch she knew. To this witch she would go and beg her to make her a mask with the face of her stepdaughter, and when she had the mask the rest would be easy. She told her daughter what she meant to do, and although the daughter could only say ‘dirty creatures,’ in answer, she nodded and smiled and looked well pleased.

Everything fell out exactly as the woman had hoped. By the aid of her magic mirror the witch beheld the new princess walking in her gardens in a dress of green silk, and in a few minutes had produced a mask so like her, that very few people could have told the difference. However, she counselled the woman that when her daughter first wore it—for that, of course, was what she intended her to do—she had better pretend that she had a toothache, and cover her head with a lace veil. The woman thanked her and paid her well, and returned to her hut, carrying the mask under her cloak.

In a few days she heard that a great hunt was planned, and the prince would leave the palace very early in the morning, so that his wife would be alone all day. This was a chance not to be missed, and taking her daughter with her she went up to the palace, where she had never been before. The princess was too happy in her new home to remember all that she had suffered in the old one, and she welcomed them both gladly, and gave them quantities of beautiful things to take back with them. At last she took them down to the shore to see a pleasure boat which her husband had had made for her; and here, the woman seizing her opportunity, stole softly behind the girl and pushed her off the rock on which she was standing, into the deep water, where she instantly sank to the bottom. Then she fastened the mask on her daughter, flung over her shoulders a velvet cloak, which the princess had let fall, and finally arranged a lace veil over her head.

‘Rest your cheek on your hand, as if you were in pain, when the prince returns,’ said the mother; ‘and be careful not to speak, whatever you do. I will go back to the witch and see if she cannot take off the spell laid on you by those horrible birds. Ah! why did I not think of it before!’

No sooner had the prince entered the palace than he hastened to the princess’s apartments, where he found her lying on the sofa apparently in great pain.

‘My dearest wife, what is the matter with you?’ he cried, kneeling down beside her, and trying to take her hand; but she snatched it away, and pointing to her cheek murmured something he could not catch.

‘What is it? tell me! Is the pain bad? When did it begin? Shall I send for your ladies to bath the place?’ asked the prince, pouring out these and a dozen other questions, to which the girl only shook her head.

‘But I can’t leave you like this,’ he continued, starting up, ‘I must summon all the court physicians to apply soothing balsams to the sore place! And as he spoke he sprang to his feet to go in search of them once came near her the trick would at once be discovered, that she forgot her mother’s counsel not to speak, and forgot even the spell that had been laid upon her, and catching hold of the prince’s tunic, she cried in tones of entreaty: ‘Dirty creatures!’

The young man stopped, not able to believe his ears, but supposed that pain had made the princess cross, as it sometimes does. However, he guessed somehow that she wised to be left alone, so he only said:

‘Well, I dare say a little sleep will do you good, if you can manage to get it, and that you will wake up better to-morrow.’

Now, that night happened to be very hot and airless, and the prince, after vainly trying to rest, at length got up and went to the window. Suddenly he beheld in the moonlight a form with a wreath of roses on her head rise out of the sea below him and step on to the sands, holding out her arms as she did so towards the palace.

‘That maiden is strangely like my wife,’ thought he; ‘I must see her closer! And he hastened down to the water. But when he got there, the princess, for she indeed it was, had disappeared completely, and he began to wonder if his eyes had deceived him.

The next morning he went to the false bride’s room, but her ladies told him she would neither speak nor get up, though she ate everything they set before her. The prince was sorely perplexed as to what could be the matter with her, for naturally he could not guess that she was expecting her mother to return every moment, and to remove the spell the doves had laid upon her, and meanwhile was afraid to speak lest she should betray herself. At length he made up his mind to summon all the court physicians; he did not tell her what he was going to do, lest it should make her worse, but he went himself and begged the four learned leeches

attached to the king's person to follow him to the princess's apartments. Unfortunately, as they entered, the princess was so enraged at the sight of them that she forgot all about the doves, and shrieked out: 'Dirty creatures! dirty creatures!' which so offended the physicians that they left the room at once, and nothing that the prince could say would prevail on them to remain. He then tried to persuade his wife to send them a message that she was sorry for her rudeness, but not a word would she say.

Late that evening, when he had performed all the tiresome duties which fall to the lot of every prince, the young man was leaning out of his window, refreshing himself with the cool breezes that blew off the sea. His thoughts went back to the scene of the morning, and he wondered if, after all, he had not made a great mistake in marrying a low-born wife, however beautiful she might be. How could he have imagined that the quiet, gentle girl who had been so charming a companion to him during the first days of their marriage, could have become in a day the rude, sulky woman, who could not control her temper even to benefit herself. One thing was clear, if she did not change her conduct very shortly he would have to send her away from court.

He was thinking these thoughts, when his eyes fell on the sea beneath him, and there, as before, was the figure that so closely resembled his wife, standing with her feet in the water, holding out her arms to him.

'Wait for me! Wait for me! Wait for me!' he cried; not even knowing he was speaking. But when he reached the shore there was nothing to be seen but the shadows cast by the moonlight.

A state ceremonial in a city some distance off caused the prince to ride away at daybreak, and he left without seeing his wife again.

'Perhaps she may have come to her senses by to-morrow,' said he to himself; 'and, anyhow, if I am going to send her back to her father, it might be better if we did not meet in the meantime! Then he put the matter from his mind, and kept his thoughts on the duty that lay before him.

It was nearly midnight before he returned to the palace, but, instead of entering, he went down to the shore and hid behind a rock. He had scarcely done so when the girl came out of the sea, and stretched out her arms towards his window. In an instant the prince had seized her hand, and though she made a frightened struggle to reach the water—for she in her turn had had a spell laid upon her—he held her fast.

‘You are my own wife, and I shall never let you go,’ he said. But the words were hardly out of his mouth when he found that it was a hare that he was holding by the paw. Then the hare changed into a fish, and the fish into a bird, and the bird into a slimy wriggling snake. This time the prince’s hand nearly opened of itself, but with a strong effort he kept his fingers shut, and drawing his sword cut off its head, when the spell was broken, and the girl stood before him as he had seen her first, the wreath upon her head and the birds singing for joy.

The very next morning the stepmother arrived at the palace with an ointment that the old witch had given her to place upon her daughter’s tongue, which would break the dove’s spell, if the rightful bride had really been drowned in the sea; if not, then it would be useless. The mother assured her that she had seen her stepdaughter sink, and that there was no fear that she would ever come up again; but, to make all quite safe, the old woman might bewitch the girl; and so she did. After that the wicked stepmother travelled all through the night to get to the palace as soon as possible, and made her way straight into her daughter’s room.

‘I have got it! I have got it!’ she cried triumphantly, and laid the ointment on her daughter’s tongue.

‘Now what do you say?’ she asked proudly.

‘Dirty creatures! dirty creatures!’ answered the daughter; and the mother wrung her hands and wept, as she knew that all her plans had failed.

At this moment the prince entered with his real wife. ‘You both deserved death,’ he said, ‘and if it were left to me, you should have it. But the princess has begged me to spare your lives, so you will be put into a ship and carried off to a desert island, where you will stay till you die.’

Then the ship was made ready and the wicked woman and her daughter were placed in it, and it sailed away, and no more was heard of them. But the prince and his wife lived together long and happily, and ruled their people well.

THE FOOLISH WEAVER

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[Adapted from Thorpe’s Yule-Tide Stories.]

Once a weaver, who was in want of work, took service with a certain farmer as a shepherd.

The farmer, knowing that the man was very slow-witted, gave him most careful instructions as to everything that he was to do.

Finally he said: ‘If a wolf or any wild animal attempts to hurt the flock you should pick up a big stone like this’ (suiting the action to the word) ‘and throw a few such at him, and he will be afraid and go away.’ The weaver said that he understood, and started with the flocks to the hillsides where they grazed all day.

By chance in the afternoon a leopard appeared, and the weaver instantly ran home as fast as he could to get the stones which the farmer had shown him, to throw at the creature. When he came back all the flock were scattered or killed, and when the farmer heard the tale he beat him soundly. ‘Were there no stones on the hillside that you should run back to get them, you senseless one?’ he cried; ‘you are not fit to herd sheep. To-day you shall stay at home and mind my old mother who is sick, perhaps you will be able to drive flies off her face, if you can’t drive beasts away from sheep!’

So, the next day, the weaver was left at home to take care of the farmer’s old sick mother. Now as she lay outside on a bed, it turned out that the flies became very troublesome, and the weaver looked round for something to drive them away with; and as he had been told to pick up the nearest stone to drive the beasts away from the flock, he thought he would this time show how cleverly he could obey orders. Accordingly he seized the nearest stone, which was a big, heavy one, and dashed it at the flies; but, unhappily, he slew the poor old woman also; and then, being afraid of the wrath of the farmer, he fled and was not seen again in that neighbourhood.

All that day and all the next night he walked, and at length he came to a village where a great many weavers lived together.

‘You are welcome,’ said they. ‘Eat and sleep, for to-morrow six of us start in search of fresh wool to weave, and we pray you to give us your company.’

‘Willingly,’ answered the weaver. So the next morning the seven weavers set out to go to the village where they could buy what they wanted. On the way they had to cross a ravine which lately had been full of water, but now was quite dry. The weavers, however, were accustomed to swim over this ravine; therefore, regardless of the fact that this time it was dry, they stripped, and, tying their clothes on their heads, they proceeded to swim across the dry sand and rocks that formed the bed of the ravine. Thus they got to the other side without further damage than bruised knees and elbows, and as soon as they were over, one of them began to count the party to make sure that all were safe there. He counted all except himself, and then cried out that somebody was missing! This set each of them counting; but each made the same mistake of counting all except himself, so that they became certain that one of their party was missing! They ran up and down the bank of the ravine wringing their hands in great distress and looking for signs of their lost comrade. There a farmer found them and asked what was the matter. ‘Alas!’ said one, ‘seven of us started from the other bank and one must have been drowned on the crossing, as we can only find six remaining!’ The farmer eyed them a minute, and then, picking up his stick, he dealt each a sounding blow, counting, as he did so, ‘One! two! three!’ and so on up to the seven. When the weavers found that there were seven of them they were overcome with gratitude to one whom they took for a magician as he could thus make seven out of an obvious six.

THE CLEVER CAT

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[From the Pushto.]

Once upon a time there lived an old man who dwelt with his son in a small hut on the edge of the plain. He was very old, and had worked very hard, and when at last he was struck down by illness he felt that he should never rise from his bed again.

So, one day, he bade his wife summon their son, when he came back from his journey to the nearest town, where he had been to buy bread.

‘Come hither, my son,’ said he; ‘I know myself well to be dying, and I have nothing to leave you but my falcon, my cat and my greyhound; but if you make good use of them you will never lack food. Be good to your mother, as you have been to me. And now farewell!’

Then he turned his face to the wall and died.

There was great mourning in the hut for many days, but at length the son rose up, and calling to his greyhound, his cat and his falcon, he left the house saying that he would bring back something for dinner. Wandering over the plain, he noticed a troop of gazelles, and pointed to his greyhound to give chase. The dog soon brought down a fine fat beast, and slinging it over his shoulders, the young man turned homewards. On the way, however, he passed a pond, and as he approached a cloud of birds flew into the air. Shaking his wrist, the falcon seated on it darted into the air, and swooped down upon the quarry he had marked, which fell dead to the ground. The young man picked it up, and put it in his pouch and then went towards home again.

Near the hut was a small barn in which he kept the produce of the little patch of corn, which grew close to the garden. Here a rat ran out almost under his feet, followed by another and another; but quick as thought the cat was upon them and not one escaped her.

When all the rats were killed, the young man left the barn. He took the path leading to the door of the hut, but stopped on feeling a hand laid on

his shoulder.

‘Young man,’ said the ogre (for such was the stranger), ‘you have been a good son, and you deserve the piece of luck which has befallen you this day. Come with me to that shining lake yonder, and fear nothing.’

Wondering a little at what might be going to happen to him, the youth did as the ogre bade him, and when they reached the shore of the lake, the ogre turned and said to him:

‘Step into the water and shut your eyes! You will find yourself sinking slowly to the bottom; but take courage, all will go well. Only bring up as much silver as you can carry, and we will divide it between us.’

So the young man stepped bravely into the lake, and felt himself sinking, sinking, till he reached firm ground at last. In front of him lay four heaps of silver, and in the midst of them a curious white shining stone, marked over with strange characters, such as he had never seen before. He picked it up in order to examine it more closely, and as he held it the stone spoke.

‘As long as you hold me, all your wishes will come true,’ it said. ‘But hide me in your turban, and then call to the ogre that you are ready to come up.’

In a few minutes the young man stood again by the shores of the lake.

‘Well, where is the silver?’ asked the ogre, who was awaiting him.

‘Ah, my father, how can I tell you! So bewildered was I, and so dazzled with the splendours of everything I saw, that I stood like a statue, unable to move. Then hearing steps approaching I got frightened, and called to you, as you know.’

‘You are no better than the rest,’ cried the ogre, and turned away in a rage.

When he was out of sight the young man took the stone from his turban and looked at it. ‘I want the finest camel that can be found, and the most splendid garments,’ said he.

‘Shut your eyes then,’ replied the stone. And he shut them; and when he opened them again the camel that he had wished for was standing before him, while the festal robes of a desert prince hung from his shoulders. Mounting the camel, he whistled the falcon to his wrist, and, followed by his greyhound and his cat, he started homewards.

His mother was sewing at her door when this magnificent stranger rode up, and, filled with surprise, she bowed low before him.

‘Don’t you know me, mother?’ he said with a laugh. And on hearing his voice the good woman nearly fell to the ground with astonishment.

‘How have you got that camel and those clothes?’ asked she. ‘Can a son of mine have committed murder in order to possess them?’

‘Do not be afraid; they are quite honestly come by,’ answered the youth. ‘I will explain all by-and-by; but now you must go to the palace and tell the king I wish to marry his daughter.’

At these words the mother thought her son had certainly gone mad, and stared blankly at him. The young man guessed what was in her heart, and replied with a smile:

‘Fear nothing. Promise all that he asks; it will be fulfilled somehow.’

So she went to the palace, where she found the king sitting in the Hall of Justice listening to the petitions of his people. The woman waited until all had been heard and the hall was empty, and then went up and knelt before the throne.

‘My son has sent me to ask for the hand of the princess,’ said she.

The king looked at her and thought that she was mad; but, instead of ordering his guards to turn her out, he answered gravely:

‘Before he can marry the princess he must build me a palace of ice, which can be warmed with fires, and wherein the rarest singing-birds can live!’

‘It shall be done, your Majesty,’ said she, and got up and left the hall.

Her son was anxiously awaiting her outside the palace gates, dressed in the clothes that he wore every day.

‘Well, what have I got to do?’ he asked impatiently, drawing his mother aside so that no one could overhear them.

‘Oh, something quite impossible; and I hope you will put the princess out of your head,’ she replied.

‘Well, but what is it?’ persisted he.

‘Nothing but to build a palace of ice wherein fires can burn that shall keep it so warm that the most delicate singing-birds can live in it!’

‘I thought it would be something much harder than that,’ exclaimed the young man. ‘I will see about it at once.’ And leaving his mother, he went into the country and took the stone from his turban.

‘I want a palace of ice that can be warmed with fires and filled with the rarest singing-birds!’

‘Shut your eyes, then,’ said the stone; and he shut them, and when he opened them again there was the palace, more beautiful than anything he could have imagined, the fires throwing a soft pink glow over the ice.

‘It is fit even for the princess,’ thought he to himself.

As soon as the king awoke next morning he ran to the window, and there across the plain he beheld the palace.

‘That young man must be a great wizard; he may be useful to me.’ And when the mother came again to tell him that his orders had been fulfilled he received her with great honour, and bade her tell her son that the wedding was fixed for the following day.

The princess was delighted with her new home, and with her husband also; and several days slipped happily by, spent in turning over all the beautiful things that the palace contained. But at length the young man grew tired of always staying inside walls, and he told his wife that the next day he must leave her for a few hours, and go out hunting. ‘You will not mind?’ he asked. And she answered as became a good wife:

‘Yes, of course I shall mind; but I will spend the day in planning out some new dresses; and then it will be so delightful when you come back, you know!’

So the husband went off to hunt, with the falcon on his wrist, and the greyhound and the cat behind him—for the palace was so warm that even the cat did not mind living in it.

No sooner had he gone, than the ogre who had been watching his chance for many days, knocked at the door of the palace.

‘I have just returned from a far country,’ he said, ‘and I have some of the largest and most brilliant stones in the world with me. The princess is known to love beautiful things, perhaps she might like to buy some?’

Now the princess had been wondering for many days what trimming she should put on her dresses, so that they should outshine the dresses of the other ladies at the court balls. Nothing that she thought of seemed good enough, so, when the message was brought that the ogre and his wares were below, she at once ordered that he should be brought to her chamber.

Oh! what beautiful stones he laid before her; what lovely rubies, and what rare pearls! No other lady would have jewels like those—of that the

princess was quite sure; but she cast down her eyes so that the ogre might not see how much she longed for them.

‘I fear they are too costly for me,’ she said carelessly; ‘and besides, I have hardly need of any more jewels just now.’

‘I have no particular wish to sell them myself,’ answered the ogre, with equal indifference. ‘But I have a necklace of shining stones which was left me by father, and one, the largest engraven with weird characters, is missing. I have heard that it is in your husband’s possession, and if you can get me that stone you shall have any of these jewels that you choose. But you will have to pretend that you want it for yourself; and, above all, do not mention me, for he sets great store by it, and would never part with it to a stranger! To-morrow I will return with some jewels yet finer than those I have with me to-day. So, madam, farewell!’

Left alone, the princess began to think of many things, but chiefly as to whether she would persuade her husband to give her the stone or not. At one moment she felt he had already bestowed so much upon her that it was a shame to ask for the only object he had kept back. No, it would be mean; she could not do it! But then, those diamonds, and those string of pearls! After all, they had only been married a week, and the pleasure of giving it to her ought to be far greater than the pleasure of keeping it for himself. And she was sure it would be!

Well, that evening, when the young man had supped off his favourite dishes which the princess took care to have specially prepared for him, she sat down close beside him, and began stroking his head. For some time she did not speak, but listened attentively to all the adventures that had befallen him that day.

‘But I was thinking of you all the time,’ said he at the end, ‘and wishing that I could bring you back something you would like. But, alas! what is there that you do not possess already?’

‘How good of you not to forget me when you are in the midst of such dangers and hardships,’ answered she. ‘Yes, it is true I have many beautiful things; but if you want to give me a present—and to-morrow is my birthday—there IS one thing that I wish for very much.’

‘And what is that? Of course you shall have it directly!’ he asked eagerly.

‘It is that bright stone which fell out of the folds of your turban a few days ago,’ she answered, playing with his finger; ‘the little stone with all those funny marks upon it. I never saw any stone like it before.’

The young man did not answer at first; then he said, slowly:

‘I have promised, and therefore I must perform. But will you swear never to part from it, and to keep it safely about you always? More I cannot tell you, but I beg you earnestly to take heed to this.’

The princess was a little startled by his manner, and began to be sorry that she had every listened to the ogre. But she did not like to draw back, and pretended to be immensely delighted at her new toy, and kissed and thanked her husband for it.

‘After all I needn’t give it to the ogre,’ thought she as she dropped off to sleep.

Unluckily the next morning the young man went hunting again, and the ogre, who was watching, knew this, and did not come till much later than before. At the moment that he knocked at the door of the palace the princess had tired of all her employments, and her attendants were at their wits’ end how to amuse her, when a tall negro dressed in scarlet came to announce that the ogre was below, and desired to know if the princess would speak to him.

‘Bring him hither at once!’ cried she, springing up from her cushions, and forgetting all her resolves of the previous night. In another moment she was bending with rapture over the glittering gems.

‘Have you got it?’ asked the ogre in a whisper, for the princess’s ladies were standing as near as they dared to catch a glimpse of the beautiful jewels.

‘Yes, here,’ she answered, slipping the stone from her sash and placing it among the rest. Then she raised her voice, and began to talk quickly of the prices of the chains and necklaces, and after some bargaining, to deceive the attendants, she declared that she liked one string of pearls better than all the rest, and that the ogre might take away the other things, which were not half as valuable as he supposed.

‘As you please, madam,’ said he, bowing himself out of the palace.

Soon after he had gone a curious thing happened. The princess carelessly touched the wall of her room, which was wont to reflect the warm red light of the fire on the hearth, and found her hand quite wet. She

turned round, and—was it her fancy? or did the fire burn more dimly than before? Hurriedly she passed into the picture gallery, where pools of water showed here and there on the floor, and a cold chill ran through her whole body. At that instant her frightened ladies came running down the stairs, crying:

‘Madam! madam! what has happened? The palace is disappearing under our eyes!’

‘My husband will be home very soon,’ answered the princess—who, though nearly as much frightened as her ladies, felt that she must set them a good example. ‘Wait till then, and he will tell us what to do.’

So they waited, seated on the highest chairs they could find, wrapped in their warmest garments, and with piles of cushions under their feet, while the poor birds flew with numbed wings hither and thither, till they were so lucky as to discover an open window in some forgotten corner. Through this they vanished, and were seen no more.

At last, when the princess and her ladies had been forced to leave the upper rooms, where the walls and floors had melted away, and to take refuge in the hall, the young man came home. He had ridden back along a winding road from which he did not see the palace till he was close upon it, and stood horrified at the spectacle before him. He knew in an instant that his wife must have betrayed his trust, but he would not reproach her, as she must be suffering enough already. Hurrying on he sprang over all that was left of the palace walls, and the princess gave a cry of relief at the sight of him.

‘Come quickly,’ he said, ‘or you will be frozen to death!’ And a dreary little procession set out for the king’s palace, the greyhound and the cat bringing up the rear.

At the gates he left them, though his wife besought him to allow her to enter.

‘You have betrayed me and ruined me,’ he said sternly; ‘I go to seek my fortune alone.’ And without another word he turned and left her.

With his falcon on his wrist, and his greyhound and cat behind him, the young man walked a long way, inquiring of everyone he met whether they had seen his enemy the ogre. But nobody had. Then he bade his falcon fly up into the sky—up, up, and up—and try if his sharp eyes could discover the old thief. The bird had to go so high that he did not return for some

hours; but he told his master that the ogre was lying asleep in a splendid palace in a far country on the shores of the sea. This was delightful news to the young man, who instantly bought some meat for the falcon, bidding him make a good meal.

‘To-morrow,’ said he, ‘you will fly to the palace where the ogre lies, and while he is asleep you will search all about him for a stone on which is engraved strange signs; this you will bring to me. In three days I shall expect you back here.’

‘Well, I must take the cat with me,’ answered the bird.

The sun had not yet risen before the falcon soared high into the air, the cat seated on his back, with his paws tightly clasping the bird’s neck.

‘You had better shut your eyes or you may get giddy,’ said the bird; and the cat, you had never before been off the ground except to climb a tree, did as she was bid.

All that day and all that night they flew, and in the morning they saw the ogre’s palace lying beneath them.

‘Dear me,’ said the cat, opening her eyes for the first time, ‘that looks to me very like a rat city down there, let us go down to it; they may be able to help us.’ So they alighted in some bushes in the heart of the rat city. The falcon remained where he was, but the cat lay down outside the principal gate, causing terrible excitement among the rats.

At length, seeing she did not move, one bolder than the rest put its head out of an upper window of the castle, and said, in a trembling voice:

‘Why have you come here? What do you want? If it is anything in our power, tell us, and we will do it.’

‘If you would have let me speak to you before, I would have told you that I come as a friend,’ replied the cat; ‘and I shall be greatly obliged if you would send four of the strongest and cunningest among you, to do me a service.’

‘Oh, we shall be delighted,’ answered the rat, much relieved. ‘But if you will inform me what it is you wish them to do I shall be better able to judge who is most fitted for the post.’

‘I thank you,’ said the cat. ‘Well, what they have to do is this: To-night they must burrow under the walls of the castle and go up to the room were an ogre lies asleep. Somewhere about him he has hidden a stone, on which

are engraved strange signs. When they have found it they must take it from him without his waking, and bring it to me.'

'Your orders shall be obeyed,' replied the rat. And he went out to give his instructions.

About midnight the cat, who was still sleeping before the gate, was awakened by some water flung at her by the head rat, who could not make up his mind to open the doors.

'Here is the stone you wanted,' said he, when the cat started up with a loud mew; 'if you will hold up your paws I will drop it down.' And so he did. 'And now farewell,' continued the rat; 'you have a long way to go, and will do well to start before daybreak.'

'Your counsel is good,' replied the cat, smiling to itself; and putting the stone in her mouth she went off to seek the falcon.

Now all this time neither the cat nor the falcon had had any food, and the falcon soon got tired carrying such a heavy burden. When night arrived he declared he could go no further, but would spend it on the banks of a river.

'And it is my turn to take care of the stone,' said he, 'or it will seem as if you had done everything and I nothing.'

'No, I got it, and I will keep it,' answered the cat, who was tired and cross; and they began a fine quarrel. But, unluckily, in the midst of it, the cat raised her voice, and the stone fell into the ear of a big fish which happened to be swimming by, and though both the cat and the falcon sprang into the water after it, they were too late.

Half drowned, and more than half choked, the two faithful servants scrambled back to land again. The falcon flew to a tree and spread his wings in the sun to dry, but the cat, after giving herself a good shake, began to scratch up the sandy banks and to throw the bits into the stream.

'What are you doing that for?' asked a little fish. 'Do you know that you are making the water quite muddy?'

'That doesn't matter at all to me,' answered the cat. 'I am going to fill up all the river, so that the fishes may die.'

'That is very unkind, as we have never done you any harm,' replied the fish. 'Why are you so angry with us?'

'Because one of you has got a stone of mine—a stone with strange signs upon it—which dropped into the water. If you will promise to get it

back for me, why, perhaps I will leave your river alone.’

‘I will certainly try,’ answered the fish in a great hurry; ‘but you must have a little patience, as it may not be an easy task.’ And in an instant his scales might be seen flashing quickly along.

The fish swam as fast as he could to the sea, which was not far distant, and calling together all his relations who lived in the neighbourhood, he told them of the terrible danger which threatened the dwellers in the river.

‘None of us has got it,’ said the fishes, shaking their heads; ‘but in the bay yonder there is a tunny who, although he is so old, always goes everywhere. He will be able to tell you about it, if anyone can.’ So the little fish swam off to the tunny, and again related his story.

‘Why I was up that river only a few hours ago!’ cried the tunny; ‘and as I was coming back something fell into my ear, and there it is still, for I went to sleep, when I got home and forgot all about it. Perhaps it may be what you want.’ And stretching up his tail he whisked out the stone.

‘Yes, I think that must be it,’ said the fish with joy. And taking the stone in his mouth he carried it to the place where the cat was waiting for him.

‘I am much obliged to you,’ said the cat, as the fish laid the stone on the sand, ‘and to reward you, I will let your river alone.’ And she mounted the falcon’s back, and they flew to their master.

Ah, how glad he was to see them again with the magic stone in their possession. In a moment he had wished for a palace, but this time it was of green marble; and then he wished for the princess and her ladies to occupy it. And there they lived for many years, and when the old king died the princess’s husband reigned in his stead.

THE STORY OF MANUS

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[Adapted from Contes Berberes.]

Far away over the sea of the West there reigned a king who had two sons; and the name of the one was Oireal, and the name of the other was Iarlaid. When the boys were still children, their father and mother died, and a great council was held, and a man was chosen from among them who would rule the kingdom till the boys were old enough to rule it themselves.

The years passed on, and by-and-by another council was held, and it was agreed that the king's sons were now of an age to take the power which rightly belonged to them. So the youths were bidden to appear before the council, and Oireal the elder was smaller and weaker than his brother.

'I like not to leave the deer on the hill and the fish in the rivers, and sit in judgment on my people,' said Oireal, when he had listened to the words of the chief of the council. And the chief waxed angry, and answered quickly:

'Not one clod of earth shall ever be yours if this day you do not take on yourself the vows that were taken by the king your father.'

Then spake Iarlaid, the younger, and he said: 'Let one half be yours, and the other give to me; then you will have fewer people to rule over.'

'Yes, I will do that,' answered Oireal.

After this, one half of the men of the land of Lochlann did homage to Oireal, and the other half to Iarlaid. And they governed their kingdoms as they would, and in a few years they became grown men with beards on their chins; and Iarlaid married the daughter of the king of Greece, and Oireal the daughter of the king of Orkney. The next year sons were born to Oireal and Iarlaid; and the son of Oireal was big and strong, but the son of Iarlaid was little and weak, and each had six foster brothers who went everywhere with the princes.

One day Manus, son of Oireal, and his cousin, the son of Iarlaid, called to their foster brothers, and bade them come and play a game at shinny in the great field near the school where they were taught all that princes and nobles should know. Long they played, and swiftly did the ball pass from one to another, when Manus drove the ball at his cousin, the son of Iarlaid. The boy, who was not used to be roughly handled, even in jest, cried out that he was sorely hurt, and went home with his foster brothers and told his tale to his mother. The wife of Iarlaid grew white and angry as she listened, and thrusting her son aside, sought the council hall where Iarlaid was sitting.

‘Manus has driven a ball at my son, and fain would have slain him,’ said she. ‘Let an end be put to him and his ill deeds.’

But Iarlaid answered:

‘Nay, I will not slay the son of my brother.’

‘And he shall not slay my son,’ said the queen. And calling to her chamberlain she ordered him to lead the prince to the four brown boundaries of the world, and to leave him there with a wise man, who would care for him, and let no harm befall him. And the wise man set the boy on the top of a hill where the sun always shone, and he could see every man, but no man could see him.

Then she summoned Manus to the castle, and for a whole year she kept him fast, and his own mother could not get speech of him. But in the end, when the wife of Oireal fell sick, Manus fled from the tower which was his prison, and stole back to his on home.

For a few years he stayed there in peace, and then the wife of Iarlaid his uncle sent for him.

‘It is time that you were married,’ she said, when she saw that Manus had grown tall and strong like unto Iarlaid. ‘Tall and strong you are, and comely of face. I know a bride that will suit you well, and that is the daughter of the mighty earl of Finghaidh, that does homage for his lands to me. I myself will go with a great following to his house, and you shall go with me.’

Thus it was done; and though the earl’s wife was eager to keep her daughter with her yet a while, she was fain to yield, as the wife of Iarlaid vowed that not a rood of land should the earl have, unless he did her bidding. But if he would give his daughter to Manus, she would bestow on

him the third part of her own kingdom, with much treasure beside. This she did, not from love to Manus, but because she wished to destroy him. So they were married, and rode back with the wife of Iarlaid to her own palace. And that night, while he was sleeping, there came a wise man, who was his father's friend, and awoke him saying: 'Danger lies very close to you, Manus, son of Oireal. You hold yourself favoured because you have as a bride the daughter of a mighty earl; but do you know what bride the wife of Iarlaid sought for her own son? It was no worldly wife she found for him, but the swift March wind, and never can you prevail against her.'

'Is it thus?' answered Manu. And at the first streak of dawn he went to the chamber where the queen lay in the midst of her maidens.

'I have come,' he said, 'for the third part of the kingdom, and for the treasure which you promised me.' But the wife of Iarlaid laughed as she heard him.

'Not a clod shall you have here,' spake she. 'You must go to the Old Bergen for that. Mayhap under its stones and rough mountains you may find a treasure!'

'Then give me your son's six foster brothers as well as my own,' answered he. And the queen gave them to him, and they set out for Old Bergen.

A year passed by, and found them still in that wild land, hunting the reindeer, and digging pits for the mountain sheep to fall into. For a time Manus and his companions lived merrily, but at length Manus grew weary of the strange country, and they all took ship for the land of Lochlann. The wind was fierce and cold, and long was the voyage; but, one spring day, they sailed into the harbour that lay beneath the castle of Iarlaid. The queen looked from her window and beheld him mounting the hill, with the twelve foster brothers behind him. Then she said to her husband: 'Manus has returned with his twelve foster brothers. Would that I could put an end to him and his murdering and his slaying.'

'That were a great pity,' answered Iarlaid. 'And it is not I that will do it.'

'If you will not do it I will,' said she. And she called the twelve foster brothers and made them vow fealty to herself. So Manus was left with no man, and sorrowful was he when he returned alone to Old Bergen. It was

late when his foot touched the shore, and took the path towards the forest. On his way there met him a man in a red tunic.

‘Is it you, Manus, come back again?’ asked he.

‘It is I,’ answered Manus; ‘alone have I returned from the land of Lochlann.’

The man eyed him silently for a moment, and then he said:

‘I dreamed that you were girt with a sword and became king of Lochlann.’ But Manus answered:

‘I have no sword and my bow is broken.’

‘I will give you a new sword if you will make me a promise,’ said the man once more.

‘To be sure I will make it, if ever I am king,’ answered Manus. ‘But speak, and tell me what promise I am to make.’

‘I was your grandfather’s armourer,’ replied the man, ‘and I wish to be your armourer also.’

‘That I will promise readily,’ said Manus; and followed the man into his house, which was at a little distance. But the house was not like other houses, for the walls of every room were hung so thick with arms that you could not see the boards.

‘Choose what you will,’ said the man; and Manus unhooked a sword and tried it across his knee, and it broke, and so did the next, and the next.

‘Leave off breaking the swords,’ cried the man, ‘and look at this old sword and helmet and tunic that I wore in the wars of your grandfather. Perhaps you may find them of stouter steel.’ And Manus bent the sword thrice across his knee but he could not break it. So he girded it to his side, and put on the old helmet. As he fastened the strap his eye fell on a cloth flapping outside the window.

‘What cloth is that?’ asked he.

‘It is a cloth that was woven by the Little People of the forest,’ said the man; ‘and when you are hungry it will give you food and drink, and if you meet a foe, he will not hurt you, but will stoop and kiss the back of your hand in token of submission. Take it, and use it well.’ Manus gladly wrapped the shawl round his arm, and was leaving the house, when he heard the rattling of a chain blown by the wind.

‘What chain is that?’ asked he.

‘The creature who has that chain round his neck, need not fear a hundred enemies,’ answered the armourer. And Manus wound it round him and passed on into the forest.

Suddenly there sprang out from the bushes two lions, and a lion cub with them. The fierce beasts bounded towards him, roaring loudly, and would fain have eaten him, but quickly Manus stooped and spread the cloth upon the ground. At that the lions stopped, and bowing their great heads, kissed the back of his wrist and went their ways. But the cub rolled itself up in the cloth; so Manus picked them both up, and carried them with him to Old Bergen.

Another year went by, and then he took the lion cub and set forth to the land of Lochlann. And the wife of Iarlaid came to meet him, and a brown dog, small but full of courage, came with her. When the dog beheld the lion cub he rushed towards him, thinking to eat him; but the cub caught the dog by the neck, and shook him, and he was dead. And the wife of Iarlaid mourned him sore, and her wrath was kindled, and many times she tried to slay Manus and his cub, but she could not. And at last they two went back to Old Bergen, and the twelve foster brothers went also.

‘Let them go,’ said the wife of Iarlaid, when she heard of it. ‘My brother the Red Gruagach will take the head off Manus as well in Old Bergen as elsewhere.’

Now these words were carried by a messenger to the wife of Oireal, and she made haste and sent a ship to Old Bergen to bear away her son before the Red Gruagach should take the head off him. And in the ship was a pilot. But the wife of Iarlaid made a thick fog to cover the face of the sea, and the rowers could not row, lest they should drive the ship on to a rock. And when night came, the lion cub, whose eyes were bright and keen, stole up to Manus, and Manus got on his back, and the lion cub sprang ashore and bade Manus rest on the rock and wait for him. So Manus slept, and by-and-by a voice sounded in his ears, saying: ‘Arise!’ And he saw a ship in the water beneath him, and in the ship sat the lion cup in the shape of the pilot.

Then they sailed away through the fog, and none saw them; and they reached the land of Lochlann, and the lion cub with the chain round his neck sprang from the ship and Manus followed after. And the lion cub

killed all the men that guarded the castle, and Iarlaid and his wife also, so that, in the end, Manus son of Oireal was crowned king of Lochlann.

PINKEL THE THIEF

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[Shortened from West Highland Tales.]

Long, long ago there lived a widow who had three sons. The two eldest were grown up, and though they were known to be idle fellows, some of the neighbours had given them work to do on account of the respect in which their mother was held. But at the time this story begins they had both been so careless and idle that their masters declared they would keep them no longer.

So home they went to their mother and youngest brother, of whom they thought little, because he made himself useful about the house, and looked after the hens, and milked the cow. ‘Pinkel,’ they called him in scorn, and by-and-by ‘Pinkel’ became his name throughout the village.

The two young men thought it was much nicer to live at home and be idle than to be obliged to do a quantity of disagreeable things they did not like, and they would have stayed by the fire till the end of their lives had not the widow lost patience with them and said that since they would not look for work at home they must seek it elsewhere, for she would not have them under her roof any longer. But she repented bitterly of her words when Pinkel told her that he too was old enough to go out into the world, and that when he had made a fortune he would send for his mother to keep house for him.

The widow wept many tears at parting from her youngest son, but as she saw that his heart was set upon going with his brothers, she did not try to keep him. So the young men started off one morning in high spirits, never doubting that work such as they might be willing to do would be had for the asking, as soon as their little store of money was spent.

But a very few days of wandering opened their eyes. Nobody seemed to want them, or, if they did, the young men declared that they were not able to undertake all that the farmers or millers or woodcutters required of them. The youngest brother, who was wiser, would gladly have done some

of the work that the others refused, but he was small and slight, and no one thought of offering him any. Therefore they went from one place to another, living only on the fruit and nuts they could find in the woods, and getting hungrier every day.

One night, after they had been walking for many hours and were very tired, they came to a large lake with an island in the middle of it. From the island streamed a strong light, by which they could see everything almost as clearly as if the sun had been shining, and they perceived that, lying half hidden in the rushes, was a boat.

‘Let us take it and row over to the island, where there must be a house,’ said the eldest brother; ‘and perhaps they will give us food and shelter.’ And they all got in and rowed across in the direction of the light. As they drew near the island they saw that it came from a golden lantern hanging over the door of a hut, while sweet tinkling music proceeded from some bells attached to the golden horns of a goat which was feeding near the cottage. The young men’s hearts rejoiced as they thought that at last they would be able to rest their weary limbs, and they entered the hut, but were amazed to see an ugly old woman inside, wrapped in a cloak of gold which lighted up the whole house. They looked at each other uneasily as she came forward with her daughter, as they knew by the cloak that this was a famous witch.

‘What do you want?’ asked she, at the same time signing to her daughter to stir the large pot on the fire.

‘We are tired and hungry, and would fain have shelter for the night,’ answered the eldest brother.

‘You cannot get it here,’ said the witch, ‘but you will find both food and shelter in the palace on the other side of the lake. Take your boat and go; but leave this boy with me—I can find work for him, though something tells me he is quick and cunning, and will do me ill.’

‘What harm can a poor boy like me do a great Troll like you?’ answered Pinkel. ‘Let me go, I pray you, with my brothers. I will promise never to hurt you.’ And at last the witch let him go, and he followed his brothers to the boat.

The way was further than they thought, and it was morning before they reached the palace.

Now, at last, their luck seemed to have turned, for while the two eldest were given places in the king's stables, Pinkel was taken as page to the little prince. He was a clever and amusing boy, who saw everything that passed under his eyes, and the king noticed this, and often employed him in his own service, which made his brothers very jealous.

Things went on this way for some time, and Pinkel every day rose in the royal favour. At length the envy of his brothers became so great that they could bear it no longer, and consulted together how best they might ruin his credit with the king. They did not wish to kill him—though, perhaps, they would not have been sorry if they had heard he was dead—but merely wished to remind him that he was after all only a child, not half so old and wise as they.

Their opportunity soon came. It happened to be the king's custom to visit his stables once a week, so that he might see that his horses were being properly cared for. The next time he entered the stables the two brothers managed to be in the way, and when the king praised the beautiful satin skins of the horses under their charge, and remarked how different was their condition when his grooms had first come across the lake, the young men at once began to speak of the wonderful light which sprang from the lantern over the hut. The king, who had a passion for collection all the rarest things he could find, fell into the trap directly, and inquired where he could get this marvellous lantern.

'Send Pinkel for it, Sire,' said they. 'It belongs to an old witch, who no doubt came by it in some evil way. But Pinkel has a smooth tongue, and he can get the better of any woman, old or young.'

'Then bid him go this very night,' cried the king; 'and if he brings me the lantern I will make him one of the chief men about my person.'

Pinkel was much pleased at the thought of his adventure, and without more ado he borrowed a little boat which lay moored to the shore, and rowed over to the island at once. It was late by the time he arrived, and almost dark, but he knew by the savoury smell that reached him that the witch was cooking her supper. So he climbed softly on to the roof, and, peering, watched till the old woman's back was turned, when he quickly drew a handful of salt from his pocket and threw it into the pot. Scarcely had he done this when the witch called her daughter and bade her lift the pot off the fire and put the stew into a dish, as it had been cooking quite

long enough and she was hungry. But no sooner had she tasted it than she put her spoon down, and declared that her daughter must have been meddling with it, for it was impossible to eat anything that was all made of salt.

‘Go down to the spring in the valley, and get some fresh water, that I may prepare a fresh supper,’ cried she, ‘for I feel half-starved.’

‘But, mother,’ answered the girl, ‘how can I find the well in this darkness? For you know that the lantern’s rays shed no light down there.’

‘Well, then, take the lantern with you,’ answered the witch, ‘for supper I must have, and there is no water that is nearer.’

So the girl took her pail in one hand and the golden lantern in the other, and hastened away to the well, followed by Pinkel, who took care to keep out of the way of the rays. When at last she stooped to fill her pail at the well Pinkel pushed her into it, and snatching up the lantern hurried back to his boat and rowed off from the shore.

He was already a long distance from the island when the witch, who wondered what had become of her daughter, went to the door to look for her. Close around the hut was thick darkness, but what was that bobbing light that streamed across the water? The witch’s heart sank as all at once it flashed upon her what had happened.

‘Is that you, Pinkel?’ cried she; and the youth answered:

‘Yes, dear mother, it is I!’

‘And are you not a knave for robbing me?’ said she.

‘Truly, dear mother, I am,’ replied Pinkel, rowing faster than ever, for he was half afraid that the witch might come after him. But she had no power on the water, and turned angrily into the hut, muttering to herself all the while:

‘Take care! take care! A second time you will not escape so easily!’

The sun had not yet risen when Pinkel returned to the palace, and, entering the king’s chamber, he held up the lantern so that its rays might fall upon the bed. In an instant the king awoke, and seeing the golden lantern shedding its light upon him, he sprang up, and embraced Pinkel with joy.

‘O cunning one,’ cried he, ‘what treasure hast thou brought me!’ And calling for his attendants he ordered that rooms next his own should be

prepared for Pinkel, and that the youth might enter his presence at any hour. And besides this, he was to have a seat on the council.

It may easily be guessed that all this made the brothers more envious than they were before; and they cast about in their minds afresh how best they might destroy him. At length they remembered the goat with golden horns and the bells, and they rejoiced; ‘For,’ said they, ‘THIS time the old woman will be on the watch, and let him be as clever as he likes, the bells on the horns are sure to warn her.’ So when, as before, the king came down to the stables and praised the cleverness of their brother, the young men told him of that other marvel possessed by the witch, the goat with the golden horns.

From this moment the king never closed his eyes at night for longing after this wonderful creature. He understood something of the danger that there might be in trying to steal it, now that the witch’s suspicions were aroused, and he spent hours in making plans for outwitting her. But somehow he never could think of anything that would do, and at last, as the brothers had foreseen, he sent for Pinkel.

‘I hear,’ he said, ‘that the old witch on the island has a goat with golden horns from which hang bells that tinkle the sweetest music. That goat I must have! But, tell me, how am I to get it? I would give the third part of my kingdom to anyone who would bring it to me.’

‘I will fetch it myself,’ answered Pinkel.

This time it was easier for Pinkel to approach the island unseen, as there was no golden lantern to thrown its beams over the water. But, on the other hand, the goat slept inside the hut, and would therefore have to be taken from under the very eyes of the old woman. How was he to do it? All the way across the lake he thought and thought, till at length a plan came into his head which seemed as if it might do, though he knew it would be very difficult to carry out.

The first thing he did when he reached the shore was to look about for a piece of wood, and when he had found it he hid himself close to the hut, till it grew quite dark and near the hour when the witch and her daughter went to bed. Then he crept up and fixed the wood under the door, which opened outwards, in such a manner that the more you tried to shut it the more firmly it stuck. And this was what happened when the girl went as usual to bolt the door and make all fast for the night.

‘What are you doing?’ asked the witch, as her daughter kept tugging at the handle.

‘There is something the matter with the door; it won’t shut,’ answered she.

‘Well, leave it alone; there is nobody to hurt us,’ said the witch, who was very sleepy; and the girl did as she was bid, and went to bed. Very soon they both might have been heard snoring, and Pinkel knew that his time was come. Slipping off his shoes he stole into the hut on tiptoe, and taking from his pocket some food of which the goat was particularly fond, he laid it under his nose. Then, while the animal was eating it, he stuffed each golden bell with wool which he had also brought with him, stopping every minute to listen, lest the witch should awaken, and he should find himself changed into some dreadful bird or beast. But the snoring still continued, and he went on with his work as quickly as he could. When the last bell was done he drew another handful of food out of his pocket, and held it out to the goat, which instantly rose to its feet and followed Pinkel, who backed slowly to the door, and directly he got outside he seized the goat in his arms and ran down to the place where he had moored his boat.

As soon as he had reached the middle of the lake, Pinkel took the wool out of the bells, which began to tinkle loudly. Their sound awoke the witch, who cried out as before:

‘Is that you, Pinkel?’

‘Yes, dear mother, it is I,’ said Pinkel.

‘Have you stolen my golden goat?’ asked she.

‘Yes, dear mother, I have,’ answered Pinkel.

‘Are you not a knave, Pinkel?’

‘Yes, dear mother, I am,’ he replied. And the old witch shouted in a rage:

‘Ah! beware how you come hither again, for next time you shall not escape me!’

But Pinkel laughed and rowed on.

The king was so delighted with the goat that he always kept it by his side, night and day; and, as he had promised, Pinkel was made ruler over the third part of the kingdom. As may be supposed, the brothers were more furious than ever, and grew quite thin with rage.

‘How can we get rid of him?’ said one to the other. And at length they remembered the golden cloak.

‘He will need to be clever if he is to steal that!’ they cried, with a chuckle. And when next the king came to see his horses they began to speak of Pinkel and his marvellous cunning, and how he had contrived to steal the lantern and the goat, which nobody else would have been able to do.

‘But as he was there, it is a pity he could not have brought away the golden cloak,’ added they.

‘The golden cloak! what is that?’ asked the king. And the young men described its beauties in such glowing words that the king declared he should never know a day’s happiness till he had wrapped the cloak round his own shoulders.

‘And,’ added he, ‘the man who brings it to me shall wed my daughter, and shall inherit my throne.’

‘None can get it save Pinkel,’ said they; for they did not imagine that the witch, after two warnings, could allow their brother to escape a third time. So Pinkel was sent for, and with a glad heart he set out.

He passed many hours inventing first one plan and then another, till he had a scheme ready which he thought might prove successful.

Thrusting a large bag inside his coat, he pushed off from the shore, taking care this time to reach the island in daylight. Having made his boat fast to a tree, he walked up to the hut, hanging his head, and putting on a face that was both sorrowful and ashamed.

‘Is that you, Pinkel?’ asked the witch when she saw him, her eyes gleaming savagely.

‘Yes, dear mother, it is I,’ answered Pinkel.

‘So you have dared, after all you have done, to put yourself in my power!’ cried she. ‘Well, you sha’n’t escape me THIS time!’ And she took down a large knife and began to sharpen it.’

‘Oh! dear mother, spare me!’ shrieked Pinkel, falling on his knees, and looking wildly about him.

‘Spare you, indeed, you thief! Where are my lantern and my goat? No! not! there is only one fate for robbers!’ And she brandished the knife in the air so that it glittered in the firelight.

‘Then, if I must die,’ said Pinkel, who, by this time, was getting really rather frightened, ‘let me at least choose the manner of my death. I am very hungry, for I have had nothing to eat all day. Put some poison, if you like, into the porridge, but at least let me have a good meal before I die.’

‘That is not a bad idea,’ answered the woman; ‘as long as you do die, it is all one to me.’ And ladling out a large bowl of porridge, she stirred some poisonous herbs into it, and set about work that had to be done. Then Pinkel hastily poured all the contents of the bowl into his bag, and make a great noise with his spoon, as if he was scraping up the last morsel.

‘Poisoned or not, the porridge is excellent. I have eaten it, every scrap; do give me some more,’ said Pinkel, turning towards her.

‘Well, you have a fine appetite, young man,’ answered the witch; ‘however, it is the last time you will ever eat it, so I will give you another bowlful.’ And rubbing in the poisonous herbs, she poured him out half of what remained, and then went to the window to call her cat.

In an instant Pinkel again emptied the porridge into the bag, and the next minute he rolled on the floor, twisting himself about as if in agony, uttering loud groans the while. Suddenly he grew silent and lay still.

‘Ah! I thought a second dose of that poison would be too much for you,’ said the witch looking at him. ‘I warned you what would happen if you came back. I wish that all thieves were as dead as you! But why does not my lazy girl bring the wood I sent her for, it will soon be too dark for her to find her way? I suppose I must go and search for her. What a trouble girls are!’ And she went to the door to watch if there were any signs of her daughter. But nothing could be seen of her, and heavy rain was falling.

‘It is no night for my cloak,’ she muttered; ‘it would be covered with mud by the time I got back.’ So she took it off her shoulders and hung it carefully up in a cupboard in the room. After that she put on her clogs and started to seek her daughter. Directly the last sound of the clogs had ceased, Pinkel jumped up and took down the cloak, and rowed off as fast as he could.

He had not gone far when a puff of wind unfolded the cloak, and its brightness shed gleams across the water. The witch, who was just entering the forest, turned round at that moment and saw the golden rays. She forgot all about her daughter, and ran down to the shore, screaming with rage at being outwitted a third time.

‘Is that you, Pinkel?’ cried she.

‘Yes, dear mother, it is I.’

‘Have you taken my gold cloak?’

‘Yes, dear mother, I have.’

‘Are you not a great knave?’

‘Yes, truly dear mother, I am.’

And so indeed he was!

But, all the same, he carried the cloak to the king’s palace, and in return he received the hand of the king’s daughter in marriage. People said that it was the bride who ought to have worn the cloak at her wedding feast; but the king was so pleased with it that he would not part from it; and to the end of his life was never seen without it. After his death, Pinkel became king; and let up hope that he gave up his bad and thievish ways, and ruled his subjects well. As for his brothers, he did not punish them, but left them in the stables, where they grumbled all day long.

THE ADVENTURES OF A JACKAL

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[Thorpe’s Yule-Tide Stories.]

In a country which is full of wild beasts of all sorts there once lived a jackal and a hedgehog, and, unlike though they were, the two animals made great friends, and were often seen in each other’s company.

One afternoon they were walking along a road together, when the jackal, who was the taller of the two, exclaimed:

‘Oh! there is a barn full of corn; let us go and eat some.’

‘Yes, do let us!’ answered the hedgehog. So they went to the barn, and ate till they could eat no more. Then the jackal put on his shoes, which he had taken off so as to make no noise, and they returned to the high road.

After they had gone some way they met a panther, who stopped, and bowing politely, said:

‘Excuse my speaking to you, but I cannot help admiring those shoes of yours. Do you mind telling me who made them?’

‘Yes, I think they are rather nice,’ answered the jackal; ‘I made them myself, though.’

‘Could you make me a pair like them?’ asked the panther eagerly.

‘I would do my best, of course,’ replied the jackal; ‘but you must kill me a cow, and when we have eaten the flesh I will take the skin and make your shoes out of it.’

So the panther prowled about until he saw a fine cow grazing apart from the rest of the herd. He killed it instantly, and then gave a cry to the jackal and hedgehog to come to the place where he was. They soon skinned the dead beasts, and spread its skin out to dry, after which they had a grand feast before they curled themselves up for the night, and slept soundly.

Next morning the jackal got up early and set to work upon the shoes, while the panther sat by and looked on with delight. At last they were finished, and the jackal arose and stretched himself.

‘Now go and lay them in the sun out there,’ said he; ‘in a couple of hours they will be ready to put on; but do not attempt to wear them before, or you will feel them most uncomfortable. But I see the sun is high in the heavens, and we must be continuing our journey.’

The panther, who always believed what everybody told him, did exactly as he was bid, and in two hours’ time began to fasten on the shoes. They certainly set off his paws wonderfully, and he stretched out his forepaws and looked at them with pride. But when he tried to walk—ah! that was another story! They were so stiff and hard that he nearly shrieked every step he took, and at last he sank down where he was, and actually began to cry.

After some time some little partridges who were hopping about heard the poor panther’s groans, and went up to see what was the matter. He had never tried to make his dinner off them, and they had always been quite friendly.

‘You seem in pain,’ said one of them, fluttering close to him, ‘can we help you?’

‘Oh, it is the jackal! He made me these shoes; they are so hard and tight that they hurt my feet, and I cannot manage to kick them off.’

‘Lie still, and we will soften them,’ answered the kind little partridge. And calling to his brothers, they all flew to the nearest spring, and carried water in their beaks, which they poured over the shoes. This they did till the hard leather grew soft, and the panther was able to slip his feet out of them.

‘Oh, thank you, thank you,’ he cried, skipping round with joy. ‘I feel a different creature. Now I will go after the jackal and pay him my debts.’ And he bounded away into the forest.

But the jackal had been very cunning, and had trotted backwards and forwards and in and out, so that it was very difficult to know which track he had really followed. At length, however, the panther caught sight of his enemy, at the same moment that the jackal had caught sight of him. The panther gave a loud roar, and sprang forward, but the jackal was too quick for him and plunged into a dense thicket, where the panther could not follow.

Disgusted with his failure, but more angry than ever, the panther lay down for a while to consider what he should do next, and as he was

thinking, an old man came by.

‘Oh! father, tell me how I can repay the jackal for the way he has served me!’ And without more ado he told his story.

‘If you take my advice,’ answered the old man, ‘you will kill a cow, and invite all the jackals in the forest to the feast. Watch them carefully while they are eating, and you will see that most of them keep their eyes on their food. But if one of them glances at you, you will know that is the traitor.’

The panther, whose manners were always good, thanked the old man, and followed his counsel. The cow was killed, and the partridges flew about with invitations to the jackals, who gathered in large numbers to the feast. The wicked jackal came amongst them; but as the panther had only seen him once he could not distinguish him from the rest. However, they all took their places on wooden seats placed round the dead cow, which was laid across the boughs of a fallen tree, and began their dinner, each jackal fixing his eyes greedily on the piece of meat before him. Only one of them seemed uneasy, and every now and then glanced in the direction of his host. This the panther noticed, and suddenly made a bound at the culprit and seized his tail; but again the jackal was too quick for him, and catching up a knife he cut off his tail and darted into the forest, followed by all the rest of the party. And before the panther had recovered from his surprise he found himself alone.

‘What am I to do now?’ he asked the old man, who soon came back to see how things had turned out.

‘It is very unfortunate, certainly,’ answered he; ‘but I think I know where you can find him. There is a melon garden about two miles from here, and as jackals are very fond of melons they are nearly sure to have gone there to feed. If you see a tailless jackal you will know that he is the one you want.’ So the panther thanked him and went his way.

Now the jackal had guessed what advice the old man would give his enemy, and so, while his friends were greedily eating the ripest melons in the sunniest corner of the garden, he stole behind them and tied their tails together. He had only just finished when his ears caught the sound of breaking branches; and he cried: ‘Quick! quick! here comes the master of the garden!’ And the jackals sprang up and ran away in all directions,

leaving their tails behind them. And how was the panther to know which was his enemy?

‘They none of them had any tails,’ he said sadly to the old man, ‘and I am tired of hunting them. I shall leave them alone and go and catch something for supper.’

Of course the hedgehog had not been able to take part in any of these adventures; but as soon as all danger was over, the jackal went to look for his friend, whom he was lucky enough to find at home.

‘Ah, there you are,’ he said gaily. ‘I have lost my tail since I saw you last. And other people have lost theirs too; but that is no matter! I am hungry, so come with me to the shepherd who is sitting over there, and we will ask him to sell us one of his sheep.’

‘Yes, that is a good plan,’ answered the hedgehog. And he walked as fast as his little legs would go to keep up with the jackal. When they reached the shepherd the jackal pulled out his purse from under his foreleg, and made his bargain.

‘Only wait till to-morrow,’ said the shepherd, ‘and I will give you the biggest sheep you ever saw. But he always feeds at some distance from the rest of the flock, and it would take me a long time to catch him.’

‘Well, it is very tiresome, but I suppose I must wait,’ replied the jackal. And he and the hedgehog looked about for a nice dry cave in which to make themselves comfortable for the night. But, after they had gone, the shepherd killed one of his sheep, and stripped off his skin, which he sewed tightly round a greyhound he had with him, and put a cord round its neck. Then he lay down and went to sleep.

Very, very early, before the sun was properly up, the jackal and the hedgehog were pulling at the shepherd’s cloak.

‘Wake up,’ they said, ‘and give us that sheep. We have had nothing to eat all night, and are very hungry.’

The shepherd yawned and rubbed his eyes. ‘He is tied up to that tree; go and take him.’ So they went to the tree and unfastened the cord, and turned to go back to the cave where they had slept, dragging the greyhound after them. When they reached the cave the jackal said to the hedgehog.

‘Before I kill him let me see whether he is fat or thin.’ And he stood a little way back, so that he might the better examine the animal. After

looking at him, with his head on one side, for a minute or two, he nodded gravely.

‘He is quite fat enough; he is a good sheep.’

But the hedgehog, who sometimes showed more cunning than anyone would have guessed, answered:

‘My friend, you are talking nonsense. The wool is indeed a sheep’s wool, but the paws of my uncle the greyhound peep out from underneath.’

‘He is a sheep,’ repeated the jackal, who did not like to think anyone cleverer than himself.

‘Hold the cord while I look at him,’ answered the hedgehog.

Very unwillingly the jackal held the rope, while the hedgehog walked slowly round the greyhound till he reached the jackal again. He knew quite well by the paws and tail that it was a greyhound and not a sheep, that the shepherd had sold them; and as he could not tell what turn affairs might take, he resolved to get out of the way.

‘Oh! yes, you are right,’ he said to the jackal; ‘but I never can eat till I have first drunk. I will just go and quench my thirst from that spring at the edge of the wood, and then I shall be ready for breakfast.’

‘Don’t be long, then,’ called the jackal, as the hedgehog hurried off at his best pace. And he lay down under a rock to wait for him.

More than an hour passed by and the hedgehog had had plenty of time to go to the spring and back, and still there was no sign of him. And this was very natural, as he had hidden himself in some long grass under a tree!

At length the jackal guessed that for some reason his friend had run away, and determined to wait for his breakfast no longer. So he went up to the place where the greyhound had been tethered and untied the rope. But just as he was about to spring on his back and give him a deadly bite, the jackal heard a low growl, which never proceeded from the throat of any sheep. Like a flash of lightning the jackal threw down the cord and was flying across the plain; but though his legs were long, the greyhound’s legs were longer still, and he soon came up with his prey. The jackal turned to fight, but he was no match for the greyhound, and in a few minutes he was lying dead on the ground, while the greyhound was trotting peacefully back to the shepherd.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE JACKAL'S ELDEST SON

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[Nouveaux Contes Berberes, par Rene Basset.]

Now, though the jackal was dead, he had left two sons behind him, every whit as cunning and tricky as their father. The elder of the two was a fine handsome creature, who had a pleasant manner and made many friends. The animal he saw most of was a hyena; and one day, when they were taking a walk together, they picked up a beautiful green cloak, which had evidently been dropped by some one riding across the plain on a camel. Of course each wanted to have it, and they almost quarrelled over the matter; but at length it was settled that the hyena should wear the cloak by day and the jackal by night. After a little while, however, the jackal became discontented with this arrangement, declaring that none of his friends, who were quite different from those of the hyena, could see the splendour of the mantle, and that it was only fair that he should sometimes be allowed to wear it by day. To this the hyena would by no means consent, and they were on the eve of a quarrel when the hyena proposed that they should ask the lion to judge between them. The jackal agreed to this, and the hyena wrapped the cloak about him, and they both trotted off to the lion's den.

The jackal, who was fond of talking, at once told the story; and when it was finished the lion turned to the hyena and asked if it was true.

'Quite true, your majesty,' answered the hyena.

'Then lay the cloak on the ground at my feet,' said the lion, 'and I will give my judgment.' So the mantle was spread upon the red earth, the hyena and the jackal standing on each side of it.

There was silence for a few moments, and then the lion sat up, looking very great and wise.

'My judgment is that the garment shall belong wholly to whoever first rings the bell of the nearest mosque at dawn to-morrow. Now go; for much business awaits me!'

All that night the hyena sat up, fearing lest the jackal should reach the bell before him, for the mosque was close at hand. With the first streak of dawn he bounded away to the bell, just as the jackal, who had slept soundly all night, was rising to his feet.

‘Good luck to you,’ cried the jackal. And throwing the cloak over his back he darted away across the plain, and was seen no more by his friend the hyena.

After running several miles the jackal thought he was safe from pursuit, and seeing a lion and another hyena talking together, he strolled up to join them.

‘Good morning,’ he said; ‘may I ask what is the matter? You seem very serious about something.’

‘Pray sit down,’ answered the lion. ‘We were wondering in which direction we should go to find the best dinner. The hyena wishes to go to the forest, and I to the mountains. What do you say?’

‘Well, as I was sauntering over the plain, just now, I noticed a flock of sheep grazing, and some of them had wandered into a little valley quite out of sight of the shepherd. If you keep among the rocks you will never be observed. But perhaps you will allow me to go with you and show you the way?’

‘You are really very kind,’ answered the lion. And they crept steadily along till at length they reached the mouth of the valley where a ram, a sheep and a lamb were feeding on the rich grass, unconscious of their danger.

‘How shall we divide them?’ asked the lion in a whisper to the hyena.

‘Oh, it is easily done,’ replied the hyena. ‘The lamb for me, the sheep for the jackal, and the ram for the lion.’

‘So I am to have that lean creature, which is nothing but horns, am I?’ cried the lion in a rage. ‘I will teach you to divide things in that manner!’ And he gave the hyena two great blows, which stretched him dead in a moment. Then he turned to the jackal and said: ‘How would you divide them?’

‘Quite differently from the hyena,’ replied the jackal. ‘You will breakfast off the lamb, you will dine off the sheep, and you will sup off the ram.’

‘Dear me, how clever you are! Who taught you such wisdom?’ exclaimed the lion, looking at him admiringly.

‘The fate of the hyena,’ answered the jackal, laughing, and running off at his best speed; for he saw two men armed with spears coming close behind the lion!

The jackal continued to run till at last he could run no longer. He flung himself under a tree panting for breath, when he heard a rustle amongst the grass, and his father’s old friend the hedgehog appeared before him.

‘Oh, is it you?’ asked the little creature; ‘how strange that we should meet so far from home!’

‘I have just had a narrow escape of my life,’ gasped the jackal, ‘and I need some sleep. After that we must think of something to do to amuse ourselves.’ And he lay down again and slept soundly for a couple of hours.

‘Now I am ready,’ said he; ‘have you anything to propose?’

‘In a valley beyond those trees,’ answered the hedgehog, ‘there is a small farmhouse where the best butter in the world is made. I know their ways, and in an hour’s time the farmer’s wife will be off to milk the cows, which she keeps at some distance. We could easily get in at the window of the shed where she keeps the butter, and I will watch, lest some one should come unexpectedly, while you have a good meal. Then you shall watch, and I will eat.’

‘That sounds a good plan,’ replied the jackal; and they set off together.

But when they reached the farmhouse the jackal said to the hedgehog: ‘Go in and fetch the pots of butter and I will hide them in a safe place.’

‘Oh no,’ cried the hedgehog, ‘I really couldn’t. They would find out directly! And, besides, it is so different just eating a little now and then.’

‘Do as I bid you at once,’ said the jackal, looking at the hedgehog so sternly that the little fellow dared say no more, and soon rolled the jars to the window where the jackal lifted them out one by one.

When they were all in a row before him he gave a sudden start.

‘Run for your life,’ he whispered to his companion; ‘I see the woman coming over the hill!’ And the hedgehog, his heart beating, set off as fast as he could. The jackal remained where he was, shaking with laughter, for the woman was not in sight at all, and he had only sent the hedgehog away because he did not want him to know where the jars of butter were buried. But every day he stole out to their hiding-place and had a delicious feast.

At length, one morning, the hedgehog suddenly said:

‘You never told me what you did with those jars?’

‘Oh, I hid them safely till the farm people should have forgotten all about them,’ replied the jackal. ‘But as they are still searching for them we must wait a little longer, and then I’ll bring them home, and we will share them between us.’

So the hedgehog waited and waited; but every time he asked if there was no chance of getting jars of butter the jackal put him off with some excuse. After a while the hedgehog became suspicious, and said:

‘I should like to know where you have hidden them. To-night, when it is quite dark, you shall show me the place.’

‘I really can’t tell you,’ answered the jackal. ‘You talk so much that you would be sure to confide the secret to somebody, and then we should have had our trouble for nothing, besides running the risk of our necks being broken by the farmer. I can see that he is getting disheartened, and very soon he will give up the search. Have patience just a little longer.’

The hedgehop said no more, and pretended to be satisfied; but when some days had gone by he woke the jackal, who was sleeping soundly after a hunt which had lasted several hours.

‘I have just had notice,’ remarked the hedgehog, shaking him, ‘that my family wish to have a banquet to-morrow, and they have invited you to it. Will you come?’

‘Certainly,’ answered the jackal, ‘with pleasure. But as I have to go out in the morning you can meet me on the road.’

‘That will do very well,’ replied the hedgehog. And the jackal went to sleep again, for he was obliged to be up early.

Punctual to the moment the hedgehog arrived at the place appointed for their meeting, and as the jackal was not there he sat down and waited for him.

‘Ah, there you are!’ he cried, when the dusky yellow form at last turned the corner. ‘I had nearly given you up! Indeed, I almost wish you had not come, for I hardly know where I shall hide you.’

‘Why should you hide me anywhere?’ asked the jackal. ‘What is the matter with you?’

‘Well, so many of the guests have brought their dogs and mules with them, that I fear it may hardly be safe for you to go amongst them. No;

don’t run off that way,’ he added quickly, ‘because there is another troop that are coming over the hill. Lie down here, and I will throw these sacks over you; and keep still for your life, whatever happens.’

And what did happen was, that when the jackal was lying covered up, under a little hill, the hedgehog set a great stone rolling, which crushed him to death.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE YOUNGER SON OF THE JACKAL

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[Contes Berberes.]

Now that the father and elder brother were both dead, all that was left of the jackal family was one son, who was no less cunning than the others had been. He did not like staying in the same place any better than they, and nobody ever knew in what part of the country he might be found next.

One day, when we was wandering about he beheld a nice fat sheep, which was cropping the grass and seemed quite contented with her lot.

‘Good morning,’ said the jackal, ‘I am so glad to see you. I have been looking for you everywhere.’

‘For ME?’ answered the sheep, in an astonished voice; ‘but we have never met before!’

‘No; but I have heard of you. Oh! You don’t know what fine things I have heard! Ah, well, some people have all the luck!’

‘You are very kind, I am sure,’ answered the sheep, not knowing which way to look. ‘Is there any way in which I can help you?’

‘There is something that I had set my heart on, though I hardly like to propose it on so short an acquaintance; but from what people have told me, I thought that you and I might keep house together comfortably, if you would only agree to try. I have several fields belonging to me, and if they are kept well watered they bear wonderful crops.’

‘Perhaps I might come for a short time,’ said the sheep, with a little hesitation; ‘and if we do not get on, we can part company.’

‘Oh, thank you, thank you,’ cried the jackal; ‘do not let us lose a moment.’ And he held out his paw in such an inviting manner that the sheep got up and trotted beside him till they reached home.

‘Now,’ said the jackal, ‘you go to the well and fetch the water, and I will pour it into the trenches that run between the patches of corn.’ And as he did so he sang lustily. The work was very hard, but the sheep did not

grumble, and by-and-by was rewarded at seeing the little green heads poking themselves through earth. After that the hot sun ripened them quickly, and soon harvest time was come. Then the grain was cut and ground and ready for sale.

When everything was complete, the jackal said to the sheep:

‘Now let us divide it, so that we can each do what we like with his share.’

‘You do it,’ answered the sheep; ‘here are the scales. You must weigh it carefully.’

So the jackal began to weigh it, and when he had finished, he counted out loud:

‘One, two, three, four, five, six, seven parts for the jackal, and one part for the sheep. If she likes it she can take it, if not, she can leave it.’

The sheep looked at the two heaps in silence—one so large, the other so small; and then she answered:

‘Wait for a minute, while I fetch some sacks to carry away my share.’

But it was not sacks that the sheep wanted; for as soon as the jackal could no longer see her she set forth at her best pace to the home of the greyhound, where she arrived panting with the haste she had made.

‘Oh, good uncle, help me, I pray you!’ she cried, as soon as she could speak.

‘Why, what is the matter?’ asked the greyhound, looking up with astonishment.

‘I beg you to return with me, and frighten the jackal into paying me what he owes me,’ answered the sheep. ‘For months we have lived together, and I have twice every day drawn the water, while he only poured it into the trenches. Together we have reaped our harvest; and now, when the moment to divide our crop has come, he has taken seven parts for himself, and only left one for me.’

She finished, and giving herself a twist, passed her woolly tail across her eyes; while the greyhound watched her, but held his peace. Then he said:

‘Bring me a sack.’ And the sheep hastened away to fetch one. Very soon she returned, and laid the sack down before him.

‘Open it wide, that I may get in,’ cried he; and when he was comfortably rolled up inside he bade the sheep take him on her back, and

hasten to the place where she had left the jackal.

She found him waiting for her, and pretending to be asleep, though she clearly saw him wink one of his eyes. However, she took no notice, but throwing the sack roughly on the ground, she exclaimed:

‘Now measure!’

At this the jackal got up, and going to the heap of grain which lay close by, he divided it as before into eight portions—seven for himself and one for the sheep.

‘What are you doing that for?’ asked she indignantly. ‘You know quite well that it was I who drew the water, and you who only poured it into the trenches.’

‘You are mistaken,’ answered the jackal. ‘It was I who drew the water, and you who poured it into the trenches. Anybody will tell you that! If you like, I will ask those people who are digging there!’

‘Very well,’ replied the sheep. And the jackal called out:

‘Ho! You diggers, tell me: Who was it you heard singing over the work?’

‘Why, it was you, of course, jackal! You sang so loud that the whole world might have heard you!’

‘And who it is that sings—he who draws the water, or he who empties it?’

‘Why, certainly he who draws the water!’

‘You hear?’ said the jackal, turning to the sheep. ‘Now come and carry away your own portion, or else I shall take it for myself.’

‘You have got the better of me,’ answered the sheep; ‘and I suppose I must confess myself beaten! But as I bear no malice, go and eat some of the dates that I have brought in that sack.’ And the jackal, who loved dates, ran instantly back, and tore open the mouth of the sack. But just as he was about to plunge his nose in he saw two brown eyes calmly looking at him. In an instant he had let fall the flap of the sack and bounded back to where the sheep was standing.

‘I was only in fun; and you have brought my uncle the greyhound. Take away the sack, we will make the division over again.’ And he began rearranging the heaps.

‘One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, for my mother the sheep, and one for the jackal,’ counted he; casting timid glances all the while at the

sack.

‘Now you can take your share and go,’ said the sheep. And the jackal did not need twice telling! Whenever the sheep looked up, she still saw him flying, flying across the plain; and, for all I know, he may be flying across it still.

THE THREE TREASURES OF THE GIANTS

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[Contes Berberes, par Rene Basset.]

Long, long ago, there lived an old man and his wife who had three sons; the eldest was called Martin, the second Michael, while the third was named Jack.

One evening they were all seated round the table, eating their supper of bread and milk.

‘Martin,’ said the old man suddenly, ‘I feel that I cannot live much longer. You, as the eldest, will inherit this hut; but, if you value my blessing, be good to your mother and brothers.’

‘Certainly, father; how can you suppose I should do them wrong?’ replied Martin indignantly, helping himself to all the best bits in the dish as he spoke. The old man saw nothing, but Michael looked on in surprise, and Jack was so astonished that he quite forgot to eat his own supper.

A little while after, the father fell ill, and sent for his sons, who were out hunting, to bid him farewell. After giving good advice to the two eldest, he turned to Jack.

‘My boy,’ he said, ‘you have not got quite as much sense as other people, but if Heaven has deprived you of some of your wits, it was given you a kind heart. Always listen to what it says, and take heed to the words of your mother and brothers, as well as you are able!’ So saying the old man sank back on his pillows and died.

The cries of grief uttered by Martin and Michael sounded through the house, but Jack remained by the bedside of his father, still and silent, as if he were dead also. At length he got up, and going into the garden, hid himself in some trees, and wept like a child, while his two brothers made ready for the funeral.

No sooner was the old man buried than Martin and Michael agreed that they would go into the world together to seek their fortunes, while Jack

stayed at home with their mother. Jack would have liked nothing better than to sit and dream by the fire, but the mother, who was very old herself, declared that there was no work for him to do, and that he must seek it with his brothers.

So, one fine morning, all three set out; Martin and Michael carried two great bags full of food, but Jack carried nothing. This made his brothers very angry, for the day was hot and the bags were heavy, and about noon they sat down under a tree and began to eat. Jack was as hungry as they were, but he knew that it was no use asking for anything; and he threw himself under another tree, and wept bitterly.

‘Another time perhaps you won’t be so lazy, and will bring food for yourself,’ said Martin, but to his surprise Jack answered:

‘You are a nice pair! You talk of seeking your fortunes so as not to be a burden on our mother, and you begin by carrying off all the food she has in the house!’

This reply was so unexpected that for some moments neither of the brothers made any answer. Then they offered their brother some of their food, and when he had finished eating they went their way once more.

Towards evening they reached a small hut, and knocking at the door, asked if they might spend the night there. The man, who was a wood-cutter, invited them him, and begged them to sit down to supper. Martin thanked him, but being very proud, explained that it was only shelter they wanted, as they had plenty of food with them; and he and Michael at once opened their bags and began to eat, while Jack hid himself in a corner. The wife, on seeing this, took pity on him, and called him to come and share their supper, which he gladly did, and very good he found it. At this, Martin regretted deeply that he had been so foolish as to refuse, for his bits of bread and cheese seemed very hard when he smelt the savoury soup his brother was enjoying.

‘He shan’t have such a chance again,’ thought he; and the next morning he insisted on plunging into a thick forest where they were likely to meet nobody.

For a long time they wandered hither and thither, for they had no path to guide them; but at last they came upon a wide clearing, in the midst of which stood a castle. Jack shouted with delight, but Martin, who was in a bad temper, said sharply:

‘We must have taken a wrong turning! Let us go back.’

‘Idiot!’ replied Michael, who was hungry too, and, like many people when they are hungry, very cross also. ‘We set out to travel through the world, and what does it matter if we go to the right or to the left?’ And, without another word, took the path to the castle, closely followed by Jack, and after a moment by Martin likewise.

The door of the castle stood open, and they entered a great hall, and looked about them. Not a creature was to be seen, and suddenly Martin—he did not know why—felt a little frightened. He would have left the castle at once, but stopped when Jack boldly walked up to a door in the wall and opened it. He could not for very shame be outdone by his younger brother, and passed behind him into another splendid hall, which was filled from floor to ceiling with great pieces of copper money.

The sight quite dazzled Martin and Michael, who emptied all the provisions that remained out of their bags, and heaped them up instead with handfuls of copper.

Scarcely had they done this when Jack threw open another door, and this time it led to a hall filled with silver. In an instant his brothers had turned their bags upside down, so that the copper money tumbled out on to the floor, and were shovelling in handfuls of the silver instead. They had hardly finished, when Jack opened yet a third door, and all three fell back in amazement, for this room as a mass of gold, so bright that their eyes grew sore as they looked at it. However, they soon recovered from their surprise, and quickly emptied their bags of silver, and filled them with gold instead. When they would hold no more, Martin said:

‘We had better hurry off now lest somebody else should come, and we might not know what to do’; and, followed by Michael, he hastily left the castle. Jack lingered behind for a few minutes to put pieces of gold, silver, and copper into his pocket, and to eat the food that his brothers had thrown down in the first room. Then he went after them, and found them lying down to rest in the midst of a forest. It was near sunset, and Martin began to feel hungry, so, when Jack arrived, he bade him return to the castle and bring the bread and cheese that they had left there.

‘It is hardly worth doing that,’ answered Jack; ‘for I picked up the pieces and ate them myself.’

At this reply both brothers were beside themselves with anger, and fell upon the boy, beating him, and calling him names, till they were quite tired.

‘Go where you like,’ cried Martin with a final kick; ‘but never come near us again.’ And poor Jack ran weeping into the woods.

The next morning his brothers went home, and bought a beautiful house, where they lived with their mother like great lords.

Jack remained for some hours in hiding, thankful to be safe from his tormentors; but when no one came to trouble him, and his back did not ache so much, he began to think what he had better do. At length he made up his mind to go to the caste and take away as much money with him as would enable him to live in comfort for the rest of his life. This being decided, he sprang up, and set out along the path which led to the castle. As before, the door stood open, and he went on till he had reached the hall of gold, and there he took off his jacket and tied the sleeves together so that it might make a kind of bag. He then began to pour in the gold by handfuls, when, all at once, a noise like thunder shook the castle. This was followed by a voice, hoarse as that of a bull, which cried:

‘I smell the smell of a man.’ And two giants entered.

‘So, little worm! it is you who steal our treasures!’ exclaimed the biggest. ‘Well, we have got you now, and we will cook you for supper!’ But here the other giant drew him aside, and for a moment or two they whispered together. At length the first giant spoke:

‘To please my friend I will spare your life on condition that, for the future, you shall guard our treasures. If you are hungry take this little table and rap on it, saying, as you do so: “The dinner of an emperor!” and you will get as much food as you want.’

With a light heart Jack promised all that was asked of him, and for some days enjoyed himself mightily. He had everything he could wish for, and did nothing from morning till night; but by-and-by he began to get very tired of it all.

‘Let the giants guard their treasures themselves,’ he said to himself at last; ‘I am going away. But I will leave all the gold and silver behind me, and will take nought but you, my good little table.’

So, tucking the table under his arm, he started off for the forest, but he did not linger there long, and soon found himself in the fields on the other

side. There he saw an old man, who begged Jack to give him something to eat.

‘You could not have asked a better person,’ answered Jack cheerfully. And signing to him to sit down with him under a tree, he set the table in front of them, and struck it three times, crying:

‘The dinner of an emperor!’ He had hardly uttered the words when fish and meat of all kinds appeared on it!

‘That is a clever trick of yours,’ said the old man, when he had eaten as much as he wanted. ‘Give it to me in exchange for a treasure I have which is still better. Do you see this cornet? Well, you have only to tell it that you wish for an army, and you will have as many soldiers as you require.’

Now, since he had been left to himself, Jack had grown ambitious, so, after a moment’s hesitation, he took the cornet and gave the table in exchange. The old man bade him farewell, and set off down one path, while Jack chose another, and for a long time he was quite pleased with his new possession. Then, as he felt hungry, he wished for his table back again, as no house was in sight, and he wanted some supper badly. All at once he remembered his cornet, and a wicked thought entered his mind.

‘Two hundred hussars, forward!’ cried he. And the neighing of horses and the clanking of swords were heard close at hand. The officer who rode at their head approached Jack, and politely inquired what he wished them to do.

‘A mile or two along that road,’ answered Jack, ‘you will find an old man carrying a table. Take the table from him and bring it to me.’

The officer saluted and went back to his men, who started at a gallop to do Jack’s bidding.

In ten minutes they had returned, bearing the table with them.

‘That is all, thank you,’ said Jack; and the soldiers disappeared inside the cornet.

Oh, what a good supper Jack had that night, quite forgetting that he owed it to a mean trick. The next day he breakfasted early, and then walked on towards the nearest town. On the way thither he met another old man, who begged for something to eat.

‘Certainly, you shall have something to eat,’ replied Jack. And, placing the table on the ground he cried:

‘The dinner of an emperor!’ when all sorts of food dishes appeared. At first the old man ate quite greedily, and said nothing; but, after his hunger was satisfied, he turned to Jack and said:

‘That is a very clever trick of yours. Give the table to me and you shall have something still better.’

‘I don’t believe that there is anything better,’ answered Jack.

‘Yes, there is. Here is my bag; it will give you as many castles as you can possibly want.’

Jack thought for a moment; then he replied: ‘Very well, I will exchange with you.’ And passing the table to the old man, he hung the bag over his arm.

Five minutes later he summoned five hundred lancers out of the cornet and bade them go after the old man and fetch back the table.

Now that by his cunning he had obtained possession of the three magic objects, he resolved to return to his native place. Smearing his face with dirt, and tearing his clothes so as to look like a beggar, he stopped the passers by and, on pretence of seeking money or food, he questioned them about the village gossip. In this manner he learned that his brothers had become great men, much respected in all the country round. When he heard that, he lost no time in going to the door of their fine house and imploring them to give him food and shelter; but the only thing he got was hard words, and a command to beg elsewhere. At length, however, at their mother’s entreaty, he was told that he might pass the night in the stable. Here he waited until everybody in the house was sound asleep, when he drew his bag from under his cloak, and desired that a castle might appear in that place; and the cornet gave him soldiers to guard the castle, while the table furnished him with a good supper. In the morning, he caused it all to vanish, and when his brothers entered the stable they found him lying on the straw.

Jack remained here for many days, doing nothing, and—as far as anybody knew—eating nothing. This conduct puzzled his brothers greatly, and they put such constant questions to him, that at length he told them the secret of the table, and even gave a dinner to them, which far outdid any they had ever seen or heard of. But though they had solemnly promised to reveal nothing, somehow or other the tale leaked out, and before long reached the ears of the king himself. That very evening his chamberlain

arrived at Jack’s dwelling, with a request from the king that he might borrow the table for three days.

‘Very well,’ answered Jack, ‘you can take it back with you. But tell his majesty that if he does not return it at the end of the three days I will make war upon him.’

So the chamberlain carried away the table and took it straight to the king, telling him at the same time of Jack’s threat, at which they both laughed till their sides ached.

Now the king was so delighted with the table, and the dinners it gave him, that when the three days were over he could not make up his mind to part with it. Instead, he sent for his carpenter, and bade him copy it exactly, and when it was done he told his chamberlain to return it to Jack with his best thanks. It happened to be dinner time, and Jack invited the chamberlain, who knew nothing of the trick, to stay and dine with him. The good man, who had eaten several excellent meals provided by the table in the last three days, accepted the invitation with pleasure, even though he was to dine in a stable, and sat down on the straw beside Jack.

‘The dinner of an emperor!’ cried Jack. But not even a morsel of cheese made its appearance.

‘The dinner of an emperor!’ shouted Jack in a voice of thunder. Then the truth dawned on him; and, crushing the table between his hands, he turned to the chamberlain, who, bewildered and half-frightened, was wondering how to get away.

‘Tell your false king that to-morrow I will destroy his castle as easily as I have broken this table.’

The chamberlain hastened back to the palace, and gave the king Jack’s message, at which he laughed more than before, and called all his courtiers to hear the story. But they were not quite so merry when they woke next morning and beheld ten thousand horsemen, and as many archers, surrounding the palace. The king saw it was useless to hold out, and he took the white flag of truce in one hand, and the real table in the other, and set out to look for Jack.

‘I committed a crime,’ said he; ‘but I will do my best to make up for it. Here is your table, which I own with shame that I tried to steal, and you shall have besides, my daughter as your wife!’

There was no need to delay the marriage when the table was able to furnish the most splendid banquet that ever was seen, and after everyone had eaten and drunk as much as they wanted, Jack took his bag and commanded a castle filled with all sorts of treasures to arise in the park for himself and his bride.

At this proof of his power the king's heart died within him.

'Your magic is greater than mine,' he said; 'and you are young and strong, while I am old and tired. Take, therefore, the sceptre from my hand, and my crown from my head, and rule my people better than I have done.'

So at last Jack's ambition was satisfied. He could not hope to be more than king, and as long as he had his cornet to provide him with soldiers he was secure against his enemies. He never forgave his brothers for the way they had treated him, though he presented his mother with a beautiful castle, and everything she could possibly wish for. In the centre of his own palace was a treasure chamber, and in this chamber the table, the cornet, and the bag were kept as the most prized of all his possessions, and not a week passed without a visit from king John to make sure they were safe. He reigned long and well, and died a very old man, beloved by his people. But his good example was not followed by his sons and his grandsons. They grew so proud that they were ashamed to think that the founder of their race had once been a poor boy; and as they and all the world could not fail to remember it, as long as the table, the cornet, and the bag were shown in the treasure chamber, one king, more foolish than the rest, thrust them into a dark and damp cellar.

For some time the kingdom remained, though it became weaker and weaker every year that passed. Then, one day, a rumour reached the king that a large army was marching against him. Vaguely he recollected some tales he had heard about a magic cornet which could provide as many soldiers as would serve to conquer the earth, and which had been removed by his grandfather to a cellar. Thither he hastened that he might renew his power once more, and in that black and slimy spot he found the treasures indeed. But the table fell to pieces as he touched it, in the cornet there remained only a few fragments of leathern belts which the rats had gnawed, and in the bag nothing but broken bits of stone.

And the king bowed his head to the doom that awaited him, and in his heart cursed the ruin wrought by the pride and foolishness of himself and his forefathers.

THE ROVER OF THE PLAIN

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[From Contes Populaires Slaves, par Louis Leger.]

A long way off, near the sea coast of the east of Africa, there dwelt, once upon a time, a man and his wife. They had two children, a son and a daughter, whom they loved very much, and, like parents in other countries, they often talked of the fine marriages the young people would make some day. Out there both boys and girls marry early, and very soon, it seemed to the mother, a message was sent by a rich man on the other side of the great hills offering a fat herd of oxen in exchange for the girl. Everyone in the house and in the village rejoiced, and the maiden was despatched to her new home. When all was quiet again the father said to his son:

‘Now that we own such a splendid troop of oxen you had better hasten and get yourself a wife, lest some illness should overtake them. Already we have seen in the villages round about one or two damsels whose parents would gladly part with them for less than half the herd. Therefore tell us which you like best, and we will buy her for you.’

But the son answered:

‘Not so; the maidens I have seen do not please me. If, indeed, I must marry, let me travel and find a wife for myself.’

‘It shall be as you wish,’ said the parents; ‘but if by-and-by trouble should come of it, it will be your fault and not ours.’

The youth, however, would not listen; and bidding his father and mother farewell, set out on his search. Far, far away he wandered, over mountains and across rivers, till he reached a village where the people were quite different from those of his own race. He glanced about him and noticed that the girls were fair to look upon, as they pounded maize or stewed something that smelt very nice in earthen pots—especially if you were hot and tired; and when one of the maidens turned round and offered the stranger some dinner, he made up his mind that he would wed her and nobody else.

So he sent a message to her parents asking their leave to take her for his wife, and they came next day to bring their answer.

‘We will give you our daughter,’ said they, ‘if you can pay a good price for her. Never was there so hardworking a girl; and how we shall do without her we cannot tell! Still—no doubt your father and mother will come themselves and bring the price?’

‘No; I have the price with me,’ replied the young man; laying down a handful of gold pieces. ‘Here it is—take it.’

The old couple’s eyes glittered greedily; but custom forbade them to touch the price before all was arranged.

‘At least,’ said they, after a moment’s pause, ‘we may expect them to fetch your wife to her new home?’

‘No; they are not used to travelling,’ answered the bridegroom. ‘Let the ceremony be performed without delay, and we will set forth at once. It is a long journey.’

Then the parents called in the girl, who was lying in the sun outside the hut, and, in the presence of all the village, a goat was killed, the sacred dance took place, and a blessing was said over the heads of the young people. After that the bride was led aside by her father, whose duty it was to bestow on her some parting advice as to her conduct in her married life.

‘Be good to your husband’s parents,’ added he, ‘and always do the will of your husband.’ And the girl nodded her head obediently. Next it was the mother’s turn; and, as was the custom of the tribe, she spoke to her daughter:

‘Will you choose which of your sisters shall go with you to cut your wood and carry your water?’

‘I do not want any of them,’ answered she; ‘they are no use. They will drop the wood and spill the water.’

‘Then will you have any of the other children? There are enough to spare,’ asked the mother again. But the bride said quickly:

‘I will have none of them! You must give me our buffalo, the Rover of the Plain; he alone shall serve me.’

‘What folly you talk!’ cried the parents. ‘Give you our buffalo, the Rover of the Plain? Why, you know that our life depends on him. Here he is well fed and lies on soft grass; but how can you tell what will befall him

in another country? The food may be bad, he will die of hunger; and, if he dies we die also.'

'No, no,' said the bride; 'I can look after him as well as you. Get him ready, for the sun is sinking and it is time we set forth.'

So she went away and put together a small pot filled with healing herms, a horn that she used in tending sick people, a little knife, and a calabash containing deer fat; and, hiding these about her, she took leave of her father and mother and started across the mountains by the side of her husband.

But the young man did not see the buffalo that followed them, which had left his home to be the servant of his wife.

No one ever knew how the news spread to the kraal that the young man was coming back, bringing a wife with him; but, somehow or other, when the two entered the village, every man and woman was standing in the road uttering shouts of welcome.

'Ah, you are not dead after all,' cried they; 'and have found a wife to your liking, though you would have none of our girls. Well, well, you have chosen your own path; and if ill comes of it beware lest you grumble.'

Next day the husband took his wife to the fields and showed her which were his, and which belonged to his mother. The girl listened carefully to all he told her, and walked with him back to the hut; but close to the door she stopped, and said:

'I have dropped my necklace of beads in the field, and I must go and look for it.' But in truth she had done nothing of the sort, and it was only an excuse to go and seek the buffalo.

The beast was crouching under a tree when she came up, and snorted with pleasure at the sight of her.

'You can roam about this field, and this, and this,' she said, 'for they belong to my husband; and that is his wood, where you may hide yourself. But the other fields are his mother's, so beware lest you touch them.'

'I will beware,' answered the buffalo; and, patting his head, the girl left him.

Oh, how much better a servant he was than any of the little girls the bride had refused to bring with her! If she wanted water, she had only to cross the patch of maize behind the hut and seek out the place where the buffalo lay hidden, and put down her pail beside him. Then she would sit

at her ease while he went to the lake and brought the bucket back brimming over. If she wanted wood, he would break the branches off the trees and lay them at her feet. And the villagers watched her return laden, and said to each other:

‘Surely the girls of her country are stronger than our girls, for none of them could cut so quickly or carry so much!’ But then, nobody knew that she had a buffalo for a servant.

Only, all this time she never gave the poor buffalo anything to eat, because she had just one dish, out of which she and her husband ate; while in her old home there was a dish put aside expressly for the Rover of the Plain. The buffalo bore it as long as he could; but, one day, when his mistress bade him go to the lake and fetch water, his knees almost gave way from hunger. He kept silence, however, till the evening, when he said to his mistress:

‘I am nearly starved; I have not touched food since I came here. I can work no more.’

‘Alas!’ answered she, ‘what can I do? I have only one dish in the house. You will have to steal some beans from the fields. Take a few here and a few there; but be sure not to take too many from one place, or the owner may notice it.’

Now the buffalo had always lived an honest life, but if his mistress did not feed him, he must get food for himself. So that night, when all the village was asleep, he came out from the wood and ate a few beans here and a few there, as his mistress had bidden him. And when at last his hunger was satisfied, he crept back to his lair. But a buffalo is not a fairy, and the next morning, when the women arrived to work in the fields, they stood still with astonishment, and said to each other:

‘Just look at this; a savage beast has been destroying our crops, and we can see the traces of his feet!’ And they hurried to their homes to tell their tale.

In the evening the girl crept out to the buffalo’s hiding-place, and said to him:

‘They perceived what happened, of course; so to-night you had better seek your supper further off.’ And the buffalo nodded his head and followed her counsel; but in the morning, when these women also went out to work, the races of hoofs were plainly to be seen, and they hastened to

tell their husbands, and begged them to bring their guns, and to watch for the robber.

It happened that the stranger girl's husband was the best marksman in all the village, and he hid himself behind the trunk of a tree and waited.

The buffalo, thinking that they would probably make a search for him in the fields he had laid waste the evening before, returned to the bean patch belonging to his mistress.

The young man saw him coming with amazement.

'Why, it is a buffalo!' cried he; 'I never have beheld one in this country before!' And raising his gun, he aimed just behind the ear.

The buffalo gave a leap into the air, and then fell dead.

'It was a good shot,' said the young man. And he ran to the village to tell them that the thief was punished.

When he entered his hut he found his wife, who had somehow heard the news, twisting herself to and fro and shedding tears.

'Are you ill?' asked he. And she answered: 'Yes; I have pains all over my body.' But she was not ill at all, only very unhappy at the death of the buffalo which had served her so well. Her husband felt anxious, and sent for the medicine man; but though she pretended to listen to him, she threw all his medicine out of the door directly he had gone away.

With the first rays of light the whole village was awake, and the women set forth armed with baskets and the men with knives in order to cut up the buffalo. Only the girl remained in her hut; and after a while she too went to join them, groaning and weeping as she walked along.

'What are you doing here?' asked her husband when he saw her. 'If you are ill you are better at home.'

'Oh! I could not stay alone in the village,' said she. And her mother-in-law left off her work to come and scold her, and to tell her that she would kill herself if she did such foolish things. But the girl would not listen and sat down and looked on.

When they had divided the buffalo's flesh, and each woman had the family portion in her basket, the stranger wife got up and said:

'Let me have the head.'

'You could never carry anything so heavy,' answered the men, 'and now you are ill besides.'

‘You do not know how strong I am,’ answered she. And at last they gave it her.

She did not walk to the village with the others, but lingered behind, and, instead of entering her hut, she slipped into the little shed where the pots for cooking and storing maize were kept. Then she laid down the buffalo’s head and sat beside it. Her husband came to seek her, and begged her to leave the shed and go to bed, as she must be tired out; but the girl would not stir, neither would she attend to the words of her mother-in-law.

‘I wish you would leave me alone!’ she answered crossly. ‘It is impossible to sleep if somebody is always coming in.’ And she turned her back on them, and would not even eat the food they had brought. So they went away, and the young man soon stretched himself out on his mat; but his wife’s odd conduct made him anxious, and he lay wake all night, listening.

When all was still the girl made a fire and boiled some water in a pot. As soon as it was quite hot she shook in the medicine that she had brought from home, and then, taking the buffalo’s head, she made incisions with her little knife behind the ear, and close to the temple where the shot had struck him. Next she applied the horn to the spot and blew with all her force till, at length, the blood began to move. After that she spread some of the deer fat out of the calabash over the wound, which she held in the steam of the hot water. Last of all, she sang in a low voice a dirge over the Rover of the Plain.

As she chanted the final words the head moved, and the limbs came back. The buffalo began to feel alive again and shook his horns, and stood up and stretched himself. Unluckily it was just at this moment that the husband said to himself:

‘I wonder if she is crying still, and what is the matter with her! Perhaps I had better go and see.’ And he got up and, calling her by name, went out to the shed.

‘Go away! I don’t want you!’ she cried angrily. But it was too late. The buffalo had fallen to the ground, dead, and with the wound in his head as before.

The young man who, unlike most of his tribe, was afraid of his wife, returned to his bed without having seen anything, but wondering very much what she could be doing all this time. After waiting a few minutes,

she began her task over again, and at the end the buffalo stood on his feet as before. But just as the girl was rejoicing that her work was completed, in came the husband once more to see what his wife was doing; and this time he sat himself down in the hut, and said that he wished to watch whatever was going on. Then the girl took up the pitcher and all her other things and left the shed, trying for the third time to bring the buffalo back to life.

She was too late; the dawn was already breaking, and the head fell to the ground, dead and corrupt as it was before.

The girl entered the hut, where her husband and his mother were getting ready to go out.

‘I want to go down to the lake, and bathe,’ said she.

‘But you could never walk so far,’ answered they. ‘You are so tired, as it is, that you can hardly stand!’

However, in spite of their warnings, the girl left the hut in the direction of the lake. Very soon she came back weeping, and sobbed out:

‘I met some one in the village who lives in my country, and he told me that my mother is very, very ill, and if I do not go to her at once she will be dead before I arrive. I will return as soon as I can, and now farewell.’ And she set forth in the direction of the mountains. But this story was not true; she knew nothing about her mother, only she wanted an excuse to go home and tell her family that their prophecies had come true, and that the buffalo was dead.

Balancing her basket on her head, she walked along, and directly she had left the village behind her she broke out into the song of the Rover of the Plain, and at last, at the end of the day, she came to the group of huts where her parents lived. Her friends all ran to meet her, and, weeping, she told them that the buffalo was dead.

This sad news spread like lightning through the country, and the people flocked from far and near to bewail the loss of the beast who had been their pride.

‘If you had only listened to us,’ they cried, ‘he would be alive now. But you refused all the little girls we offered you, and would have nothing but the buffalo. And remember what the medicine-man said: “If the buffalo dies you die also!”’

So they bewailed their fate, one to the other, and for a while they did not perceive that the girl's husband was sitting in their midst, leaning his gun against a tree. Then one man, turning, beheld him, and bowed mockingly.

'Hail, murderer! hail! you have slain us all!'

The young man stared, not knowing what he meant, and answered, wonderingly:

'I shot a buffalo; is that why you call me a murderer?'

'A buffalo—yes; but the servant of your wife! It was he who carried the wood and drew the water. Did you not know it?'

'No; I did not know it,' replied the husband in surprise. 'Why did no one tell me? Of course I should not have shot him!'

'Well, he is dead,' answered they, 'and we must die too.'

At this the girl took a cup in which some poisonous herbs had been crushed, and holding it in her hands, she wailed: 'O my father, Rover of the Plain!' Then drinking a deep draught from it, fell back dead. One by one her parents, her brothers and her sisters, drank also and died, singing a dirge to the memory of the buffalo.

The girl's husband looked on with horror; and returned sadly home across the mountains, and, entering his hut, threw himself on the ground. At first he was too tired to speak; but at length he raised his head and told all the story to his father and mother, who sat watching him. When he had finished they shook their heads and said:

'Now you see that we spoke no idle words when we told you that ill would come of your marriage! We offered you a good and hard-working wife, and you would have none of her. And it is not only your wife you have lost, but your fortune also. For who will give you back your money if they are all dead?'

'It is true, O my father,' answered the young man. But in his heart he thought more of the loss of his wife than of the money he had given for her.

THE WHITE DOE

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[From L’Etude Ethnographique sur les Baronga, par Henri Junod.]

Once upon a time there lived a king and queen who loved each other dearly, and would have been perfectly happy if they had only had a little son or daughter to play with. They never talked about it, and always pretended that there was nothing in the world to wish for; but, sometimes when they looked at other people’s children, their faces grew sad, and their courtiers and attendants knew the reason why.

One day the queen was sitting alone by the side of a waterfall which sprung from some rocks in the large park adjoining the castle. She was feeling more than usually miserable, and had sent away her ladies so that no one might witness her grief. Suddenly she heard a rustling movement in the pool below the waterfall, and, on glancing up, she saw a large crab climbing on to a stone beside her.

‘Great queen,’ said the crab, ‘I am here to tell you that the desire of your heart will soon be granted. But first you must permit me to lead you to the palace of the fairies, which, though hard by, has never been seen by mortal eyes because of the thick clouds that surround it. When there you will know more; that is, if you will trust yourself to me.’

The queen had never before heard an animal speak, and was struck dumb with surprise. However, she was so enchanted at the words of the crab that she smiled sweetly and held out her hand; it was taken, not by the crab, which had stood there only a moment before, but by a little old woman smartly dressed in white and crimson with green ribbons in her grey hair. And, wonderful to say, not a drop of water fell from her clothes.

The old woman ran lightly down a path along which the queen had been a hundred times before, but it seemed so different she could hardly believe it was the same. Instead of having to push her way through nettles and brambles, roses and jasmine hung about her head, while under her feet

the ground was sweet with violets. The orange trees were so tall and thick that, even at mid-day, the sun was never too hot, and at the end of the path was a glimmer of something so dazzling that the queen had to shade her eyes, and peep at it only between her fingers.

‘What can it be?’ she asked, turning to her guide; who answered:

‘Oh, that is the fairies’ palace, and here are some of them coming to meet us.’

As she spoke the gates swung back and six fairies approached, each bearing in her hand a flower made of precious stones, but so like a real one that it was only by touching you could tell the difference.

‘Madam,’ they said, ‘we know not how to thank you for this mark of your confidence, but have the happiness to tell you that in a short time you will have a little daughter.’

The queen was so enchanted at this news that she nearly fainted with joy; but when she was able to speak, she poured out all her gratitude to the fairies for their promised gift.

‘And now,’ she said, ‘I ought not to stay any longer, for my husband will think that I have run away, or that some evil beast has devoured me.’

In a little while it happened just as the fairies had foretold, and a baby girl was born in the palace. Of course both the king and queen were delighted, and the child was called Desiree, which means ‘desired,’ for she had been ‘desired’ for five years before her birth.

At first the queen could think of nothing but her new plaything, but then she remembered the fairies who had sent it to her. Bidding her ladies bring her the posy of jewelled flowers which had been given her at the palace, she took each flower in her hand and called it by name, and, in turn, each fairy appeared before her. But, as unluckily often happens, the one to whom she owed the most, the crab-fairy, was forgotten, and by this, as in the case of other babies you have read about, much mischief was wrought.

However, for the moment all was gaiety in the palace, and everybody inside ran to the windows to watch the fairies’ carriages, for no two were alike. One had a car of ebony, drawn by white pigeons, another was lying back in her ivory chariot, driving ten black crows, while the rest had chosen rare woods or many-coloured sea-shells, with scarlet and blue macaws, long-tailed peacocks, or green love-birds for horses. These

carriages were only used on occasions of state, for when they went to war flying dragons, fiery serpents, lions or leopards, took the place of the beautiful birds.

The fairies entered the queen's chamber followed by little dwarfs who carried their presents and looked much prouder than their mistresses. One by one their burdens were spread upon the ground, and no one had ever seen such lovely things. Everything that a baby could possibly wear or play with was there, and besides, they had other and more precious gifts to give her, which only children who have fairies for godmothers can ever hope to possess.

They were all gathered round the heap of pink cushions on which the baby lay asleep, when a shadow seemed to fall between them and the sun, while a cold wind blew through the room. Everybody looked up, and there was the crab-fairy, who had grown as tall as the ceiling in her anger.

'So I am forgotten!' cried she, in a voice so loud that the queen trembled as she heard it. 'Who was it soothed you in your trouble? Who was it led you to the fairies? Who was it brought you back in safety to your home again? Yet I—I—am overlooked, while these who have done nothing in comparison, are petted and thanked.'

The queen, almost dumb with terror, in vain tried to think of some explanation or apology; but there was none, and she could only confess her fault and implore forgiveness. The fairies also did their best to soften the wrath of their sister, and knowing that, like many plain people who are not fairies, she was very vain, they entreated her to drop her crab's disguise, and to become once more the charming person they were accustomed to see.

For some time the enraged fairy would listen to nothing; but at length the flatteries began to take effect. The crab's shell fell from her, she shrank into her usual size, and lost some of her fierce expression.

'Well,' she said, 'I will not cause the princess's death, as I had meant to do, but at the same time she will have to bear the punishment of her mother's fault, as many other children have done before her. The sentence I pass upon her is, that if she is allowed to see one ray of daylight before her fifteenth birthday she will rue it bitterly, and it may perhaps cost her her life.' And with these words she vanished by the window through which

she came, while the fairies comforted the weeping queen and took counsel how best the princess might be kept safe during her childhood.

At the end of half an hour they had made up their minds what to do, and at the command of the fairies, a beautiful palace sprang up, close to that of the king and queen, but different from every palace in the world in having no windows, and only a door right under the earth. However, once within, daylight was hardly missed, so brilliant were the multitudes of tapers that were burning on the walls.

Now up to this time the princess's history has been like the history of many a princess that you have read about; but, when the period of her imprisonment was nearly over, her fortunes took another turn. For almost fifteen years the fairies had taken care of her, and amused her and taught her, so that when she came into the world she might be no whit behind the daughters of other kings in all that makes a princess charming and accomplished. They all loved her dearly, but the fairy Tulip loved her most of all; and as the princess's fifteenth birthday drew near, the fairy began to tremble lest something terrible should happen—some accident which had not been foreseen. 'Do not let her out of your sight,' said Tulip to the queen, 'and meanwhile, let her portrait be painted and carried to the neighbouring Courts, as is the custom in order that the kings may see how far her beauty exceeds that of every other princess, and that they may demand her in marriage for their sons.'

And so it was done; and as the fairy had prophesied, all the young princes fell in love with the picture; but the last one to whom it was shown could think of nothing else, and refused to let it be removed from his chamber, where he spent whole days gazing at it.

The king his father was much surprised at the change which had come over his son, who generally passed all his time in hunting or hawking, and his anxiety was increased by a conversation he overheard between two of his courtiers that they feared the prince must be going out of his mind, so moody had he become. Without losing a moment the king went to visit his son, and no sooner had he entered the room than the young man flung himself at his father's feet.

'You have betrothed me already to a bride I can never love!' cried he; 'but if you will not consent to break off the match, and ask for the hand of the princess Desiree, I shall die of misery, thankful to be alive no longer.'

These words much displeased the king, who felt that, in breaking off the marriage already arranged he would almost certainly be bringing on his subjects a long and bloody war; so, without answering, he turned away, hoping that a few days might bring his son to reason. But the prince's condition grew rapidly so much worse that the king, in despair, promised to send an embassy at once to Desiree's father.

This news cured the young man in an instant of all his ills; and he began to plan out every detail of dress and of horses and carriages which were necessary to make the train of the envoy, whose name was Becasigue, as splendid as possible. He longed to form part of the embassy himself, if only in the disguise of a page; but this the king would not allow, and so the prince had to content himself with searching the kingdom for everything that was rare and beautiful to send to the princess. Indeed, he arrived, just as the embassy was starting, with his portrait, which had been painted in secret by the court painter.

The king and queen wished for nothing better than that their daughter marry into such a great and powerful family, and received the ambassador with every sign of welcome. They even wished him to see the princess Desiree, but this was prevented by the fairy Tulip, who feared some ill might come of it.

'And be sure you tell him,' added she, 'that the marriage cannot be celebrated till she is fifteen years old, or else some terrible misfortune will happen to the child.'

So when Becasigue, surround by his train, made a formal request that the princess Desiree might be given in marriage to his master's son, the king replied that he was much honoured, and would gladly give his consent; but that no one could even see the princess till her fifteenth birthday, as the spell laid upon her in her cradle by a spiteful fairy, would not cease to work till that was past. The ambassador was greatly surprised and disappointed, but he knew too much about fairies to venture to disobey them, therefore he had to content himself with presenting the prince's portrait to the queen, who lost no time in carrying it to the princess. As the girl took it in her hands it suddenly spoke, as it had been taught to do, and uttered a compliment of the most delicate and charming sort, which made the princess flush with pleasure.

‘How would you like to have a husband like that?’ asked the queen, laughing.

‘As if I knew anything about husbands!’ replied Desiree, who had long ago guessed the business of the ambassador.

‘Well, he will be your husband in three months,’ answered the queen, ordering the prince’s presents to be brought in. The princess was very pleased with them, and admired them greatly, but the queen noticed that all the while her eyes constantly strayed from the softest silks and most brilliant jewels to the portrait of the prince.

The ambassador, finding that there was no hope of his being allowed to see the princess, took his leave, and returned to his own court; but here a new difficulty appeared. The prince, though transported with joy at the thought that Desiree was indeed to be his bride, was bitterly disappointed that she had not been allowed to return with Becasigue, as he had foolishly expected; and never having been taught to deny himself anything or to control his feelings, he fell as ill as he had done before. He would eat nothing nor take pleasure in anything, but lay all day on a heap of cushions, gazing at the picture of the princess.

‘If I have to wait three months before I can marry the princess I shall die!’ was all this spoilt boy would say; and at length the king, in despair, resolved to send a fresh embassy to Desiree’s father to implore him to permit the marriage to be celebrated at once. ‘I would have presented my prayer in person, he added in his letter, ‘but my great age and infirmities do not suffer me to travel; however my envoy has orders to agree to any arrangement that you may propose.’

On his arrival at the palace Becasigue pleaded his young master’s cause as fervently as the king his father could have done, and entreated that the princess might be consulted in the matter. The queen hastened to the marble tower, and told her daughter of the sad state of the prince. Des the prince without risking the doom pronounced over her by the wicked fairy.

‘I see!’ she exclaimed joyfully at last. ‘Let a carriage be built through which no light can come, and let it be brought into my room. I will then get into it, and we can travel swiftly during the night and arrive before dawn at the palace of the prince. Once there, I can remain in some underground chamber, where no light can come.’

‘Ah, how clever you are,’ cried the queen, clasping her in her arms. And she hurried away to tell the king.

‘What a wife our prince will have!’ said Becasigue bowing low; ‘but I must hasten back with the tidings, and to prepare the underground chamber for the princess.’ And so he took his leave.

In a few days the carriage commanded by the princess was ready. It was of green velvet, scattered over with large golden thistles, and lined inside with silver brocade embroidered with pink roses. It had no windows, of course; but the fairy Tulip, whose counsel had been asked, had managed to light it up with a soft glow that came no one knew whither.

It was carried straight up into the great hall of the tower, and the princess stepped into it, followed by her faithful maid of honour, Eglantine, and by her lady in waiting Cerisette, who also had fallen in love with the prince’s portrait and was bitterly jealous of her mistress. The fourth place in the carriage was filled by Cerisette’s mother, who had been sent by the queen to look after the three young people.

Now the Fairy of the Fountain was the godmother of the princess Nera, to whom the prince had been betrothed before the picture of Desiree had made him faithless. She was very angry at the slight put upon her godchild, and from that moment kept careful watch on the princess. In this journey she saw her chance, and it was she who, invisible, sat by Cerisette, and put bad thoughts into the minds of both her and her mother.

The way to the city where the prince lived ran for the most part through a thick forest, and every night when there was no moon, and not a single star could be seen through the trees, the guards who travelled with the princess opened the carriage to give it an airing. This went on for several days, till only twelve hours journey lay between them and the palace. The Cerisette persuaded her mother to cut a great hole in the side of the carriage with a sharp knife which she herself had brought for the purpose. In the forest the darkness was so intense that no one perceived what she had done, but when they left the last trees behind them, and emerged into the open country, the sun was up, and for the first time since her babyhood, Desiree found herself in the light of day.

She looked up in surprise at the dazzling brilliance that streamed through the hole; then gave a sigh which seemed to come from her heart.

The carriage door swung back, as if by magic, and a white doe sprang out, and in a moment was lost to sight in the forest. But, quick as she was, Eglantine, her maid of honour, had time to see where she went, and jumped from the carriage in pursuit of her, followed at a distance by the guards.

Cerisette and her mother looked at each other in surprise and joy. They could hardly believe in their good fortune, for everything had happened exactly as they wished. The first thing to be done was to conceal the hole which had been cut, and when this was managed (with the help of the angry fairy, though they did not know it), Cerisette hastened to take off her own clothes, and put on those of the princess, placing the crown of diamonds on her head. She found this heavier than she expected; but then, she had never been accustomed to wear crowns, which makes all the difference.

At the gates of the city the carriage was stopped by a guard of honour sent by the king as an escort to his son's bride. Though Cerisette and her mother could of course see nothing of what was going on outside, they heard plainly the shouts of welcome from the crowds along the streets.

The carriage stopped at length in the vast hall which Becasigue had prepared for the reception of the princess. The grand chamberlain and the lord high steward were awaiting her, and when the false bride stepped into the brilliantly lighted room, they bowed low, and said they had orders to inform his highness the moment she arrived. The prince, whom the strict etiquette of the court had prevented from being present in the underground hall, was burning with impatience in his own apartments.

'So she had come!' cried he, throwing down the bow he had been pretending to mend. 'Well, was I not right? Is she not a miracle of beauty and grace? And has she her equal in the whole world?' The ministers looked at each other, and made no reply; till at length the chamberlain, who was the bolder of the two, observed:

'My lord, as to her beauty, you can judge of that for yourself. No doubt it is as great as you say; but at present it seems to have suffered, as is natural, from the fatigues of the journey.'

This was certainly not what the prince had expected to hear. Could the portrait have flattered her? He had known of such things before, and a cold

shiver ran through him; but with an effort he kept silent from further questioning, and only said:

‘Has the king been told that the princess is in the palace?’

‘Yes, highness; and he has probably already joined her.’

‘Then I will go too,’ said the prince.

Weak as he was from his long illness, the prince descended the staircase, supported by the ministers, and entered the room just in time to hear his father’s loud cry of astonishment and disgust at the sight of Cerisette.

‘There was been treachery at work,’ he exclaimed, while the prince leant, dumb with horror, against the doorpost. But the lady in waiting, who had been prepared for something of the sort, advanced, holding in her hand the letters which the king and queen had entrusted to her.

‘This is the princess Desiree,’ said she, pretending to have heard nothing, ‘and I have the honour to present to you these letters from my liege lord and lady, together with the casket containing the princess’ jewels.’

The king did not move or answer her; so the prince, leaning on the arm of Becasigue, approached a little closer to the false princess, hoping against hope that his eyes had deceived him. But the longer he looked the more he agreed with his father that there was treason somewhere, for in no single respect did the portrait resemble the woman before him. Cerisette was so tall that the dress of the princess did not reach her ankles, and so thin that her bones showed through the stuff. Besides that her nose was hooked, and her teeth black and ugly.

In his turn, the prince stood rooted to the spot. At last he spoke, and his words were addressed to his father, and not to the bride who had come so far to marry him.

‘We have been deceived,’ he said, ‘and it will cost me my life.’ And he leaned so heavily on the envoy that Becasigue feared he was going to faint, and hastily laid him on the floor. For some minutes no one could attend to anybody but the prince; but as soon as he revived the lady in waiting made herself heard.

‘Oh, my lovely princess, why did we ever leave home?’ cried she. ‘But the king your father will avenge the insults that have been heaped on you when we tell him how you have been treated.’

‘I will tell him myself,’ replied the king in wrath; ‘he promised me a wonder of beauty, he has sent me a skeleton! I am not surprised that he has kept her for fifteen years hidden away from the eyes of the world. Take them both away,’ he continued, turning to his guards, ‘and lodge them in the state prison. There is something more I have to learn of this matter.’

His orders were obeyed, and the prince, loudly bewailing his sad fate, was led back to bed, where for many days he lay in a high fever. At length he slowly began to gain strength, but his sorrow was still so great that he could not bear the sight of a strange face, and shuddered at the notion of taking his proper part in the court ceremonies. Unknown to the king, or to anybody but Becasigue, he planned that, as soon as he was able, he would make his escape and pass the rest of his life alone in some solitary place. It was some weeks before he had regained his health sufficiently to carry out his design; but finally, one beautiful starlight night, the two friends stole away, and when the king woke next morning he found a letter lying by his bed, saying that his son had gone, he knew not whither. He wept bitter tears at the news, for he loved the prince dearly; but he felt that perhaps the young man had done wisely, and he trusted to time and Becasigue’s influence to bring the wanderer home.

And while these things were happening, what had become of the white doe? Though when she sprang from the carriage she was aware that some unkind fate had changed her into an animal, yet, till she saw herself in a stream, she had no idea what it was.

‘Is it really, I, Desiree?’ she said to herself, weeping. ‘What wicked fairy can have treated me so; and shall I never, never take my own shape again? My only comfort that, in this great forest, full of lions and serpents, my life will be a short one.’

Now the fairy Tulip was as much grieved at the sad fate of the princess as Desiree’s own mother could have been if she had known of it. Still, she could not help feeling that if the king and queen had listened to her advice the girl would by this time be safely in the walls of her new home. However, she loved Desiree too much to let her suffer more than could be helped, and it was she who guided Eglantine to the place where the white doe was standing, cropping the grass which was her dinner.

At the sound of footsteps the pretty creature lifted her head, and when she saw her faithful companion approaching she bounded towards her, and

rubbed her head on Eglantine's shoulder. The maid of honour was surprised; but she was fond of animals, and stroked the white doe tenderly, speaking gently to her all the while. Suddenly the beautiful creature lifted her head, and looked up into Eglantine's face, with tears streaming from her eyes. A thought flashed through her mind, and quick as lightning the girl flung herself on her knees, and lifting the animal's feet kissed them one by one. 'My princess! O my dear princess!' cried she; and again the white doe rubbed her head against her, for thought the spiteful fairy had taken away her power of speech, she had not deprived her of her reason!

All day long the two remained together, and when Eglantine grew hungry she was led by the white doe to a part of the forest where pears and peaches grew in abundance; but, as night came on, the maid of honour was filled with the terrors of wild beasts which had beset the princess during her first night in the forest.

'Is there no hut or cave we could go into?' asked she. But the doe only shook her head; and the two sat down and wept with fright.

The fairy Tulip, who, in spite of her anger, was very soft-hearted, was touched at their distress, and flew quickly to their help.

'I cannot take away the spell altogether,' she said, 'for the Fairy of the Fountain is stronger than I; but I can shorten the time of your punishment, and am able to make it less hard, for as soon as darkness fall you shall resume your own shape.'

To think that by-and-by she would cease to be a white doe—indeed, that she would at once cease to be one during the night—was for the present joy enough for Desiree, and she skipped about on the grass in the prettiest manner.

'Go straight down the path in front of you,' continued the fairy, smiling as she watched her; 'go straight down the path and you will soon reach a little hut where you will find shelter.' And with these words she vanished, leaving her hearers happier than they ever thought they could be again.

An old woman was standing at the door of the hut when Eglantine drew near, with the white doe trotting by her side.

'Good evening!' she said; 'could you give me a night's lodging for myself and my doe?'

‘Certainly I can,’ replied the old woman. And she led them into a room with two little white beds, so clean and comfortable that it made you sleepy even to look at them.

The door had hardly closed behind the old woman when the sun sank below the horizon, and Desiree became a girl again.

‘Oh, Eglantine! what should I have done if you had not followed me,’ she cried. And she flung herself into her friend’s arms in a transport of delight.

Early in the morning Eglantine was awakened by the sound of someone scratching at the door, and on opening her eyes she saw the white doe struggling to get out. The little creature looked up and into her face, and nodded her head as the maid of honour unfastened the latch, but bounded away into the woods, and was lost to sight in a moment.

Meanwhile, the prince and Becasigue were wandering through the wood, till at last the prince grew so tired, that he lay down under a tree, and told Becasigue that he had better go in search of food, and of some place where they could sleep. Becasigue had not gone very far, when a turn of the path brought him face to face with the old woman who was feeding her doves before her cottage.

‘Could you give me some milk and fruit?’ asked he. ‘I am very hungry myself, and, besides, I have left a friend behind me who is still weak from illness.’

‘Certainly I can,’ answered the old woman. ‘But come and sit down in my kitchen while I catch the goat and milk it.’

Becasigue was glad enough to do as he was bid, and in a few minutes the old woman returned with a basket brimming over with oranges and grapes.

‘If your friend has been ill he should not pass the night in the forest,’ said she. ‘I have room in my hut—tiny enough, it is true; but better than nothing, and to that you are both heartily welcome.’

Becasigue thanked her warmly, and as by this time it was almost sunset, he set out to fetch the prince. It was while he was absent that Eglantine and the white doe entered the hut, and having, of course, no idea that in the very next room was the man whose childish impatience had been the cause of all their troubles.

In spite of his fatigue, the prince slept badly, and directly it was light he rose, and bidding Becasigue remain where he was, as he wished to be alone, he strolled out into the forest. He walked on slowly, just as his fancy led him, till, suddenly, he came to a wide open space, and in the middle was the white doe quietly eating her breakfast. She bounded off at the sight of a man, but not before the prince, who had fastened on his bow without thinking, had let fly several arrows, which the fairy Tulip took care should do her no harm. But, quickly as she ran, she soon felt her strength failing her, for fifteen years of life in a tower had not taught her how to exercise her limbs.

Luckily, the prince was too weak to follow her far, and a turn of a path brought her close to the hut, where Eglantine was awaiting her. Panting for breath, she entered their room, and flung herself down on the floor.

When it was dark again, and she was once more the princess Desiree, she told Eglantine what had befallen her.

‘I feared the Fairy of the Fountain, and the cruel beasts,’ said she; ‘but somehow I never thought of the dangers that I ran from men. I do not know now what saved me.’

‘You must stay quietly here till the time of your punishment is over,’ answered Eglantine. But when the morning dawned, and the girl turned into a doe, the longing for the forest came over her, and she sprang away as before.

As soon as the prince was awake he hastened to the place where, only the day before, he had found the white doe feeding; but of course she had taken care to go in the opposite direction. Much disappointed, he tried first one green path and then another, and at last, wearied with walking, he threw himself down and went fast asleep.

Just at this moment the white doe sprang out of a thicket near by, and started back trembling when she beheld her enemy lying there. Yet, instead of turning to fly, something bade her go and look at him unseen. As she gazed a thrill ran through her, for she felt that, worn and wasted though he was by illness, it was the face of her destined husband. Gently stooping over him she kissed his forehead, and at her touch he awoke.

For a minute they looked at each other, and to his amazement he recognized the white doe which had escaped him the previous day. But in an instant the animal was aroused to a sense of her danger, and she fled

with all her strength into the thickest part of the forest. Quick as lightning the prince was on her track, but this time it was with no wish to kill or even wound the beautiful creature.

‘Pretty doe! pretty doe! stop! I won’t hurt you,’ cried he, but his words were carried away by the wind.

At length the doe could run no more, and when the prince reached her, she was lying stretched out on the grass, waiting for her death blow. But instead the prince knelt at her side, and stroked her, and bade her fear nothing, as he would take care of her. So he fetched a little water from the stream in his horn hunting cup, then, cutting some branches from the trees, he twisted them into a litter which he covered with moss, and laid the white doe gently on it.

For a long time they remained thus, but when Desiree saw by the way that the light struck the trees, that he sun must be near its setting, she was filled with alarm lest the darkness should fall, and the prince should behold her in her human shape.

‘No, he must not see me for the first time here,’ she thought, and instantly began to plan how to get rid of him. Then she opened her mouth and let her tongue hang out, as if she were dying of thirst, and the prince, as she expected, hastened to the stream to get her some more water.

When he returned, the white doe was gone.

That night Desiree confessed to Eglantine that her pursuer was no other than the prince, and that far from flattering him, the portrait had never done him justice.

‘Is it not hard to meet him in this shape,’ wept she, ‘when we both love each other so much?’ But Eglantine comforted her, and reminded her that in a short time all would be well.

The prince was very angry at the flight of the white doe, for whom he had taken so much trouble, and returning to the cottage he poured out his adventures and his wrath to Becasigue, who could not help smiling.

‘She shall not escape me again,’ cried the prince. ‘If I hunt her every day for a year, I will have her at last.’ And in this frame of mind he went to bed.

When the white doe entered the forest next morning, she had not made up her mind whether she would go and meet the prince, or whether she would shun him, and hide in thickets of which he knew nothing. She

decided that the last plan was the best; and so it would have been if the prince had not taken the very same direction in search of her.

Quite by accident he caught sight of her white skin shining through the bushes, and at the same instant she heard a twig snap under his feet. In a moment she was up and away, but the prince, not knowing how else to capture her, aimed an arrow at her leg, which brought her to the ground.

The young man felt like a murderer as he ran hastily up to where the white doe lay, and did his best to soothe the pain she felt, which, in reality, was the last part of the punishment sent by the Fairy of the Fountain. First he brought her some water, and then he fetched some healing herbs, and having crushed them in his hand, laid them on the wound.

'Ah! what a wretch I was to have hurt you,' cried he, resting her head upon his knees; 'and now you will hate me and fly from me for ever!'

For some time the doe lay quietly where she was, but, as before, she remembered that the hour of her transformation was near. She struggled to her feet, but the prince would not hear of her walking, and thinking the old woman might be able to dress her wound better than he could, he took her in his arms to carry her back to the hut. But, small as she was, she made herself so heavy that, after staggering a few steps under her weight, he laid her down, and tied her fast to a tree with some of the ribbons of his hat. This done he went away to get help.

Meanwhile Eglantine had grown very uneasy at the long absence of her mistress, and had come out to look for her. Just as the prince passed out of sight the fluttering ribbons dance before her eyes, and she descried her beautiful princess bound to a tree. With all her might she worked at the knots, but not a single one could she undo, though all appeared so easy. She was still busy with them when a voice behind her said:

'Pardon me, fair lady, but it is MY doe you are trying to steal!'

'Excuse me, good knight' answered Eglantine, hardly glancing at him, 'but it is MY doe that is tied up here! And if you wish for a proof of it, you can see if she knows me or not. Touch my heart, my little one,' she continued, dropping on her knees. And the doe lifted up its fore-foot and laid it on her side. 'Now put your arms round my neck, and sigh.' And again the doe did as she was bid.

'You are right,' said the prince; 'but it is with sorrow I give her up to you, for though I have wounded her yet I love her deeply.'

To this Eglantine answered nothing; but carefully raising up the doe, she led her slowly to the hut.

Now both the prince and Becasigue were quite unaware that the old woman had any guests besides themselves, and, following afar, were much surprised to behold Eglantine and her charge enter the cottage. They lost no time in questioning the old woman, who replied that she knew nothing about the lady and her white doe, who slept next the chamber occupied by the prince and his friend, but that they were very quiet, and paid her well. Then she went back to her kitchen.

'Do you know,' said Becasigue, when they were alone, 'I am certain that the lady we saw is the maid of honour to the Princess Desiree, whom I met at the palace. And, as her room is next to this, it will be easy to make a small hole through which I can satisfy myself whether I am right or not.'

So, taking a knife out of his pocket, he began to saw away the woodwork. The girls heard the grating noise, but fancying it was a mouse, paid no attention, and Becasigue was left in peace to pursue his work. At length the hole was large enough for him to peep through, and the sight was one to strike him dumb with amazement. He had guessed truly: the tall lady was Eglantine herself; but the other—where had he seen her? Ah! now he knew—it was the lady of the portrait!

Desiree, in a flowing dress of green silk, was lying stretched out upon cushions, and as Eglantine bent over her to bathe the wounded leg, she began to talk:

'Oh! let me die,' cried she, 'rather than go on leading this life. You cannot tell the misery of being a beast all the day, and unable to speak to the man I love, to whose impatience I owe my cruel fate. Yet, even so, I cannot bring myself to hate him.'

These words, low though they were spoken, reached Becasigue, who could hardly believe his ears. He stood silent for a moment; then, crossing to the window out of which the prince was gazing, he took his arm and led him across the room. A single glance was sufficient to show the prince that it was indeed Desiree; and how another had come to the palace bearing her name, at that instant he neither knew nor cared. Stealing on tip-toe from the room, he knocked at the next door, which was opened by Eglantine, who thought it was the old woman bearing their supper.

She started back at the sight of the prince, whom this time she also recognised. But he thrust her aside, and flung himself at the feet of Desiree, to whom he poured out all his heart!

Dawn found them still conversing; and the sun was high in the heavens before the princess perceived that she retained her human form. Ah! how happy she was when she knew that the days of her punishment were over; and with a glad voice she told the prince the tale of her enchantment.

So the story ended well after all; and the fairy Tulip, who turned out to be the old woman of the hut, made the young couple such a wedding feast as had never been seen since the world began. And everybody was delighted, except Cerisette and her mother, who were put in a boat and carried to a small island, where they had to work hard for their living.

THE GIRL-FISH

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[Contes des Fees, par Madame d’Aulnoy.]

Once upon a time there lived, on the bank of a stream, a man and a woman who had a daughter. As she was an only child, and very pretty besides, they never could make up their minds to punish her for her faults or to teach her nice manners; and as for work—she laughed in her mother’s face if she asked her to help cook the dinner or to wash the plates. All the girl would do was to spend her days in dancing and playing with her friends; and for any use she was to her parents they might as well have no daughter at all.

However, one morning her mother looked so tired that even the selfish girl could not help seeing it, and asked if there was anything she was able to do, so that her mother might rest a little.

The good woman looked so surprised and grateful for this offer that the girl felt rather ashamed, and at that moment would have scrubbed down the house if she had been requested; but her mother only begged her to take the fishing-net out to the bank of the river and mend some holes in it, as her father intended to go fishing that night.

The girl took the net and worked so hard that soon there was not a hole to be found. She felt quite pleased with herself, though she had had plenty to amuse her, as everybody who passed by had stopped and had a chat with her. But by this time the sun was high overhead, and she was just folding her net to carry it home again, when she heard a splash behind her, and looking round she saw a big fish jump into the air. Seizing the net with both hands, she flung it into the water where the circles were spreading one behind the other, and, more by luck than skill, drew out the fish.

‘Well, you are a beauty!’ she cried to herself; but the fish looked up to her and said:

‘You had better not kill me, for, if you do, I will turn you into a fish yourself!’

The girl laughed contemptuously, and ran straight in to her mother.

‘Look what I have caught,’ she said gaily; ‘but it is almost a pity to eat it, for it can talk, and it declares that, if I kill it, it will turn me into a fish too.’

‘Oh, put it back, put it back!’ implored the mother. ‘Perhaps it is skilled in magic. And I should die, and so would your father, if anything should happen to you.’

‘Oh, nonsense, mother; what power could a creature like that have over me? Besides, I am hungry, and if I don’t have my dinner soon, I shall be cross.’ And off she went to gather some flowers to stick in her hair.

About an hour later the blowing of a horn told her that dinner was ready.

‘Didn’t I say that fish would be delicious?’ she cried; and plunging her spoon into the dish the girl helped herself to a large piece. But the instant it touched her mouth a cold shiver ran through her. Her head seemed to flatten, and her eyes to look oddly round the corners; her legs and her arms were stuck to her sides, and she gasped wildly for breath. With a mighty bound she sprang through the window and fell into the river, where she soon felt better, and was able to swim to the sea, which was close by.

No sooner had she arrived there than the sight of her sad face attracted the notice of some of the other fishes, and they pressed round her, begging her to tell them her story.

‘I am not a fish at all,’ said the new-comer, swallowing a great deal of salt water as she spoke; for you cannot learn how to be a proper fish all in a moment. ‘I am not a fish at all, but a girl; at least I was a girl a few minutes ago, only—’ And she ducked her head under the waves so that they should not see her crying.

‘Only you did not believe that the fish you caught had power to carry out its threat,’ said an old tunny. ‘Well, never mind, that has happened to all of us, and it really is not a bad life. Cheer up and come with us and see our queen, who lives in a palace that is much more beautiful than any your queens can boast of.’

The new fish felt a little afraid of taking such a journey; but as she was still more afraid of being left alone, she waved her tail in token of consent, and off they all set, hundreds of them together. The people on the rocks and in the ships that saw them pass said to each other:

‘Look what a splendid shoal!’ and had no idea that they were hastening to the queen’s palace; but, then, dwellers on land have so little notion of what goes on in the bottom of the sea! Certainly the little new fish had none. She had watched jelly-fish and nautilus swimming a little way below the surface, and beautiful coloured sea-weeds floating about; but that was all. Now, when she plunged deeper her eyes fell upon strange things.

Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl, inestimable stones, unvalued jewels—all scattered in the bottom of the sea! Dead men’s bones were there also, and long white creatures who had never seen the light, for they mostly dwelt in the clefts of rocks where the sun’s rays could not come. At first our little fish felt as if she were blind also, but by-and-by she began to make out one object after another in the green dimness, and by the time she had swum for a few hours all became clear.

‘Here we are at last,’ cried a big fish, going down into a deep valley, for the sea has its mountains and valleys just as much as the land. ‘That is the palace of the queen of the fishes, and I think you must confess that the emperor himself has nothing so fine.’

‘It is beautiful indeed,’ gasped the little fish, who was very tired with trying to swim as fast as the rest, and beautiful beyond words the palace was. The walls were made of pale pink coral, worn smooth by the waters, and round the windows were rows of pearls; the great doors were standing open, and the whole troop floated into the chamber of audience, where the queen, who was half a woman after all, was seated on a throne made of a green and blue shell.

‘Who are you, and where do you come from?’ said she to the little fish, whom the others had pushed in front. And in a low, trembling voice, the visitor told her story.

‘I was once a girl too,’ answered the queen, when the fish had ended; ‘and my father was the king of a great country. A husband was found for me, and on my wedding-day my mother placed her crown on my head and told me that as long as I wore it I should likewise be queen. For many months I was as happy as a girl could be, especially when I had a little son to play with. But, one morning, when I was walking in my gardens, there came a giant and snatched the crown from my head. Holding me fast, he told me that he intended to give the crown to his daughter, and to enchant my husband the prince, so that he should not know the difference between

us. Since then she has filled my place and been queen in my stead. As for me, I was so miserable that I threw myself into the sea, and my ladies, who loved me, declared that they would die too; but, instead of dying, some wizard, who pitied my fate, turned us all into fishes, though he allowed me to keep the face and body of a woman. And fished we must remain till someone brings me back my crown again!'

'I will bring it back if you tell me what to do!' cried the little fish, who would have promised anything that was likely to carry her up to earth again. And the queen answered:

'Yes, I will tell you what to do.'

She sat silent for a moment, and then went on:

'There is no danger if you will only follow my counsel; and first you must return to earth, and go up to the top of a high mountain, where the giant has built his castle. You will find him sitting on the steps weeping for his daughter, who has just died while the prince was away hunting. At the last she sent her father my crown by a faithful servant. But I warn you to be careful, for if he sees you he may kill you. Therefore I will give you the power to change yourself into any creature that may help you best. You have only to strike your forehead, and call out its name.'

This time the journey to land seemed much shorter than before, and when once the fish reached the shore she struck her forehead sharply with her tail, and cried:

'Deer, come to me!'

In a moment the small, slimy body disappeared, and in its place stood a beautiful beast with branching horns and slender legs, quivering with longing to be gone. Throwing back her head and snuffing the air, she broke into a run, leaping easily over the rivers and walls that stood in her way.

It happened that the king's son had been hunting since daybreak, but had killed nothing, and when the deer crossed his path as he was resting under a tree he determined to have her. He flung himself on his horse, which went like the wind, and as the prince had often hunted the forest before, and knew all the short cuts, he at last came up with the panting beast.

'By your favour let me go, and do not kill me,' said the deer, turning to the prince with tears in her eyes, 'for I have far to run and much to do.'

And as the prince, struck dumb with surprise, only looked at her, the deer cleared the next wall and was soon out of sight.

‘That can’t really be a deer,’ thought the prince to himself, reining in his horse and not attempting to follow her. ‘No deer ever had eyes like that. It must be an enchanted maiden, and I will marry her and no other.’ So, turning his horse’s head, he rode slowly back to his palace.

The deer reached the giant’s castle quite out of breath, and her heart sank as she gazed at the tall, smooth walls which surrounded it. Then she plucked up courage and cried:

‘Ant, come to me!’ And in a moment the branching horns and beautiful shape had vanished, and a tiny brown ant, invisible to all who did not look closely, was climbing up the walls.

It was wonderful how fast she went, that little creature! The wall must have appeared miles high in comparison with her own body; yet, in less time than would have seemed possible, she was over the top and down in the courtyard on the other side. Here she paused to consider what had best be done next, and looking about her she saw that one of the walls had a tall tree growing by it, and in the corner was a window very nearly on a level with the highest branches of the tree.

‘Monkey, come to me!’ cried the ant; and before you could turn round a monkey was swinging herself from the topmost branches into the room where the giant lay snoring.

‘Perhaps he will be so frightened at the sight of me that he may die of fear, and I shall never get the crown,’ thought the monkey. ‘I had better become something else.’ And she called softly: ‘Parrot, come to me!’

Then a pink and grey parrot hopped up to the giant, who by this time was stretching himself and giving yawns which shook the castle. The parrot waited a little, until he was really awake, and then she said boldly that she had been sent to take away the crown, which was not his any longer, now his daughter the queen was dead.

On hearing these words the giant leapt out of bed with an angry roar, and sprang at the parrot in order to wring her neck with his great hands. But the bird was too quick for him, and, flying behind his back, begged the giant to have patience, as her death would be of no use to him.

‘That is true,’ answered the giant; ‘but I am not so foolish as to give you that crown for nothing. Let me think what I will have in exchange!’

And he scratched his huge head for several minutes, for giants' minds always move slowly.

'Ah, yes, that will do!' exclaimed the giant at last, his face brightening. 'You shall have the crown if you will bring me a collar of blue stones from the Arch of St. Martin, in the Great City.'

Now when the parrot had been a girl she had often heard of this wonderful arch and the precious stones and marbles that had been let into it. It sounded as if it would be a very hard thing to get them away from the building of which they formed a part, but all had gone well with her so far, and at any rate she could but try. So she bowed to the giant, and made her way back to the window where the giant could not see her. Then she called quickly:

'Eagle, come to me!'

Before she had even reached the tree she felt herself borne up on strong wings ready to carry her to the clouds if she wished to go there, and seeming a mere speck in the sky, she was swept along till she beheld the Arch of St. Martin far below, with the rays of the sun shining on it. Then she swooped down, and, hiding herself behind a buttress so that she could not be detected from below, she set herself to dig out the nearest blue stones with her beak. It was even harder work than she had expected; but at last it was done, and hope arose in her heart. She next drew out a piece of string that she had found hanging from a tree, and sitting down to rest strung the stones together. When the necklace was finished she hung it round her neck, and called: 'Parrot, come to me!' And a little later the pink and grey parrot stood before the giant.

'Here is the necklace you asked for,' said the parrot. And the eyes of the giant glistened as he took the heap of blue stones in his hand. But for all that he was not minded to give up the crown.

'They are hardly as blue as I expected,' he grumbled, though the parrot knew as well as he did that he was not speaking the truth; 'so you must bring me something else in exchange for the crown you covet so much. If you fail it will cost you not only the crown but you life also.'

'What is it you want now?' asked the parrot; and the giant answered:

'If I give you my crown I must have another still more beautiful; and this time you shall bring me a crown of stars.'

The parrot turned away, and as soon as she was outside she murmured:

‘Toad, come to me!’ And sure enough a toad she was, and off she set in search of the starry crown.

She had not gone far before she came to a clear pool, in which the stars were reflected so brightly that they looked quite real to touch and handle. Stooping down she filled a bag she was carrying with the shining water and, returning to the castle, wove a crown out of the reflected stars. Then she cried as before:

‘Parrot, come to me!’ And in the shape of a parrot she entered the presence of the giant.

‘Here is the crown you asked for,’ she said; and this time the giant could not help crying out with admiration. He knew he was beaten, and still holding the chaplet of stars, he turned to the girl.

‘Your power is greater than mine: take the crown; you have won it fairly!’

The parrot did not need to be told twice. Seizing the crown, she sprang on to the window, crying: ‘Monkey, come to me!’ And to a monkey, the climb down the tree into the courtyard did not take half a minute. When she had reached the ground she said again: ‘Ant, come to me!’ And a little ant at once began to crawl over the high wall. How glad the ant was to be out of the giant’s castle, holding fast the crown which had shrunk into almost nothing, as she herself had done, but grew quite big again when the ant exclaimed:

‘Deer, come to me!’

Surely no deer ever ran so swiftly as that one! On and on she went, bounding over rivers and crashing through tangles till she reached the sea. Here she cried for the last time:

‘Fish, come to me!’ And, plunging in, she swam along the bottom as far as the palace, where the queen and all the fishes gathered together awaiting her.

The hours since she had left had gone very slowly—as they always do to people that are waiting—and many of them had quite given up hope.

‘I am tired of staying here,’ grumbled a beautiful little creature, whose colours changed with every movement of her body, ‘I want to see what is going on in the upper world. It must be months since that fish went away.’

‘It was a very difficult task, and the giant must certainly have killed her or she would have been back long ago,’ remarked another.

‘The young flies will be coming out now,’ murmured a third, ‘and they will all be eaten up by the river fish! It is really too bad!’ When, suddenly, a voice was heard from behind: ‘Look! look! what is that bright thing that is moving so swiftly towards us?’ And the queen started up, and stood on her tail, so excited was she.

A silence fell on all the crowd, and even the grumblers held their peace and gazed like the rest. On and on came the fish, holding the crown tightly in her mouth, and the others moved back to let her pass. On she went right up to the queen, who bent and, taking the crown, placed it on her own head. Then a wonderful thing happened. Her tail dropped away or, rather, it divided and grew into two legs and a pair of the prettiest feet in the world, while her maidens, who were grouped around her, shed their scales and became girls again. They all turned and looked at each other first, and next at the little fish who had regained her own shape and was more beautiful than any of them.

‘It is you who have given us back our life; you, you!’ they cried; and fell to weeping from very joy.

So they all went back to earth and the queen’s palace, and quite forgot the one that lay under the sea. But they had been so long away that they found many changes. The prince, the queen’s husband, had died some years since, and in his place was her son, who had grown up and was king! Even in his joy at seeing his mother again an air of sadness clung to him, and at last the queen could bear it no longer, and begged him to walk with her in the garden. Seated together in a bower of jessamine—where she had passed long hours as a bride—she took her son’s hand and entreated him to tell her the cause of his sorrow. ‘For,’ said she, ‘if I can give you happiness you shall have it.’

‘It is no use,’ answered the prince; ‘nobody can help me. I must bear it alone.’

‘But at least let me share your grief,’ urged the queen.

‘No one can do that,’ said he. ‘I have fallen in love with what I can never marry, and I must get on as best I can.’

‘It may not be as impossible as you think,’ answered the queen. ‘At any rate, tell me.’

There was silence between them for a moment, then, turning away his head, the prince answered gently:

‘I have fallen in love with a beautiful deer!’

‘Ah, if that is all,’ exclaimed the queen joyfully. And she told him in broken words that, as he had guessed, it was no deer but an enchanted maiden who had won back the crown and brought her home to her own people.

‘She is here, in my palace,’ added the queen. ‘I will take you to her.’

But when the prince stood before the girl, who was so much more beautiful than anything he had ever dreamed of, he lost all his courage, and stood with bent head before her.

Then the maiden drew near, and her eyes, as she looked at him, were the eyes of the deer that day in the forest. She whispered softly:

‘By your favour let me go, and do not kill me.’

And the prince remembered her words, and his heart was filled with happiness. And the queen, his mother, watched them and smiled.

THE OWL AND THE EAGLE

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[From Cuentos Populars Catalans, por lo Dr. D. Francisco de S. Maspons y Labros.]

Once upon a time, in a savage country where the snow lies deep for many months in the year, there lived an owl and an eagle. Though they were so different in many ways they became great friends, and at length set up house together, one passing the day in hunting and the other the night. In this manner they did not see very much of each other—and perhaps agreed all the better for that; but at any rate they were perfectly happy, and only wanted one thing, or, rather, two things, and that was a wife for each.

‘I really am too tired when I come home in the evening to clean up the house,’ said the eagle.

‘And I am much too sleepy at dawn after a long night’s hunting to begin to sweep and dust,’ answered the owl. And they both made up their minds that wives they must have.

They flew about in their spare moments to the young ladies of their acquaintance, but the girls all declared they preferred one husband to two. The poor birds began to despair, when, one evening, after they had been for a wonder hunting together, they found two sisters fast asleep on their two beds. The eagle looked at the owl and the owl looked at the eagle.

‘They will make capital wives if they will only stay with us,’ said they. And they flew off to give themselves a wash, and to make themselves smart before the girls awoke.

For many hours the sisters slept on, for they had come a long way, from a town where there was scarcely anything to eat, and felt weak and tired. But by-and-by they opened their eyes and saw the two birds watching them.

‘I hope you are rested?’ asked the owl politely.

‘Oh, yes, thank you,’ answered the girls. ‘Only we are so very hungry. Do you think we could have something to eat?’

‘Certainly!’ replied the eagle. And he flew away to a farmhouse a mile or two off, and brought back a nest of eggs in his strong beak; while the owl, catching up a tin pot, went to a cottage where lived an old woman and her cow, and entering the shed by the window dipped the pot into the pail of new milk that stood there.

The girls were so much delighted with the kindness and cleverness of their hosts that, when the birds inquired if they would marry them and stay there for ever, they accepted without so much as giving it a second thought. So the eagle took the younger sister to wife, and the owl the elder, and never was a home more peaceful than theirs!

All went well for several months, and then the eagle’s wife had a son, while, on the same day, the owl’s wife gave birth to a frog, which she placed directly on the banks of a stream near by, as he did not seem to like the house. The children both grew quickly, and were never tired of playing together, or wanted any other companions.

One night in the spring, when the ice had melted, and the snow was gone, the sisters sat spinning in the house, awaiting their husbands’ return. But long though they watched, neither the owl nor the eagle ever came; neither that day nor the next, nor the next, nor the next. At last the wives gave up all hope of their return; but, being sensible women, they did not sit down and cry, but called their children, and set out, determined to seek the whole world over till the missing husbands were found.

Now the women had no idea in which direction the lost birds had gone, but they knew that some distance off was a thick forest, where good hunting was to be found. It seemed a likely place to find them, or, at any rate, they might hear something of them, and they walked quickly on, cheered by the thought that they were doing something. Suddenly the younger sister, who was a little in front, gave a cry of surprise.

‘Oh! look at that lake!’ she said, ‘we shall never get across it.’

‘Yes we shall,’ answered the elder; ‘I know what to do.’ And taking a long piece of string from her pocket, fastened it into the frog’s mouth, like a bit.

‘You must swim across the lake,’ she said, stooping to put him in, ‘and we will walk across on the line behind you.’ And so they did, till they got to about the middle of the lake, when the frog boy stopped.

‘I don’t like it, and I won’t go any further,’ cried he sulkily. And his mother had to promise him all sorts of nice things before he would go on again.

When at last they reached the other side, the owl’s wife untied the line from the frog’s mouth and told him he might rest and play by the lake till they got back from the forest. Then she and her sister and the boy walked on, with the great forest looming before them. But they had by this time come far and were very tired, and felt glad enough to see some smoke curling up from a little hut in front of them.

‘Let us go in and ask for some water,’ said the eagle’s wife; and in they went.

The inside of the hut was so dark that at first they could see nothing at all; but presently they heard a feeble croak from one corner. But sisters turned to look, and there, tied by wings and feet, and their eyes sunken, were the husbands that they sought. Quick as lightning the wives cut the deer-thongs which bound them; but the poor birds were too weak from pain and starvation to do more than utter soft sounds of joy. Hardly, however, were they set free, than a voice of thunder made the two sisters jump, while the little boy clung tightly round his mother’s neck.

‘What are you doing in my house?’ cried she. And the wives answered boldly that now they had found their husbands they meant to save them from such a wicked witch.

‘Well, I will give you your chance,’ answered the ogress, with a hideous grin; ‘we will see if you can slide down this mountain. If you can reach the bottom of the cavern, you shall have your husbands back again.’ And as she spoke she pushed them before her out of the door to the edge of a precipice, which went straight down several hundreds of feet. Unseen by the witch, the frog’s mother fastened one end of the magic line about her, and whispered to the little boy to hold fast the other. She had scarcely done so when the witch turned round.

‘You don’t seem to like your bargain,’ said she; but the girl answered:

‘Oh, yes, I am quite ready. I was only waiting for you!’ And sitting down she began her slide. On, on, she went, down to such a depth that even the witch’s eyes could not follow her; but she took for granted that the woman was dead, and told the sister to take her place. At that instant, however, the head of the elder appeared above the rock, brought upwards

by the magic line. The witch gave a howl of disgust, and hid her face in her hands; thus giving the younger sister time to fasten the cord to her waist before the ogress looked up.

‘You can’t expect such luck twice,’ she said; and the girl sat down and slid over the edge. But in a few minutes she too was back again, and the witch saw that she had failed, and feared lest her power was going. Trembling with rage though she was, she dared not show it, and only laughed hideously.

‘I sha’n’t let my prisoners go as easily as all that!’ she said. ‘Make my hair grow as thick and as black as yours, or else your husbands shall never see daylight again.’

‘That is quite simple,’ replied the elder sister; ‘only you must do as we did—and perhaps you won’t like the treatment.’

‘If you can bear it, of course I can,’ answered the witch. And so the girls told her they had first smeared their heads with pitch and then laid hot stones upon them.

‘It is very painful,’ said they, ‘but there is no other way that we know of. And in order to make sure that all will go right, one of us will hold you down while the other pours on the pitch.’

And so they did; and the elder sister let down her hair till it hung over the witch’s eyes, so that she might believe it was her own hair growing. Then the other brought a huge stone, and, in short, there was an end of the witch. The sisters were savages who had never seen a missionary.

So when the sisters saw that she was dead they went to the hut, and nursed their husbands till they grew strong. Then they picked up the frog, and all went to make another home on the other side of the great lake.

THE FROG AND THE LION FAIRY

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[From the Journal of the Anthropological Institute.]

Once upon a time there lived a king who was always at war with his neighbours, which was very strange, as he was a good and kind man, quite content with his own country, and not wanting to seize land belonging to other people. Perhaps he may have tried too much to please everybody, and that often ends in pleasing nobody; but, at any rate, he found himself, at the end of a hard struggle, defeated in battle, and obliged to fall back behind the walls of his capital city. Once there, he began to make preparations for a long siege, and the first thing he did was to plan how best to send his wife to a place of security.

The queen, who loved her husband dearly, would gladly have remained with him to share his dangers, but he would not allow it. So they parted, with many tears, and the queen set out with a strong guard to a fortified castle on the outskirts of a great forest, some two hundred miles distant. She cried nearly all the way, and when she arrived she cried still more, for everything in the castle was dusty and old, and outside there was only a gravelled courtyard, and the king had forbidden her to go beyond the walls without at least two soldiers to take care of her.

Now the queen had only been married a few months, and in her own home she had been used to walk and ride all over the hills without any attendants at all; so she felt very dull at her being shut up in this way. However, she bore it for a long while because it was the king’s wish, but when time passed and there were no signs of the war drifting in the direction of the castle, she grew bolder, and sometimes strayed outside the walls, in the direction of the forest.

Then came a dreadful period, when news from the king ceased entirely.

‘He must surely be ill or dead,’ thought the poor girl, who even now was only sixteen. ‘I can bear it no longer, and if I do not get a letter from

him soon I shall leave this horrible place and go back to see what is the matter. Oh! I do wish I had never come away!'

So, without telling anyone what she intended to do, she ordered a little low carriage to be built, something like a sledge, only it was on two wheels—just big enough to hold one person.

'I am tired of being always in the castle,' she said to her attendants; 'and I mean to hunt a little. Quite close by, of course,' she added, seeing the anxious look on their faces. 'And there is no reason that you should not hunt too.'

All the faces brightened at that, for, to tell the truth, they were nearly as dull as their mistress; so the queen had her way, and two beautiful horses were brought from the stable to draw the little chariot. At first the queen took care to keep near the rest of the hunt, but gradually she stayed away longer and longer, and at last, one morning, she took advantage of the appearance of a wild boar, after which her whole court instantly galloped, to turn into a path in the opposite direction.

Unluckily, it did not happen to lead towards the king's palace, where she intended to go, but she was so afraid her flight would be noticed that she whipped up her horses till they ran away.

When she understood what was happening the poor young queen was terribly frightened, and, dropping the reins, clung to the side of the chariot. The horses, thus left without any control, dashed blindly against a tree, and the queen was flung out on the ground, where she lay for some minutes unconscious.

A rustling sound near her at length caused her to open her eyes; before her stood a huge woman, almost a giantess, without any clothes save a lion's skin, which was thrown over her shoulders, while a dried snake's skin was plaited into her hair. In one hand she held a club on which she leaned, and in the other a quiver full of arrows.

At the sight of this strange figure the queen thought she must be dead, and gazing on an inhabitant of another world. So she murmured softly to herself:

'I am not surprised that people are so loth to die when they know that they will see such horrible creatures.' But, low as she spoke, the giantess caught the words, and began to laugh.

‘Oh, don’t be afraid; you are still alive, and perhaps, after all, you may be sorry for it. I am the Lion Fairy, and you are going to spend the rest of your days with me in my palace, which is quite near this. So come along.’ But the queen shrank back in horror.

‘Oh, Madam Lion, take me back, I pray you, to my castle; and fix what ransom you like, for my husband will pay it, whatever it is. But the giantess shook her head.

‘I am rich enough already,’ she answered, ‘but I am often dull, and I think you may amuse me a little.’ And, so saying, she changed her shape into that of a lion, and throwing the queen across her back, she went down the ten thousand steps that led to her palace. The lion had reached the centre of the earth before she stopped in front of a house, lighted with lamps, and built on the edge of a lake of quicksilver. In this lake various huge monsters might be seen playing or fighting—the queen did not know which—and around flew rooks and ravens, uttering dismal croaks. In the distance was a mountain down whose sides waters slowly coursed—these were the tears of unhappy lovers—and nearer the gate were trees without either fruit of flowers, while nettles and brambles covered the ground. If the castle had been gloomy, what did the queen feel about this?

For some days the queen was so much shaken by all she had gone through that she lay with her eyes closed, unable either to move or speak. When she got better, the Lion Fairy told her that if she liked she could build herself a cabin, as she would have to spend her life in that place. At these words the queen burst into tears, and implored her gaoler to put her to death rather than condemn her to such a life; but the Lion Fairy only laughed, and counselled her to try to make herself pleasant, as many worse things might befall her.

‘Is there no way in which I can touch your heart?’ asked the poor girl in despair.

‘Well, if you really wish to please me you will make me a pasty out of the stings of bees, and be sure it is good.’

‘But I don’t see any bees,’ answered the queen, looking round.

‘Oh, no, there aren’t any,’ replied her tormentor; ‘but you will have to find them all the same.’ And, so saying, she went away.

‘After all, what does it matter?’ thought the queen to herself, ‘I have only one life, and I can but lose it.’ And not caring what she did, she left

the palace and seating herself under a yew tree, poured out all her grief.

‘Oh, my dear husband,’ wept she, ‘what will you think when you come to the castle to fetch me and find me gone? Rather a thousand times that you should fancy me dead than imagine that I had forgotten you! Ah, how fortunate that the broken chariot should be lying in the wood, for then you may grieve for me as one devoured by wild beasts. And if another should take my place in your heart—Well, at least I shall never know it.’

She might have continued for long in this fashion had not the voice of a crow directly overhead attracted her attention. Looking up to see what was the matter she beheld, in the dim light, a crow holding a fat frog in his claws, which he evidently intended for his supper. The queen rose hastily from the seat, and striking the bird sharply on the claws with the fan which hung from her side, she forced him to drop the frog, which fell to the round more dead than alive. The crow, furious at his disappointment, flew angrily away.

As soon as the frog had recovered her senses she hopped up to the queen, who was still sitting under the yew. Standing on her hind legs, and bowing low before her, she said gently:

‘Beautiful lady, by what mischance do you come here? You are the only creature that I have seen do a kind deed since a fatal curiosity lured me to this place.’

‘What sort of a frog can you be that knows the language of mortals?’ asked the queen in her turn. ‘But if you do, tell me, I pray, if I alone am a captive, for hitherto I have beheld no one but the monsters of the lake.’

‘Once upon a time they were men and women like yourself,’ answered the frog, ‘but having power in their hands, they used it for their own pleasure. Therefore fate has sent them here for a while to bear the punishment of their misdoings.’

‘But you, friend frog, you are not one of these wicked people, I am sure?’ asked the queen.

‘I am half a fairy,’ replied the frog; ‘but, although I have certain magic gifts, I am not able to do all I wish. And if the Lion Fairy were to know of my presence in her kingdom she would hasten to kill me.’

‘But if you are a fairy, how was it that you were so nearly slain by the crow?’ said the queen, wrinkling her forehead.

‘Because the secret of my power lies in my little cap that is made of rose leaves; but I had laid it aside for the moment, when that horrible crow pounced upon me. Once it is on my head I fear nothing. But let me repeat; had it not been for you I could not have escaped death, and if I can do anything to help you, or soften your hard fate, you have only to tell me.’

‘Alas,’ sighed the queen, ‘I have been commanded by the Lion Fairy to make her a pasty out of the stings of bees, and, as far as I can discover, there are none here; as how should there be, seeing there are no flowers for them to feed on? And, even if there were, how could I catch them?’

‘Leave it to me,’ said the frog, ‘I will manage it for you.’ And, uttering a strange noise, she struck the ground thrice with her foot. In an instant six thousand frogs appeared before her, one of them bearing a little cap.

‘Cover yourselves with honey, and hop round by the beehives,’ commanded the frog, putting on the cap which her friend was holding in her mouth. And turning to the queen, he added:

‘The Lion Fairy keeps a store of bees in a secret place near to the bottom of the ten thousand steps leading into the upper world. Not that she wants them for herself, but they are sometimes useful to her in punishing her victims. However, this time we will get the better of her.’

Just as she had finished speaking the six thousand frogs returned, looking so strange with bees sticking to every part of them that, sad as she felt, the poor queen could not help laughing. The bees were all so stupefied with what they had eaten that it was possible to draw their stings without hunting them. So, with the help of her friend, the queen soon made ready her pasty and carried it to the Lion Fairy.

‘Not enough pepper,’ said the giantess, gulping down large morsels, in order the hide the surprise she felt. ‘Well, you have escaped this time, and I am glad to find I have got a companion a little more intelligent than the others I have tried. Now, you had better go and build yourself a house.’

So the queen wandered away, and picking up a small axe which lay near the door she began with the help of her friend the frog to cut down some cypress trees for the purpose. And not content with that the six thousand froggy servants were told to help also, and it was not long before they had built the prettiest little cabin in the world, and made a bed in one corner of dried ferns which they fetched from the top of the ten thousand steps. It looked soft and comfortable, and the queen was very glad to lie

down upon it, so tired was she with all that had happened since the morning. Scarcely, however, had she fallen asleep when the lake monsters began to make the most horrible noises just outside, while a small dragon crept in and terrified her so that she ran away, which was just what the dragon wanted!

The poor queen crouched under a rock for the rest of the night, and the next morning, when she woke from her troubled dreams, she was cheered at seeing the frog watching by her.

‘I hear we shall have to build you another palace,’ said she. ‘Well, this time we won’t go so near the lake.’ And she smiled with her funny wide mouth, till the queen took heart, and they went together to find wood for the new cabin.

The tiny palace was soon ready, and a fresh bed made of wild thyme, which smelt delicious. Neither the queen nor the frog said anything about it, but somehow, as always happens, the story came to the ears of the Lion Fairy, and she sent a raven to fetch the culprit.

‘What gods or men are protecting you?’ she asked, with a frown. ‘This earth, dried up by a constant rain of sulphur and fire, produces nothing, yet I hear that YOUR bed is made of sweet smelling herbs. However, as you can get flowers for yourself, of course you can get them for me, and in an hour’s time I must have in my room a nosegay of the rarest flowers. If not —! Now you can go.’

The poor queen returned to her house looking so sad that the frog, who was waiting for her, noticed it directly.

‘What is the matter?’ said she, smiling.

‘Oh, how can you laugh!’ replied the queen. ‘This time I have to bring her in an hour a posy of the rarest flowers, and where am I to find them? If I fail I know she will kill me.’

‘Well, I must see if I can’t help you,’ answered the frog. ‘The only person I have made friends with here is a bat. She is a good creature, and always does what I tell her, so I will just lend her my cap, and if she puts it on, and flies into the world, she will bring back all we want. I would go myself, only she will be quicker.’

Then the queen dried her eyes, and waited patiently, and long before the hour had gone by the bat flew in with all the most beautiful and sweetest flowers that grew on the earth. The girl sprang up overjoyed at

the sight, and hurried with them to the Lion Fairy, who was so astonished that for once she had nothing to say.

Now the smell and touch of the flowers had made the queen sick with longing for her home, and she told the frog that she would certainly die if she did not manage to escape somehow.

‘Let me consult my cap,’ said the frog; and taking it off she laid it in a box, and threw in after it a few sprigs of juniper, some capers, and two peas, which she carried under her right leg; she then shut down the lid of the box, and murmured some words which the queen did not catch.

In a few moments a voice was heard speaking from the box.

‘Fate, who rules us all,’ said the voice, ‘forbids your leaving this place till the time shall come when certain things are fulfilled. But, instead, a gift shall be given you, which will comfort you in all your troubles.’

And the voice spoke truly, for, a few days after, when the frog peeped in at the door she found the most beautiful baby in the world lying by the side of the queen.

‘So the cap has kept its word,’ cried the frog with delight. ‘How soft its cheeks are, and what tiny feet it has got! What shall we call it?’

This was a very important point, and needed much discussion. A thousand names were proposed and rejected for a thousand silly reasons. One was another reminded the queen of somebody she did not like; but at length an idea flashed into the queen’s head, and she called out:

‘I know! We will call her Muffette.’

‘That is the very thing,’ shouted the frog, jumping high into the air; and so it was settled.

The princess Muffette was about six months old when the frog noticed that the queen had begun to grow sad again.

‘Why do you have that look in your eyes?’ she asked one day, when she had come in to play with the baby, who could now crawl.

The way they played their game was to let Muffette creep close to the frog, and then for the frog to bound high into the air and alight on the child’s head, or back, or legs, when she always sent up a shout of pleasure. There is no play fellow like a frog; but then it must be a fairy frog, or else you might hurt it, and if you did something dreadful might happen to you. Well, as I have said, our frog was struck with the queen’s sad face, and lost no time in asking her what was the reason.

‘I don’t see what you have to complain of now; Muffette is quite well and quite happy, and even the Lion Fairy is kind to her when she sees her. What is it?’

‘Oh! if her father could only see her!’ broke forth the queen, clasping her hands. ‘Or if I could only tell him all that has happened since we parted. But they will have brought him tidings of the broken carriage, and he will have thought me dead, or devoured by wild beasts. And though he will mourn for me long—I know that well—yet in time they will persuade him to take a wife, and she will be young and fair, and he will forget me.’

And in all this the queen guessed truly, save that nine long years were to pass before he would consent to put another in her place.

The frog answered nothing at the time, but stopped her game and hopped away among the cypress trees. Here she sat and thought and thought, and the next morning she went back to the queen and said:

‘I have come, madam, to make you an offer. Shall I go to the king instead of you, and tell him of your sufferings, and that he has the most charming baby in the world for his daughter? The way is long, and I travel slowly; but, sooner or later, I shall be sure to arrive. Only, are you not afraid to be left without my protection? Ponder the matter carefully; it is for you to decide.’

‘Oh, it needs no pondering,’ cried the queen joyfully, holding up her clasped hands, and making Muffette do likewise, in token of gratitude. But in order that he may know that you have come from me I will send him a letter.’ And pricking her arm, she wrote a few words with her blood on the corner of her handkerchief. Then tearing it off, she gave it to the frog, and they bade each other farewell.

It took the frog a year and four days to mount the ten thousand steps that led to the upper world, but that was because she was still under the spell of a wicked fairy. By the time she reached the top, she was so tired that she had to remain for another year on the banks of a stream to rest, and also to arrange the procession with which she was to present herself before the king. For she knew far too well what was due to herself and her relations, to appear at Court as if she was a mere nobody. At length, after many consultations with her cap, the affair was settled, and at the end of the second year after her parting with the queen they all set out.

First walked her bodyguard of grasshoppers, followed by her maids of honour, who were those tiny green frogs you see in the fields, each one mounted on a snail, and seated on a velvet saddle. Next came the water-rats, dressed as pages, and lastly the frog herself, in a litter borne by eight toads, and made of tortoiseshell. Here she could lie at her ease, with her cap on her head, for it was quite large and roomy, and could easily have held two eggs when the frog was not in it.

The journey lasted seven years, and all this time the queen suffered tortures of hope, though Muffette did her best to comfort her. Indeed, she would most likely have died had not the Lion Fairy taken a fancy that the child and her mother should go hunting with her in the upper world, and, in spite of her sorrows, it was always a joy to the queen to see the sun again. As for little Muffette, by the time she was seven her arrows seldom missed their mark. So, after all, the years of waiting passed more quickly than the queen had dared to hope.

The frog was always careful to maintain her dignity, and nothing would have persuaded her to show her face in public places, or even along the high road, where there was a chance of meeting anyone. But sometimes, when the procession had to cross a little stream, or go over a piece of marshy ground, orders would be given for a halt; fine clothes were thrown off, bridles were flung aside, and grasshoppers, water-rats, even the frog herself, spent a delightful hour or two playing in the mud.

But at length the end was in sight, and the hardships were forgotten in the vision of the towers of the king’s palace; and, one bright morning, the cavalcade entered the gates with all the pomp and circumstance of a royal embassy. And surely no ambassador had ever created such a sensation! Door and windows, even the roofs of houses, were filled with people, whose cheers reached the ears of the king. However, he had no time to attend to such matters just then, as, after nine years, he had at last consented to the entreaties of his courtiers, and was on the eve of celebrating his second marriage.

The frog’s heart beat high when her litter drew up before the steps of the palace, and leaning forward she beckoned to her side one of the guards who were standing in his doorway.

‘I wish to see his Majesty,’ said he.

‘His Majesty is engaged, and can see no one,’ answered the soldier.

‘His Majesty will see ME,’ returned the frog, fixing her eye upon him; and somehow the man found himself leading the procession along the gallery into the Hall of Audience, where the king sat surrounded by his nobles arranging the dresses which everyone was to wear at his marriage ceremony.

All stared in surprise as the procession advanced, and still more when the frog gave one bound from the litter on to the floor, and with another landed on the arm of the chair of state.

‘I am only just in time, sire,’ began the frog; ‘had I been a day later you would have broken your faith which you swore to the queen nine years ago.’

‘Her remembrance will always be dear to me,’ answered the king gently, though all present expected him to rebuke the frog severely for her impertinence. But know, Lady Frog, that a king can seldom do as he wishes, but must be bound by the desires of his subjects. For nine years I have resisted them; now I can do so no longer, and have made choice of the fair young maiden playing at ball yonder.’

‘You cannot wed her, however fair she may be, for the queen your wife is still alive, and sends you this letter written in her own blood,’ said the frog, holding out the square of handkerchief as she spoke. ‘And, what is more, you have a daughter who is nearly nine years old, and more beautiful than all the other children in the world put together.’

The king turned pale when he heard these words, and his hand trembled so that he could hardly read what the queen had written. Then he kissed the handkerchief twice or thrice, and burst into tears, and it was some minutes before he could speak. When at length he found his voice he told his councillors that the writing was indeed that of the queen, and now that he had the joy of knowing she was alive he could, of course, proceed no further with his second marriage. This naturally displeased the ambassadors who had conducted the bride to court, and one of them inquired indignantly if he meant to put such an insult on the princess on the word of a mere frog.

‘I am not a “mere frog,” and I will give you proof of it,’ retorted the angry little creature. And putting on her cap, she cried: Fairies that are my friends, come hither!’ And in a moment a crowd of beautiful creatures, each one with a crown on her head, stood before her. Certainly none could

have guessed that they were the snails, water-rats, and grasshoppers from which she had chosen her retinue.

At a sign from the frog the fairies danced a ballet, with which everyone was so delighted that they begged to have to repeated; but now it was not youths and maidens who were dancing, but flowers. Then these again melted into fountains, whose waters interlaced and, rushing down the sides of the hall, poured out in a cascade down the steps, and formed a river found the castle, with the most beautiful little boats upon it, all painted and gilded.

‘Oh, let us go in them for a sail!’ cried the princess, who had long ago left her game of ball for a sight of these marvels, and, as she was bent upon it, the ambassadors, who had been charged never to lose sight of her, were obliged to go also, though they never entered a boat if they could help it.

But the moment they and the princess had seated themselves on the soft cushions, river and boats vanished, and the princess and the ambassadors vanished too. Instead the snails and grasshoppers and water-rats stood round the frog in their natural shapes.

‘Perhaps,’ said she, ‘your Majesty may now be convinced that I am a fairy and speak the truth. Therefore lose no time in setting in order the affairs of your kingdom and go in search of your wife. Here is a ring that will admit you into the presence of the queen, and will likewise allow you to address unharmed the Lion Fairy, though she is the most terrible creature that ever existed.’

By this time the king had forgotten all about the princess, whom he had only chosen to please his people, and was as eager to depart on his journey as the frog was for him to go. He made one of his ministers regent of the kingdom, and gave the frog everything her heart could desire; and with her ring on his finger he rode away to the outskirts of the forest. Here he dismounted, and bidding his horse go home, he pushed forward on foot.

Having nothing to guide him as to where he was likely to find the entrance of the under-world, the king wandered hither and thither for a long while, till, one day, while he was resting under a tree, a voice spoke to him.

‘Why do you give yourself so much trouble for nought, when you might know what you want to know for the asking? Alone you will never

discover the path that leads to your wife.’

Much startled, the king looked about him. He could see nothing, and somehow, when he thought about it, the voice seemed as if it were part of himself. Suddenly his eyes fell on the ring, and he understood.

‘Fool that I was!’ cried he; ‘and how much precious time have I wasted? Dear ring, I beseech you, grant me a vision of my wife and my daughter!’ And even as he spoke there flashed past him a huge lioness, followed by a lady and a beautiful young maid mounted on fairy horses.

Almost fainting with joy he gazed after them, and then sank back trembling on the ground.

‘Oh, lead me to them, lead me to them!’ he exclaimed. And the ring, bidding him take courage, conducted him safely to the dismal place where his wife had lived for ten years.

Now the Lion Fairy knew beforehand of his expected presence in her dominions, and she ordered a palace of crystal to be built in the middle of the lake of quicksilver; and in order to make it more difficult of approach she let it float whither it would. Immediately after their return from the chase, where the king had seen them, she conveyed the queen and Muffette into the palace, and put them under the guard of the monsters of the lake, who one and all had fallen in love with the princess. They were horribly jealous, and ready to eat each other up for her sake, so they readily accepted the charge. Some stationed themselves round the floating palace, some sat by the door, while the smallest and lightest perched themselves on the roof.

Of course the king was quite ignorant of these arrangements, and boldly entered the palace of the Lion Fairy, who was waiting for him, with her tail lashing furiously, for she still kept her lion’s shape. With a roar that shook the walls she flung herself upon him; but he was on the watch, and a blow from his sword cut off the paw she had put forth to strike him dead. She fell back, and with his helmet still on and his shield up, he set his foot on her throat.

‘Give me back the wife and the child you have stolen from me,’ he said, ‘or you shall not live another second!’

But the fairy answered:

‘Look through the window at that lake and see if it is in my power to give them to you.’ And the king looked, and through the crystal walls he

beheld his wife and daughter floating on the quicksilver. At that sight the Lion Fairy and all her wickedness was forgotten. Flinging off his helmet, he shouted to them with all his might. The queen knew his voice, and she and Muffette ran to the window and held out their hands. Then the king swore a solemn oath that he would never leave the spot without taking them if it should cost him his life; and he meant it, though at the moment he did not know what he was undertaking.

Three years passed by, and the king was no nearer to obtaining his heart's desire. He had suffered every hardship that could be imagined—nettles had been his bed, wild fruits more bitter than gall his food, while his days had been spent in fighting the hideous monsters which kept him from the palace. He had not advanced one single step, nor gained one solitary advantage. Now he was almost in despair, and ready to defy everything and throw himself into the lake.

It was at this moment of his blackest misery that, one night, a dragon who had long watched him from the roof crept to his side.

'You thought that love would conquer all obstacles,' said he; 'well, you have found it hasn't! But if you will swear to me by your crown and sceptre that you will give me a dinner of the food that I never grow tired of, whenever I choose to ask for it, I will enable you to reach your wife and daughter.'

Ah, how glad the king was to hear that! What oath would he not have taken so as to clasp his wife and child in is arms? Joyfully he swore whatever the dragon asked of him; then he jumped on his back, and in another instant would have been carried by the strong wings into the castle if the nearest monsters had not happened to awake and hear the noise of talking and swum to the shore to give battle. The fight was long and hard, and when the king at last beat back his foes another struggle awaited him. At the entrance gigantic bats, owls, and crows set upon him from all sides; but the dragon had teeth and claws, while the queen broke off sharp bits of glass and stabbed and cut in her anxiety to help her husband. At length the horrible creatures flew away; a sound like thunder was heard, the palace and the monsters vanished, while, at the same moment—no one knew how—the king found himself standing with his wife and daughter in the hall of his own home.

The dragon had disappeared with all the rest, and for some years no more was heard or thought of him. Muffette grew every day more beautiful, and when she was fourteen the kings and emperors of the neighbouring countries sent to ask her in marriage for themselves or their sons. For a long time the girl turned a deaf ear to all their prayers; but at length a young prince of rare gifts touched her heart, and though the king had left her free to choose what husband she would, he had secretly hoped that out of all the wooers this one might be his son-in-law. So they were betrothed that some day with great pomp, and then with many tears, the prince set out for his father's court, bearing with him a portrait of Muffette.

The days passed slowly to Muffette, in spite of her brave efforts to occupy herself and not to sadden other people by her complaints. One morning she was playing on her harp in the queen's chamber when the king burst into the room and clasped his daughter in his arms with an energy that almost frightened her.

'Oh, my child! my dear child! why were you ever born?' cried he, as soon as he could speak.

'Is the prince dead?' faltered Muffette, growing white and cold.

'No, no; but—oh, how can I tell you!' And he sank down on a pile of cushions while his wife and daughter knelt beside him.

At length he was able to tell his tale, and a terrible one it was! There had just arrived at court a huge giant, as ambassador from the dragon by whose help the king had rescued the queen and Muffette from the crystal palace. The dragon had been very busy for many years past, and had quite forgotten the princess till the news of her betrothal reached his ears. Then he remembered the bargain he had made with her father; and the more he heard of Muffette the more he felt sure she would make a delicious dish. So he had ordered the giant who was his servant to fetch her at once.

No words would paint the horror of both the queen and the princess as they listened to this dreadful doom. They rushed instantly to the hall, where the giant was awaiting them, and flinging themselves at his feet implored him to take the kingdom if he would, but to have pity on the princess. The giant looked at them kindly, for he was not at all hard-hearted, but said that he had no power to do anything, and that if the princess did not go with him quietly the dragon would come himself.

Several days went by, and the king and queen hardly ceased from entreating the aid of the giant, who by this time was getting weary of waiting.

‘There is only one way of helping you,’ he said at last, ‘and that is to marry the princess to my nephew, who, besides being young and handsome, has been trained in magic, and will know how to keep her safe from the dragon.’

‘Oh, thank you, thank you!’ cried the parents, clasping his great hands to their breasts. ‘You have indeed lifted a load from us. She shall have half the kingdom for her dowry.’ But Muffette stood up and thrust them aside.

‘I will not buy my life with faithlessness,’ she said proudly; ‘and I will go with you this moment to the dragon’s abode.’ And all her father’s and mother’s tears and prayers availed nothing to move her.

The next morning Muffette was put into a litter, and, guarded by the giant and followed by the king and queen and the weeping maids of honour, they started for the foot of the mountain where the dragon had his castle. The way, though rough and stony, seemed all too short, and when they reached the spot appointed by the dragon the giant ordered the men who bore the litter to stand still.

‘It is time for you to bid farewell to your daughter,’ said he; ‘for I see the dragon coming to us.’

It was true; a cloud appeared to pass over the sun, for between them and it they could all discern dimly a huge body half a mile long approaching nearer and nearer. At first the king could not believe that this was the small beast who had seemed so friendly on the shore of the lake of quicksilver but then he knew very little of necromancy, and had never studied the art of expanding and contracting his body. But it was the dragon and nothing else, whose six wings were carrying him forward as fast as might be, considering his great weight and the length of his tail, which had fifty twists and a half.

He came quickly, yes; but the frog, mounted on a greyhound, and wearing her cap on her head, went quicker still. Entering a room where the prince was sitting gazing at the portrait of his betrothed, she cried to him:

‘What are you doing lingering here, when the life of the princess is nearing its last moment? In the courtyard you will find a green horse with

three heads and twelve feet, and by its side a sword eighteen yards long. Hasten, lest you should be too late!’

The fight lasted all day, and the prince’s strength was well-nigh spent, when the dragon, thinking that the victory was won, opened his jaws to give a roar of triumph. The prince saw his chance, and before his foe could shut his mouth again had plunged his sword far down his adversary’s throat. There was a desperate clutching of the claws to the earth, a slow flagging of the great wings, then the monster rolled over on his side and moved no more. Muffette was delivered.

After this they all went back to the palace. The marriage took place the following day, and Muffette and her husband lived happy for ever after.

THE ADVENTURES OF COVAN THE BROWN-HAIRED

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[From Les Contes des Fees, par Madame d'Aulnoy.]

On the shores of the west, where the great hills stand with their feet in the sea, dwelt a goatherd and his wife, together with their three sons and one daughter. All day long the young men fished and hunted, while their sister took out the kids to pasture on the mountain, or stayed at home helping her mother and mending the nets.

For several years they all lived happily together, when one day, as the girl was out on the hill with the kids, the sun grew dark and an air cold as a thick white mist came creeping, creeping up from the sea. She rose with a shiver, and tried to call to her kids, but the voice died away in her throat, and strong arms seemed to hold her.

Loud were the wails in the hut by the sea when the hours passed on and the maiden came not. Many times the father and brothers jumped up, thinking they heard her steps, but in the thick darkness they could scarcely see their own hands, nor could they tell where the river lay, nor where the mountain. One by one the kids came home, and at every bleat someone hurried to open the door, but no sound broke the stillness. Through the night no one slept, and when morning broke and the mist rolled back, they sought the maiden by sea and by land, but never a trace of her could be found anywhere.

Thus a year and a day slipped by, and at the end of it Gorla of the Flocks and his wife seemed suddenly to have grown old. Their sons too were sadder than before, for they loved their sister well, and had never ceased to mourn for her. At length Ardan the eldest spoke and said:

'It is now a year and a day since our sister was taken from us, and we have waited in grief and patience for her to return. Surely some evil has befallen her, or she would have sent us a token to put our hearts at rest;

and I have vowed to myself that my eyes shall not know sleep till, living or dead, I have found her.'

'If you have vowed, then must you keep your vow,' answered Gorla. 'But better had it been if you had first asked your father's leave before you made it. Yet, since it is so, your mother will bake you a cake for you to carry with you on your journey. Who can tell how long it may be?'

So the mother arose and baked not one cake but two, a big one and a little one.

'Choose, my son,' said she. 'Will you have the little cake with your mother's blessing, or the big one without it, in that you have set aside your father and taken on yourself to make a vow?'

'I will have the large cake,' answered the youth; 'for what good would my mother's blessing do for me if I was dying of hunger?' And taking the big cake he went his way.

Straight on he strode, letting neither hill nor river hinder him. Swiftly he walked—swiftly as the wind that blew down the mountain. The eagles and the gulls looked on from their nests as he passed, leaving the deer behind him; but at length he stopped, for hunger had seized on him, and he could walk no more. Trembling with fatigue he sat himself on a rock and broke a piece off his cake.

'Spare me a morsel, Ardan son of Gorla,' asked a raven, fluttering down towards him.

'Seek food elsewhere, O bearer of ill-news,' answered Ardan son of Gorla; 'it is but little I have for myself.' And he stretched himself out for a few moments, then rose to his feet again. On and on went he till the little birds flew to their nests, and the brightness died out of the sky, and a darkness fell over the earth. On and on, and on, till at last he saw a beam of light streaming from a house and hastened towards it.

The door was opened and he entered, but paused when he beheld an old man lying on a bench by the fire, while seated opposite him was a maiden combing out the locks of her golden hair with a comb of silver.

'Welcome, fair youth,' said the old man, turning his head. 'Sit down and warm yourself, and tell me how fares the outer world. It is long since I have seen it.'

'All my news is that I am seeking service,' answered Ardan son of Gorla; 'I have come from far since sunrise, and glad was I to see the rays

of your lamp stream into the darkness.'

'I need someone to herd my three dun cows, which are hornless,' said the old man. 'If, for the space of a year, you can bring them back to me each evening before the sun sets, I will make you payment that will satisfy your soul.'

But here the girl looked up and answered quickly:

'Ill will come of it if he listens to your offer.'

'Counsel unsought is worth nothing,' replied, rudely, Ardan son of Gorla. 'It would be little indeed that I am fit for if I cannot drive three cows out to pasture and keep them safe from the wolves that may come down from the mountains. Therefore, good father, I will take service with you at daybreak, and ask no payment till the new year dawns.'

Next morning the bell of the deer was not heard amongst the fern before the maiden with the hair of gold had milked the cows, and led them in front of the cottage where the old man and Ardan son of Gorla awaited them.

'Let them wander where they will,' he said to his servant, 'and never seek to turn them from their way, for well they know the fields of good pasture. But take heed to follow always behind them, and suffer nothing that you see, and nought that you hear, to draw you into leaving them. Now go, and may wisdom go with you.'

As he ceased speaking he touched one of the cows on her forehead, and she stepped along the path, with the two others one on each side. As he had been bidden, behind them came Ardan son of Gorla, rejoicing in his heart that work so easy had fallen to his lot. At the year's end, thought he, enough money would lie in his pocket to carry him into far countries where his sister might be, and, in the meanwhile, someone might come past who could give him tidings of her.

Thus he spoke to himself, when his eyes fell on a golden cock and a silver hen running swiftly along the grass in front of him. In a moment the words that the old man had uttered vanished from his mind and he gave chase. They were so near that he could almost seize their tails, yet each time he felt sure he could catch them his fingers closed on the empty air. At length he could run no more, and stopped to breathe, while the cock and hen went on as before. Then he remembered the cows, and, somewhat

frightened, turned back to seek them. Luckily they had not strayed far, and were quietly feeding on the thick green grass.

Ardan son of Gorla was sitting under a tree, when he beheld a staff of gold and a staff of silver doubling themselves in strange ways on the meadow in front of him, and starting up he hastened towards them. He followed them till he was tired, but he could not catch them, though they seemed ever within his reach. When at last he gave up the quest his knees trembled beneath him for very weariness, and glad was he to see a tree growing close by lade with fruits of different sorts, of which he ate greedily.

The sun was by now low in the heavens, and the cows left off feeding, and turned their faces home again, followed by Ardan son of Gorla. At the door of their stable the maiden stood awaiting them, and saying nought to their herd, she sat down and began to milk. But it was not milk that flowed into her pail; instead it was filled with a thin stream of water, and as she rose up from the last cow the old man appeared outside.

‘Faithless one, you have betrayed your trust!’ he said to Ardan son of Gorla. ‘Not even for one day could you keep true! Well, you shall have your reward at once, that others may take warning from you.’ And waving his wand he touched with it the chest of the youth, who became a pillar of stone.

Now Gorla of the Flocks and his wife were full of grief that they had lost a son as well as a daughter, for no tidings had come to them of Ardan their eldest born. At length, when two years and two days had passed since the maiden had led her kids to feed on the mountain and had been seen no more, Ruais, second son of Gorla, rose up one morning, and said:

‘Time is long without my sister and Ardan my brother. So I have vowed to seek them wherever they may be.’

And his father answered:

‘Better it had been if you had first asked my consent and that of your mother; but as you have vowed so must you do.’ Then he bade his wife make a cake, but instead she made two, and offered Ruais his choice, as she had done to Ardan. Like Ardan, Ruais chose the large, unblessed cake, and set forth on his way, doing always, though he knew it not, that which Ardan had done; so, needless is it to tell what befell him till he too stood, a

pillar of stone, on the hill behind the cottage, so that all men might see the fate that awaited those who broke their faith.

Another year and a day passed by, when Covan the Brown-haired, youngest son of Gorla of the Flocks, one morning spake to his parents, saying:

‘It is more than three years since my sister left us. My brothers have also gone, no one know whither, and of us four none remains but I. No, therefore, I long to seek them, and I pray you and my mother to place no hindrance in my way.’

And his father answered:

‘Go, then, and take our blessing with you.’

So the wife of Gorla of the Flocks baked two cakes, one large and one small; and Covan took the small one, and started on his quest. In the wood he felt hungry, for he had walked far, and he sat down to eat. Suddenly a voice behind him cried:

‘A bit for me! a bit for me!’ And looking round he beheld the black raven of the wilderness.

‘Yes, you shall have a bit,’ said Covan the Brown-haired; and breaking off a piece he stretched it upwards to the raven, who ate it greedily. Then Covan arose and went forward, till he saw the light from the cottage streaming before him, and glad was he, for night was at hand.

‘Maybe I shall find some work there,’ he thought, ‘and at least I shall gain money to help me in my search; for who knows how far my sister and my brothers may have wandered?’

The door stood open and he entered, and the old man gave him welcome, and the golden-haired maiden likewise. As happened before, he was offered by the old man to herd his cows; and, as she had done to his brothers, the maiden counselled him to leave such work alone. But, instead of answering rudely, like both Ardan and Ruais, he thanked her, with courtesy, though he had no mind to heed her; and he listened to the warnings and words of his new master.

Next day he set forth at dawn with the dun cows in front of him, and followed patiently wherever they might lead him. On the way he saw the gold cock and silver hen, which ran even closer to him than they had done to his brothers. Sorely tempted, he longed to give them chase; but, remembering in time that he had been bidden to look neither to the right

nor to the left, with a mighty effort he turned his eyes away. Then the gold and silver staffs seemed to spring from the earth before him, but this time also he overcame; and though the fruit from the magic tree almost touched his mouth, he brushed it aside and went steadily on.

That day the cows wandered father than ever they had done before, and never stopped till they had reached a moor where the heather was burning. The fire was fierce, but the cows took no heed, and walked steadily through it, Covan the Brown-haired following them. Next they plunged into a foaming river, and Covan plunged in after them, though the water came high above his waist. On the other side of the river lay a wide plain, and here the cows lay down, while Covan looked about him. Near him was a house built of yellow stone, and from it came sweet songs, and Covan listened, and his heart grew light within him.

While he was thus waiting there ran up to him a youth, scarcely able to speak so swiftly had he sped; and he cried aloud:

‘Hasten, hasten, Covan the Brown-haired, for your cows are in the corn, and you must drive them out!’

‘Nay,’ said Covan smiling, ‘it had been easier for you to have driven them out than to come here to tell me.’ And he went on listening to the music.

Very soon the same youth returned and cried with panting breath:

‘Out upon you, Covan son of Gorla, that you stand there agape. For our dogs are chasing your cows, and you must drive them off!’

‘Nay, then,’ answered Covan as before, ‘it had been easier for you to call off your dogs than to come here to tell me.’ And he stayed where he was till the music ceased.

Then he turned to look for the cows, and found them all lying in the place where he had left them; but when they saw Covan they rose up and walked homewards, taking a different path to that they had trod in the morning. This time they passed over a plain so bare that a pin could not have lain there unnoticed, yet Covan beheld with surprise a foal and its mother feeding there, both as fat as if they had pastured on the richest grass. Further on they crossed another plain, where the grass was thick and green, but on it were feeding a foal and its mother, so lean that you could have counted their ribs. And further again the path led them by the shores of a lake whereon were floating two boats; one full of gay and happy

youths, journeying to the land of the Sun, and another with grim shapes clothed in black, travelling to the land of Night.

‘What can these things mean?’ said Covan to himself, as he followed his cows.

Darkness now fell, the wind howled, and torrents of rain poured upon them. Covan knew not how far they might yet have to go, or indeed if they were on the right road. He could not even see his cows, and his heart sank lest, after all, he should have failed to bring them safely back. What was he to do?

He waited thus, for he could go neither forwards nor backwards, till he felt a great friendly paw laid on his shoulder.

‘My cave is just here,’ said the Dog of Maol-mor, of whom Covan son of Gorla had heard much. ‘Spend the night here, and you shall be fed on the flesh of lamb, and shall lay aside three-thirds of thy weariness.’

And Covan entered, and supped, and slept, and in the morning rose up a new man.

‘Farewell, Covan,’ said the Dog of Maol-mor. ‘May success go with you, for you took what I had to give and did not mock me. So, when danger is your companion, wish for me, and I will not fail you.’

At these words the Dog of Maol-mor disappeared into the forest, and Covan went to seek his cows, which were standing in the hollow where the darkness had come upon them.

At the sight of Covan the Brown-haired they walked onwards, Covan following ever behind them, and looking neither to the right nor to the left. All that day they walked, and when night fell they were in a barren plain, with only rocks for shelter.

‘We must rest here as best we can,’ spoke Covan to the cows. And they bowed their heads and lay down in the place where they stood. Then came the black raven of Corri-nan-creag, whose eyes never closed, and whose wings never tired; and he fluttered before the face of Covan and told him that he knew of a cranny in the rock where there was food in plenty, and soft moss for a bed.

‘Go with me thither,’ he said to Covan, ‘and you shall lay aside three-thirds of your weariness, and depart in the morning refreshed,’ and Covan listened thankfully to his words, and at dawn he rose up to seek his cows.

‘Farewell!’ cried the black raven. ‘You trusted me, and took all I had to offer in return for the food you once gave me. So if in time to come you need a friend, wish for me, and I will not fail you.’

As before, the cows were standing in the spot where he had left them, ready to set out. All that day they walked, on and on, and on, Covan son of Gorla walking behind them, till night fell while they were on the banks of a river.

‘We can go no further,’ spake Covan to the cows. And they began to eat the grass by the side of the stream, while Covan listened to them and longed for some supper also, for they had travelled far, and his limbs were weak under him. Then there was a swish of water at his feet, and out peeped the head of the famous otter Doran-donn of the stream.

‘Trust to me and I will find you warmth and shelter,’ said Doran-donn; ‘and for food fish in plenty.’ And Covan went with him thankfully, and ate and rested, and laid aside three-thirds of his weariness. At sunrise he left his bed of dried sea-weed, which had floated up with the tide, and with a grateful heart bade farewell to Doran-donn.

‘Because you trusted me and took what I had to offer, you have made me your friend, Covan,’ said Doran-donn. ‘And if you should be in danger, and need help from one who can swim a river or dive beneath a wave, call to me and I will come to you.’ Then he plunged into the stream, and was seen no more.

The cows were standing ready in the place where Covan had left them, and they journeyed on all that day, till, when night fell, they reached the cottage. Joyful indeed was the old man as the cows went into their stables, and he beheld the rich milk that flowed into the pail of the golden-haired maiden with the silver comb.

‘You have done well indeed,’ he said to Covan son of Gorla. ‘And now, what would you have as a reward?’

‘I want nothing for myself,’ answered Covan the Brown-haired; ‘but I ask you to give me back my brothers and my sister who have been lost to us for three years past. You are wise and know the lore of fairies and of witches; tell me where I can find them, and what I must do to bring them to life again.’

The old man looked grave at the words of Covan.

‘Yes, truly I know where they are,’ answered he, ‘and I say not that they may not be brought to life again. But the perils are great—too great for you to overcome.’

‘Tell me what they are,’ said Covan again, ‘and I shall know better if I may overcome them.’

‘Listen, then, and judge. In the mountain yonder there dwells a roe, white of foot, with horns that branch like the antlers of a deer. On the lake that leads to the land of the Sun floats a duck whose body is green and whose neck is of gold. In the pool of Corri-Bui swims a salmon with a skin that shines like silver, and whose gills are red—bring them all to me, and then you shall know where dwell your brothers and your sister!’

‘To-morrow at cock-crow I will begone!’ answered Covan.

The way to the mountain lay straight before him, and when he had climbed high he caught sight of the roe with the white feet and the spotted sides, on the peak in front.

Full of hope he set out in pursuit of her, but by the time he had reached that peak she had left it and was to be seen on another. And so it always happened, and Covan’s courage had well-nigh failed him, when the thought of the Dog of Maol-mor darted into his mind.

‘Oh, that he was here!’ he cried. And looking up he saw him.

‘Why did you summon me?’ asked the Dog of Maol-mor. And when Covan had told him of his trouble, and how the roe always led him further and further, the Dog only answered:

‘Fear nothing; I will soon catch her for you.’ And in a short while he laid the roe unhurt at Covan’s feet.

‘What will you wish me to do with her?’ said the Dog. And Covan answered:

‘The old man bade me bring her, and the duck with the golden neck, and the salmon with the silver sides, to his cottage; if I shall catch them, I know not. But carry you the roe to the back of the cottage, and tether her so that she cannot escape.’

‘It shall be done,’ said the Dog of Maol-mor.

Then Covan sped to the lake which led to the land of the Sun, where the duck with the green body and the golden neck was swimming among the water-lilies.

‘Surely I can catch him, good swimmer as I am,’ to himself. But, if he could swim well, the duck could swim better, and at length his strength failed him, and he was forced to seek the land.

‘Oh that the black raven were here to help me!’ he thought to himself. And in a moment the black raven was perched on his shoulder.

‘How can I help you?’ asked the raven. And Covan answered:

‘Catch me the green duck that floats on the water.’ And the raven flew with his strong wings and picked him up in his strong beak, and in another moment the bird was laid at the feet of Covan.

This time it was easy for the young man to carry his prize, and after giving thanks to the raven for his aid, he went on to the river.

In the deep dark pool of which the old man had spoken the silver-sided salmon was lying under a rock.

‘Surely I, good fisher as I am, can catch him,’ said Covan son of Gorla. And cutting a slender pole from a bush, he fastened a line to the end of it. But cast with what skill he might, it availed nothing, for the salmon would not even look at the bait.

‘I am beaten at last, unless the Doran-donn can deliver me,’ he cried. And as he spoke there was a swish of the water, and the face of the Doran-donn looked up at him.

‘O catch me, I pray you, that salmon under the rock!’ said Covan son of Gorla. And the Doran-donn dived, and laying hold of the salmon by his tail, bore it back to the place where Covan was standing.

‘The roe, and the duck, and the salmon are here,’ said Covan to the old man, when he reached the cottage. And the old man smiled on him and bade him eat and drink, and after he hungered no more, he would speak with him.

And this was what the old man said: ‘You began well, my son, so things have gone well with you. You set store by your mother’s blessing, therefore you have been blest. You gave food to the raven when it hungered, you were true to the promise you had made to me, and did not suffer yourself to be turned aside by vain shows. You were skilled to perceive that the boy who tempted you to leave the temple was a teller of false tales, and took with a grateful heart what the poor had to offer you. Last of all, difficulties gave you courage, instead of lending you despair.

And now, as to your reward, you shall in truth take your sister home with you, and your brothers I will restore to life; but idle and unfaithful as they are their lot is to wander for ever. And so farewell, and may wisdom be with you.’

‘First tell me your name?’ asked Covan softly.

‘I am the Spirit of Age,’ said the old man.

THE PRINCESS BELLA-FLOR

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[Taken from a Celtic Story. Translated by Doctor Macleod Clarke.]

Once upon a time there lived a man who had two sons. When they grew up the elder went to seek his fortune in a far country, and for many years no one heard anything about him. Meanwhile the younger son stayed at home with his father, who died at last in a good old age, leaving great riches behind him.

For some time the son who stayed at home spent his father's wealth freely, believing that he alone remained to enjoy it. But, one day, as he was coming down stairs, he was surprised to see a stranger enter the hall, looking about as if the house belonged to him.

'Have you forgotten me?' asked the man.

'I can't forget a person I have never known,' was the rude answer.

'I am your brother,' replied the stranger, 'and I have returned home without the money I hoped to have made. And, what is worse, they tell me in the village that my father is dead. I would have counted my lost gold as nothing if I could have seen him once more.'

'He died six months ago,' said the rich brother, 'and he left you, as your portion, the old wooden chest that stands in the loft. You had better go there and look for it; I have no more time to waste.' And he went his way.

So the wanderer turned his steps to the loft, which was at the top of the storehouse, and there he found the wooden chest, so old that it looked as if it were dropping to pieces.

'What use is this old thing to me?' he said to himself. 'Oh, well, it will serve to light a fire at which I can warm myself; so things might be worse after all.'

Placing the chest on his back, the man, whose name was Jose, set out for his inn, and, borrowing a hatchet, began to chop up the box. In doing so

he discovered a secret drawer, and in it lay a paper. He opened the paper, not knowing what it might contain, and was astonished to find that it was the acknowledgment of a large debt that was owing to his father. Putting the precious writing in his pocket, he hastily inquired of the landlord where he could find the man whose name was written inside, and he ran out at once in search of him.

The debtor proved to be an old miser, who lived at the other end of the village. He had hoped for many months that the paper he had written had been lost or destroyed, and, indeed, when he saw it, was very unwilling to pay what he owed. However, the stranger threatened to drag him before the king, and when the miser saw that there was no help for it he counted out the coins one by one. The stranger picked them up and put them in his pocket, and went back to his inn feeling that he was now a rich man.

A few weeks after this he was walking through the streets of the nearest town, when he met a poor woman crying bitterly. He stopped and asked her what was the matter, and she answered between her sobs that her husband was dying, and, to make matters worse, a creditor whom he could not pay was anxious to have him taken to prison.

‘Comfort yourself,’ said the stranger kindly; ‘they shall neither send your husband to prison nor sell your goods. I will not only pay his debts but, if he dies, the cost of his burial also. And now go home, and nurse him as well as you can.’

And so she did; but, in spite of her care, the husband died, and was buried by the stranger. But everything cost more than he expected, and when all was paid he found that only three gold pieces were left.

‘What am I to do now?’ said he to himself. ‘I think I had better go to court, and enter into the service of the king.’

At first he was only a servant, who carried the king the water for his bath, and saw that his bed was made in a particular fashion. But he did his duties so well that his master soon took notice of him, and in a short time he rose to be a gentleman of the bedchamber.

Now, when this happened the younger brother had spent all the money he had inherited, and did not know how to make any for himself. He then bethought him of the king’s favourite, and went whining to the palace to beg that his brother, whom he had so ill-used, would give him his protection, and find him a place. The elder, who was always ready to help

everyone spoke to the king on his behalf, and the next day the young man took up is work at court.

Unfortunately, the new-comer was by nature spiteful and envious, and could not bear anyone to have better luck than himself. By dint of spying through keyholes and listening at doors, he learned that the king, old and ugly though he was, had fallen in love with the Princess Bella-Flor, who would have nothing to say to him, and had hidden herself in some mountain castle, no one knew where.

‘That will do nicely,’ thought the scoundrel, rubbing his hands. ‘It will be quite easy to get the king to send my brother in search of her, and if he returns without finding her, his head will be the forfeit. Either way, he will be out of MY path.’

So he went at once to the Lord High Chamberlain and craved an audience of the king, to whom he declared he wished to tell some news of the highest importance. The king admitted him into the presence chamber without delay, and bade him state what he had to say, and to be quick about it.

‘Oh, sire! the Princess Bella-Flor—’ answered the man, and then stopped as if afraid.

‘What of the Princess Bella-Flor?’ asked the king impatiently.

‘I have heard—it is whispered at court—that your majesty desires to know where she lies in hiding.’

‘I would give half my kingdom to the man who will bring her to me,’ cried the king, eagerly. ‘Speak on, knave; has a bird of the air revealed to you the secret?’

‘It is not I, but my brother, who knows,’ replied the traitor; ‘if your majesty would ask him—’ But before the words were out of his mouth the king had struck a blow with his sceptre on a golden plate that hung on the wall.

‘Order Jose to appear before me instantly,’ he shouted to the servant who ran to obey his orders, so great was the noise his majesty had made; and when Jose entered the hall, wondering what in the world could be the matter, the king was nearly dumb from rage and excitement.

‘Bring me the Princess Bella-Flor this moment,’ stammered he, ‘for if you return without her I will have you drowned!’ And without another word he left the hall, leaving Jose staring with surprise and horror.

‘How can I find the Princess Bella-Flor when I have never even seen her?’ thought he. ‘But it is no use staying here, for I shall only be put to death.’ And he walked slowly to the stables to choose himself a horse.

There were rows upon rows of fine beasts with their names written in gold above their stalls, and Jose was looking uncertainly from one to the other, wondering which he should choose, when an old white horse turned its head and signed to him to approach.

‘Take me,’ it said in a gentle whisper, ‘and all will go well.’

Jose still felt so bewildered with the mission that the king had given him that he forgot to be astonished at hearing a horse talk. Mechanically he laid his hand on the bridle and led the white horse out of the stable. He was about to mount on his back, when the animal spoke again:

‘Pick up those three loaves of bread which you see there, and put them in your pocket.’

Jose did as he was told, and being in a great hurry to get away, asked no questions, but swung himself into the saddle.

They rode far without meeting any adventures, but at length they came to an ant-hill, and the horse stopped.

‘Crumble those three loaves for the ants,’ he said. But Jose hesitated.

‘Why, we may want them ourselves!’ answered he.

‘Never mind that; give them to the ants all the same. Do not lose a chance of helping others.’ And when the loaves lay in crumbs on the road, the horse galloped on.

By-and-by they entered a rocky pass between two mountains, and here they saw an eagle which had been caught in a hunter’s net.

‘Get down and cut the meshes of the net, and set the poor bird free,’ said the horse.

‘But it will take so long,’ objected Jose, ‘and we may miss the princess.’

‘Never mind that; do not lose a chance of helping others,’ answered the horse. And when the meshes were cut, and the eagle was free, the horse galloped on.

The had ridden many miles, and at last they came to a river, where they beheld a little fish lying gasping on the sand, and the horse said:

‘Do you see that little fish? It will die if you do not put it back in the water.’

‘But, really, we shall never find the Princess Bella-Flor if we waste our time like this!’ cried Jose.

‘We never waste time when we are helping others,’ answered the horse. And soon the little fish was swimming happily away.

A little while after they reached a castle, which was built in the middle of a very thick wood, and right in front was the Princess Bella-Flor feeding her hens.

‘Now listen,’ said the horse. ‘I am going to give all sorts of little hops and skips, which will amuse the Princess Bella-Flor. Then she will tell you that she would like to ride a little way, and you must help her to mount. When she is seated I shall begin to neigh and kick, and you must say that I have never carried a woman before, and that you had better get up behind so as to be able to manage me. Once on my back we will go like the wind to the king’s palace.’

Jose did exactly as the horse told him, and everything fell out as the animal prophesied; so that it was not until they were galloping breathlessly towards the palace that the princess knew that she was taken captive. She said nothing, however, but quietly opened her apron which contained the bran for the chickens, and in a moment it lay scattered on the ground.

‘Oh, I have let fall my bran!’ cried she; ‘please get down and pick it up for me.’ But Jose only answered:

‘We shall find plenty of bran where we are going.’ And the horse galloped on.

They were now passing through a forest, and the princess took out her handkerchief and threw it upwards, so that it stuck in one of the topmost branches of a tree.

‘Dear me; how stupid! I have let my handkerchief blow away,’ said she. ‘Will you climb up and get it for me?’ But Jose answered:

‘We shall find plenty of handkerchiefs where we are going.’ And the horse galloped on.

After the wood they reached a river, and the princess slipped a ring off her finger and let it roll into the water.

‘How careless of me,’ gasped she, beginning to sob. ‘I have lost my favourite ring; DO stop for a moment and look if you can see it.’ But Jose answered:

‘You will find plenty of rings where you are going.’ And the horse galloped on.

At last they entered the palace gates, and the king’s heart bounded with joy at beholding his beloved Princess Bella-Flor. But the princess brushed him aside as if he had been a fly, and locked herself into the nearest room, which she would not open for all his entreaties.

‘Bring me the three things I lost on the way, and perhaps I may think about it,’ was all she would say. And, in despair, the king was driven to take counsel of Jose.

‘There is no remedy that I can see,’ said his majesty, ‘but that you, who know where they are, should go and bring them back. And if you return without them I will have you drowned.’

Poor Jose was much troubled at these words. He thought that he had done all that was required of him, and that his life was safe. However, he bowed low, and went out to consult his friend the horse.

‘Do not vex yourself,’ said the horse, when he had heard the story; ‘jump up, and we will go and look for the things.’ And Jose mounted at once.

They rode on till they came to the ant-hill, and then the horse asked:

‘Would you like to have the bran?’

‘What is the use of liking?’ answered Jose.

‘Well, call the ants, and tell them to fetch it for you; and, if some of it has been scattered by the wind, to bring in its stead the grains that were in the cakes you gave them.’ Jose listened in surprise. He did not much believe in the horse’s plan; but he could not think of anything better, so he called to the ants, and bade them collect the bran as fast as they could.

Then he saw under a tree and waited, while his horse cropped the green turf.

‘Look there!’ said the animal, suddenly raising its head; and Jose looked behind him and saw a little mountain of bran, which he put into a bag that was hung over his saddle.

‘Good deeds bear fruit sooner or later,’ observed the horse; ‘but mount again, as we have far to go.’

When they arrived at the tree, they saw the handkerchief fluttering like a flag from the topmost branch, and Jose’s spirits sank again.

‘How am I to get that handkerchief?’ cried he; ‘why I should need Jacob’s ladder!’ But the horse answered:

‘Do not be frightened; call to the eagle you set free from the net, he will bring it to you.’

So Jose called to the eagle, and the eagle flew to the top of the tree and brought back the handkerchief in its beak. Jose thanked him, and vaulting on his horse they rode on to the river.

A great deal of rain had fallen in the night, and the river, instead of being clear as it was before, was dark and troubled.

‘How am I to fetch the ring from the bottom of this river when I do not know exactly where it was dropped, and cannot even see it?’ asked Jose. But the horse answered: ‘Do not be frightened; call the little fish whose life you saved, and she will bring it to you.’

So he called to the fish, and the fish dived to the bottom and slipped behind big stones, and moved little ones with its tail till it found the ring, and brought it to Jose in its mouth.

Well pleased with all he had done, Jose returned to the palace; but when the king took the precious objects to Bella-Flor, she declared that she would never open her door till the bandit who had carried her off had been fried in oil.

‘I am very sorry,’ said the king to Jose, ‘I really would rather not; but you see I have no choice.’

While the oil was being heated in the great caldron, Jose went to the stables to inquire of his friend the horse if there was no way for him to escape.

‘Do not be frightened,’ said the horse. ‘Get on my back, and I will gallop till my whole body is wet with perspiration, then rub it all over your skin, and no matter how hot the oil may be you will never feel it.’

Jose did not ask any more questions, but did as the horse bade him; and men wondered at his cheerful face as they lowered him into the caldron of boiling oil. He was left there till Bella-Flor cried that he must be cooked enough. Then out came a youth so young and handsome, that everyone fell in love with him, and Bella-Flor most of all.

As for the old king, he saw that he had lost the game; and in despair he flung himself into the caldron, and was fried instead of Jose. Then Jose was proclaimed king, on condition that he married Bella-Flor which he

promised to do the next day. But first he went to the stables and sought out the horse, and said to him: ‘It is to you that I owe my life and my crown. Why have you done all this for me?’

And the horse answered: ‘I am the soul of that unhappy man for whom you spent all your fortune. And when I saw you in danger of death I begged that I might help you, as you had helped me. For, as I told you, Good deeds bear their own fruit!’

THE BIRD OF TRUTH

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[From Cuentos, Oraciones, y Adivinas, por Fernan Caballero.]

Once upon a time there lived a poor fisher who built a hut on the banks of a stream which, shunning the glare of the sun and the noise of the towns, flowed quietly past trees and under bushes, listening to the songs of the birds overhead.

One day, when the fisherman had gone out as usual to cast his nets, he saw borne towards him on the current a cradle of crystal. Slipping his net quickly beneath it he drew it out and lifted the silk coverlet. Inside, lying on a soft bed of cotton, were two babies, a boy and a girl, who opened their eyes and smiled at him. The man was filled with pity at the sight, and throwing down his lines he took the cradle and the babies home to his wife.

The good woman flung up her hands in despair when she beheld the contents of the cradle.

‘Are not eight children enough,’ she cried, ‘without bringing us two more? How do you think we can feed them?’

‘You would not have had me leave them to die of hunger,’ answered he, ‘or be swallowed up by the waves of the sea? What is enough for eight is also enough for ten.’

The wife said no more; and in truth her heart yearned over the little creatures. Somehow or other food was never lacking in the hut, and the children grew up and were so good and gentle that, in time, their foster-parents loved them as well or better than their own, who were quarrelsome and envious. It did not take the orphans long to notice that the boys did not like them, and were always playing tricks on them, so they used to go away by themselves and spend whole hours by the banks of the river. Here they would take out the bits of bread they had saved from their breakfasts and crumble them for the birds. In return, the birds taught them many

things: how to get up early in the morning, how to sing, and how to talk their language, which very few people know.

But though the little orphans did their best to avoid quarrelling with their foster-brothers, it was very difficult always to keep the peace. Matters got worse and worse till, one morning, the eldest boy said to the twins:

‘It is all very well for you to pretend that you have such good manners, and are so much better than we, but we have at least a father and mother, while you have only got the river, like the toads and the frogs.’

The poor children did not answer the insult; but it made them very unhappy. And they told each other in whispers that they could not stay there any longer, but must go into the world and seek their fortunes.

So next day they arose as early as the birds and stole downstairs without anybody hearing them. One window was open, and they crept softly out and ran to the side of the river. Then, feeling as if they had found a friend, they walked along its banks, hoping that by-and-by they should meet some one to take care of them.

The whole of that day they went steadily on without seeing a living creature, till, in the evening, weary and footsore, they saw before them a small hut. This raised their spirits for a moment; but the door was shut, and the hut seemed empty, and so great was their disappointment that they almost cried. However, the boy fought down his tears, and said cheerfully:

‘Well, at any rate here is a bench where we can sit down, and when we are rested we will think what is best to do next.’

Then they sat down, and for some time they were too tired even to notice anything; but by-and-by they saw that under the tiles of the roof a number of swallows were sitting, chattering merrily to each other. Of course the swallows had no idea that the children understood their language, or they would not have talked so freely; but, as it was, they said whatever came into their heads.

‘Good evening, my fine city madam,’ remarked a swallow, whose manners were rather rough and countryfied to another who looked particularly distinguished. ‘Happy, indeed, are the eyes that behold you! Only think of your having returned to your long-forgotten country friends, after you have lived for years in a palace!’

‘I have inherited this nest from my parents,’ replied the other, ‘and as they left it to me I certainly shall make it my home. But,’ she added politely, ‘I hope that you and all your family are well?’

‘Very well indeed, I am glad to say. But my poor daughter had, a short time ago, such bad inflammation in her eyes that she would have gone blind had I not been able to find the magic herb, which cured her at once.’

‘And how is the nightingale singing? Does the lark soar as high as ever? And does the linnet dress herself as smartly?’ But here the country swallow drew herself up.

‘I never talk gossip,’ she said severely. ‘Our people, who were once so innocent and well-behaved, have been corrupted by the bad examples of men. It is a thousand pities.’

‘What! innocence and good behaviour are not to be met with among birds, nor in the country! My dear friend, what are you saying?’

‘The truth and nothing more. Imagine, when we returned here, we met some linnets who, just as the spring and the flowers and the long days had come, were setting out for the north and the cold? Out of pure compassion we tried to persuade them to give up this folly; but they only replied with the utmost insolence.’

‘How shocking!’ exclaimed the city swallow.

‘Yes, it was. And worse than that, the crested lark, that was formerly so timid and shy, is now no better than a thief, and steals maize and corn whenever she can find them.’

‘I am astonished at what you say.’

‘You will be more astonished when I tell you that on my arrival here for the summer I found my nest occupied by a shameless sparrow! “This is my nest,” I said. “Yours?” he answered, with a rude laugh. “Yes, mine; my ancestors were born here, and my sons will be born here also.” And at that my husband set upon him and threw him out of the nest. I am sure nothing of this sort ever happens in a town.’

‘Not exactly, perhaps. But I have seen a great deal—if you only knew!’

‘Oh! do tell us! do tell us!’ cried they all. And when they had settled themselves comfortably, the city swallow began:

‘You must know, then that our king fell in love with the youngest daughter of a tailor, who was as good and gentle as she was beautiful. His nobles hoped that he would have chosen a queen from one of their

daughters, and tried to prevent the marriage; but the king would not listen to them, and it took place. Not many months later a war broke out, and the king rode away at the head of his army, while the queen remained behind, very unhappy at the separation. When peace was made, and the king returned, he was told that his wife had had two babies in his absence, but that both were dead; that she herself had gone out of her mind and was obliged to be shut up in a tower in the mountains, where, in time, the fresh air might cure her.'

'And was this not true?' asked the swallows eagerly.

'Of course not,' answered the city lady, with some contempt for their stupidity. 'The children were alive at that very moment in the gardener's cottage; but at night the chamberlain came down and put them in a cradle of crystal, which he carried to the river.

'For a whole day they floated safely, for though the stream was deep it was very still, and the children took no harm. In the morning—so I am told by my friend the kingfisher—they were rescued by a fisherman who lived near the river bank.'

The children had been lying on the bench, listening lazily to the chatter up to this point; but when they heard the story of the crystal cradle which their foster-mother had always been fond of telling them, they sat upright and looked at each other.

'Oh, how glad I am I learnt the birds' language!' said the eyes of one to the eyes of the other.

Meanwhile the swallows had spoken again.

'That was indeed good fortune!' cried they.

'And when the children are grown up they can return to their father and set their mother free.'

'It will not be so easy as you think,' answered the city swallow, shaking her head; 'for they will have to prove that they are the king's children, and also that their mother never went mad at all. In fact, it is so difficult that there is only one way of proving it to the king.'

'And what is that?' cried all the swallows at once. 'And how do you know it?'

'I know it,' answered the city swallow, 'because, one day, when I was passing through the palace garden, I met a cuckoo, who, as I need not tell you, always pretends to be able to see into the future. We began to talk

about certain things which were happening in the palace, and of the events of past years. “Ah,” said he, “the only person who can expose the wickedness of the ministers and show the king how wrong he has been, is the Bird of Truth, who can speak the language of men.”

‘“And where can this bird be found?” I asked.

‘“It is shut up in a castle guarded by a fierce giant, who only sleeps one quarter of an hour out of the whole twenty-four,” replied the cuckoo.

‘And where is this castle?’ inquired the country swallow, who, like all the rest, and the children most of all, had been listening with deep attention.

‘That is just what I don’t know,’ answered her friend. ‘All I can tell you is that not far from here is a tower, where dwells an old witch, and it is she who knows the way, and she will only teach it to the person who promises to bring her the water from the fountain of many colours, which she uses for her enchantments. But never will she betray the place where the Bird of Truth is hidden, for she hates him, and would kill him if she could; knowing well, however, that this bird cannot die, as he is immortal, she keeps him closely shut up, and guarded night and day by the Birds of Bad Faith, who seek to gag him so that his voice should not be heard.’

‘And is there no one else who can tell the poor boy where to find the bird, if he should ever manage to reach the tower?’ asked the country swallow.

‘No one,’ replied the city swallow, ‘except an owl, who lives a hermit’s life in that desert, and he knows only one word of man’s speech, and that is “cross.” So that even if the prince did succeed in getting there, he could never understand what the owl said. But, look, the sun is sinking to his nest in the depths of the sea, and I must go to mine. Good-night, friends, good-night!’

Then the swallow flew away, and the children, who had forgotten both hunger and weariness in the joy of this strange news, rose up and followed in the direction of her flight. After two hours’ walking, they arrived at a large city, which they felt sure must be the capital of their father’s kingdom. Seeing a good-natured looking woman standing at the door of a house, they asked her if she would give them a night’s lodging, and she was so pleased with their pretty faces and nice manners that she welcomed them warmly.

It was scarcely light the next morning before the girl was sweeping out the rooms, and the boy watering the garden, so that by the time the good woman came downstairs there was nothing left for her to do. This so delighted her that she begged the children to stay with her altogether, and the boy answered that he would leave his sisters with her gladly, but that he himself had serious business on hand and must not linger in pursuit of it. So he bade them farewell and set out.

For three days he wandered by the most out-of-the-way paths, but no signs of a tower were to be seen anywhere. On the fourth morning it was just the same, and, filled with despair, he flung himself on the ground under a tree and hid his face in his hands. In a little while he heard a rustling over his head, and looking up, he saw a turtle dove watching him with her bright eyes.

‘Oh dove!’ cried the boy, addressing the bird in her own language, ‘Oh dove! tell me, I pray you, where is the castle of Come-and-never-go?’

‘Poor child,’ answered the dove, ‘who has sent you on such a useless quest?’

‘My good or evil fortune,’ replied the boy, ‘I know not which.’

‘To get there,’ said the dove, ‘you must follow the wind, which to-day is blowing towards the castle.’

The boy thanked her, and followed the wind, fearing all the time that it might change its direction and lead him astray. But the wind seemed to feel pity for him and blew steadily on.

With each step the country became more and more dreary, but at nightfall the child could see behind the dark and bare rocks something darker still. This was the tower in which dwelt the witch; and seizing the knocker he gave three loud knocks, which were echoed in the hollows of the rocks around.

The door opened slowly, and there appeared on the threshold an old woman holding up a candle to her face, which was so hideous that the boy involuntarily stepped backwards, almost as frightened by the troop of lizards, beetles and such creatures that surrounded her, as by the woman herself.

‘Who are you who dare to knock at my door and wake me?’ cried she. ‘Be quick and tell me what you want, or it will be the worse for you.’

‘Madam,’ answered the child, ‘I believe that you alone know the way to the castle of Come-and-never-go, and I pray you to show it to me.’

‘Very good,’ replied the witch, with something that she meant for a smile, ‘but to-day it is late. To-morrow you shall go. Now enter, and you shall sleep with my lizards.’

‘I cannot stay,’ said he. ‘I must go back at once, so as to reach the road from which I started before day dawns.’

‘If I tell you, will you promise me that you will bring me this jar full of the many-coloured water from the spring in the court-yard of the castle?’ asked she. ‘If you fail to keep your word I will change you into a lizard for ever.’

‘I promise,’ answered the boy.

Then the old woman called to a very thin dog, and said to him:

‘Conduct this pig of a child to the castle of Come-and-never-go, and take care that you warn my friend of his arrival.’ And the dog arose and shook itself, and set out.

At the end of two hours they stopped in front of a large castle, big and black and gloomy, whose doors stood wide open, although neither sound nor light gave sign of any presence within. The dog, however, seemed to know what to expect, and, after a wild howl, went on; but the boy, who was uncertain whether this was the quarter of an hour when the giant was asleep, hesitated to follow him, and paused for a moment under a wild olive that grew near by, the only tree which he had beheld since he had parted from the dove. ‘Oh, heaven, help me!’ cried he.

‘Cross! cross!’ answered a voice.

The boy leapt for joy as he recognised the note of the owl of which the swallow had spoken, and he said softly in the bird’s language:

‘Oh, wise owl, I pray you to protect and guide me, for I have come in search of the Bird of Truth. And first I must fill this far with the many-coloured water in the courtyard of the castle.’

‘Do not do that,’ answered the owl, ‘but fill the jar from the spring which bubbles close by the fountain with the many-coloured water. Afterwards, go into the aviary opposite the great door, but be careful not to touch any of the bright-plumaged birds contained in it, which will cry to you, each one, that he is the Bird of Truth. Choose only a small white bird that is hidden in a corner, which the others try incessantly to kill, not

knowing that it cannot die. And, be quick!—for at this very moment the giant has fallen asleep, and you have only a quarter of an hour to do everything.'

The boy ran as fast as he could and entered the courtyard, where he saw the two spring close together. He passed by the many-coloured water without casting a glance at it, and filled the jar from the fountain whose water was clear and pure. He next hastened to the aviary, and was almost deafened by the clamour that rose as he shut the door behind him. Voices of peacocks, voices of ravens, voices of magpies, each claiming to be the Bird of Truth. With steadfast face the boy walked by them all, to the corner, where, hemmed in by a hand of fierce crows, was the small white bird he sought. Putting her safely in his breast, he passed out, followed by the screams of the birds of Bad Faith which he left behind him.

Once outside, he ran without stopping to the witch's tower, and handed to the old woman the jar she had given him.

'Become a parrot!' cried she, flinging the water over him. But instead of losing his shape, as so many had done before, he only grew ten times handsomer; for the water was enchanted for good and not ill. Then the creeping multitude around the witch hastened to roll themselves in the water, and stood up, human beings again.

When the witch saw what was happening, she took a broomstick and flew away.

Who can guess the delight of the sister at the sight of her brother, bearing the Bird of Truth? But although the boy had accomplished much, something very difficult yet remained, and that was how to carry the Bird of Truth to the king without her being seized by the wicked courtiers, who would be ruined by the discovery of their plot.

Soon—no one knew how—the news spread abroad that the Bird of Truth was hovering round the palace, and the courtiers made all sorts of preparations to hinder her reaching the king.

They got ready weapons that were sharpened, and weapons that were poisoned; they sent for eagles and falcons to hunt her down, and constructed cages and boxes in which to shut her up if they were not able to kill her. They declared that her white plumage was really put on to hide her black feathers—in fact there was nothing they did not do in order to

prevent the king from seeing the bird or from paying attention to her words if he did.

As often happens in these cases, the courtiers brought about that which they feared. They talked so much about the Bird of Truth that at last the king heard of it, and expressed a wish to see her. The more difficulties that were put in his way the stronger grew his desire, and in the end the king published a proclamation that whoever found the Bird of Truth should bring her to him without delay.

As soon as he saw this proclamation the boy called his sister, and they hastened to the palace. The bird was buttoned inside his tunic, but, as might have been expected, the courtiers barred the way, and told the child that he could not enter. It was in vain that the boy declared that he was only obeying the king's commands; the courtiers only replied that his majesty was not yet out of bed, and it was forbidden to wake him.

They were still talking, when, suddenly, the bird settled the question by flying upwards through an open window into the king's own room. Alighting on the pillow, close to the king's head, she bowed respectfully, and said:

'My lord, I am the Bird of Truth whom you wished to see, and I have been obliged to approach you in the manner because the boy who brought me is kept out of the palace by your courtiers.'

'They shall pay for their insolence,' said the king. And he instantly ordered one of his attendants to conduct the boy at once to his apartments; and in a moment more the prince entered, holding his sister by the hand.

'Who are you?' asked the king; 'and what has the Bird of Truth to do with you?'

'If it please your majesty, the Bird of Truth will explain that herself,' answered the boy.

And the bird did explain; and the king heard for the first time of the wicked plot that had been successful for so many years. He took his children in his arms, with tears in his eyes, and hurried off with them to the tower in the mountains where the queen was shut up. The poor woman was as white as marble, for she had been living almost in darkness; but when she saw her husband and children, the colour came back to her face, and she was as beautiful as ever.

They all returned in state to the city, where great rejoicings were held. The wicked courtiers had their heads cut off, and all their property was taken away. As for the good old couple, they were given riches and honour, and were loved and cherished to the end of their lives.

THE MINK AND THE WOLF

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[From Cuentos, Oraciones y Adivinas, por Fernan Caballero.]

In a big forest in the north of America lived a quantity of wild animals of all sorts. They were always very polite when they met; but, in spite of that, they kept a close watch one upon the other, as each was afraid of being killed and eaten by somebody else. But their manners were so good that no one would ever had guessed that.

One day a smart young wolf went out to hunt, promising his grandfather and grandmother that he would be sure to be back before bedtime. He trotted along quite happily through the forest till he came to a favourite place of his, just where the river runs into the sea. There, just as he had hoped, he saw the chief mink fishing in a canoe.

‘I want to fish too,’ cried the wolf. But the mink said nothing and pretended not to hear.

‘I wish you would take me into your boat!’ shouted the wolf, louder than before, and he continued to beseech the mink so long that at last he grew tired of it, and paddled to the shore close enough for the wolf to jump in.

‘Sit down quietly at that end or we shall be upset,’ said the mink; ‘and if you care about sea-urchins’ eggs, you will find plenty in that basket. But be sure you eat only the white ones, for the red ones would kill you.’

So the wolf, who was always hungry, began to eat the eggs greedily; and when he had finished he told the mink he thought he would have a nap.

‘Well, then, stretch yourself out, and rest your head on that piece of wood,’ said the mink. And the wolf did as he was bid, and was soon fast asleep. Then the mink crept up to him and stabbed him to the heart with his knife, and he died without moving. After that he landed on the beach, skinned the wolf, and taking the skin to his cottage, he hung it up before the fire to dry.

Not many days later the wolf's grandmother, who, with the help of her relations, had been searching for him everywhere, entered the cottage to buy some sea-urchins' eggs, and saw the skin, which she at once guessed to be that of her grandson.

'I knew he was dead—I knew it! I knew it!' she cried, weeping bitterly, till the mink told her rudely that if she wanted to make so much noise she had better do it outside as he liked to be quiet. So, half-blinded by her tears, the old woman went home the way she had come, and running in at the door, she flung herself down in front of the fire.

'What are you crying for?' asked the old wolf and some friends who had been spending the afternoon with him.

'I shall never see my grandson any more!' answered she. 'Mink has killed him, oh! oh!' And putting her head down, she began to weep as loudly as ever.

'There! there!' said her husband, laying his paw on her shoulder. 'Be comforted; if he IS dead, we will avenge him.' And calling to the others they proceeded to talk over the best plan. It took them a long time to make up their minds, as one wolf proposed one thing and one another; but at last it was agreed that the old wolf should give a great feast in his house, and that the mink should be invited to the party. And in order that no time should be lost it was further agreed that each wolf should bear the invitations to the guests that lived nearest to him.

Now the wolves thought they were very cunning, but the mink was more cunning still; and though he sent a message by a white hare, that was going that way, saying he should be delighted to be present, he determined that he would take his precautions. So he went to a mouse who had often done him a good turn, and greeted her with his best bow.

'I have a favour to ask of you, friend mouse,' said he, 'and if you will grant it I will carry you on my back every night for a week to the patch of maize right up the hill.'

'The favour is mine,' answered the mouse. 'Tell me what it is that I can have the honour of doing for you.'

'Oh, something quite easy,' replied the mink. 'I only want you—between to-day and the next full moon—to gnaw through the bows and paddles of the wolf people, so that directly they use them they will break. But of course you must manage it so that they notice nothing.'

‘Of course,’ answered the mouse, ‘nothing is easier; but as the full moon is to-morrow night, and there is not much time, I had better begin at once.’ Then the mink thanked her, and went his way; but before he had gone far he came back again.

‘Perhaps, while you are about the wolf’s house seeing after the bows, it would do no harm if you were to make that knot-hole in the wall a little bigger,’ said he. ‘Not large enough to draw attention, of course; but it might come in handy.’ And with another nod he left her.

The next evening the mink washed and brushed himself carefully and set out for the feast. He smiled to himself as he looked at the dusty track, and perceived that though the marks of wolves’ feet were many, not a single guest was to be seen anywhere. He knew very well what that meant; but he had taken his precautions and was not afraid.

The house door stood open, but through a crack the mink could see the wolves crowding in the corner behind it. However, he entered boldly, and as soon as he was fairly inside the door was shut with a bang, and the whole herd sprang at him, with their red tongues hanging out of their mouths. Quick as they were they were too late, for the mink was already through the knot-hole and racing for his canoe.

The knot-hole was too small for the wolves, and there were so many of them in the hut that it was some time before they could get the door open. Then they seized the bows and arrows which were hanging on the walls and, once outside, aimed at the flying mink; but as they pulled the bows broke in their paws, so they threw them away, and bounded to the shore, with all their speed, to the place where their canoes were drawn up on the beach.

Now, although the mink could not run as fast as the wolves, he had a good start, and was already afloat when the swiftest among them threw themselves into the nearest canoe. They pushed off, but as they dipped the paddles into the water, they snapped as the bows had done, and were quite useless.

‘I know where there are some new ones,’ cried a young fellow, leaping on shore and rushing to a little cave at the back of the beach. And the mink’s heart smote him when he heard, for he had not known of this secret store.

After a long chase the wolves managed to surround their prey, and the mink, seeing it was no good resisting any more, gave himself up. Some of the elder wolves brought out some cedar bands, which they always carried wound round their bodies, but the mink laughed scornfully at the sight of them.

‘Why I could snap those in a moment,’ said he; ‘if you want to make sure that I cannot escape, better take a line of kelp and bind me with that.’

‘You are right,’ answered the grandfather; ‘your wisdom is greater than ours.’ And he bade his servants gather enough kelp from the rocks to make a line, as they had brought none with them.

‘While the line is being made you might as well let me have one last dance,’ remarked the mink. And the wolves replied: ‘Very good, you may have your dance; perhaps it may amuse us as well as you.’ So they brought two canoes and placed them one beside the other. The mink stood up on his hind legs and began to dance, first in one canoe and then in the other; and so graceful was he, that the wolves forgot they were going to put him to death, and howled with pleasure.

‘Pull the canoes a little apart; they are too close for this new dance,’ he said, pausing for a moment. And the wolves separated them while he gave a series of little springs, sometime pirouetting while he stood with one foot on the prow of both. ‘Now nearer, now further apart,’ he would cry as the dance went on. ‘No! further still.’ And springing into the air, amidst howls of applause, he came down head-foremost, and dived to the bottom. And through the wolves, whose howls had now changed into those of rage, sought him everywhere, they never found him, for he hid behind a rock till they were out of sight, and then made his home in another forest.

ADVENTURES OF AN INDIAN BRAVE

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[From the Journal of the Anthropological Institute.]

A long, long way off, right away in the west of America, there once lived an old man who had one son. The country round was covered with forests, in which dwelt all kinds of wild beasts, and the young man and his companions used to spend whole days in hunting them, and he was the finest hunter of all the tribe.

One morning, when winter was coming on, the youth and his companions set off as usual to bring back some of the mountain goats and deer to be salted down, as he was afraid of a snow-storm; and if the wind blew and the snow drifted the forest might be impassable for some weeks. The old man and the wife, however, would not go out, but remained in the wigwam making bows and arrows.

It soon grew so cold in the forest that at last one of the men declared they could walk no more, unless they could manage to warm themselves.

‘That is easily done,’ said the leader, giving a kick to a large tree. Flames broke out in the trunk, and before it had burnt up they were as hot as if it had been summer. Then they started off to the place where the goats and deer were to be found in the greatest numbers, and soon had killed as many as they wanted. But the leader killed most, as he was the best shot.

‘Now we must cut up the game and divide it,’ said he; and so they did, each one taking his own share; and, walking one behind the other, set out for the village. But when they reached a great river the young man did not want the trouble of carrying his pack any further, and left it on the bank.

‘I am going home another way,’ he told his companions. And taking another road he reached the village long before they did.

‘Have you returned with empty hands?’ asked the old man, as his son opened the door.

‘Have I ever done that, that you put me such a question?’ asked the youth. ‘No; I have slain enough to feast us for many moons, but it was

heavy, and I left the pack on the bank of the great river. Give me the arrows, I will finish making them, and you can go to the river and bring home the pack!'

So the old man rose and went, and strapped the meat on his shoulder; but as he was crossing the ford the strap broke and the pack fell into the river. He stooped to catch it, but it swirled past him. He clutched again; but in doing so he over-balanced himself and was hurried into some rapids, where he was knocked against some rocks, and he sank and was drowned, and his body was carried down the stream into smoother water when it rose to the surface again. But by this time it had lost all likeness to a man, and was changed into a piece of wood.

The wood floated on, and the river got bigger and bigger and entered a new country. There it was borne by the current close to the shore, and a woman who was down there washing her clothes caught it as it passed, and drew it out, saying to herself: 'What a nice smooth plank! I will use it as a table to put my food upon.' And gathering up her clothes she took the plank with her into her hut.

When her supper time came she stretched the board across two strings which hung from the roof, and set upon it the pot containing a stew that smelt very good. The woman had been working hard all day and was very hungry, so she took her biggest spoon and plunged it into the pot. But what was her astonishment and disgust when both pot and food vanished instantly before her!

'Oh, you horrid plank, you have brought me ill-luck!' she cried. And taking it up she flung it away from her.

The woman had been surprised before at the disappearance of her food, but she was more astonished still when, instead of the plank, she beheld a baby. However, she was fond of children and had none of her own, so she made up her mind that she would keep it and take care of it. The baby grew and throve as no baby in that country had ever done, and in four days he was a man, and as tall and strong as any brave of the tribe.

'You have treated me well,' he said, 'and meat shall never fail to your house. But now I must go, for I have much work to do.'

Then he set out for his home.

It took him many days to get there, and when he saw his son sitting in his place his anger was kindled, and his heart was stirred to take

vengeance upon him. So he went out quickly into the forest and shed tears, and each tear became a bird. ‘Stay there till I want you,’ said he; and he returned to the hut.

‘I saw some pretty new birds, high up in a tree yonder,’ he remarked. And the son answered: ‘Show me the way and I will get them for dinner.’

The two went out together, and after walking for about half an hour they old man stopped. ‘That is the tree,’ he said. And the son began to climb it.

Now a strange thing happened. The higher the young man climbed the higher the birds seemed to be, and when he looked down the earth below appeared no bigger than a star. Sill he tried to go back, but he could not, and though he could not see the birds any longer he felt as if something were dragging him up and up.

He thought that he had been climbing that tree for days, and perhaps he had, for suddenly a beautiful country, yellow with fields of maize, stretched before him, and he gladly left the top of the tree and entered it. He walked through the maize without knowing where he was going, when he heard a sound of knocking, and saw two old blind women crushing their food between two stones. He crept up to them on tiptoe, and when one old woman passed her dinner to the other he held out his hand and took it and ate if for himself.

‘How slow you are kneading that cake,’ cried the other old woman at last.

‘Why, I have given you your dinner, and what more do you want?’ replied the second.

‘You didn’t; at least I never got it,’ said the other.

‘I certainly thought you took it from me; but here is some more.’ And again the young man stretched out his hand; and the two old women fell to quarrelling afresh. But when it happened for the third time the old women suspected some trick, and one of them exclaimed:

‘I am sure there is a man here; tell me, are you not my grandson?’

‘Yes,’ answered the young man, who wished to please her, ‘and in return for your good dinner I will see if I cannot restore your sight; for I was taught in the art of healing by the best medicine man in the tribe.’ And with that he left them, and wandered about till he found the herb which he wanted. Then he hastened back to the old women, and begging them to

boil him some water, he threw the herb in. As soon as the pot began to sing he took off the lid, and sprinkled the eyes of the women, and sight came back to them once more.

There was no night in that country, so, instead of going to bed very early, as he would have done in his own hut, the young man took another walk. A splashing noise near by drew him down to a valley through which ran a large river, and up a waterfall some salmon were leaping. How their silver sides glistened in the light, and how he longed to catch some of the great fellows! But how could he do it? He had beheld no one except the old women, and it was not very likely that they would be able to help him. So with a sigh he turned away and went back to them, but, as he walked, a thought struck him. He pulled out one of his hairs which hung nearly to his waist, and it instantly became a strong line, nearly a mile in length.

‘Weave me a net that I may catch some salmon,’ said he. And they wove him the net he asked for, and for many weeks he watched by the river, only going back to the old women when he wanted a fish cooked.

At last, one day, when he was eating his dinner, the old woman who always spoke first, said to him:

‘We have been very glad to see you, grandson, but now it is time that you went home.’ And pushing aside a rock, he saw a deep hole, so deep that he could not see to the bottom. Then they dragged a basket out of the house, and tied a rope to it. ‘Get in, and wrap this blanket round your head,’ said they; ‘and, whatever happens, don’t uncover it till you get to the bottom.’ Then they bade him farewell, and he curled himself up in the basket.

Down, down, down he went; would he ever stop going? But when the basket did stop, the young man forgot what he had been told, and put his head out to see what was the matter. In an instant the basket moved, but, to his horror, instead of going down, he felt himself being drawn upwards, and shortly after he beheld the faces of the old women.

‘You will never see your wife and son if you will not do as you are bid,’ said they. ‘Now get in, and do not stir till you hear a crow calling.’

This time the young man was wiser, and though the basket often stopped, and strange creatures seemed to rest on him and to pluck at his blanket, he held it tight till he heard the crow calling. Then he flung off the blanket and sprang out, while the basket vanished in the sky.

He walked on quickly down the track that led to the hut, when, before him, he saw his wife with his little son on her back.

‘Oh! there is father at last,’ cried the boy; but the mother bade him cease from idle talking.

‘But, mother, it is true; father is coming!’ repeated the child. And, to satisfy him, the woman turned round and perceived her husband.

Oh, how glad they all were to be together again! And when the wind whistled through the forest, and the snow stood in great banks round the door, the father used to take the little boy on his knee and tell him how he caught salmon in the Land of the Sun.

HOW THE STALOS WERE TRICKED

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[From the Journal of the Anthropological Institute.]

‘Mother, I have seen such a wonderful man,’ said a little boy one day, as he entered a hut in Lapland, bearing in his arms the bundle of sticks he had been sent out to gather.

‘Have you, my son; and what was he like?’ asked the mother, as she took off the child’s sheepskin coat and shook it on the doorstep.

‘Well, I was tired of stooping for the sticks, and was leaning against a tree to rest, when I heard a noise of ‘sh-’sh, among the dead leaves. I thought perhaps it was a wolf, so I stood very still. But soon there came past a tall man—oh! twice as tall as father—with a long red beard and a red tunic fastened with a silver girdle, from which hung a silver-handled knife. Behind him followed a great dog, which looked stronger than any wolf, or even a bear. But why are you so pale, mother?’

‘It was the Stalo,’ replied she, her voice trembling; ‘Stalo the man-eater! You did well to hide, or you might never had come back. But, remember that, though he is so tall and strong, he is very stupid, and many a Lapp has escaped from his clutches by playing him some clever trick.’

Not long after the mother and son had held this talk, it began to be whispered in the forest that the children of an old man called Patto had vanished one by one, no one knew whither. The unhappy father searched the country for miles round without being able to find as much as a shoe or a handkerchief, to show him where they had passed, but at length a little boy came with news that he had seen the Stalo hiding behind a well, near which the children used to play. The boy had waited behind a clump of bushes to see what would happen, and by-and-by he noticed that the Stalo had laid a cunning trap in the path to the well, and that anybody who fell over it would roll into the water and drown there.

And, as he watched, Patto’s youngest daughter ran gaily down the path, till her foot caught in the strings that were stretched across the steepest

place. She slipped and fell, and in another instant had rolled into the water within reach of the Stalo.

As soon as Patto heard this tale his heart was filled with rage, and he vowed to have his revenge. So he straightway took an old fur coat from the hook where it hung, and putting it on went out into the forest. When he reached the path that led to the well he looked hastily round to be sure that no one was watching him, then laid himself down as if he had been caught in the snare and had rolled into the well, though he took care to keep his head out of the water.

Very soon he heard a ‘sh-’sh of the leaves, and there was the Stalo pushing his way through the undergrowth to see what chance he had of a dinner. At the first glimpse of Patto’s head in the well he laughed loudly, crying:

‘Ha! ha! This time it is the old ass! I wonder how he will taste?’ And drawing Patto out of the well, he flung him across his shoulders and carried him home. Then he tied a cord round him and hung him over the fire to roast, while he finished a box that he was making before the door of the hut, which he meant to hold Patto’s flesh when it was cooked. In a very short time the box was so nearly done that it only wanted a little more chipping out with an axe; but this part of the work was easier accomplished indoors, and he called to one of his sons who were lounging inside to bring him the tool.

The young man looked everywhere, but he could not find the axe, for the very good reason that Patto had managed to pick it up and hide it in his clothes.

‘Stupid fellow! what is the use of you?’ grumbled his father angrily; and he bade first one and then another of his sons to fetch him the tool, but they had no better success than their brother.

‘I must come myself, I suppose!’ said Stalo, putting aside the box. But, meanwhile, Patto had slipped from the hook and concealed himself behind the door, so that, as Stalo stepped in, his prisoner raised the axe, and with one blow the ogre’s head was rolling on the ground. His sons were so frightened at the sight that they all ran away.

And in this manner Patto avenged his dead children.

But though Stalo was dead, his three sons were still living, and not very far off either. They had gone to their mother, who was tending some

reindeer on the pastures, and told her that by some magic, they knew not what, their father's head had rolled from his body, and they had been so afraid that something dreadful would happen to them that they had come to take refuge with her. The ogress said nothing. Long ago she had found out how stupid her sons were, so she just sent them out to milk the reindeer, while she returned to the other house to bury her husband's body.

Now, three days' journey from the hut on the pastures two brothers Sodno dwelt in a small cottage with their sister Lyma, who tended a large herd of reindeer while they were out hunting. Of late it had been whispered from one to another that the three young Stalos were to be seen on the pastures, but the Sodno brothers did not disturb themselves, the danger seemed too far away.

Unluckily, however, one day, when Lyma was left by herself in the hut, the three Stalos came down and carried her and the reindeer off to their own cottage. The country was very lonely, and perhaps no one would have known in which direction she had gone had not the girl managed to tie a ball of thread to the handle of a door at the back of the cottage and let it trail behind her. Of course the ball was not long enough to go all the way, but it lay on the edge of a snowy track which led straight to the Stalos' house.

When the brothers returned from their hunting they found both the hut and the sheds empty. Loudly they cried: 'Lyma! Lyma!' But no voice answered them; and they fell to searching all about, lest perchance their sister might have dropped some clue to guide them. At length their eyes dropped on the thread which lay on the snow, and they set out to follow it.

On and on they went, and when at length the thread stopped the brothers knew that another day's journey would bring them to the Stalos' dwelling. Of course they did not dare to approach it openly, for the Stalos had the strength of giants, and besides, there were three of them; so the two Sodnos climbed into a big bushy tree which overhung a well.

'Perhaps our sister may be sent to draw water here,' they said to each other.

But it was not till the moon had risen that the sister came, and as she let down her bucket into the well, the leaves seemed to whisper 'Lyma! Lyma!'

The girl started and looked up, but could see nothing, and in a moment the voice came again.

‘Be careful—take no notice, fill your buckets, but listen carefully all the while, and we will tell you what to do so that you may escape yourself and set free the reindeer also.’

So Lyman bent over the well lower than before, and seemed busier than ever.

‘You know,’ said her brother, ‘that when a Stalo finds that anything has been dropped into his food he will not eat a morsel, but throws it to his dogs. Now, after the pot has been hanging some time over the fire, and the broth is nearly cooked, just rake up the log of wood so that some of the ashes fly into the pot. The Stalo will soon notice this, and will call you to give all the food to the dogs; but, instead, you must bring it straight to us, as it is three days since we have eaten or drunk. That is all you need do for the present.’

Then Lyma took up her buckets and carried them into the house, and did as her brothers had told her. They were so hungry that they ate the food up greedily without speaking, but when there was nothing left in the pot, the eldest one said:

‘Listen carefully to what I have to tell you. After the eldest Stalo has cooked and eaten a fresh supper, he will go to bed and sleep so soundly that not even a witch could wake him. You can hear him snoring a mile off, and then you must go into his room and pull off the iron mantle that covers him, and put it on the fire till it is almost red hot. When that is done, come to us and we will give you further directions.’

‘I will obey you in everything, dear brothers,’ answered Lyman; and so she did.

It had happened that on this very evening the Stalos had driven in some of the reindeer from the pasture, and had tied them up to the wall of the house so that they might be handy to kill for next day’s dinner. The two Sodnos had seen what they were doing, and where the beasts were secured; so, at midnight, when all was still, they crept down from their tree and seized the reindeer by the horns which were locked together. The animals were frightened, and began to neigh and kick, as if they were fighting together, and the noise became so great that even the eldest Stalo was awakened by it, and that was a thing which had never occurred before.

Raising himself in his bed, he called to his youngest brother to go out and separate the reindeer or they would certainly kill themselves.

The young Stalo did as he was bid, and left the house; but no sooner was he out of the door than he was stabbed to the heart by one of the Sodnos, and fell without a groan. Then they went back to worry the reindeer, and the noise became as great as ever, and a second time the Stalo awoke.

‘The boy does not seem to be able to part the beasts,’ he cried to his second brother; ‘go and help him, or I shall never get to sleep.’ So the brother went, and in an instant was struck dead as he left the house by the sword of the eldest Sodno. The Stalo waited in bed a little longer for things to get quiet, but as the clatter of the reindeer’s horns was as bad as ever, he rose angrily from his bed muttering to himself:

‘It is extraordinary that they cannot unlock themselves; but as no one else seems able to help them I suppose I must go and do it.’

Rubbing his eyes, he stood up on the floor and stretched his great arms and gave a yawn which shook the walls. The Sodnos heard it below, and posted themselves, one at the big door and one at the little door at the back, for they did not know what their enemy would come out at.

The Stalo put out his hand to take his iron mantle from the bed, where it always lay, but the mantle was no there. He wondered where it could be, and who could have moved it, and after searching through all the rooms, he found it hanging over the kitchen fire. But the first touch burnt him so badly that he let it alone, and went with nothing, except a stick in his hand, through the back door.

The young Sodno was standing ready for him, and as the Stalo passed the threshold struck him such a blow on the head that he rolled over with a crash and never stirred again. The two Sodnos did not trouble about him, but quickly stripped the younger Stalos of their clothes, in which they dressed themselves. Then they sat still till the dawn should break and they could find out from the Stalos’ mother where the treasure was hidden.

With the first rays of the sun the young Sodno went upstairs and entered the old woman’s room. She was already up and dressed, and sitting by the window knitting, and the young man crept in softly and crouched down on the floor, laying his head on her lap. For a while he kept silence, then he whispered gently:

‘Tell me, dear mother, where did my eldest brother conceal his riches?’

‘What a strange question! Surely you must know,’ answered she.

‘No, I have forgotten; my memory is so bad.’

‘He dug a hole under the doorstep and placed it there,’ said she. And there was another pause.

By-and-by the Sodno asked again:

‘And where may my second brother’s money be?’

‘Don’t you know that either?’ cried the mother in surprise.

‘Oh, yes; I did once. But since I fell upon my head I can remember nothing.’

‘It is behind the oven,’ answered she. And again was silence.

‘Mother, dear mother,’ said the young man at last, ‘I am almost afraid to ask you; but I really have grown so stupid of late. Where did I hide my own money?’

But at this question the old woman flew into a passion, and vowed that if she could find a rod she would bring his memory back to him. Luckily, no rod was within her reach, and the Sodno managed, after a little, to coax her back into good humour, and at length she told him that the youngest Stalo had buried his treasure under the very place where she was sitting.

‘Dear mother,’ said Lyman, who had come in unseen, and was kneeling in front of the fire. ‘Dear mother, do you know who it is you have been talking with?’

The old woman started, but answered quietly:

‘It is a Sodno, I suppose?’

‘You have guessed right,’ replied Lyma.

The mother of the Stalos looked round for her iron cane, which she always used to kill her victims, but it was not there, for Lyma had put it in the fire.

‘Where is my iron cane?’ asked the old woman.

‘There!’ answered Lyma, pointing to the flames.

The old woman sprang forwards and seized it, but her clothes caught fire, and in a few minutes she was burned to ashes.

So the Sodno brothers found the treasure, and they carried it, and their sister and the reindeer, to their own home, and were the richest men in all Lapland.

ANDRAS BAIVE

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[From Lapplandische Marchen, J. C. Poestion.]

Once upon a time there lived in Lapland a man who was so very strong and swift of foot that nobody in his native town of Vadso could come near him if they were running races in the summer evenings. The people of Vadso were very proud of their champion, and thought that there was no one like him in the world, till, by-and-by, it came to their ears that there dwelt among the mountains a Lapp, Andras Baive by name, who was said by his friends to be even stronger and swifter than the bailiff. Of course not a creature in Vadso believed that, and declared that if it made the mountaineers happier to talk such nonsense, why, let them!

The winter was long and cold, and the thoughts of the villagers were much busier with wolves than with Andras Baive, when suddenly, on a frosty day, he made his appearance in the little town of Vadso. The bailiff was delighted at this chance of trying his strength, and at once went out to seek Andras and to coax him into giving proof of his vigour. As he walked along his eyes fell upon a big eight-oared boat that lay upon the shore, and his face shone with pleasure. ‘That is the very thing,’ laughed he, ‘I will make him jump over that boat.’ Andras was quite ready to accept the challenge, and they soon settled the terms of the wager. He who could jump over the boat without so much as touching it with his heel was to be the winner, and would get a large sum of money as the prize. So, followed by many of the villagers, the two men walked down to the sea.

An old fisherman was chosen to stand near the boat to watch fair play, and to hold the stakes, and Andras, as the stranger was told to jump first. Going back to the flag which had been stuck into the sand to mark the starting place, he ran forward, with his head well thrown back, and cleared the boat with a mighty bound. The lookers-on cheered him, and indeed he well deserve it; but they waited anxiously all the same to see what the bailiff would do. On he came, taller than Andras by several inches, but

heavier of build. He too sprang high and well, but as he came down his heel just grazed the edge of the boat. Dead silence reigned amidst the townsfolk, but Andras only laughed and said carelessly:

‘Just a little too short, bailiff; next time you must do better than that.’

The bailiff turned red with anger at his rival’s scornful words, and answered quickly: ‘Next time you will have something harder to do.’ And turning his back on his friends, he went sulkily home. Andras, putting the money he had earned in his pocket, went home also.

The following spring Andras happened to be driving his reindeer along a great fiord to the west of Vadso. A boy who had met him hastened to tell the bailiff that his enemy was only a few miles off; and the bailiff, disguising himself as a Stalo, or ogre, called his son and his dog and rowed away across the fiord to the place where the boy had met Andras.

Now the mountaineer was lazily walking along the sands, thinking of the new hut that he was building with the money that he had won on the day of his lucky jump. He wandered on, his eyes fixed on the sands, so that he did not see the bailiff drive his boat behind a rock, while he changed himself into a heap of wreckage which floated in on the waves. A stumble over a stone recalled Andras to himself, and looking up he beheld the mass of wreckage. ‘Dear me! I may find some use for that,’ he said; and hastened down to the sea, waiting till he could lay hold of some stray rope which might float towards him. Suddenly—he could not have told why—a nameless fear seized upon him, and he fled away from the shore as if for his life. As he ran he heard the sound of a pipe, such as only ogres of the Stalo kind were wont to use; and there flashed into his mind what the bailiff had said when they jumped the boat: ‘Next time you will have something harder to do.’ So it was no wreckage after all that he had seen, but the bailiff himself.

It happened that in the long summer nights up in the mountain, where the sun never set, and it was very difficult to get to sleep, Andras had spent many hours in the study of magic, and this stood him in good stead now. The instant he heard the Stalo music he wished himself to become the feet of a reindeer, and in this guise he galloped like the wind for several miles. Then he stopped to take breath and find out what his enemy was doing. Nothing he could see, but to his ears the notes of a pipe floated over the plain, and ever, as he listened, it drew nearer.

A cold shiver shook Andras, and this time he wished himself the feet of a reindeer calf. For when a reindeer calf has reached the age at which he begins first to lose his hair he is so swift that neither beast nor bird can come near him. A reindeer calf is the swiftest of all things living. Yes; but not so swift as a Stalo, as Andras found out when he stopped to rest, and heard the pipe playing!

For a moment his heart sank, and he gave himself up for dead, till he remembered that, not far off, were two little lakes joined together by a short though very broad river. In the middle of the river lay a stone that was always covered by water, except in dry seasons, and as the winter rains had been very heavy, he felt quite sure that not even the top of it could be seen. The next minute, if anyone had been looking that way, he would have beheld a small reindeer calf speeding northwards, and by-and-by giving a great spring, which landed him in the midst of the stream. But, instead of sinking to the bottom, he paused a second to steady himself, then gave a second spring which landed him on the further shore. He next ran on to a little hill where he saw down and began to neigh loudly, so that the Stalo might know exactly where he was.

‘Ah! There you are,’ cried the Stalo, appearing on the opposite bank; ‘for a moment I really thought I had lost you.’

‘No such luck,’ answered Andras, shaking his head sorrowfully. By this time he had taken his own shape again.

‘Well, but I don’t see how I am to get to you,’ said the Stalo, looking up and down.

‘Jump over, as I did,’ answered Andras; ‘it is quite easy.’

‘But I could not jump this river; and I don’t know how you did,’ replied the Stalo.

‘I should be ashamed to say such things,’ exclaimed Andras. ‘Do you mean to tell me that a jump, which the weakest Lapp boy would make nothing of, is beyond your strength?’

The Stalo grew red and angry when he heard these words, just as Andras meant him to do. He bounded into the air and fell straight into the river. Not that that would have mattered, for he was a good swimmer; but Andras drew out the bow and arrows which every Lapp carries, and took aim at him. His aim was good, but the Stalo sprang so high into the air that the arrow flew between his feet. A second shot, directed at his forehead,

fared no better, for this time the Stalo jumped so high to the other side that the arrow passed between his finger and thumb. Then Andras aimed his third arrow a little over the Stalo's head, and when he sprang up, just an instant too soon, it hit him between the ribs.

Mortally wounded as he was, the Stalo was not yet dead, and managed to swim to the shore. Stretching himself on the sand, he said slowly to Andras:

'Promise that you will give me an honourable burial, and when my body is laid in the grave go in my boat across the fiord, and take whatever you find in my house which belongs to me. My dog you must kill, but spare my son, Andras.'

Then he died; and Andras sailed in his boat away across the fiord and found the dog and boy. The dog, a fierce, wicked-looking creature, he slew with one blow from his fist, for it is well known that if a Stalo's dog licks the blood that flows from his dead master's wounds the Stalo comes to life again. That is why no REAL Stalo is ever seen without his dog; but the bailiff, being only half a Stalo, had forgotten him, when he went to the little lakes in search of Andras. Next, Andras put all the gold and jewels which he found in the boat into his pockets, and bidding the boy get in, pushed it off from the shore, leaving the little craft to drift as it would, while he himself ran home. With the treasure he possessed he was able to buy a great herd of reindeer; and he soon married a rich wife, whose parents would not have him as a son-in-law when he was poor, and the two lived happy for ever after.

THE WHITE SLIPPER

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[From Lapplandische Mahrchen, J. C. Poestion.]

Once upon a time there lived a king who had a daughter just fifteen years old. And what a daughter!

Even the mothers who had daughters of their own could not help allowing that the princess was much more beautiful and graceful than any of them; and, as for the fathers, if one of them ever beheld her by accident he could talk of nothing else for a whole day afterwards.

Of course the king, whose name was Balancin, was the complete slave of his little girl from the moment he lifted her from the arms of her dead mother; indeed, he did not seem to know that there was anyone else in the world to love.

Now Diamantina, for that was her name, did not reach her fifteenth birthday without proposals for marriage from every country under heaven; but be the suitor who he might, the king always said him nay.

Behind the palace a large garden stretched away to the foot of some hills, and more than one river flowed through. Hither the princess would come each evening towards sunset, attended by her ladies, and gather herself the flowers that were to adorn her rooms. She also brought with her a pair of scissors to cut off the dead blooms, and a basket to put them in, so that when the sun rose next morning he might see nothing unsightly. When she had finished this task she would take a walk through the town, so that the poor people might have a chance of speaking with her, and telling her of their troubles; and then she would seek out her father, and together they would consult over the best means of giving help to those who needed it.

But what has all this to do with the White Slipper? my readers will ask.

Have patience, and you will see.

Next to his daughter, Balancin loved hunting, and it was his custom to spend several mornings every week chasing the boars which abounded in

the mountains a few miles from the city. One day, rushing downhill as fast as he could go, he put his foot into a hole and fell, rolling into a rocky pit of brambles. The king's wounds were not very severe, but his face and hands were cut and torn, while his feet were in a worse plight still, for, instead of proper hunting boots, he only wore sandals, to enable him to run more swiftly.

In a few days the king was as well as ever, and the signs of the scratches were almost gone; but one foot still remained very sore, where a thorn had pierced deeply and had festered. The best doctors in the kingdom treated it with all their skill; they bathed, and poulticed, and bandaged, but it was in vain. The foot only grew worse and worse, and became daily more swollen and painful.

After everyone had tried his own particular cure, and found it fail, there came news of a wonderful doctor in some distant land who had healed the most astonishing diseases. On inquiring, it was found that he never left the walls of his own city, and expected his patients to come to see him; but, by dint of offering a large sum of money, the king persuaded the famous physician to undertake the journey to his own court.

On his arrival the doctor was led at once into the king's presence, and made a careful examination of his foot.

'Alas! your majesty,' he said, when he had finished, 'the wound is beyond the power of man to heal; but though I cannot cure it, I can at least deaden the pain, and enable you to walk without so much suffering.'

'Oh, if you can only do that,' cried the king, 'I shall be grateful to you for life! Give your own orders; they shall be obeyed.'

'Then let your majesty bid the royal shoemaker make you a shoe of goat-skin very loose and comfortable, while I prepare a varnish to paint over it of which I alone have the secret!' So saying, the doctor bowed himself out, leaving the king more cheerful and hopeful than he had been for long.

The days passed very slowly with him during the making of the shoe and the preparation of the varnish, but on the eighth morning the physician appeared, bringing with him the shoe in a case. He drew it out to slip on the king's foot, and over the goat-skin he had rubbed a polish so white that the snow itself was not more dazzling.

‘While you wear this shoe you will not feel the slightest pain,’ said the doctor. ‘For the balsam with which I have rubbed it inside and out has, besides its healing balm, the quality of strengthening the material it touches, so that, even were your majesty to live a thousand years, you would find the slipper just as fresh at the end of that time as it is now.’

The king was so eager to put it on that he hardly gave the physician time to finish. He snatched it from the case and thrust his foot into it, nearly weeping for joy when he found he could walk and run as easily as any beggar boy.

‘What can I give you?’ he cried, holding out both hands to the man who had worked this wonder. ‘Stay with me, and I will heap on you riches greater than ever you dreamed of.’ But the doctor said he would accept nothing more than had been agreed on, and must return at once to his own country, where many sick people were awaiting him. So king Balancin had to content himself with ordering the physician to be treated with royal honours, and desiring that an escort should attend him on his journey home.

For two years everything went smoothly at court, and to king Balancin and his daughter the sun no sooner rose than it seemed time for it to set. Now, the king’s birthday fell in the month of June, and as the weather happened to be unusually fine, he told the princess to celebrate it in any way that pleased her. Diamantina was very fond of being on the river, and she was delighted at this chance of delighting her tastes. She would have a merry-making such as never had been seen before, and in the evening, when they were tired of sailing and rowing, there should be music and dancing, plays and fireworks. At the very end, before the people went home, every poor person should be given a loaf of bread and every girl who was to be married within the year a new dress.

The great day appeared to Diamantina to be long in coming, but, like other days, it came at last. Before the sun was fairly up in the heavens the princess, too full of excitement to stay in the palace, was walking about the streets so covered with precious stones that you had to shade your eyes before you could look at her. By-and-by a trumpet sounded, and she hurried home, only to appear again in a few moments walking by the side of her father down to the river. Here a splendid barge was waiting for them, and from it they watched all sorts of races and feats of swimming

and diving. When these were over the barge proceeded up the river to the field where the dancing and concerts were to take place, and after the prizes had been given away to the winners, and the loaves and the dresses had been distributed by the princess, they bade farewell to their guests, and turned to step into the barge which was to carry them back to the palace.

Then a dreadful thing happened. As the king stepped on board the boat one of the sandals of the white slipper, which had got loose, caught in a nail that was sticking out, and caused the king to stumble. The pain was great, and unconsciously he turned and shook his foot, so that the sandals gave way, and in a moment the precious shoe was in the river.

It had all occurred so quickly that nobody had noticed the loss of the slipper, not even the princess, whom the king's cries speedily brought to his side.

'What is the matter, dear father?' asked she. But the king could not tell her; and only managed to gasp out: 'My shoe! my shoe!' While the sailors stood round staring, thinking that his majesty had suddenly gone mad.

Seeing her father's eyes fixed on the stream, Diamantina looked hastily in that direction. There, dancing on the current, was the point of something white, which became more and more distant the longer they watched it. The king could bear the sight no more, and, besides, now that the healing ointment in the shoe had been removed the pain in his foot was as bad as ever; he gave a sudden cry, staggered, and fell over the bulwarks into the water.

In an instant the river was covered with bobbing heads all swimming their fastest towards the king, who had been carried far down by the swift current. At length one swimmer, stronger than the rest, seized hold of his tunic, and drew him to the bank, where a thousand eager hands were ready to haul him out. He was carried, unconscious, to the side of his daughter, who had fainted with terror on seeing her father disappear below the surface, and together they were place in a coach and driven to the palace, where the best doctors in the city were awaiting their arrival.

In a few hours the princess was as well as ever; but the pain, the wetting, and the shock of the accident, all told severely on the king, and for three days he lay in a high fever. Meanwhile, his daughter, herself nearly mad with grief, gave orders that the white slipper should be sought

for far and wide; and so it was, but even the cleverest divers could find no trace of it at the bottom of the river.

When it became clear that the slipper must have been carried out to sea by the current, Diamantina turned her thoughts elsewhere, and sent messengers in search of the doctor who had brought relief to her father, begging him to make another slipper as fast as possible, to supply the place of the one which was lost. But the messengers returned with the sad news that the doctor had died some weeks before, and, what was worse, his secret had died with him.

In his weakness this intelligence had such an effect on the king that the physicians feared he would become as ill as before. He could hardly be persuaded to touch food, and all night long he lay moaning, partly with pain, and partly over his own folly in not having begged the doctor to make him several dozens of white slippers, so that in case of accidents he might always have one to put on. However, by-and-by he saw that it was no use weeping and wailing, and commanded that they should search for his lost treasure more diligently than ever.

What a sight the river banks presented in those days! It seemed as if all the people in the country were gathered on them. But this second search was no more fortunate than the first, and at last the king issued a proclamation that whoever found the missing slipper should be made heir to the crown, and should marry the princess.

Now many daughters would have rebelled at being disposed of in the manner; and it must be admitted that Diamantina’s heart sank when she heard what the king had done. Still, she loved her father so much that she desired his comfort more than anything else in the world, so she said nothing, and only bowed her head.

Of course the result of the proclamation was that the river banks became more crowded than before; for all the princess’s suitors from distant lands flocked to the spot, each hoping that he might be the lucky finder. Many times a shining stone at the bottom of the stream was taken for the slipper itself, and every evening saw a band of dripping downcast men returning homewards. But one youth always lingered longer than the rest, and night would still see him engaged in the search, though his clothes stuck to his skin and his teeth chattered.

One day, when the king was lying on his bed racked with pain, he heard the noise of a scuffle going on in his antechamber, and rang a golden bell that stood by his side to summon one of his servants.

‘Sire,’ answered the attendant, when the king inquired what was the matter, ‘the noise you heard was caused by a young man from the town, who has had the impudence to come here to ask if he may measure your majesty’s foot, so as to make you another slipper in place of the lost one.’

‘And what have you done to the youth?’ said the king.

‘The servants pushed him out of the palace, and, added a few blows to teach him not to be insolent,’ replied the man.

‘Then they did very ill,’ answered the king, with a frown. ‘He came here from kindness, and there was no reason to maltreat him.’

‘Oh, my lord, he had the audacity to wish to touch your majesty’s sacred person—he, a good-for-nothing boy, a mere shoemaker’s apprentice, perhaps! And even if he could make shoes to perfection they would be no use without the soothing balsam.’

The king remained silent for a few moments, then he said:

‘Never mind. Go and fetch the youth and bring him to me. I would gladly try any remedy that may relieve my pain.’

So, soon afterwards, the youth, who had not gone far from the palace, was caught and ushered into the king’s presence.

He was tall and handsome and, though he professed to make shoes, his manners were good and modest, and he bowed low as he begged the king not only to allow him to take the measure of his foot, but also to suffer him to place a healing plaster over the wound.

Balancin was pleased with the young man’s voice and appearance, and thought that he looked as if he knew what he was doing. So he stretched out his bad foot which the youth examined with great attention, and then gently laid on the plaster.

Very shortly the ointment began to soothe the sharp pain, and the king, whose confidence increased every moment, begged the young man to tell him his name.

‘I have no parents; they died when I was six, sire,’ replied the youth, modestly. ‘Everyone in the town calls me Gilguerillo, because, when I was little, I went singing through the world in spite of my misfortunes. Luckily for me I was born to be happy.’

‘And you really think you can cure me?’ asked the king.

‘Completely, my lord,’ answered Gilguerillo.

‘And how long do you think it will take?’

‘It is not an easy task; but I will try to finish it in a fortnight,’ replied the youth.

A fortnight seemed to the king a long time to make one slipper. But he only said:

‘Do you need anything to help you?’

‘Only a good horse, if your majesty will be kind enough to give me one,’ answered Gilguerillo. And the reply was so unexpected that the courtiers could hardly restrain their smiles, while the king stared silently.

‘You shall have the horse,’ he said at last, ‘and I shall expect you back in a fortnight. If you fulfil your promise you know your reward; if not, I will have you flogged for your impudence.’

Gilguerillo bowed, and turned to leave the palace, followed by the jeers and scoffs of everyone he met. But he paid no heed, for he had got what he wanted.

He waited in front of the gates till a magnificent horse was led up to him, and vaulting into the saddle with an ease which rather surprised the attendant, rode quickly out of the town amidst the jests of the assembled crowd, who had heard of his audacious proposal. And while he is on his way let us pause for a moment and tell who he is.

Both father and mother had died before the boy was six years old; and he had lived for many years with his uncle, whose life had been passed in the study of chemistry. He could leave no money to his nephew, as he had a son of his own; but he taught him all he knew, and at his dead Gilguerillo entered an office, where he worked for many hours daily. In his spare time, instead of playing with the other boys, he passed hours poring over books, and because he was timid and liked to be alone he was held by everyone to be a little mad. Therefore, when it became known that he had promised to cure the king’s foot, and had ridden away—no one knew where—a roar of laughter and mockery rang through the town, and jeers and scoffing words were sent after him.

But if they had only known what were Gilguerillo’s thoughts they would have thought him madder than ever.

The real truth was that, on the morning when the princess had walked through the streets before making holiday on the river Gilguerillo had seen her from his window, and had straightway fallen in love with her. Of course he felt quite hopeless. It was absurd to imagine that the apothecary's nephew could ever marry the king's daughter; so he did his best to forget her, and study harder than before, till the royal proclamation suddenly filled him with hope. When he was free he no longer spent the precious moments poring over books, but, like the rest, he might have been seen wandering along the banks of the river, or diving into the stream after something that lay glistening in the clear water, but which turned out to be a white pebble or a bit of glass.

And at the end he understood that it was not by the river that he would win the princess; and, turning to his books for comfort, he studied harder than ever.

There is an old proverb which says: 'Everything comes to him who knows how to wait.' It is not all men who know hot to wait, any more than it is all men who can learn by experience; but Gilguerillo was one of the few and instead of thinking his life wasted because he could not have the thing he wanted most, he tried to busy himself in other directions. So, one day, when he expected it least, his reward came to him.

He happened to be reading a book many hundreds of years old, which told of remedies for all kinds of diseases. Most of them, he knew, were merely invented by old women, who sought to prove themselves wiser than other people; but at length he came to something which caused him to sit up straight in his chair, and made his eyes brighten. This was the description of a balsam—which would cure every kind of sore or wound—distilled from a plant only to be found in a country so distant that it would take a man on foot two months to go and come back again.

When I say that the book declared that the balsam could heal every sort of sore or wound, there were a few against which it was powerless, and it gave certain signs by which these might be known. This was the reason why Gilguerillo demanded to see the king's foot before he would undertake to cure it; and to obtain admittance he gave out that he was a shoemaker. However, the dreaded signs were absent, and his heart bounded at the thought that the princess was within his reach.

Perhaps she was; but a great deal had to be accomplished yet, and he had allowed himself a very short time in which to do it.

He spared his horse only so much as was needful, yet it took him six days to reach the spot where the plant grew. A thick wood lay in front of him, and, fastening the bridle tightly to a tree, he flung himself on his hands and knees and began to hunt for the treasure. Many time he fancied it was close to him, and many times it turned out to be something else; but, at last, when light was fading, and he had almost given up hope, he came upon a large bed of the plant, right under his feet! Trembling with joy, he picked every scrap he could see, and placed it in his wallet. Then, mounting his horse, he galloped quickly back towards the city.

It was night when he entered the gates, and the fifteen days allotted were not up till the next day. His eyes were heavy with sleep, and his body ached with the long strain, but, without pausing to rest, he kindled a fire on is hearth, and quickly filling a pot with water, threw in the herbs and left them to boil. After that he lay down and slept soundly.

The sun was shining when he awoke, and he jumped up and ran to the pot. The plant had disappeared and in its stead was a thick syrup, just as the book had said there would be. He lifted the syrup out with a spoon, and after spreading it in the sun till it was partly dry, poured it into a small flask of crystal. He next washed himself thoroughly, and dressed himself, in his best clothes, and putting the flask in his pocket, set out for the palace, and begged to see the king without delay.

Now Balancin, whose foot had been much less painful since Gilguerillo had wrapped it in the plaster, was counting the days to the young man’s return; and when he was told Gilguerillo was there, ordered him to be admitted at once. As he entered, the king raised himself eagerly on his pillows, but his face fell when he saw no signs of a slipper.

‘You have failed, then?’ he said, throwing up his hands in despair.

‘I hope not, your majesty; I think not,’ answered the youth. And drawing the flask from his pocket, he poured two or three drops on the wound.

‘Repeat this for three nights, and you will find yourself cured,’ said he. And before the king had time to thank him he had bowed himself out.

Of course the news soon spread through the city, and men and women never tired of calling Gilguerillo an impostor, and prophesying that the

end of the three days would see him in prison, if not on the scaffold. But Gilguerillo paid no heed to their hard words, and no more did the king, who took care that no hand but his own should put on the healing balsam.

On the fourth morning the king awoke and instantly stretched out his wounded foot that he might prove the truth or falsehood of Gilguerillo's remedy. The wound was certainly cured on that side, but how about the other? Yes, that was cured also; and not even a scar was left to show where it had been!

Was ever any king so happy as Balancin when he satisfied himself of this?

Lightly as a deer he jumped from his bed, and began to turn head over heels and to perform all sorts of antics, so as to make sure that his foot was in truth as well as it looked. And when he was quite tired he sent for his daughter, and bade the courtiers bring the lucky young man to his room.

'He is really young and handsome,' said the princess to herself, heaving a sigh of relief that it was not some dreadful old man who had healed her father; and while the king was announcing to his courtiers the wonderful cure that had been made, Diamantina was thinking that if Gilguerillo looked so well in his common dress, how much improved by the splendid garments of a king' son. However, she held her peace, and only watched with amusement when the courtiers, knowing there was no help for it, did homage and obeisance to the chemist's boy.

Then they brought to Gilguerillo a magnificent tunic of green velvet bordered with gold, and a cap with three white plumes stuck in it; and at the sight of him so arrayed, the princess fell in love with him in a moment. The wedding was fixed to take place in eight days, and at the ball afterwards nobody danced so long or so lightly as king Balancin.

THE MAGIC BOOK

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[From Capullos de Rosa, por D. Enrique Ceballos Quintana.]

[From AEventyr fra Zylland samlede og optegnede af Tang Kristensen. Translated from the Danish by Mrs. Skavgaard-Pedersen.]

There was once an old couple named Peder and Kirsten who had an only son called Hans. From the time he was a little boy he had been told that on his sixteenth birthday he must go out into the world and serve his apprenticeship. So, one fine summer morning, he started off to seek his fortune with nothing but the clothes he wore on his back.

For many hours he trudged on merrily, now and then stopping to drink from some clear spring or to pick some ripe fruit from a tree. The little wild creatures peeped at him from beneath the bushes, and he nodded and smiled, and wished them ‘Good-morning.’ After he had been walking for some time he met an old white-bearded man who was coming along the footpath. The boy would not step aside, and the man was determined not to do so either, so they ran against one another with a bump.

‘It seems to me,’ said the old fellow, ‘that a boy should give way to an old man.’

‘The path is for me as well as for you,’ answered young Hans saucily, for he had never been taught politeness.

‘Well, that’s true enough,’ answered the other mildly. ‘And where are you going?’

‘I am going into service,’ said Hans.

‘Then you can come and serve me,’ replied the man.

Well, Hans could do that; but what would his wages be?

‘Two pounds a year, and nothing to do but keep some rooms clean,’ said the new-comer.

This seemed to Hans to be easy enough; so he agreed to enter the old man’s service, and they set out together. On their way they crossed a deep

valley and came to a mountain, where the man opened a trapdoor, and bidding Hans follow him, he crept in and began to go down a long flight of steps. When they got to the bottom Hans saw a large number of rooms lit by many lamps and full of beautiful things. While he was looking round the old man said to him:

‘Now you know what you have to do. You must keep these rooms clean, and strew sand on the floor every day. Here is a table where you will always find food and drink, and there is your bed. You see there are a great many suits of clothes hanging on the wall, and you may wear any you please; but remember that you are never to open this locked door. If you do ill will befall you. Farewell, for I am going away again and cannot tell when I may return.

No sooner had the old man disappeared than Hans sat down to a good meal, and after that went to bed and slept until the morning. At first he could not remember what had happened to him, but by-and-by he jumped up and went into all the rooms, which he examined carefully.

‘How foolish to bid me to put sand on the floors,’ he thought, ‘when there is nobody here by myself! I shall do nothing of the sort.’ And so he shut the doors quickly, and only cleaned and set in order his own room. And after the first few days he felt that that was unnecessary too, because no one came there to see if the rooms where clean or not. At last he did no work at all, but just sat and wondered what was behind the locked door, till he determined to go and look for himself.

The key turned easily in the lock. Hans entered, half frightened at what he was doing, and the first thing he beheld was a heap of bones. That was not very cheerful; and he was just going out again when his eye fell on a shelf of books. Here was a good way of passing the time, he thought, for he was fond of reading, and he took one of the books from the shelf. It was all about magic, and told you how you could change yourself into anything in the world you liked. Could anything be more exciting or more useful? So he put it in his pocket, and ran quickly away out of the mountain by a little door which had been left open.

When he got home his parents asked him what he had been doing and where he had got the fine clothes he wore.

‘Oh, I earned them myself,’ answered he.

‘You never earned them in this short time,’ said his father. ‘Be off with you; I won’t keep you here. I will have no thieves in my house!’

‘Well I only came to help you,’ replied the boy sulkily. ‘Now I’ll be off, as you wish; but to-morrow morning when you rise you will see a great dog at the door. Do not drive it away, but take it to the castle and sell it to the duke, and they will give you ten dollars for it; only you must bring the strap you lead it with, back to the house.’

Sure enough the next day the dog was standing at the door waiting to be let in. The old man was rather afraid of getting into trouble, but his wife urged him to sell the dog as the boy had bidden him, so he took it up to the castle and sold it to the duke for ten dollars. But he did not forget to take off the strap with which he had led the animal, and to carry it home. When he got there old Kirsten met him at the door.

‘Well, Peder, and have you sold the dog?’ asked she.

‘Yes, Kirsten; and I have brought back ten dollars, as the boy told us,’ answered Peder.

‘Ay! but that’s fine!’ said his wife. ‘Now you see what one gets by doing as one is bid; if it had not been for me you would have driven the dog away again, and we should have lost the money. After all, I always know what is best.’

‘Nonsense!’ said her husband; ‘women always think they know best. I should have sold the dog just the same whatever you had told me. Put the money away in a safe place, and don’t talk so much.’

The next day Hans came again; but though everything had turned out as he had foretold, he found that his father was still not quite satisfied.

‘Be off with you!’ said he, ‘you’ll get us into trouble.’

‘I haven’t helped you enough yet,’ replied the boy. ‘To-morrow there will come a great fat cow, as big as the house. Take it to the king’s palace and you’ll get as much as a thousand dollars for it. Only you must unfasten the halter you lead it with and bring it back, and don’t return by the high road, but through the forest.’

The next day, when the couple rose, they saw an enormous head looking in at their bedroom window, and behind it was a cow which was nearly as big as their hut. Kirsten was wild with joy to think of the money the cow would bring them.

‘But how are you going to put the rope over her head?’ asked she.

‘Wait and you’ll see, mother,’ answered her husband. Then Peder took the ladder that led up to the hayloft and set it against the cow’s neck, and he climbed up and slipped the rope over her head. When he had made sure that the noose was fast they started for the palace, and met the king himself walking in his grounds.

‘I heard that the princess was going to be married,’ said Peder, ‘so I’ve brought your majesty a cow which is bigger than any cow that was ever seen. Will your majesty deign to buy it?’

The king had, in truth, never seen so large a beast, and he willingly paid the thousand dollars, which was the price demanded; but Peder remembered to take off the halter before he left. After he was gone the king sent for the butcher and told him to kill the animal for the wedding feast. The butcher got ready his pole-axe; but just as he was going to strike, the cow changed itself into a dove and flew away, and the butcher stood staring after it as if he were turned to stone. However, as the dove could not be found, he was obliged to tell the king what had happened, and the king in his turn despatched messengers to capture the old man and bring him back. But Peder was safe in the woods, and could not be found. When at last he felt the danger was over, and he might go home, Kirsten nearly fainted with joy at the sight of all the money he brought with him.

‘Now that we are rich people we must build a bigger house,’ cried she; and was vexed to find that Peder only shook his head and said: ‘No; if they did that people would talk, and say they had got their wealth by ill-doing.’

A few mornings later Hans came again.

‘Be off before you get us into trouble,’ said his father. ‘So far the money has come right enough, but I don’t trust it.’

‘Don’t worry over that, father,’ said Hans. ‘To-morrow you will find a horse outside by the gate. Ride it to market and you will get a thousand dollars for it. Only don’t forget to loosen the bridle when you sell it.’

Well, in the morning there was the horse; Kirsten had never seen so find an animal. ‘Take care it doesn’t hurt you, Peder,’ said she.

‘Nonsense, wife,’ answered he crossly. ‘When I was a lad I lived with horses, and could ride anything for twenty miles round.’ But that was not quite the truth, for he had never mounted a horse in his life.

Still, the animal was quiet enough, so Peder got safely to market on its back. There he met a man who offered nine hundred and ninety-nine

dollars for it, but Peder would take nothing less than a thousand. At last there came an old, grey-bearded man who looked at the horse and agreed to buy it; but the moment he touched it the horse began to kick and plunge. ‘I must take the bridle off,’ said Peder. ‘It is not to be sold with the animal as is usually the case.’

‘I’ll give you a hundred dollars for the bridle,’ said the old man, taking out his purse.

‘No, I can’t sell it,’ replied Hans’s father.

‘Five hundred dollars!’

‘No.’

‘A thousand!’

At this splendid offer Peder’s prudence gave way; it was a shame to let so much money go. So he agreed to accept it. But he could hardly hold the horse, it became so unmanageable. So he gave the animal in charge to the old man, and went home with his two thousand dollars.

Kirsten, of course, was delighted at this new piece of good fortune, and insisted that the new house should be built and land bought. This time Peder consented, and soon they had quite a fine farm.

Meanwhile the old man rode off on his new purchase, and when he came to a smithy he asked the smith to forge shoes for the horse. The smith proposed that they should first have a drink together, and the horse was tied up by the spring whilst they went indoors. The day was hot, and both men were thirsty, and, besides, they had much to say; and so the hours slipped by and found them still talking. Then the servant girl came out to fetch a pail of water, and, being a kind-hearted lass, she gave some to the horse to drink. What was her surprise when the animal said to her: ‘Take off my bridle and you will save my life.’

‘I dare not,’ said she; ‘your master will be so angry.’

‘He cannot hurt you,’ answered the horse, ‘and you will save my life.’

At that she took off the bridle; but nearly fainted with astonishment when the horse turned into a dove and flew away just as the old man came out of the house. Directly he saw what had happened he changed himself into a hawk and flew after the dove. Over the woods and fields they went, and at length they reached a king’s palace surrounded by beautiful gardens. The princess was walking with her attendants in the rose garden when the dove turned itself into a gold ring and fell at her feet.

‘Why, here is a ring!’ she cried, ‘where could it have come from?’ And picking it up she put it on her finger. As she did so the hill-man lost his power over Hans—for of course you understand that it was he who had been the dog, the cow, the horse and the dove.

‘Well, that is really strange,’ said the princess. ‘It fits me as though it had been made for me!’

Just at that moment up came the king.

‘Look at what I have found!’ cried his daughter.

‘Well, that is not worth much, my dear,’ said he. ‘Besides, you have rings enough, I should think.’

‘Never mind, I like it,’ replied the princess.

But as soon as she was alone, to her amazement, the ring suddenly left her finger and became a man. You can imagine how frightened she was, as, indeed, anybody would have been; but in an instant the man became a ring again, and then turned back to a man, and so it went on for some time until she began to get used to these sudden changes.

‘I am sorry I frightened you,’ said Hans, when he thought he could safely speak to the princess without making her scream. ‘I took refuge with you because the old hill-man, whom I have offended, was trying to kill me, and here I am safe.’

‘You had better stay here then,’ said the princess. So Hans stayed, and he and she became good friends; though, of course, he only became a man when no one else was present.

This was all very well; but, one day, as they were talking together, the king happened to enter the room, and although Hans quickly changed himself into a ring again it was too late.

The king was terribly angry.

‘So this is why you have refused to marry all the kings and princes who have sought your hand?’ he cried.

And, without waiting for her to speak, he commanded that his daughter should be walled up in the summer-house and starved to death with her lover.

That evening the poor princess, still wearing her ring, was put into the summer-house with enough food to last for three days, and the door was bricked up. But at the end of a week or two the king thought it was time to give her a grand funeral, in spite of her bad behaviour, and he had the

summer-house opened. He could hardly believe his eyes when he found that the princess was not there, nor Hans either. Instead, there lay at his feet a large hole, big enough for two people to pass through.

Now what had happened was this.

When the princess and Hans had given up hope, and cast themselves down on the ground to die, they fell down this hole, and right through the earth as well, and at last they tumbled into a castle built of pure gold at the other side of the world, and there they lived happily. But of this, of course, the king knew nothing.

‘Will anyone go down and see where the passage leads to?’ he asked, turning to his guards and courtiers. ‘I will reward splendidly the man who is brave enough to explore it.’

For a long time nobody answered. The hole was dark and deep, and if it had a bottom no one could see it. At length a soldier, who was a careless sort of fellow, offered himself for the service, and cautiously lowered himself into the darkness. But in a moment he, too, fell down, down, down. Was he going to fall for ever, he wondered! Oh, how thankful he was in the end to reach the castle, and to meet the princess and Hans, looking quite well and not at all as if they had been starved. They began to talk, and the soldier told them that the king was very sorry for the way he had treated his daughter, and wished day and night that he could have her back again.

Then they all took ship and sailed home, and when they came to the princess’s country, Hans disguised himself as the sovereign of a neighbouring kingdom, and went up to the palace alone. He was given a hearty welcome by the king, who prided himself on his hospitality, and a banquet was commanded in his honour. That evening, whilst they sat drinking their wine, Hans said to the king:

‘I have heard the fame of your majesty’s wisdom, and I have travelled from far to ask your counsel. A man in my country has buried his daughter alive because she loved a youth who was born a peasant. How shall I punish this unnatural father, for it is left to me to give judgment?’

The king, who was still truly grieved for his daughter’s loss, answered quickly:

‘Burn him alive, and strew his ashes all over the kingdom.’

Hans looked at him steadily for a moment, and then threw off his disguise.

‘You are the man,’ said he; ‘and I am he who loved your daughter, and became a gold ring on her finger. She is safe, and waiting not far from here; but you have pronounced judgment on yourself.’

Then the king fell on his knees and begged for mercy; and as he had in other respects been a good father, they forgave him. The wedding of Hans and the princess was celebrated with great festivities which lasted a month. As for the hill-man he intended to be present; but whilst he was walking along a street which led to the palace a loose stone fell on his head and killed him. So Hans and the princess lived in peace and happiness all their days, and when the old king died they reigned instead of him.

THE OLIVE FAIRY BOOK

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PREFACE

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Many years ago my friend and publisher, Mr. Charles Longman, presented me with *Le Cabinet des Fées* (‘The Fairy Cabinet’). This work almost requires a swinging bookcase for its accommodation, like the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and in a revolving bookcase I bestowed the volumes. Circumstances of an intimately domestic character, ‘not wholly unconnected,’ as Mr. Micawber might have said, with the narrowness of my study (in which it is impossible to ‘swing a cat’), prevent the revolving bookcase from revolving at this moment. I can see, however, that the Fairy Cabinet contains at least forty volumes, and I think there are about sixty in all. This great plenitude of fairy tales from all quarters presents legends of fairies, witches, genii or Djinn, monsters, dragons, wicked step-mothers, princesses, pretty or plain, princes lucky or unlucky, giants, dwarfs, and enchantments. The stories begin with those which children like best—the old *Blue Beard*, *Puss in Boots*, *Hop o’ my Thumb*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, and *Toads and Pearls*. These were first collected, written, and printed at Paris in 1697. The author was Monsieur Charles Perrault, a famous personage in a great *perruque*, who in his day wrote large volumes now unread. He never dreamed that he was to be remembered mainly by the shabby little volume with the tiny headpiece pictures—how unlike the fairy way of drawing by Mr. Ford, said to be known as ‘Over-the-wall Ford’ among authors who play cricket, because of the force with which he swipes! Perrault picked up the rustic tales which the nurse of his little boy used to tell, and he told them again in his own courtly, witty way. They do not seem to have been translated into English until nearly thirty years later, when they were published in English, with the French on the opposite page, by a Mr. Pote, a bookseller at Eton. Probably the younger Eton boys learned as much French as they condescended to acquire from these fairy tales, which are certainly more amusing than the *Télémaque* of Messire François de Salignac de la Motte-

Fénelon, tutor of the children of France, Archbishop Duke of Cambrai, and Prince of the Holy Roman Empire.

The success of Perrault was based on the pleasure which the court of Louis XIV. took in fairy tales; we know that they were told among Court ladies, from a letter of Madame de Sévigné. Naturally, Perrault had imitators, such as Madame d'Aulnoy, a wandering lady of more wit than reputation. To her we owe *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Yellow Dwarf*. Anthony Hamilton tried his hand with *The Ram*, a story too prolix and confused, best remembered for the remark, 'Ram, my friend, begin at the beginning!' Indeed, the narrative style of the Ram is lacking in lucidity! Then came *The Arabian Nights*, translated by Monsieur Galland. Nobody has translated *The Arabian Nights* so well as Galland. His is the reverse of a scientific rendering, but it is as pleasantly readable as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* would be if Alexandre Dumas had kept his promise to translate Homer. Galland omitted the verses and a great number of passages which nobody would miss, though the anthropologist is supposed to find them valuable and instructive in later scientific translations which do not amuse. Later, Persian Tales, Tales of the Sea, and original inventions, more or less on the fairy model, were composed by industrious men and women. They are far too long—are novels, indeed, and would please no child or mature person of taste. All these were collected in the vast Fairy Cabinet, published in 1786, just before the Revolution. Probably their attempt to be simple charmed a society which was extremely artificial, talked about 'the simple life' and the 'state of nature,' and was on the eve of a revolution in which human nature revealed her most primitive traits in orgies of blood.

That was the end of the Court and of the Court Fairy Tales, and just when they were demolished, learned men like the Grimms and Sir Walter Scott began to take an interest in the popular tales of peasants and savages all the world over. All the world over the tales were found to be essentially the same things. *Cinderella* is everywhere; a whole book has been written on *Cinderella* by Miss Cox, and a very good book it is, but not interesting to children. For them the best of the collections of foreign fairy tales are the German stories by the Grimms, the *Tales from the Norse*, by Sir G. W. Dasent, (which some foolish 'grown-ups' denounced as 'improper'), and Miss Frere's Indian stories. There are hundreds of collections of savage and peasant fairy tales, but, though many of these are most interesting,

especially Bishop Callaway's Zulu stories (with the Zulu versions), these do not come in the way of parents and uncles, and therefore do not come in the way of children. It is my wish that children should be allowed to choose their own books. Let their friends give them the money and turn them loose in the book shops! They know their own tastes, and if the children are born bookish, while their dear parents are the reverse, (and this does occur!), then the children make the better choice. They are unaffected in their selections; some want Shakespeares of their own, and some prefer a volume entitled *Buster Brown*. A few—alas, how few!—are fond of poetry; a still smaller number are fond of history. 'We know that there are no fairies, but history stories are *true*!' say these little innocents. I am not so sure that there are no fairies, and I am only too well aware that the best 'history stories' are not true.

What children do love is ghost stories. 'Tell us a ghost story!' they cry, and I am able to meet the demand, with which I am in sincere sympathy. Only strong control prevents me from telling the last true ghost story which I heard yesterday. It would suit children excellently well. 'The Grey Ghost Story Book' would be a favourite. At a very early age I read a number of advertisements of books, and wept because I could not buy dozens of them, and somebody gave me a book on Botany! It looked all right, nicely bound in green cloth, but within it was full of all manner of tediousness.

In our Fairy Cabinet, which cannot extend to sixty volumes, we have aimed at pleasing children, not 'grown-ups,' at whom the old French writers directed their romances, but have hunted for fairy tales in all quarters, not in Europe alone. In this volume we open, thanks to Dr. Ignaz Künos, with a story from the Turks. 'Little King Loc' is an original invention by M. Anatole France, which he very kindly permitted Mrs. Lang to adapt from *L'Abeille*.

Major Campbell, as previously, tells tales which he collected among the natives of India. But the sources are usually named at the end of each story, and when they are not named children will not miss them. Mrs. Lang, except in cases mentioned, has translated and adapted to the conditions of young readers the bulk of the collection, and Mrs. Skovgaard-Pedersen has done 'The Green Knight' from the Danish. I must

especially thank Monsieur Macler for permitting us to use some of his *Contes Arméniens* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, Editeur).

MADSCHUN

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Once upon a time there lived, in a small cottage among some hills, a woman with her son, and, to her great grief, the young man, though hardly more than twenty years of age, had not as much hair on his head as a baby. But, old as he looked, the youth was very idle, and whatever trade his mother put him to he refused to work, and in a few days always came home again.

On a fine summer morning he was lying as usual half asleep in the little garden in front of the cottage when the sultan's daughter came riding by, followed by a number of gaily dressed ladies. The youth lazily raised himself on his elbow to look at her, and that one glance changed his whole nature.

'I will marry her and nobody else,' he thought. And jumping up, he went to find his mother.

'You must go at once to the sultan, and tell him that I want his daughter for my wife,' he said.

'WHAT?' shouted the old woman, shrinking back into a corner, for nothing but sudden madness could explain such an amazing errand.

'Don't you understand? You must go at once to the sultan and tell him that I want his daughter for my wife,' repeated the youth impatiently.

'But—but, do you know what you are saying?' stammered the mother. 'You will learn no trade, and have only the five gold pieces left you by your father, and can you really expect that the sultan would give his daughter to a penniless bald-pate like you?'

'That is *my* affair; do as I bid you.' And neither day nor night did her son cease tormenting her, till, in despair, she put on her best clothes, and wrapped her veil about her, and went over the hill to the palace.

It was the day that the sultan set apart for hearing the complaints and petitions of his people, so the woman found no difficulty in gaining admission to his presence.

‘Do not think me mad, O Excellency,’ she began, ‘though I know I must seem like it. But I have a son who, since his eyes have rested on the veiled face of the princess, has not left me in peace day or night till I consented to come to the palace, and to ask your Excellency for your daughter’s hand. It was in vain I answered that my head might pay the forfeit of my boldness, he would listen to nothing. Therefore am I here; do with me even as you will!’

Now the sultan always loved anything out of the common, and this situation was new indeed. So, instead of ordering the trembling creature to be flogged or cast into prison, as some other sovereigns might have done, he merely said: ‘Bid your son come hither.’

The old woman stared in astonishment at such a reply. But when the sultan repeated his words even more gently than before, and did not look in anywise angered, she took courage, and bowing again she hastened homeward.

‘Well, how have you sped?’ asked her son eagerly as she crossed the threshold.

‘You are to go up to the palace without delay, and speak to the sultan himself,’ replied the mother. And when he heard the good news, his face lightened up so wonderfully that his mother thought what a pity it was that he had no hair, as then he would be quite handsome.

‘Ah, the lightning will not fly more swiftly,’ cried he. And in another instant he was out of her sight.

When the sultan beheld the bald head of his daughter’s wooer, he no longer felt in the mood for joking, and resolved that he must somehow or other shake himself free of such an unwelcome lover. But as he had summoned the young man to the palace, he could hardly dismiss him without a reason, so he hastily said:

‘I hear you wish to marry my daughter? Well and good. But the man who is to be her husband must first collect all the birds in the world, and bring them into the gardens of the palace; for hitherto no birds have made their homes in the trees.’

The young man was filled with despair at the sultan’s words. How was he to snare all these birds? and even if he *did* succeed in catching them it would take years to carry them to the palace! Still, he was too proud to let the sultan think that he had given up the princess without a struggle, so he

took a road that led past the palace and walked on, not noticing whither he went.

In this manner a week slipped by, and at length he found himself crossing a desert with great rocks scattered here and there. In the shadow cast by one of these was seated a holy man or dervish, as he was called, who motioned to the youth to sit beside him.

‘Something is troubling you, my son,’ said the holy man; ‘tell me what it is, as I may be able to help you.’

‘O, my father,’ answered the youth, ‘I wish to marry the princess of my country; but the sultan refuses to give her to me unless I can collect all the birds in the world and bring them into his garden. And how can I, or any other man, do that?’

‘Do not despair,’ replied the dervish, ‘it is not so difficult as it sounds. Two days’ journey from here, in the path of the setting sun, there stands a cypress tree, larger than any other cypress that grows upon the earth. Sit down where the shadow is darkest, close to the trunk, and keep very still. By-and-by you will hear a mighty rushing of wings, and all the birds in the world will come and nestle in the branches. Be careful not to make a sound till everything is quiet again, and then say “Madschun!” At that the birds will be forced to remain where they are—not one can move from its perch; and you will be able to place them all over your head and arms and body, and in this way you must carry them to the sultan.’

With a glad heart the young man thanked the dervish, and paid such close heed to his directions that, a few days later, a strange figure covered with soft feathers walked into the presence of the sultan. The princess’s father was filled with surprise, for never had he seen such a sight before. Oh! how lovely were those little bodies, and bright frightened eyes! Soon a gentle stirring was heard, and what a multitude of wings unfolded themselves: blue wings, yellow wings, red wings, green wings. And when the young man whispered ‘Go,’ they first flew in circles round the sultan’s head, and then disappeared through the open window, to choose homes in the garden.

‘I have done your bidding, O Sultan, and now give me the princess,’ said the youth. And the sultan answered hurriedly:

‘Yes! oh, yes! you have pleased me well! Only one thing remains to turn you into a husband that any girl might desire. That head of yours, you

know—it is so *very* bald! Get it covered with nice thick curly hair, and *then* I will give you my daughter. You are so clever that I am sure this will give you no trouble at all.'

Silently the young man listened to the sultan's words, and silently he sat in his mother's kitchen for many days to come, till, one morning, the news reached him that the sultan had betrothed his daughter to the son of the wizir, and that the wedding was to be celebrated without delay in the palace. With that he arose in wrath, and made his way quickly and secretly to a side door, used only by the workmen who kept the building in repair, and, unseen by anyone, he made his way into the mosque, and then entered the palace by a gallery which opened straight into the great hall. Here the bride and bridegroom and two or three friends were assembled, waiting for the appearance of the sultan for the contract to be signed.

'Madschun!' whispered the youth from above. And instantly everyone remained rooted to the ground; and some messengers whom the sultan had sent to see that all was ready shared the same fate.

At length, angry and impatient, the sultan went down to behold with his own eyes what had happened, but as nobody could give him any explanation, he bade one of his attendants to fetch a magician, who dwelt near one of the city gates, to remove the spell which had been cast by some evil genius.

'It is your own fault,' said the magician, when he had heard the sultan's story. 'If you had not broken your promise to the young man, your daughter would not have had this ill befall her. Now there is only one remedy, and the bridegroom you have chosen must yield his place to the bald-headed youth.'

Sore though he was in his heart, the sultan knew that the magician was wiser than he, and despatched his most trusted servants to seek out the young man without a moment's delay and bring him to the palace. The youth, who all this time had been hiding behind a pillar, smiled to himself when he heard these words, and, hastening home, he said to his mother: 'If messengers from the sultan should come here and ask for me, be sure you answer that it is a long while since I went away, and that you cannot tell where I may be, but that if they will give you money enough for your journey, as you are very poor, you will do your best to find me.' Then he hid himself in the loft above, so that he could listen to all that passed.

The next minute someone knocked loudly at the door, and the old woman jumped up and opened it.

‘Is your bald-headed son here?’ asked the man outside. ‘If so, let him come with me, as the sultan wishes to speak with him directly.’

‘Alas! sir,’ replied the woman, putting a corner of her veil to her eyes, ‘he left me long since, and since that day no news of him has reached me.’

‘Oh! good lady, can you not guess where he may be? The sultan intends to bestow on him the hand of his daughter, and he is certain to give a large reward to the man who brings him back.’

‘He never told me whither he was going,’ answered the crone, shaking her head. ‘But it is a great honour that the sultan does him, and well worth some trouble. There *are* places where, perhaps, he may be found, but they are known to me only, and I am a poor woman and have no money for the journey.’

‘Oh! that will not stand in the way,’ cried the man. ‘In this purse are a thousand gold pieces; spend them freely. Tell me where I can find him and you shall have as many more.’

‘Very well,’ said she, ‘it is a bargain; and now farewell, for I must make some preparations; but in a few days at furthest you shall hear from me.’

For nearly a week both the old woman and her son were careful not to leave the house till it was dark, lest they should be seen by any of the neighbours, and as they did not even kindle a fire or light a lantern, everyone supposed that the cottage was deserted. At length one fine morning, the young man got up early and dressed himself, and put on his best turban, and after a hasty breakfast took the road to the palace.

The huge negro before the door evidently expected him, for without a word he let him pass, and another attendant who was waiting inside conducted him straight into the presence of the sultan, who welcomed him gladly.

‘Ah, my son! where have you hidden yourself all this time?’ said he. And the bald-headed man answered:

‘Oh, Sultan! Fairly I won your daughter, but you broke your word, and would not give her to me. Then my home grew hateful to me, and I set out to wander through the world! But now that you have repented of your ill-

faith, I have come to claim the wife who is mine of right. Therefore bid your wizir prepare the contract.'

So a fresh contract was prepared, and at the wish of the new bridegroom was signed by the sultan and the wizir in the chamber where they met. After this was done, the youth begged the sultan to lead him to the princess, and together they entered the big hall, where everyone was standing exactly as they were when the young man had uttered the fatal word.

'Can you remove the spell?' asked the sultan anxiously.

'I think so,' replied the young man (who, to say the truth, was a little anxious himself), and stepping forward, he cried:

'Let the victims of Madschun be free!'

No sooner were the words uttered than the statues returned to life, and the bride placed her hand joyfully in that of her new bridegroom. As for the old one, he vanished completely, and no one ever knew what became of him.

(Adapted from *Türkische Volksmärchen aus Stambul*. Dr. Ignaz Künos. E. J. Brill, Leiden.)

THE BLUE PARROT

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In a part of Arabia where groves of palms and sweet-scented flowers give the traveller rest after toilsome journeys under burning skies, there reigned a young king whose name was Lino. He had grown up under the wise rule of his father, who had lately died, and though he was only nineteen, he did not believe, like many young men, that he must change all the laws in order to show how clever he was, but was content with the old ones which had made the people happy and the country prosperous. There was only one fault that his subjects had to find with him, and that was that he did not seem in any hurry to be married, in spite of the prayers that they frequently offered him.

The neighbouring kingdom was governed by the Swan fairy, who had an only daughter, the Princess Hermosa, who was as charming in her way as Lino in his. The Swan fairy always had an ambassador at the young king's court, and on hearing the grumbles of the citizens that Lino showed no signs of taking a wife, the good man resolved that *he* would try his hand at match-making. 'For,' he said, 'if there is any one living who is worthy of the Princess Hermosa he is to be found here. At any rate, I can but try and bring them together.'

Now, of course, it was not proper to offer the princess in marriage, and the difficulty was to work upon the unconscious king so as to get the proposal to come from *him.* But the ambassador was well used to the ways of courts, and after several conversations on the art of painting, which Lino loved, he led the talk to portraits, and mentioned carelessly that a particularly fine picture had lately been made of his own princess. 'Though, as for a likeness,' he concluded, 'perhaps it is hardly as good as this small miniature, which was painted a year ago.'

The king took it, and looked at it closely.

'Ah!' he sighed, 'that must be flattered! It cannot be possible that any woman should be such a miracle of beauty.'

'If you could only see her,' answered the ambassador.

The king did not reply, but the ambassador was not at all surprised when, the following morning, he was sent for into the royal presence.

‘Since you showed me that picture,’ began Lino, almost before the door was shut, ‘I have not been able to banish the face of the princess from my thoughts. I have summoned you here to inform you that I am about to send special envoys to the court of the Swan fairy, asking her daughter in marriage.’

‘I cannot, as you will understand, speak for my mistress in so important a matter,’ replied the ambassador, stroking his beard in order to conceal the satisfaction he felt. ‘But I know that she will certainly be highly gratified at your proposal.’

‘If that is so,’ cried the king, his whole face beaming with joy, ‘then, instead of sending envoys, I will go myself, and take you with me. In three days my preparations will be made, and we will set out.’

* * * * *

Unluckily for Lino, he had for his neighbour on the other side a powerful magician named Ismenor, who was king of the Isle of Lions, and the father of a hideous daughter, whom he thought the most beautiful creature that ever existed. Riquette, for such was her name, had also fallen in love with a portrait, but it was of King Lino, and she implored her father to give him to her for a husband. Ismenor, who considered that no man lived who was worthy of his treasure, was about to send his chief minister to King Lino on this mission, when the news reached him that the king had already started for the court of the Swan fairy. Riquette was thrown into transports of grief, and implored her father to prevent the marriage, which Ismenor promised to do; and calling for an ugly and humpbacked little dwarf named Rabot, he performed some spells which transported them quickly to a rocky valley through which the king and his escort were bound to pass. When the tramp of horses was heard, the magician took out an enchanted handkerchief, which rendered invisible any one who touched it. Giving one end to Rabot, and holding the other himself, they walked unseen amongst the horsemen, but not a trace of Lino was to be found. And this was natural enough, because the king, tired out with the excitement and fatigue of the last few days, had bidden the heavy coaches, laden with presents for the

princess, to go forwards, while he rested under the palms with a few of his friends. Here Ismenor beheld them, all sound asleep; and casting a spell which prevented their waking till he wished them to do so, he stripped the king of all his clothes and dressed him in those of Rabot, whom he touched with his ring, saying:

'Take the shape of Lino until you have wedded the daughter of the Swan fairy.'

And so great was the magician's power that Rabot positively believed himself to be really the king!

When the groom had mounted Lino's horse, and had ridden out of sight, Ismenor aroused the king, who stared with astonishment at the dirty garments in which he was dressed; but before he had time to look about him, the magician caught him up in a cloud, and carried him off to his daughter.

Meantime Rabot had come up with the others, who never guessed for a moment that he was not their own master.

'I am hungry,' said he, 'give me something to eat at once.'

'May it please your majesty,' answered the steward, 'the tents are not even set up, and it will be at least an hour before your supper is served! We thought——'

'Who taught you to think?' interrupted the false king rudely. 'You are nothing but a fool! Get me some horse's flesh directly—it is the best meat in the world!'

The steward could hardly believe his ears. King Lino, the most polite man under the sun, to speak to his faithful servant in such a manner! And to want horse's flesh too! Why he was so delicate in his appetite that he lived mostly on fruit and cakes. Well, well, there was no knowing what people would come to; and, anyhow, he must obey at once, if he wished to keep his head on his shoulders. Perhaps, after all, it was love which had driven him mad, and, if so, by-and-by he might come right again.

Whatever excuses his old servants might invent for their master, by the time the procession reached the Swan's fairy capital there were no more horses left, and they were forced to walk up to the palace on foot. Hiding their surprise as best they could, they begged the king to follow them, dismounting from their own horses, as he, they supposed, preferred to

walk. They soon perceived the Swan fairy and her daughter awaiting them on a low balcony, under which the king stopped.

‘Madam,’ he said, ‘you may be surprised that I have come to ask your daughter’s hand in so unceremonious a fashion; but the journey is long, and I was hungry and ate my horse, which is the best meat in the world; and I forced my courtiers to eat theirs also. But for all that I am a great king, and wish to be your son-in-law. And now that is settled, where is Hermosa?’

‘Sire,’ answered the queen, not a little displeased as well as amazed at the king’s manner, which was so different from anything she had been led to expect. ‘You possess my daughter’s portrait, and it can have made but little impression on you if you don’t recognise her at once.’

‘I don’t remember any portrait,’ replied Rabot; ‘but perhaps it may be in my pocket after all.’ And he searched everywhere, while the ladies-in-waiting looked on with astonishment, but of course found nothing. When he had finished he turned to the princess, who stood there blushing and angry, and said:

‘If it is you whom I have come to marry, I think you are very beautiful, and I am sure if I had even seen your portrait I should have remembered it. Let us have the wedding as soon as possible; and, meantime, I should like to go to sleep, for your country is very different from mine, and I can assure you that after walking over stones and sand for days and days one needs a little rest.’

And without waiting for a reply he bade one of the pages conduct him to his room, where he was soon snoring so loud that he could be heard at the other end of the town.

As soon as he was out of their sight the poor princess flung herself into her mother’s arms, and burst into tears. For fifteen days she had had King Lino’s portrait constantly before her, while the letter from their own ambassador speaking of the young man’s grace and charm had never left her pocket. True, the portrait was faithful enough, but how could that fair outside contain so rough and rude a soul? Yet this even she might have forgiven had the king shown any of the signs of love and admiration to which she had been so long accustomed. As for her mother, the poor Swan fairy was so bewildered at the extraordinary manners of her new son-in-law, that she was almost speechless.

Matters were in this state when King Lino's chamberlain begged for a private audience of her majesty, and no sooner were they alone than he told her that he feared that his master had suddenly gone mad, or had fallen under the spell of some magician.

'I had been lost in astonishment before,' said he, 'but now that he has failed to recognise the princess, and no longer possesses her portrait, which he never would part from for a single instant, my amazement knows no bounds. Perhaps, madam, your fairy gifts may be able to discover the reason of this change in one whose courtesy was the talk of the kingdom.' And with a low bow he took his departure.

The queen stood where the chamberlain left her, thinking deeply. Suddenly her face cleared, and going to an old chest which she kept in a secret room, she drew from it a small mirror. In this mirror she could see faithfully reflected whatever she wished, and at this moment she desired above all things to behold King Lino *as he really was*.

Ah! the chamberlain was right! It was not he who was lying on his bed snoring till the whole palace shook beneath him. No, *this* was her real son-in-law—the man dressed in dirty clothes, and imprisoned in one of Ismenor's strongest towers, and kissing the portrait of Hermosa, which had escaped the wizard's notice, owing to the young king having worn it, for better concealment, tied amongst his hair. Calling hastily to her daughter, she bade her also look, and Hermosa had the pleasure of gazing on Lino, who was behaving exactly as she could have wished. The mirror was still in her hand when the door of the prison opened, and there entered the hideous Riquette, who, from her upraised eyes, seemed to be begging from Lino some favour which he refused to grant. Of course Hermosa and her mother could not hear their words, but from Riquette's angry face as she left the room, it was not difficult to guess what had happened. But the mirror had more to tell, for it appeared that in fury at her rejection by the king, Riquette had ordered four strong men to scourge him till he fainted, which was done in the sight of Hermosa, who in horror dropped the mirror, and would have fallen, had she not been caught by her mother.

'Control yourself, my child,' said the fairy. 'We have need of all our wits if we are to rescue the king from the power of those wicked people. And first it is necessary to know who the man that has taken his name and his face really is.'

Then, picking up the mirror, she wished that she might behold the false lover; and the glass gave back a vision of a dirty, greasy groom, lying, dressed as he was, on her bed of state.

‘So this is the trick Ismenor hoped to play us! Well, we will have our revenge, whatever it costs us to get it. Only we must be very careful not to let him guess that he has not deceived us, for his skill in magic is greater than mine, and I shall have to be very prudent. To begin with, I must leave you, and if the false king asks why, then answer that I have to settle some affairs on the borders of my kingdom. Meanwhile, be sure you treat him most politely, and arrange fêtes to amuse him. If he shows any sign of being suspicious, you can even give him to understand that, on your marriage, I intend to give up the crown to your husband. And now farewell!’ So saying, the Swan fairy waved her hand, and a cloud came down and concealed her, and nobody imagined that the beautiful white cloud that was blown so rapidly across the sky was the chariot that was carrying the Swan fairy to the tower of Ismenor.

* * * * *

Now the tower was situated in the midst of a forest, so the queen thought that, under cover of the dark trees, it would be quite easy for her to drop to earth unseen. But the tower was so thoroughly enchanted that the more she tried to reach the ground the tighter something tried to hold her back. At length, by putting forth all the power she possessed, she managed to descend to the foot of the tower, and there, weak and faint as she was with her exertions, she lost no time in working her spells, and found that she could only overcome Ismenor by means of a stone from the ring of Gyges. But how was she to get this ring? for the magic book told her that Ismenor guarded it night and day among his most precious treasures. However, get it she must, and in the meantime the first step was to see the royal prisoner himself. So, drawing out her tablets, she wrote as follows:

‘The bird which brings you this letter is the Swan fairy, mother of Hermosa, who loves you as much as you love her!’ And after this assurance, she related the wicked plot of which he had been the victim. Then, quickly changing herself into a swallow, she began to fly round the tower, till she discovered the window of Lino’s prison. It was so high up

that bars seemed needless, especially as four soldiers were stationed in the passage outside, therefore the fairy was able to enter, and even to hop on his shoulder, but he was so much occupied with gazing at the princess's portrait that it was some time before she could attract his attention. At last she gently scratched his cheek with the corner of the note, and he looked round with a start. On perceiving the swallow he knew at once that help had come, and tearing open the letter, he wept with joy on seeing the words it contained, and asked a thousand questions as to Hermosa, which the swallow was unable to answer, though, by repeated nods, she signed to him to read further. 'Must I indeed pretend to wish to marry that horrible Riquette?' he cried, when he had finished. 'Can I obtain the stone from the magician?'

Accordingly the next morning, when Riquette paid him her daily visit, he received her much more graciously than usual. The magician's daughter could not contain her delight at this change, and in answer to her expressions of joy, Lino told her that he had had a dream by which he had learned the inconstancy of Hermosa; also that a fairy had appeared and informed him that if he wished to break the bonds which bound him to the faithless princess and transfer his affections to the daughter of Ismenor, he must have in his possession for a day and a night a stone from the ring of Gyges, now in the possession of the magician. This news so enchanted Riquette, that she flung her arms round the king's neck and embraced him tenderly, greatly to his disgust, as he would infinitely have preferred the sticks of the soldiers. However, there was no help for it, and he did his best to seem pleased, till Riquette relieved him by announcing that she must lose no time in asking her father and obtaining from him the precious stone.

His daughter's request came as a great surprise to Ismenor, whose suspicions were instantly excited; but, think as he would, he could not see any means by which the king, so closely guarded, might have held communication with the Swan fairy. Still, he would do nothing hastily, and, hiding his dismay, he told Riquette that his only wish was to make her happy, and that as she wished so much for the stone he would fetch it for her. Then he went into the closet where all his spells were worked, and in a short time he discovered that his enemy the Swan fairy was at that moment inside his palace.

‘So that is it!’ he said, smiling grimly. ‘Well, she shall have a stone by all means, but a stone that will turn everyone who touches it into marble.’ And placing a small ruby in a box, he returned to his daughter.

‘Here is the talisman which will gain you the love of King Lino,’ he said; ‘but be sure you give him the box unopened, or else the stone will lose all its virtue.’ With a cry of joy Riquette snatched the box from his hands, and ran off to the prison, followed by her father, who, holding tightly the enchanted handkerchief, was able, unseen, to watch the working of the spell. As he expected, at the foot of the tower stood the Swan fairy, who had had the imprudence to appear in her natural shape, waiting for the stone which the prince was to throw to her. Eagerly she caught the box as it fell from the prince’s hands, but no sooner had her fingers touched the ruby, than a curious hardening came over her, her limbs stiffened, and her tongue could hardly utter the words ‘We are betrayed.’

‘Yes, you *are* betrayed,’ cried Ismenor, in a terrible voice; ‘and *you*,’ he continued, dragging the king to the window, ‘you shall turn into a parrot, and a parrot you will remain until you can persuade Hermosa to crush in your head.’

He had hardly finished before a blue parrot flew out into the forest; and the magician, mounting in his winged chariot, set off for the Isle of Swans, where he changed everybody into statues, exactly in the positions in which he found them, not even excepting Rabot himself. Only Hermosa was spared, and her he ordered to get into his chariot beside him. In a few minutes he reached the Forest of Wonders, when the magician got down, and dragged the unhappy princess out after him.

‘I have changed your mother into a stone, and your lover into a parrot,’ said he, ‘and you are to become a tree, and a tree you will remain until you have crushed the head of the person you love best in the world. But I will leave you your mind and memory, that your tortures may be increased a thousand-fold.’

Great magician as he was, Ismenor could not have invented a more terrible fate had he tried for a hundred years. The hours passed wearily by for the poor princess, who longed for a wood-cutter’s axe to put an end to her misery. How were they to be delivered from their doom? And even supposing that King Lino *did* fly that way, there were thousands of blue parrots in the forest, and how was she to know him, or he her? As to her

mother—ah! that was too bad to think about! So, being a woman, she kept on thinking.

Meanwhile the blue parrot flew about the world, making friends wherever he went, till, one day, he entered the castle of an old wizard who had just married a beautiful young wife. Grenadine, for such was her name, led a very dull life, and was delighted to have a playfellow, so she gave him a golden cage to sleep in, and delicious fruits to eat. Only in one way did he disappoint her—he never would talk as other parrots did.

'If you only knew how happy it would make me, I'm sure you would try,' she was fond of saying; but the parrot did not seem to hear her.

One morning, however, she left the room to gather some flowers, and the parrot, finding himself alone, hopped to the table, and, picking up a pencil, wrote some verses on a piece of paper. He had just finished when he was startled by a noise, and letting fall the pencil, he flew out of the window.

Now hardly had he dropped the pencil when the wizard lifted a corner of the curtain which hung over the doorway, and advanced into the room. Seeing a paper on the table, he picked it up, and great was his surprise as he read:

'Fair princess, to win your grace,
I will hold discourse with you;
Silence, though, were more in place
Than chatt'ring like a cockatoo.'

'I half suspected it was enchanted,' murmured the wizard to himself. And he fetched his books and searched them, and found that instead of being a parrot, the bird was really a king who had fallen under the wrath of a magician, and that magician the man whom the wizard hated most in the world. Eagerly he read on, seeking for some means of breaking the enchantment, and at last, to his great joy, he discovered the remedy. Then he hurried to his wife, who was lying on some cushions under the tree on which the parrot had perched, and informed her that her favourite was really the king of a great country, and that, if she would whistle for the bird, they would all go together to a certain spot in the Forest of Marvels, 'where I will restore him to his own shape. Only you must not be afraid or

cry out, whatever I do,' added he, 'or everything will be spoilt.' The wizard's wife jumped up in an instant, so delighted was she, and began to whistle the song that the parrot loved; but as he did not wish it to be known that he had been listening to the conversation he waited until she had turned her back, when he flew down the tree and alighted on her shoulder. Then they got into a golden boat, which carried them to a clearing in the forest, where three tall trees stood by themselves.

'I want these trees for my magic fire,' he said to his wife; 'put the parrot on that branch, he will be quite safe, and go yourself to a little distance. If you stay too near you may get your head crushed in their fall.'

At these words the parrot suddenly remembered the prophecy of Ismenor, and held himself ready, his heart beating at the thought that in one of those trees he beheld Hermosa. Meanwhile the magician took a spade, and loosened the earth of the roots of the three trees so that they might fall all together. Directly the parrot observed them totter he spread his wings and flew right under the middle one, which was the most beautiful of the three. There was a crash, then Lino and Hermosa stood facing each other, clasped hand in hand.

After the first few moments, the princess's thoughts turned to her mother, and falling at the feet of the magician, who was smiling with delight at the success of his plan, she implored him to help them once more, and to give the Swan fairy back her proper shape.

'That is not so easy,' said he, 'but I will try what I can do.' And transporting himself to his palace to obtain a little bottle of poisoned water, he waited till nightfall, and started at once for Ismenor's tower. Of course, had Ismenor consulted his books he would have seen what his enemy was doing, he might have protected himself; but he had been eating and drinking too much, and had gone to bed, sleeping heavily. Changing himself into a bat, the magician flew into the room, and hiding himself in the curtains, he poured all the liquid over Ismenor's face, so that he died without a groan. At the same instant the Swan fairy became a woman again, for no magician, however powerful, can work spells which last beyond his own life.

So when the Swan fairy returned to her capital she found all her courtiers waiting at the gate to receive her, and in their midst, beaming with happiness, Hermosa and King Lino. Standing behind them, though a

long way off, was Rabot; but his dirty clothes had given place to clean ones, when his earnest desire was granted, and the princess had made him head of her stables.

And here we must bid them all farewell, feeling sure they will have many years of happiness before them after the terrible trials through which they have passed.

(Adapted and shortened from *Le Cabinet des Fées*.)

GEIRLAUG THE KING’S DAUGHTER

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One day a powerful king and his beautiful wife were sitting in the gardens of their capital city, talking earnestly about the future life of their little son, who was sleeping by their side in his beautiful golden cradle. They had been married for many years without children, so when this baby came they thought themselves the happiest couple in the whole world. He was a fine sturdy little boy, who loved to kick and to strike out with his fists; but even if he had been weak and small they would still have thought him the most wonderful creature upon earth, and so absorbed were they in making plans for him, that they never noticed a huge dark shadow creeping up, till a horrible head with gleaming teeth stretched over them, and in an instant their beloved baby was snatched away.

For a while the king and queen remained where they were, speechless with horror. Then the king rose slowly, and holding out his hand to his wife, led her weeping into the palace, and for many days their subjects saw no more of them.

Meanwhile the dragon soared high into the air, holding the cradle between his teeth, and the baby still slept on. He flew so fast that he soon crossed the borders of another kingdom, and again he beheld the king and queen of the country seated in the garden with a little girl lying in a wonderful cradle of white satin and lace. Swooping down from behind as he had done before, he was just about to seize the cradle, when the king jumped up and dealt him such a blow with his golden staff that the dragon not only started back, but in his pain let fall the boy, as he spread his wings and soared into the air away from all danger.

‘That was a narrow escape,’ said the king, turning to his wife, who sat pale with fright, and clasping her baby tightly in her arms. ‘Frightful,’ murmured the queen; ‘but look, what is that glittering object that is lying out there?’ The king walked in the direction of her finger, and to his astonishment beheld another cradle and another baby.

‘Ah! the monster must have stolen this as he sought to steal Geirlaug,’ cried he. And stooping lower, he read some words that were written on the fine linen that was wound round the boy. ‘This is Grethari, son of Grethari the king!’ Unfortunately it happened that the two neighbouring monarchs had had a serious quarrel, and for some years had ceased holding communication with each other. So, instead of sending a messenger at once to Grethari to tell him of the safety of his son, the king contented himself with adopting the baby, which was brought up with Geirlaug the princess.

For a while things went well with the children, who were as happy as the day was long, but at last there came a time when the queen could no more run races or play at hide-and-seek with them in the garden as she was so fond of doing, but lay and watched them from a pile of soft cushions. By-and-by she gave up doing even that, and people in the palace spoke with low voices, and even Geirlaug and Grethari trod gently and moved quietly when they drew near her room. At length, one morning, they were sent for by the king himself, who, his eyes red with weeping, told them that the queen was dead.

Great was the sorrow of the two children, for they had loved the queen very dearly, and life seemed dull without her. But the lady-in-waiting who took care of them in the tower which had been built for them while they were still babies, was kind and good, and when the king was busy or away in other parts of his kingdom she made them quite happy, and saw that they were taught everything that a prince and princess ought to know. Thus two or three years passed, when, one day, as the children were anxiously awaiting their father’s return from a distant city, there rode post haste into the courtyard of the palace a herald whom the king had sent before him, to say that he was bringing back a new wife.

Now, in itself, there was nothing very strange or dreadful in the fact that the king should marry again, but, as the old lady-in-waiting soon guessed, the queen, in spite of her beauty, was a witch, and as it was easy to see that she was jealous of everyone who might gain power over her husband, it boded ill for Geirlaug and Grethari. The faithful woman could not sleep for thinking about her charges, and her soul sank when, a few months after the marriage, war broke out with a country across the seas, and the king rode away at the head of his troops. Then there happened

what she had so long expected. One night, when, unlike her usual habit, she was sleeping soundly—afterwards she felt sure that a drug had been put into her food—the witch came to the tower. Exactly what she did there no one knew, but, when the sun rose, the beds of Grethari and Geirlaug were empty. At dawn the queen summoned some of her guards, and told them that she had been warned in a dream that some evil fate would befall her through a wild beast, and bade them go out and kill every animal within two miles of the palace. But the only beasts they found were two black foals of wondrous beauty, fitted for the king's riding; it seemed a pity to kill them, for what harm could two little foals do anyone? So they let them run away, frisking over the plain, and returned to the palace.

'Did you see *nothing*, really *nothing*?' asked the queen, when they again appeared before her.

'Nothing, your majesty,' they replied. But the queen did not believe them, and when they were gone, she gave orders to her steward that at supper the guards should be well plied with strong drink so that their tongues should be loosened, and, further, that he was to give heed to their babble, and report to her, whatever they might let fall.

'Your majesty's commands have been obeyed,' said the steward when, late in the evening, he begged admittance to the royal apartments; 'but, after all, the men have told you the truth. I listened to their talk from beginning to end, and nothing did they see save two black foals.' He might have added more, but the look in the queen's blazing eyes terrified him, and, bowing hastily, he backed quickly out of her presence.

In a week's time the king came home, and right glad were all the courtiers to see him.

'Now, perhaps, she will find some one else to scream at,' whispered they amongst themselves. 'She' was the queen, who had vented her rage on her attendants during these days, though what had happened to make her so angry nobody knew. But whatever might be the meaning of it, things would be sure to improve with the king to rule in the palace instead of his wife. Unfortunately, their joy only lasted a short while; for the very first night after the king's arrival the queen related the evil dream she had dreamt in his absence, and begged him to go out the next morning and kill every living creature he saw within two miles of the city. The king, who always believed everything the queen said, promised to do as she wished.

But before he had ridden through the lovely gardens that surrounded the palace, he was attracted by the singing of two little blue birds perched on a scarlet-berried holly, which made him think of everything beautiful that he had ever heard of or imagined. Hour after hour passed by, and still the birds sang, and still the king listened, though of course he never guessed that it was Geirlaug and Grethari whose notes filled him with enchantment. At length darkness fell; the birds' voices were hushed, and the king awoke with a start to find that for that day his promise to the queen could not be kept.

'Well! did you see anything?' she asked eagerly, when the king entered her apartments.

'Ah, my dear, I am almost ashamed to confess to you. But the fact is that before I rode as far as the western gate the singing of two strange little blue birds made me forget all else in the world. And you will hardly believe it—but not until it grew dark did I remember where I was and what I should have been doing. However, to-morrow nothing shall hinder me from fulfilling your desires.'

'There will be no to-morrow,' muttered the queen, as she turned away with a curious glitter in her eyes. But the king did not hear her.

That night the king gave a great supper in the palace in honour of the victory he had gained over the enemy. The three men whom the queen had sent forth to slay the wild beasts held positions of trust in the household, for to them was committed the custody of the queen's person. And on the occasion of a feast their places were always next that of the king, so it was easy for the queen to scatter a slow but fatal poison in their cups without anyone being the wiser. Before dawn the palace was roused by the news that the king was dead, and that the three officers of the guards were dying also. Of course nobody's cries and laments were as loud as those of the queen. But when once the splendid funeral was over, she gave out that she was going to shut herself up in a distant castle till the year of her mourning was over, and after appointing a regent of the kingdom, she set out attended only by a maid who knew all her secrets. Once she had left the palace she quickly began to work her spells, to discover under what form Geirlaug and Grethari lay hidden. Happily, the princess had studied magic under a former governess, so was able to fathom her step-mother's wicked plot, and hastily changed herself into a whale, and her foster-

brother into its fin. Then the queen took the shape of a shark and gave chase.

For several hours a fierce battle raged between the whale and the shark, and the sea around was red with blood; first one of the combatants got the better, and then the other, but at length it became plain to the crowd of little fishes gathered round to watch, that the victory would be to the whale. And so it was. But when, after a mighty struggle, the shark floated dead and harmless on the surface of the water, the whale was so exhausted that she had only strength enough to drag her wounded body into a quiet little bay, and for three days she remained there as still and motionless as if she had been dead herself. At the end of the three days her wounds were healed, and she began to think what it was best to do.

'Let us go back to your father's kingdom,' she said to Grethari, when they had both resumed their proper shapes, and were sitting on a high cliff above the sea.

'How clever you are! I never should have thought of that!' answered Grethari, who, in truth, was not clever at all. But Geirlaug took a small box of white powder from her dress, and sprinkled some over him and some over herself, and, quicker than lightning, they found themselves in the palace grounds from which Grethari had been carried off by the dragon so many years before.

'Now take up the band with the golden letters and bind it about your forehead,' said Geirlaug, 'and go boldly up to the castle. And, remember, however great may be your thirst, you must drink nothing till you have first spoken to your father. If you do, ill will befall us both.'

'*Why* should I be thirsty?' replied Grethari, staring at her in astonishment. 'It will not take me five minutes to reach the castle gate.' Geirlaug held her peace, but her eyes had in them a sad look. 'Good-bye,' she said at last, and she turned and kissed him.

Grethari had spoken truly when he declared that he could easily get to the castle in five minutes. At least, no one would have dreamed that it could possibly take any longer. Yet, to his surprise, the door which stood so widely open that he could see the colour of the hangings within never appeared to grow any nearer, while each moment the sun burned more hotly, and his tongue was parched with thirst.

‘I don’t understand! What *can* be the matter with me—and why haven’t I reached the castle long ago?’ he murmured to himself, as his knees began to knock under him with fatigue, and his head to swim. For a few more paces he staggered on blindly, when, suddenly, the sound of rushing water smote upon his ears; and in a little wood that bordered the path he beheld a stream falling over a rock. At this sight his promise to Geirlaug was forgotten. Fighting his way through the brambles that tore his clothes, he cast himself down beside the fountain, and seizing the golden cup that hung from a tree, he drank a deep draught.

When he rose up the remembrance of Geirlaug and of his past life had vanished, and, instead, something stirred dimly within him at the vision of the white-haired man and woman who stood in the open door with outstretched hands.

‘Grethari! Grethari! So you have come home at last,’ cried they.

* * * * *

For three hours Geirlaug waited in the spot where Grethari had left her, and then she began to understand what had happened. Her heart was heavy, but she soon made up her mind what to do, and pushing her way out of the wood, she skirted the high wall that enclosed the royal park and gardens, till she reached a small house where the forester lived with his two daughters.

‘Do you want a girl to sweep, and to milk the cows?’ asked she, when one of the sisters answered her knock.

‘Yes, we do, very badly; and as you look strong and clean, we will take you for a servant if you like to come,’ replied the young woman.

‘But, first, what is your name?’

‘Lauphertha,’ said Geirlaug quickly, for she did not wish anyone to know who she was; and following her new mistress into the house, she begged to be taught her work without delay. And so clever was she, that, by-and-by, it began to be noised abroad that the strange girl who had come to live in the forester’s house had not her equal in the whole kingdom for skill as well as beauty. Thus the years slipped away, during which Geirlaug grew to be a woman. Now and then she caught glimpses of Grethari as he rode out to hunt in the forest, but when she saw him coming she hid

herself behind the great trees, for her heart was still sore at his forgetfulness. One day, however, when she was gathering herbs, he came upon her suddenly, before she had time to escape, though as she had stained her face and hands brown, and covered her beautiful hair with a scarlet cap, he did not guess her to be his foster-sister.

‘What is your name, pretty maiden?’ asked he.

‘Lauphertha,’ answered the girl with a low curtesy.

‘Ah! it is you, then, of whom I have heard so much,’ said he; ‘you are too beautiful to spend your life serving the forester’s daughters. Come with me to the palace, and my mother the queen will make you one of her ladies in waiting.’

‘Truly, that would be a great fortune,’ replied the maiden. ‘And, if you really mean it, I will go with you. But how shall I know that you are not jesting?’

‘Give me something to do for you, and I will do it, whatever it is,’ cried the young man eagerly. And she cast down her eyes, and answered:

‘Go to the stable, and bind the calf that is there so that it shall not break loose in the night and wander away, for the forester and his daughters have treated me well, and I would not leave them with aught of my work still undone.’

So Grethari set out for the stable where the calf stood, and wound the rope about its horns. But when he had made it fast to the wall, he found that a coil of the rope had twisted itself round his wrist, and, pull as he might, he could not get free. All night he wriggled and struggled till he was half dead with fatigue. But when the sun rose the rope suddenly fell away from him, and, very angry with the maiden he dragged himself back to the palace. ‘She is a witch,’ he muttered crossly to himself, ‘and I will have no more to do with her.’ And he flung himself on his bed and slept all day.

Not long after this adventure the king and queen sent their beloved son on an embassy to a neighbouring country to seek a bride from amongst the seven princesses. The most beautiful of all was, of course, the one chosen, and the young pair took ship without delay for the kingdom of the prince’s parents. The wind was fair and the vessel so swift that, in less time than could have been expected, the harbour nearest the castle was reached. A splendid carriage had been left in readiness close to the beach, but no

horses were to be found, for every one had been carried off to take part in a great review which the king was to hold that day in honour of his son's marriage.

'I can't stay here all day,' said the princess, crossly, when Grethari told her of the plight they were in. 'I am perfectly worn out as it is, and you will have to find something to draw the carriage, if it is only a donkey. If you don't, I will sail back straight to my father.'

Poor Grethari was much troubled by the words of the princess. Not that he felt so very much in love with her, for during the voyage she had shown him several times how vain and bad tempered she was; but as a prince and a bridegroom, he could not, of course, bear to think that any slight had been put upon her. So he hastily bade his attendants to go in search of some animal, and bring it at once to the place at which they were waiting.

During the long pause the princess sat in the beautiful golden coach, her blue velvet mantle powdered with silver bees drawn closely round her, so that not even the tip of her nose could be seen. At length a girl appeared driving a young ox in front of her, followed by one of the prince's messengers, who was talking eagerly.

'Will you lend me your ox, fair maiden?' asked Grethari, jumping up and going to meet them. 'You shall fix your own price, and it shall be paid ungrudgingly, for never before was king's son in such a plight.'

'My price is seats for me and my two friends behind you and your bride at the wedding feast,' answered she. And to this Grethari joyfully consented.

Six horses would not have drawn the coach at the speed of this one ox. Trees and fields flew by so fast that the bride became quite giddy, and expected, besides, that they would be upset every moment. But, in spite of her fears, nothing happened, and they drew up in safety at the door of the palace, to the great surprise of the king and queen. The marriage preparations were hurried on, and by the end of the week everything was ready. It was, perhaps, fortunate that the princess was too busy with her clothes and her jewels during this period to pay much heed to Grethari, so that by the time the wedding day came round he had almost forgotten how cross and rude she had been on the journey.

The oldest men and women in the town agreed that nothing so splendid had ever been seen as the bridal procession to the great hall, where the

banquet was to be held, before the ceremony was celebrated in the palace. The princess was in high good humour, feeling that all eyes were upon her, and bowed and smiled right and left. Taking the prince's hand, she sailed proudly down the room, where the guests were already assembled, to her place at the head of the table by the side of the bridegroom. As she did so, three strange ladies in shining dresses of blue, green, and red, glided in and seated themselves on a vacant bench immediately behind the young couple. The red lady was Geirlaug, who had brought with her the forester's daughters, and in one hand she held a wand of birch bark, and in the other a closed basket.

Silently they sat as the feast proceeded; hardly anyone noticed their presence, or, if they did, supposed them to be attendants of their future queen. Suddenly, when the merriment was at its height, Geirlaug opened the basket, and out flew a cock and hen. To the astonishment of everyone, the birds circled about in front of the royal pair, the cock plucking the feathers out of the tail of the hen, who tried in vain to escape from him.

'Will you treat me as badly as Grethari treated Geirlaug?' cried the hen at last. And Grethari heard, and started up wildly. In an instant all the past rushed back to him; the princess by his side was forgotten, and he only saw the face of the child with whom he had played long years ago.

'Where is Geirlaug?' he exclaimed, looking round the hall; and his eyes fell upon the strange lady. With a smile she held out a ring which he had given her on her twelfth birthday, when they were still children, without a thought of the future. 'You and none other shall be my wife,' he said, taking her hand, and leading her into the middle of the company.

It is not easy to describe the scene that followed. Of course, nobody understood what had occurred, and the king and queen imagined that their son had suddenly gone mad. As for the princess her rage and fury were beyond belief. The guests left the hall as quickly as they could, so that the royal family might arrange their own affairs, and in the end it was settled that half the kingdom must be given to the despised princess, instead of a husband. She sailed back at once to her country, where she was soon betrothed to a young noble, whom, in reality, she liked much better than Grethari. That evening Grethari was married to Geirlaug, and they lived happily till they died, and made all their people happy also.

(From *Neuisländischen Volksmärchen*.)

THE STORY OF LITTLE KING LOC

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Two or three miles from the coast of France, anyone sailing in a ship on a calm day can see deep, deep down, the trunks of great trees standing up in the water. Many hundreds of years ago these trees formed part of a large forest, full of all sorts of wild animals, and beyond the forest was a fine city, guarded by a castle in which dwelt the Dukes of Clarides. But little by little the sea drew nearer to the town; the foundations of the houses became undermined and fell in, and at length a shining sea flowed over the land. However, all this happened a long time after the story I am going to tell you.

The Dukes of Clarides had always lived in the midst of their people, and protected them both in war and peace.

At the period when this tale begins the Duke Robert was dead, leaving a young and beautiful duchess who ruled in his stead. Of course everyone expected her to marry again, but she refused all suitors who sought her hand, saying that, having only one soul she could have only one husband, and that her baby daughter was quite enough for her.

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One day, she was sitting in the tower, which looked out over a rocky heath, covered in summer with purple and yellow flowers, when she beheld a troop of horsemen riding towards the castle. In the midst, seated on a white horse with black and silver trappings, was a lady whom the duchess at once knew to be her friend the Countess of Blanchelande, a young widow like herself, mother of a little boy two years older than Abeille des Clarides. The duchess hailed her arrival with delight, but her joy was soon turned into weeping when the countess sank down beside her on a pile of cushions, and told the reason of her visit.

‘As you know,’ she said, taking her friend’s hand and pressing it between her own, ‘whenever a Countess of Blanchelande is about to die she finds a white rose lying on her pillow. Last night I went to bed feeling

unusually happy, but this morning when I woke the rose was resting against my cheek. I have no one to help me in the world but you, and I have come to ask if you will take Youri my son, and let him be a brother to Abeille?'

Tears choked the voice of the duchess, but she flung herself on the countess's neck, and pressed her close. Silently the two women took leave of each other, and silently the doomed lady mounted her horse and rode home again. Then, giving her sleeping boy into the care of Francœur, her steward, she laid herself quietly on her bed, where, the next morning, they found her dead and peaceful.

So Youri and Abeille grew up side by side, and the duchess faithfully kept her promise, and was a mother to them both. As they got bigger she often took them with her on her journeys through her duchy, and taught them to know her people, and to pity and to aid them.

It was on one of these journeys that, after passing through meadows covered with flowers, Youri caught sight of a great glittering expanse lying beneath some distant mountains.

'What is that, godmother?' he asked, waving his hand. 'The shield of a giant, I suppose.'

'No; a silver plate as big as the moon!' said Abeille, twisting herself round on her pony.

'It is neither a silver plate nor a giant's shield,' replied the duchess; 'but a beautiful lake. Still, in spite of its beauty, it is dangerous to go near it, for in its depths dwell some Undines, or water spirits, who lure all passers-by to their deaths.'

Nothing more was said about the lake, but the children did not forget it, and one morning, after they had returned to the castle, Abeille came up to Youri.

'The tower door is open,' whispered she; 'let us go up. Perhaps we shall find some fairies.'

But they did not find any fairies; only, when they reached the roof, the lake looked bluer and more enchanting than ever. Abeille gazed at it for a moment, and then she said:

'Do you see? I mean to go there!'

'But you mustn't,' cried Youri. 'You heard what your mother said. And, besides, it is so far; how could we get there?'

‘*You* ought to know that,’ answered Abeille scornfully. ‘What is the good of being a man, and learning all sorts of things, if you have to ask me. However, there are plenty of other men in the world, and I shall get one of them to tell me.’

Youri coloured; Abeille had never spoken like this before, and, instead of being two years younger than himself, she suddenly seemed many years older. She stood with her mocking eyes fixed on him, till he grew angry at being outdone by a girl, and taking her hand he said boldly:

‘Very well, we will *both* go to the lake.’

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The next afternoon, when the duchess was working at her tapestry surrounded by her maidens, the children went out, as usual, to play in the garden. The moment they found themselves alone, Youri turned to Abeille, and holding out his hand, said:

‘Come.’

‘Come where?’ asked Abeille, opening her eyes very wide.

‘To the lake, of course,’ answered the boy.

Abeille was silent. It was one thing to pretend you meant to be disobedient some day, a long time off, and quite another to start for such a distant place without anyone knowing that you had left the garden. ‘And in satin shoes, too! How stupid boys were to be sure.’

‘Stupid or not, I am going to the lake, and you are going with me!’ said Youri, who had not forgotten or forgiven the look she had cast on him the day before. ‘Unless,’ added he, ‘you are afraid, and in that case I shall go alone.’

This was too much for Abeille. Bursting into tears, she flung herself on Youri’s neck, and declared that wherever he went she would go too. So, peace having been made between them, they set out.

It was a hot day, and the townspeople were indoors waiting till the sun was low in the sky before they set out either to work or play, so the children passed through the streets unperceived, and crossed the river by the bridge into the flowery meadows along the road by which they had ridden with the duchess. By-and-by Abeille began to feel thirsty, but the sun had drunk up all the water, and not a drop was left for her. They

walked on a little further, and by good luck found a cherry-tree covered with ripe fruit, and after a rest and a refreshing meal, they were sure that they were strong enough to reach the lake in a few minutes. But soon Abeille began to limp and to say that her foot hurt her, and Youri had to untie the ribbons that fastened her shoe and see what was the matter. A stone had got in, so this was easily set right, and for a while they skipped along the path singing and chattering, till Abeille stopped again. This time her shoe had come off, and turning to pick it up she caught sight of the towers of the castle, looking such a long way off that her heart sank, and she burst into tears.

'It is getting dark, and the wolves will eat us,' sobbed she. But Youri put his arms round her and comforted her.

'Why we are close to the lake now. There is nothing to be afraid of! We shall be home again to supper,' cried he. And Abeille dried her eyes, and trotted on beside him.

Yes, the lake was there, blue and silvery with purple and gold irises growing on its banks, and white water-lilies floated on its bosom. Not a trace was there of a man, or of one of the great beasts so much feared by Abeille, but only the marks of tiny forked feet on the sand. The little girl at once pulled off her torn shoes and stockings and let the water flow over her, while Youri looked about for some nuts or strawberries. But none were to be found.

'I noticed, a little way back, a clump of blackberry bushes,' said he. 'Wait here for me, and I will go and gather some fruit, and after that we will start home again.' And Abeille, leaning her head drowsily against a cushion of soft moss, murmured something in reply, and soon fell asleep. In her dream a crow, bearing the smallest man that ever was seen, appeared hovering for a moment above her, and then vanished. At the same instant Youri returned and placed by her side a large leaf-full of strawberries.

'It is a pity to wake her just yet,' thought he, and wandered off beyond a clump of silvery willows to a spot from which he could get a view of the whole lake. In the moonlight, the light mist that hung over the surface made it look like fairyland. Then gradually the silver veil seemed to break up, and the shapes of fair women with outstretched hands and long green

locks floated towards him. Seized with a sudden fright, the boy turned to fly. But it was too late.

Unconscious of the terrible doom that had befallen her foster-brother, Abeille slept on, and did not awake even when a crowd of little men with white beards down to their knees came and stood in a circle round her.

‘What shall we do with her?’ asked Pic, who seemed older than any of them, though they were all very old.

‘Build a cage and put her into it,’ answered Rug.

‘No! No! What should such a beautiful princess do in a cage?’ cried Dig. And Tad, who was the kindest of them all, proposed to carry her home to her parents. But the other gnomes were too pleased with their new toy to listen to this for a moment.

‘Look, she is waking,’ whispered Pau. And as he spoke Abeille slowly opened her eyes. At first she imagined she was still dreaming; but as the little men did not move, it suddenly dawned upon her that they were real, and starting to her feet, she called loudly:

‘Youri! Youri! Where are you?’

At the sound of her voice the gnomes only pressed more closely round her, and, trembling with fear, she hid her face in her hands. The gnomes were at first much puzzled to know what to do; then Tad, climbing on a branch of the willow tree that hung over her, stooped down, and gently stroked her fingers. The child understood that he meant to be kind, and letting her hands fall, gazed at her captors. After an instant’s pause she said:

‘Little men, it is a great pity that you are so ugly. But, all the same, I will love you if you will only give me something to eat, as I am dying of hunger.’

A rustle was heard among the group as she spoke. Some were very angry at being called ugly, and said she deserved no better fate than to be left where she was. Others laughed, and declared that it did not matter what a mere mortal thought about them; while Tad bade Bog, their messenger, fetch her some milk and honey, and the finest white bread that was made in their ovens under the earth. In less time than Abeille would have taken to tie her shoe he was back again, mounted on his crow. And by the time she had eaten the bread and honey and drunk the milk, Abeille was not frightened any more, and felt quite ready to talk.

‘Little men,’ she said, looking up with a smile, ‘your supper was very good, and I thank you for it. My name is Abeille, and my brother is called Youri. Help me to find him, and tell me which is the path that leads to the castle, for mother must think something dreadful has happened to us!’

‘But your feet are so sore that you cannot walk,’ answered Dig. ‘And we may not cross the bounds into your country. The best we can do is to make a litter of twigs and cover it with moss, and we will bear you into the mountains, and present you to our king.’

Now, many a little girl would have been terrified at the thought of being carried off alone, she did not know where. But Abeille, when she had recovered from her first fright, was pleased at the notion of her strange adventure.

‘How much she would have to tell her mother and Youri on her return. Probably *they* would never go inside a mountain, if they lived to be a hundred.’ So she curled herself comfortably on her nest of moss, and waited to see what would happen.

Up, and up, and up they went; and by-and-by Abeille fell asleep again, and did not wake till the sun was shining. Up, and up, and up, for the little men could only walk very slowly, though they could spring over rocks quicker than any mortal. Suddenly the light that streamed through the branches of the litter began to change. It seemed hardly less bright, but it was certainly different; then the litter was put down, and the gnomes crowded round and helped Abeille to step out of it.

Before her stood a little man not half her size, but splendidly dressed and full of dignity. On his head was a crown of such huge diamonds that you wondered how his small body could support it. A royal mantle fell from his shoulders, and in his hand he held a lance.

‘King Loc,’ said one of the forest gnomes, ‘we found this beautiful child asleep by the lake, and have brought her to you. She says that her name is Abeille, and her mother is the Duchess des Clarides.’

‘You have done well,’ answered the king; ‘she shall be one of us.’ And standing on tiptoe, so that he could kiss her hand, he told her that they would all take care of her and make her happy, and that anything she wished for she should have at once.

‘I want a pair of shoes,’ replied Abeille.

‘Shoes!’ commanded the king, striking the ground with his lance; and immediately a lovely pair of silver shoes embroidered with pearls were slipped on her feet by one of the gnomes.

‘They are beautiful shoes,’ said Abeille rather doubtfully; ‘but do you think they will carry me all the way back to my mother?’

‘No, they are not meant for rough roads,’ replied the king, ‘but for walking about the smooth paths of the mountain, for we have many wonders to show you.’

‘Little King Loc,’ answered Abeille, ‘take away these beautiful slippers and give me a pair of wooden shoes instead, and let me go back to my mother.’ But King Loc only shook his head.

‘Little King Loc,’ said Abeille again—and this time her voice trembled—‘let me go back to my mother and Youri, and I will love you with all my heart, nearly as well as I love them.’

‘Who is Youri?’ asked King Loc.

‘Why—Youri—who has lived with us since I was a baby,’ replied Abeille; surprised that he did not know what everyone else was aware of, and never guessing that by mentioning the boy she was sealing her own fate. For King Loc had already thought what a good wife she would make him in a few years’ time, and he did not want Youri to come between them. So he was silent, and Abeille, seeing he was not pleased, burst into tears.

‘Little King Loc,’ she cried, taking hold of a corner of his mantle, ‘think how unhappy my mother will be. She will fancy that wild beasts have eaten me, or that I have got drowned in the lake.’

‘Be comforted,’ replied King Loc; ‘I will send her a dream, so that she shall know that you are safe.’

At this Abeille’s sad face brightened. ‘Little King Loc,’ she said, smiling, ‘how clever you are! But you must send her a dream every night, so that she shall see *me*—and *me* a dream, so that I may see her.’

And this King Loc promised to do.

When Abeille grew accustomed to do without her mother and Youri, she made herself happy enough in her new home. Everyone was kind to her, and petted her, and then there were such quantities of new things for her to see. The gnomes were always busy, and knew how to fashion beautiful toys as well or better than the people who lived on the earth; and

now and then, wandering with Tad or Dig in the underground passages, Abeille would catch a glimpse of blue sky through a rent in the rocks, and this she loved best of all. In this manner six years passed away.

‘His Highness King Loc wishes to see you in his presence chamber,’ said Tad, one morning, to Abeille, who was singing to herself on a golden lute; and Abeille, wondering why the king had grown so formal all of a sudden, got up obediently. Directly she appeared, King Loc opened a door in the wall which led into his treasure chamber. Abeille had never been there before, and was amazed at the splendid things heaped up before her. Gold, jewels, brocades, carpets, lay round the walls, and she walked about examining one glittering object after another, while King Loc mounted a throne of gold and ivory at one end of the hall, and watched her. ‘Choose whatever you wish,’ he said at last. A necklace of most lovely pearls was hanging from the wall, and after hesitating for a moment between that and a circlet of diamonds and sapphires, Abeille stretched up her hand towards it. But before she touched it her eyes lighted on a tiny piece of sky visible through a crack of the rock, and her hand dropped by her side. ‘Little King Loc, let me go up to the earth once again,’ she said.

Then King Loc made a sign to the treasurer, who opened a coffer full of nothing but precious stones, larger and more dazzling than were worn by any earthly monarch. ‘Choose what you will, Abeille,’ whispered King Loc.

But Abeille only shook her head.

‘A drop of dew in the garden at Clarides is brighter to me than the best of those diamonds,’ she answered, ‘and the bluest of the stones are not as blue as the eyes of Youri.’ And as she spoke a sharp pain ran through the heart of King Loc. For an instant he said nothing, then he lifted his head and looked at her. ‘Only those who despise riches should possess them. Take this crown, from henceforth you are the Princess of the Gnomes.’

During thirty days no work was done in those underground regions, for a feast was held in honour of the new princess. At the end of that period, the king appeared before Abeille, clad in his most splendid garments, and solemnly asked her to be his wife.

‘Little King Loc,’ answered the girl, ‘I love you as you are, for your goodness and kindness to me; but never, never can I love you as anything else.’

The king sighed. It was only what he had expected; still, his disappointment was great, though he tried bravely to hide it, and even to smile as he said: ‘Then, Abeille, will you promise me one thing? If there should come a day when you find that there is somebody whom you *could* love, will you tell me?’

And in her turn Abeille promised.

After this, in spite of the fact that everyone was just as kind to her as before, Abeille was no longer the merry child who passed all her days playing with the little gnomes. People who dwell under the earth grow up much faster than those who live on its surface, and, at thirteen, the girl was already a woman. Besides, King Loc’s words had set her thinking; she spent many hours by herself, and her face was no longer round and rosy, but thin and pale. It was in vain that the gnomes did their best to entice her into her old games, they had lost their interest, and even her lute lay unnoticed on the ground.

But one morning a change seemed to come over her. Leaving the room hung with beautiful silks, where she usually sat alone, she entered the king’s presence, and taking his hand she led him through long corridors till they came to a place where a strip of blue sky was to be seen.

‘Little King Loc,’ she said, turning her eyes upon him, ‘let me behold my mother again, or I shall surely die.’ Her voice shook, and her whole body trembled. Even an enemy might have pitied her; but the king, who loved her, answered nothing. All day long Abeille stayed there, watching the light fade, and the sky grow pale. By-and-by the stars came out, but the girl never moved from her place. Suddenly a hand touched her. She looked round with a start, and there was King Loc, covered from head to foot in a dark mantle, holding another over his arm. ‘Put on this and follow me,’ was all he said. But Abeille somehow knew that she was going to see her mother.

On, and on, and on they went, through passages where Abeille had never been before, and at length she was out in the world again. Oh! how beautiful it all was! How fresh was the air, and how sweet was the smell of the flowers! She felt as if she should die with joy, but at that moment King Loc lifted her off the ground, and, tiny though he was, carried her quite easily across the garden and through an open door into the silent castle.

‘Listen, Abeille,’ he whispered softly. ‘You have guessed where we are going, and you know that every night I send your mother a vision of you, and she talks to it in her dream, and smiles at it. To-night it will be no vision she sees, but you yourself; only remember, that if you touch her or speak to her my power is lost, and never more will she behold either you or your image.’

By this time they had reached the room which Abeille knew so well, and her heart beat violently as the gnome carried her over the threshold. By the light of a lamp hanging over the bed Abeille could see her mother, beautiful still, but with a face that had grown pale and sad. As she gazed the sadness vanished, and a bright smile came in its stead. Her mother’s arms were stretched out towards her, and the girl, her eyes filled with tears of joy, was stooping to meet them, when King Loc hastily snatched her up, and bore her back to the realm of the gnomes.

If the king imagined that by granting Abeille’s request he would make her happy, he soon found out his mistake, for all day long the girl sat weeping, paving no heed to the efforts of her friends to comfort her.

‘Tell me what is making you so unhappy?’ said King Loc, at last. And Abeille answered:

‘Little King Loc, and all my friends here, you are so good and kind that I know that you are miserable when I am in trouble. I would be happy if I could, but it is stronger than I. I am weeping because I shall never see again Youri de Blanchelande, whom I love with all my heart. It is a worse grief than parting with my mother, for at least I know where she is and what she is doing; while, as for Youri, I cannot tell if he is dead or alive.’

The gnomes were all silent. Kind as they were, they were not mortals, and had never felt either great joys or deep sorrows. Only King Loc dimly guessed at something of both, and he went away to consult an old, old gnome, who lived in the lowest depth of the mountain, and had spectacles of every sort, that enabled him to see all that was happening, not only on the earth, but under the sea.

Nur, for such was his name, tried many of these spectacles before he could discover anything about Youri de Blanchelande.

‘There he is!’ he cried at last. ‘He is sitting in the palace of the Undines, under the great lake; but he does not like his prison, and longs to be back in the world, doing great deeds.’

It was true. In the seven years that had passed since he had left the castle of Clarides to go with Abeille to the blue lake, Youri in his turn had become a man.

The older he grew the more weary he got of the petting and spoiling he received at the hands of the green-haired maidens, till, one day, he flung himself at the feet of the Undine queen, and implored permission to return to his old home.

The queen stooped down and stroked his hair.

‘We cannot spare you,’ she murmured gently. ‘Stay here, and you shall be king, and marry me.’

‘But it is Abeille I want to marry,’ said the youth boldly. But he might as well have talked to the winds, for at last the queen grew angry, and ordered him to be put in a crystal cage which was built for him round a pointed rock.

It was here that King Loc, aided by the spectacles of Nur, found him after many weeks’ journey. As we know, the gnomes walk slowly, and the way was long and difficult. Luckily, before he started, he had taken with him his magic ring, and the moment it touched the wall the crystal cage split from top to bottom.

‘Follow that path, and you will find yourself in the world again,’ he said to Youri; and without waiting to listen to the young man’s thanks, set out on the road he had come.

‘Bog,’ he cried, to the little man on the crow, who had ridden to meet him. ‘Hasten to the palace and inform the Princess Abeille that Youri de Blanchelande, for seven years a captive in the kingdom of the Undines, has now returned to the castle of Clarides.’

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The first person whom Youri met as he came out of the mountain was the tailor who had made all his clothes from the time that he came to live at the castle. Of this old friend, who was nearly beside himself with joy at the sight of the little master, lost for so many years, the count begged for news of his foster-mother and Abeille.

‘Alas! my lord, where can you have been that you do not know that the Princess Abeille was carried off by the gnomes on the very day that you

disappeared yourself? At least, so we guess. Ah! that day has left many a mark on our duchess! Yet she is not without a gleam of hope that her daughter is living yet, for every night the poor mother is visited by a dream which tells her all that the princess is doing.'

The good man went on to tell of all the changes that seven years had brought about in the village, but Youri heard nothing that he said, for his mind was busy with thoughts of Abeille.

At length he roused himself, and ashamed of his delay, he hastened to the chamber of the duchess, who held him in her arms as if she would never let him go. By-and-by, however, when she became calmer, he began to question her about Abeille, and how best to deliver her from the power of the gnomes. The duchess then told him that she had sent out men in all directions to look for the children directly they were found to be missing, and that one of them had noticed a troop of little men far away on the mountains, evidently carrying a litter. He was hastening after them, when, at his feet, he beheld a tiny satin slipper, which he stooped to pick up. But as he did so a dozen of the gnomes had swarmed upon him like flies, and beat him about the head till he dropped the slipper, which they took away with them, leaving the poor man dizzy with pain. When he recovered his senses the group on the mountain had disappeared.

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That night, when everyone was asleep, Youri and his old servant Francœur, stole softly down into the armoury, and dressed themselves in light suits of chain armour, with helmets and short swords, all complete. Then they mounted two horses that Francœur had tied up in the forest, and set forth for the kingdom of the gnomes. At the end of an hour's hard riding, they came to the cavern which Francœur had heard from childhood led into the centre of the earth. Here they dismounted, and entered cautiously, expecting to find darkness as thick as what they had left outside. But they had only gone a few steps when they were nearly blinded by a sudden blaze of light, which seemed to proceed from a sort of portcullis door, which barred the way in front of them.

'Who are you?' asked a voice. And the count answered:

‘Youri de Blanchelande, who has come to rescue Abeille des Clarides.’ And at these words the gate slowly swung open, and closed behind the two strangers.

Youri listened to the clang with a spasm of fear in his heart; then the desperate position he was in gave him courage. There was no retreat for him now, and in front was drawn up a large force of gnomes, whose arrows were falling like hail about him. He raised his shield to ward them off, and as he did so his eyes fell on a little man standing on a rock above the rest, with a crown on his head and a royal mantle on his shoulders. In an instant Youri had flung away his shield and sprung forward, regardless of the arrows that still fell about him.

‘Oh, is it you, is it *really* you, my deliverer? And is it your subjects who hold as a captive Abeille whom I love?’

‘I am King Loc,’ was the answer. And the figure with the long beard bent his eyes kindly on the eager youth. ‘If Abeille has lived with us all these years, for many of them she was quite happy. But the gnomes, of whom you think so little, are a just people, and they will not keep her against her will. Beg the princess to be good enough to come hither,’ he added, turning to Rug.

Amidst a dead silence Abeille entered the vast space and looked around her. At first she saw nothing but a vast host of gnomes perched on the walls and crowding on the floor of the big hall. Then her eyes met those of Youri, and with a cry that came from her heart she darted towards him, and threw herself on his breast.

‘Abeille,’ said the king, when he had watched her for a moment, with a look of pain on his face, ‘is this the man that you wish to marry?’

‘Yes, Little King Loc, this is he and nobody else! And see how I can laugh now, and how happy I am!’ And with that she began to cry.

‘Hush, Abeille! there must be no tears to-day,’ said Youri, gently stroking her hair. ‘Come, dry your eyes, and thank King Loc, who rescued me from the cage in the realm of the Undines.’

As Youri spoke Abeille lifted her head, and a great light came into her face. At last she understood.

‘You did that for me?’ she whispered. ‘Ah, Little King Loc——!’

* * * * *

So, loaded with presents, and followed by regrets, Abeille went home. In a few days the marriage took place; but however happy she was, and however busy she might be, never a month passed by without a visit from Abeille to her friends in the kingdom of the gnomes.

(Adapted and shortened from the story of *Abeille*, by M. Anatole France.)

‘A LONG-BOW STORY’

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One day a bunniah,[1] or banker, was walking along a country road when he overtook a farmer going in the same direction. Now the bunniah was very grasping, like most of his class, and was lamenting that he had had no chance of making any money that day; but at the sight of the man in front he brightened up wonderfully.

‘That is a piece of luck,’ he said to himself. ‘Let me see if this farmer is not good for something’; and he hastened his steps.

After they had bid one another good day very politely, the bunniah said to the farmer:

‘I was just thinking how dull I felt, when I beheld you, but since we are going the same way, I shall find the road quite short in such agreeable company.’

‘With all my heart,’ replied the farmer; ‘but what shall we talk about? A city man like you will not care to hear about cattle and crops.’

‘Oh,’ said the bunniah, ‘I’ll tell you what we will do. We will each tell the other the wildest tale we can imagine, and he who first throws doubt on the other’s story shall pay him a hundred rupees.’

To this the farmer agreed, and begged the bunniah to begin, as he was the bigger man of the two; and privately he made up his mind that, however improbable it might be, nothing should induce him to hint that he did not believe in the bunniah’s tale. Thus politely pressed the great man started:

‘I was going along this road one day, when I met a merchant travelling with a great train of camels laden with merchandise——’

‘Very likely,’ murmured the farmer; ‘I’ve seen that kind of thing myself.’

‘No less than one hundred and one camels,’ continued the bunniah, ‘all tied together by their nose strings—nose to tail—and stretching along the road for almost half a mile——’

‘Well?’ said the farmer.

‘Well, a kite swooped down on the foremost camel and bore him off, struggling, into the air, and by reason of them all being tied together the other hundred camels had to follow——’

‘Amazing, the strength of that kite!’ said the farmer. ‘But—well—yes, doubtless; yes—well—one hundred and one camels—and what did he do with them?’

‘You doubt it?’ demanded the bunniah.

‘Not a bit!’ said the farmer heartily.

‘Well,’ continued the bunniah, ‘it happened that the princess of a neighbouring kingdom was sitting in her private garden, having her hair combed by her maid, and she was looking upward, with her head thrown back, whilst the maid tugged away at the comb, when that wretched kite, with its prey, went soaring overhead; and, as luck would have it, the camels gave an extra kick just then, the kite lost his hold, and the whole hundred and one camels dropped right into the princess’s left eye!’

‘Poor thing!’ said the farmer; ‘it’s so painful having anything in one’s eye.’

‘Well,’ said the bunniah, who was now warming to his task, ‘the princess shook her head, and sprang up, clapping her hand on her eye. “Oh dear!” she cried, “I’ve got something in my eye, and how it *does* smart!”’

‘It always does,’ observed the farmer, ‘perfectly true. Well, what did the poor thing do?’

‘At the sound of her cries, the maid came running to her assistance. “Let me look,” said she; and with that she gave the princess’s eyelid a twitch, and out came a camel, which the maid put in her pocket—’ (‘Ah!’ grunted the farmer)—‘and then she just twisted up the corner of her headcloth and fished a hundred more of them out of the princess’s eye, and popped them all into her pocket with the other.’

Here the bunniah gasped as one who is out of breath, but the farmer looked at him slowly. ‘Well?’ said he.

‘I can’t think of anything more now,’ replied the bunniah. ‘Besides, that is the end; what do you say to it?’

‘Wonderful,’ replied the farmer, ‘and no doubt perfectly true!’

‘Well, it is your turn,’ said the bunniah. ‘I am so anxious to hear your story. I am sure it will be very interesting.’

‘Yes, I think it will,’ answered the farmer, and he began:

‘My father was a very prosperous man. Five cows he had, and three yoke of oxen, and half a dozen buffaloes, and goats in abundance; but of all his possessions the thing he loved best was a mare. A well bred mare she was—oh, a very fine mare!’

‘Yes, yes,’ interrupted the bunniah, ‘get on!’

‘I’m getting on,’ said the farmer, ‘don’t you hurry me! Well, one day, as ill-luck would have it, he rode that mare to market with a torn saddle, which galled her so, that when they got home she had a sore on her back as big as the palm of your hand.’

‘Yes,’ said the bunniah impatiently, ‘what next?’

‘It was June,’ said the farmer, ‘and you know how, in June, the air is full of dust-storms with rain at times? Well, the poor beast got dust in that wound, and what’s more, with the dust some grains of wheat, and, what with the dust and the heat and the wet, that wheat sprouted and began to grow!’

‘Wheat does when it gets a fair chance,’ said the bunniah.

‘Yes; and the next thing we knew was that there was a crop of wheat on that horse’s back as big as anything you ever saw in a hundred-acre field, and we had to hire twenty men to reap it!’

‘One generally has to hire extra hands for reaping,’ said the bunniah.

‘And we got four hundred maunds of wheat off that mare’s back!’ continued the farmer.

‘A good crop!’ murmured the bunniah.

‘And your father,’ said the farmer, ‘a poor wretch, with hardly enough to keep body and soul together—(the bunniah snorted, but was silent)—came to my father, and he said, putting his hands together as humble as could be——’

The bunniah here flashed a furious glance at his companion, but bit his lips and held his peace.

‘“I haven’t tasted food for a week. Oh! great master, let me have the loan of sixteen maunds of wheat from your store, and I will repay you.”’

‘“Certainly, neighbour,” answered my father; “take what you need, and repay it as you can.”’

‘Well?’ demanded the bunniah with fury in his eye.

‘Well, he took the wheat away with him,’ replied the farmer; ‘but he never repaid it, and it’s a debt to this day. Sometimes I wonder whether I

shall not go to law about it.’

Then the bunniah began running his thumb quickly up and down the fingers of his right hand, and his lips moved in quick calculation.

‘What is the matter?’ asked the farmer.

‘The wheat is the cheaper; I’ll pay you for the wheat,’ said the bunniah, with the calmness of despair, as he remembered that by his own arrangement he was bound to give the farmer a hundred rupees.

And to this day they say in those parts, when a man owes a debt: ‘Give me the money; or, if not that, give me at least the wheat.’

(This is from oral tradition.)

FOOTNOTE:

1. Grain merchant and banker, and generally a very greedy man.

JACKAL OR TIGER?

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One hot night, in Hindustan, a king and queen lay awake in the palace in the midst of the city. Every now and then a faint air blew through the lattice, and they hoped they were going to sleep, but they never did. Presently they became more broad awake than ever at the sound of a howl outside the palace.

‘Listen to that tiger!’ remarked the king.

‘Tiger?’ replied the queen. ‘How should there be a tiger inside the city? It was only a jackal.’

‘I tell you it was a tiger,’ said the king.

‘And I tell you that you were dreaming if you thought it was anything but a jackal,’ answered the queen.

‘I say it was a tiger,’ cried the king; ‘don’t contradict me.’

‘Nonsense!’ snapped the queen. ‘It was a jackal.’ And the dispute waxed so warm that the king said at last:

‘Very well, we’ll call the guard and ask; and if it was a jackal I’ll leave this kingdom to you and go away; and if it was a tiger then you shall go, and I will marry a new wife.’

‘As you like,’ answered the queen, ‘there isn’t any doubt which it was.’

So the king called the two soldiers who were on guard outside and put the question to them. But, whilst the dispute was going on, the king and queen had got so excited and talked so loud that the guards had heard nearly all they said, and one man observed to the other:

‘Mind you declare that the king is right. It certainly was a jackal, but, if we say so, the king will probably not keep his word about going away, and we shall get into trouble, so we had better take his side.’

To this the other agreed; therefore, when the king asked them what animal they had seen, both the guards said it was certainly a tiger, and that the king was right of course, as he always was. The king made no remark, but sent for a palanquin, and ordered the queen to be placed in it, bidding the four bearers of the palanquin to take her a long way off into the forest

and there leave her. In spite of her tears, she was forced to obey, and away the bearers went for three days and three nights until they came to a dense wood. There they set down the palanquin with the queen in it, and started home again.

Now the queen thought to herself that the king could not mean to send her away for good, and that as soon as he had got over his fit of temper he would summon her back; so she stayed quite still for a long time, listening with all her ears for approaching footsteps, but heard none. After a while she grew nervous, for she was all alone, and put her head out of the palanquin and looked about her. Day was just breaking, and birds and insects were beginning to stir; the leaves rustled in a warm breeze; but, although the queen's eyes wandered in all directions, there was no sign of any human being. Then her spirit gave way, and she began to cry.

It so happened that close to the spot where the queen's palanquin had been set down, there dwelt a man who had a tiny farm in the midst of the forest, where he and his wife lived alone far from any neighbours. As it was hot weather the farmer had been sleeping on the flat roof of his house, but was awakened by the sound of weeping. He jumped up and ran downstairs as fast as he could, and into the forest towards the place the sound came from, and there he found the palanquin.

'Oh, poor soul that weeps,' cried the farmer, standing a little way off, 'who are you?' At this salutation from a stranger the queen grew silent, dreading she knew not what.

'Oh, you that weep,' repeated the farmer, 'fear not to speak to me, for you are to me as a daughter. Tell me, who are you?'

His voice was so kind that the queen gathered up her courage and spoke. And when she had told her story, the farmer called his wife, who led her to their house, and gave her food to eat, and a bed to lie on. And in the farm, a few days later, a little prince was born, and by his mother's wish named Ameer Ali.

Years passed without a sign from the king. His wife might have been dead for all he seemed to care, though the queen still lived with the farmer, and the little prince had by this time grown up into a strong, handsome, and healthy youth. Out in the forest they seemed far from the world; very few ever came near them, and the prince was continually begging his mother and the farmer to be allowed to go away and seek adventures and

to make his own living. But she and the wise farmer always counselled him to wait, until, at last, when he was eighteen years of age, they had not the heart to forbid him any longer. So he started off one early morning, with a sword by his side, a big brass pot to hold water, a few pieces of silver, and a galail[2] or two-stringed bow in his hand, with which to shoot birds as he travelled.

Many a weary mile he tramped day after day, until, one morning, he saw before him just such a forest as that in which he had been born and bred, and he stepped joyfully into it, like one who goes to meet an old friend. Presently, as he made his way through a thicket, he saw a pigeon which he thought would make a good dinner, so he fired a pellet at it from his galail, but missed the pigeon which fluttered away with a startled clatter. At the same instant he heard a great clamour from beyond the thicket, and, on reaching the spot, he found an ugly old woman streaming wet and crying loudly as she lifted from her head an earthen vessel with a hole in it from which the water was pouring. When she saw the prince with his galail in his hand, she called out:

‘Oh, wretched one! why must you choose an old woman like me to play your pranks upon? Where am I to get a fresh pitcher instead of this one that you have broken with your foolish tricks? And how am I to go so far for water twice when one journey wearies me?’

‘But, mother,’ replied the prince, ‘I played no trick upon you! I did but shoot at a pigeon that should have served me for dinner, and as my pellet missed it, it must have broken your pitcher. But, in exchange, you shall have my brass pot, and that will not break easily; and as for getting water, tell me where to find it, and I’ll fetch it while you dry your garments in the sun, and carry it whither you will.’

At this the old woman’s face brightened. She showed him where to seek the water, and when he returned a few minutes later with his pot filled to the brim, she led the way without a word, and he followed. In a short while they came to a hut in the forest, and as they drew near it Ameer Ali beheld in the doorway the loveliest damsel his eyes had ever looked on. At the sight of a stranger she drew her veil about her and stepped into the hut, and much as he wished to see her again Ameer Ali could think of no excuse by which to bring her back, and so, with a heavy heart, he made his

salutation, and bade the old woman farewell. But when he had gone a little way she called after him:

‘If ever you are in trouble or danger, come to where you now stand and cry: “Fairy of the Forest! Fairy of the forest, help me now!” And I will listen to you.’

The prince thanked her and continued his journey, but he thought little of the old woman’s saying, and much of the lovely damsel. Shortly afterwards he arrived at a city; and, as he was now in great straits, having come to the end of his money, he walked straight to the palace of the king and asked for employment. The king said he had plenty of servants and wanted no more; but the young man pleaded so hard that at last the rajah was sorry for him, and promised that he should enter his bodyguard on the condition that he would undertake any service which was especially difficult or dangerous. This was just what Ameer Ali wanted, and he agreed to do whatever the king might wish.

Soon after this, on a dark and stormy night, when the river roared beneath the palace walls, the sound of a woman weeping and wailing was heard above the storm. The king ordered a servant to go and see what was the matter; but the servant, falling on his knees in terror, begged that he might not be sent on such an errand, particularly on a night so wild, when evil spirits and witches were sure to be abroad. Indeed, so frightened was he, that the king, who was very kind-hearted, bade another to go in his stead, but each one showed the same strange fear. Then Ameer Ali stepped forward:

‘This is my duty, your majesty,’ he said, ‘I will go.’

The king nodded, and off he went. The night was as dark as pitch, and the wind blew furiously and drove the rain in sheets into his face; but he made his way down to the ford under the palace walls and stepped into the flooded water. Inch by inch, and foot by foot he fought his way across, now nearly swept off his feet by some sudden swirl or eddy, now narrowly escaping being caught in the branches of some floating tree that came tossing and swinging down the stream. At length he emerged, panting and dripping wet, on the other side. Close by the bank stood a gallows, and on the gallows hung the body of some evildoer, whilst from the foot of it came the sound of sobbing that the king had heard.

Ameer Ali was so grieved for the one who wept there that he thought nothing of the wildness of the night or of the roaring river. As for ghosts and witches, they had never troubled him, so he walked up towards the gallows where crouched the figure of the woman.

‘What ails you?’ he said.

Now the woman was not really a woman at all, but a horrid kind of witch who really lived in Witchland, and had no business on earth. If ever a man strayed into Witchland the ogresses used to eat him up, and this old witch thought she would like to catch a man for supper, and that is why she had been sobbing and crying in hopes that someone out of pity might come to her rescue.

So when Ameer Ali questioned her, she replied:

‘Ah, kind sir, it is my poor son who hangs upon that gallows; help me to get him down and I will bless you for ever.’

Ameer Ali thought that her voice sounded rather eager than sorrowful, and he suspected that she was not telling the truth, so he determined to be very cautious.

‘That will be rather difficult,’ he said, ‘for the gallows is high, and we have no ladder.’

‘Ah, but if you will just stoop down and let me climb upon your shoulders,’ answered the old witch, ‘I think I could reach him.’ And her voice now sounded so cruel that Ameer Ali was sure that she intended some evil. But he only said:

‘Very well, we will try.’ With that he drew his sword, pretending that he needed it to lean upon, and bent so that the old woman could clamber on to his back, which she did very nimbly. Then, suddenly, he felt a noose slipped over his neck, and the old witch sprang from his shoulders on to the gallows, crying:

‘Now, foolish one, I have got you, and will kill you for my supper.’

But Ameer Ali gave a sweep upwards with his sharp sword to cut the rope that she had slipped round his neck, and not only cut the cord but cut also the old woman’s foot as it dangled above him; and with a yell of pain and anger she vanished into the darkness.

* * * * *

Ameer Ali then sat down to collect himself a little, and felt upon the ground by his side an anklet that had evidently fallen off the old witch's foot. This he put into his pocket, and as the storm had by this time passed over he made his way back to the palace. When he had finished his story, he took the anklet out of his pocket and handed it to the king, who, like everyone else, was amazed at the glory of the jewels which composed it. Indeed, Ameer Ali himself was astonished, for he had slipped the anklet into his pocket in the dark and had not looked at it since. The king was delighted at its beauty, and having praised and rewarded Ameer Ali, he gave the anklet to his daughter, a proud and spoiled princess.

Now in the women's apartments in the palace there hung two cages, in one of which was a parrot and in the other a starling, and these two birds could talk as well as human beings. They were both pets of the princess who always fed them herself, and the next day, as she was walking grandly about with her treasure tied round her ankle, she heard the starling say to the parrot:

'Oh, Toté' (that was the parrot's name), 'how do you think the princess looks in her new jewel?'

'Think?' snapped the parrot, who was cross because they hadn't given him his bath that morning, 'I think she looks like a washerwoman's daughter, with one shoe on and the other off! Why doesn't she wear two of them, instead of going about with one leg adorned and the other empty?'

When the princess heard this she burst into tears; and sending for her father she declared that he must get her another such an anklet to wear on the other leg, or she would die of shame. So the king sent for Ameer Ali and told him that he must get a second anklet exactly like the first within a month, or he should be hanged, for the princess would certainly die of disappointment.

Poor Ameer Ali was greatly troubled at the king's command, but he thought to himself that he had, at any rate, a month in which to lay his plans. He left the palace at once, and inquired of everyone where the finest jewels were to be got; but though he sought night and day he never found one to compare with the anklet. At last only a week remained, and he was in sore difficulty, when he remembered the Fairy of the forest, and determined to go without loss of time and seek her. Therefore away he

went, and after a day's travelling he reached the cottage in the forest, and, standing where he had stood when the old woman called to him, he cried:

'Fairy of the forest! Fairy of the forest! Help me! help me!'

Then there appeared in the doorway the beautiful girl he had seen before, whom in all his wanderings he had never forgotten.

'What is the matter?' she asked, in a voice so soft that he listened like one struck dumb, and she had to repeat the question before he could answer. Then he told her his story, and she went within the cottage and came back with two wands, and a pot of boiling water. The two wands she planted in the ground about six feet apart, and then, turning to him, she said:

'I am going to lie down between these two wands. You must then draw your sword and cut off my foot, and, as soon as you have done that, you must seize it and hold it over the cauldron, and every drop of blood that falls from it into the water will become a jewel. Next you must change the wands so that the one that stood at my head is at my feet, and the one at my feet stands at my head, and place the severed foot against the wound and it will heal, and I shall become quite well again as before.'

At first Ameer Ali declared that he would sooner be hanged twenty times over than treat her so roughly; but at length she persuaded him to do her bidding. He nearly fainted himself with horror when he found that, after the cruel blow which lopped her foot off, she lay as one lifeless; but he held the severed foot over the cauldron, and, as drops of blood fell from it, and he saw each turn in the water into shining gems, his heart took courage. Very soon there were plenty of jewels in the cauldron, and he quickly changed the wands, placed the severed foot against the wound, and immediately the two parts became one as before. Then the maiden opened her eyes, sprang to her feet, and drawing her veil about her, ran into the hut, and would not come out or speak to him any more. For a long while he waited, but, as she did not appear, he gathered up the precious stones and returned to the palace. He easily got some one to set the jewels, and found that there were enough to make, not only one, but three rare and beautiful anklets, and these he duly presented to the king on the very day that his month of grace was over.

The king embraced him warmly, and made him rich gifts; and the next day the vain princess put two anklets on each foot, and strutted up and

down in them admiring herself in the mirrors that lined her room.

‘Oh, Toté,’ asked the starling, ‘how do you think our princess looks now in these fine jewels?’

‘Ugh!’ growled the parrot, who was really always cross in the mornings, and never recovered his temper until after lunch, ‘she’s got all her beauty at one end of her now; if she had a few of those fine gew-gaws round her neck and wrists she would look better; but now, to my mind, she looks more than ever like the washerwoman’s daughter dressed up.’

Poor princess! she wept and stormed and raved until she made herself quite ill; and then she declared to her father that, unless she had bracelets and necklace to match the anklets she would die.

Again the king sent for Ameer Ali, and ordered him to get a necklace and bracelets to match those anklets within a month, or be put to a cruel death.

And again Ameer Ali spent nearly the whole month searching for the jewels, but all in vain. At length he made his way to the hut in the forest, and stood and cried:

‘Fairy of the forest! Fairy of the forest! Help me! help me!’

Once more the beautiful maiden appeared at his summons and asked what he wanted, and when he had told her she said he must do exactly as he had done the first time, except that now he must cut off both her hands and her head. Her words turned Ameer Ali pale with horror; but she reminded him that no harm had come to her before, and at last he consented to do as she bade him. From her severed hands and head there fell into the cauldron bracelets and chains of rubies and diamonds, emeralds and pearls that surpassed any that ever were seen. Then the head and hands were joined on to the body, and left neither sign nor scar. Full of gratitude, Ameer Ali tried to speak to her, but she ran into the house and would not come back, and he was forced to leave her and go away laden with the jewels.

When, on the day appointed, Ameer Ali produced a necklace and bracelets each more beautiful and priceless than the last, the king’s astonishment knew no bounds, and as for his daughter she was nearly mad with joy. The very next morning she put on all her finery, and thought that now, at least, that disagreeable parrot could find no fault with her appearance, and she listened eagerly when she heard the starling say:

‘Oh, Toté, how do you think our princess is looking *now*?’

‘Very fine, no doubt,’ grumbled the parrot; ‘but what is the use of dressing up like that for oneself only? She ought to have a husband—why doesn’t she marry the man who got her all these splendid things?’

Then the princess sent for her father and told him that she wished to marry Ameer Ali.

‘My dear child,’ said her father, ‘you really are very difficult to please, and want something new every day. It certainly is time you married someone, and if you choose this man, of course he shall marry you.’

So the king sent for Ameer Ali, and told him that within a month he proposed to do him the honour of marrying him to the princess, and making him heir to the throne.

On hearing this speech Ameer Ali bowed low and answered that he had done and would do the king all the service that lay in his power, save only this one thing. The king, who considered his daughter’s hand a prize for any man, flew into a passion, and the princess was more furious still. Ameer Ali was instantly thrown into the most dismal prison that they could find, and ordered to be kept there until the king had time to think in what way he should be put to death.

Meanwhile the king determined that the princess ought in any case to be married without delay, so he sent forth heralds throughout the neighbouring countries, proclaiming that on a certain day any person fitted for a bridegroom and heir to the throne should present himself at the palace.

When the day came, all the court were gathered together, and a great crowd assembled of men, young and old, who thought that they had as good a chance as anyone else to gain both the throne and the princess. As soon as the king was seated, he called upon an usher to summon the first claimant. But, just then, a farmer who stood in front of the crowd cried out that he had a petition to offer.

‘Well, hasten then,’ said the king; ‘I have no time to waste.’

‘Your majesty,’ said the farmer, ‘has now lived and administered justice long in this city, and will know that the tiger who is king of beasts hunts only in the forest, whilst jackals hunt in every place where there is something to be picked up.’

‘What is all this? what is all this?’ asked the king. ‘The man must be mad!’

‘No, your majesty,’ answered the farmer, ‘I would only remind your majesty that there are plenty of jackals gathered to-day to try and claim your daughter and kingdom: every city has sent them, and they wait hungry and eager; but do not, O king, mistake or pretend again to mistake the howl of a jackal for the hunting cry of a tiger.’

The king turned first red and then pale.

‘There is,’ continued the farmer, ‘a royal tiger bred in the forest who has the first and only true claim to your throne.’

‘Where? what do you mean?’ stammered the king, growing pale as he listened.

‘In prison,’ replied the farmer; ‘if your majesty will clear this court of the jackals I will explain.’

‘Clear the court!’ commanded the king; and, very unwillingly, the visitors left the palace.

‘Now tell me what riddle this is,’ said he.

Then the farmer told the king and his ministers how he had rescued the queen and brought up Ameer Ali; and he fetched the old queen herself, whom he had left outside. At the sight of her the king was filled with shame and self-reproach, and wished he could have lived his life over again, and not have married the mother of the proud princess, who caused him endless trouble until her death.

‘My day is past,’ said he. And he gave up his crown to his son Ameer Ali, who went once more and called to the forest fairy to provide him with a queen to share his throne.

‘There is only one person I will marry,’ said he. And this time the maiden did not run away, but agreed to be his wife. So the two were married without delay, and lived long and reigned happily.

As for the old woman whose pitcher Ameer Ali had broken, she was the forest maiden’s fairy godmother, and when she was no longer needed to look after the girl she gladly returned to fairyland.

The old king has never been heard to contradict his wife any more. If he even looks as if he does not agree with her, she smiles at him and says:

‘Is it the tiger, then? or the jackal?’ And he has not another word to say.

FOOTNOTE:

2. A galail is a double-stringed bow from which bullets or pellets of hard dried clay can be fired with considerable force and precision.

THE COMB AND THE COLLAR

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Once upon a time there was a king of Lombardy who, though he was uglier than any of his subjects, loved beauty in others, so he married a wife who was declared by everyone to be the handsomest of women; and, whispered some, the most ill-natured also. Certainly she could not endure the sight of a pretty person, and her ladies were all the plainest of their sex. Worse than all, she was desperately jealous of the king's son and daughter by his former wife.

Unfortunately, in spite of all her evil qualities, the king was her complete slave, and badly though she treated the boy, the lovely princess was made to suffer ten times as much. Not contented with giving the girl, for a governess, a woman whose temper was as bad as the queen's own, the cruel step-mother did everything she could think of to spoil the girl's beauty, and to force her to appear as ugly as she was herself; but, try as she might, when the hideous clothes and frightful brown paint had been removed, her loveliness shone out as bright as ever.

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Now the king of Lombardy was cousin to the Archduke of Placenza, who had lately lost his reason, to the great grief of his son and daughter, Perarthrites and Ferrandina. The doctors having all failed to restore him to health, the prince and princess sent a messenger to consult a famous enchantress, called the Mother of Sheaths, because everyone who visited her brought with him a knife, which she thrust into one of the sheaths with which her cavern was lined. However, they obtained little comfort from the witch, who bade them 'seek their father's wits in the place where he had lost them.' Against the wishes of the chief ministers, Perarthrites and Ferrandina rode off to the mysterious castle where the king had slept when his terrible fate had overtaken him, and, once inside the gates, nothing more was heard of them.

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When three weeks had passed and still there was no news, the king's chief minister called a council to talk over the matter, and, at the end, it was decided that a company of distinguished persons should visit the Mother of Sheaths, and that the knives they must take with them should be of pure gold, richly set with precious stones. The witch was so pleased with the beauty of the gifts that she not only listened attentively to their story, but proceeded to a hole in the cavern, from which she drew out a little case containing a comb, and a steel collar, fastened by a gold key.

'Carry this comb and the collar to every court until you find a lady beautiful enough to unlock the collar, and a man good enough to draw the comb from its case. When you have discovered these, you can return whence you came.'

'But I do not see,' said the chamberlain, 'how that will help us to bring back our lost prince and princess.'

'It is all I can do for you,' answered the Mother of Sheaths; and she went into the back of the cavern, where they dared not follow her.

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For the next few months the mad king's principal ministers wandered from one court to another, till at last they reached Lombardy, where they found that their story had already travelled before them. As soon as they appeared in the presence-chamber the king received them with open arms, for in his heart he had no doubt that his wife was the peerless beauty destined to unfasten the collar. And, indeed, if paint and hair-dye and magnificent dresses could have ensured her doing so, he would certainly have been right. But, blinded by his love for this wicked woman, he had really no idea that her charms were not her own.

At the appointed hour the queen entered the throne-room, having by her side the young princess, in the most grievous plight imaginable. Her dress was so contrived as to give the idea that she had a hump; her pink-and-white skin was thickly covered with yellow paint, and her black hair all hidden by a close-fitting brown cloth cap. Murmurs of indignation rose on all sides, and the ambassadors, who had frequently heard the princess

compared to the lovely Ferrandina, were dumb with astonishment. As for the king, he could hardly raise his eyes from the ground, so ashamed was he; and signing to his son to take his place, he withdrew from the scene.

Mounting the throne, the prince commanded the trial to begin at once, and the collar was handed to the princess's governess, who, being one of the ugliest women that ever was seen, naturally failed to turn the key. Seizing the chance of his being for a short time in power, the prince resolved to punish her cruelties towards his sister, and especially this last one, to which she had prompted the queen, and ordered her to be taken out and executed, which was done, with great good will, by the attendants. He then further commanded the ladies in waiting to attend his sister to her apartments, and bathe her and dress her in the queen's most splendid robes, as she had none of her own; and the queen, though gnashing her teeth with anger, for once dared not interfere. More quickly than could have been expected, the princess returned, looking so beautiful that if anyone had doubted before who would be able to unlock the collar they were instantly convinced. The prince glanced at her, but said nothing, and, signing to one of the ambassadors, he ordered him to make trial of the comb. One by one each man present did his best to remove it from its case, and one by one each was forced to own himself beaten. At length only the prince remained, but as he was the judge he must wait till the last.

After the men had finished, the ladies of the court had the collar presented to them according to rank, but none could even turn the key. Finally it was handed to the queen, who managed to open it a little way. Her heart beat with triumph, but immediately it closed again with a snap, and she sank back, fainting from disappointment.

By this time there were only left the prince and his sister; and no sooner did he touch the case than it opened of itself, while the lock of the collar yielded directly the princess took hold of the key. Cries of delight rose from the courtiers and attendants; but these were interrupted by a whirlwind accompanied by thick darkness, and followed by an earthquake.

When all was calm again, and the sun shining, the prince and princess had disappeared.

Although the king's son and daughter were the only persons who had vanished in the storm, unluckily they had been carried off in opposite directions. The rapid motion through the air deprived the princess of her

senses, which she nearly lost a second time, from fright, when she was set down alone in the middle of a thick forest. She ran wildly about, calling to her brother to come to her aid; but her cries only attracted the attention of some hungry wolves, who sprung towards her with their jaws gaping and their red tongues hanging out. Falling on her knees, she covered her face with one hand unconsciously grasping the collar with the other, and awaited her doom. Already she could feel their hot breath on her cheek, and crouched lower and lower, when the eyes of the foremost wolf caught sight of the collar. With a howl that echoed through the forest he bounded away, followed by his companions.

As soon as the princess had recovered from the shock she rose and fled, without knowing whither, until she found herself in a broad road, and beheld, approaching her, a flock of sheep driven by two shepherds. She hastened towards them in order to implore their help, when suddenly the sheep caught sight of her collar and instantly scattered in all directions.

‘I must have something about me which frightens all beasts,’ she thought, and took great comfort therefrom; and in good spirits she went her way, till she came to the gates of an old castle. She was just about to enter and beg for a night’s shelter, when a snow white fox ran across the road, and stopped in front of her.

He was so pretty, and had such bright beseeching eyes, that the princess hastily tucked the collar under her dress, lest he too should flee at the sight of it. Very gently she drew near, hoping he might follow her into the castle, but he only set off in another direction, and, tired though she was, something forced the girl to follow him. Thankful indeed was she when he turned a corner and sat down before the door of a tiny palace, which was built on the bank of a river. When she came up he took the hem of her dress between his teeth and led her into a room where there was a table covered with milk and fruit. After she had eaten and drunk, she lay down upon a pile of cushions, with the fox at her feet, and fell asleep to dream of her lost brother.

If the princess was dreaming of her brother, he was no less thinking of her, on the wild sea-shore, whither the whirlwind had cast him. All was bleak and bare, except a green island which he could only see from the top of a high rock where he passed all his days, gazing on the waving palm trees and glittering waterfalls in the distance.

‘Suppose she should be there?’ he said to himself; and though there was no reason to expect that the princess should be in that place more than in any other, he could not get the notion out of his head.

A song, sung in the loveliest voice he had ever heard, roused the young man from his musings, and he instantly turned in the direction from which it had come. But though the singer seemed close to him he could see her nowhere, and indeed, no sooner had he reached one spot than the voice sounded in another direction, and he followed it up and down, till he was suddenly stopped by the sight of a large fish’s skin, which lay stretched on the sand between the sea and the rocks. The thing was so ugly, that he stepped aside in disgust, and at that instant something leapt into the sea behind his back. This caused him to look round. The fish’s skin was no longer there, but in a cave in the rock behind it he discovered a bath of ebony lined with gold, which glittered in the sunlight.

Days passed without any adventures, and the prince had almost made up his mind to leave the shore, and to seek his sister inland, when once more he heard the voice that had so charmed him, and beheld the bloody skin lying on the sand, and the bath, now filled with water, in the grotto. Little sleep had he that night, and before dawn he hid himself behind the rocks, determined not to move from the place till the fish should come back again.

He had not very long to wait, for with the first rays of the sun there appeared, out to sea, a shining white object which was blown by gentle breezes towards the shore. As it came nearer he beheld a maiden, of dazzling loveliness, seated in a shell where blues and pinks and greens all melted into each other. In her hand she held the rope with which the shell was guided.

The prince was so bewildered at her beauty that he forgot that he was in hiding, and, rushing out, sank on his knees on the sands, holding out his hands towards this wonderful vision. But as he did so the comb and its case fell out of his pocket, and at the sight the lady uttered a wild shriek, and, steering her shell round, vanished speedily in the direction of the island. Throwing off his clothes, the prince was preparing to swim after her, when he perceived beside him a snow white fox, looking the same way, and making frantic signs with his paws, till a small boat put out and set sail towards them, to the great joy of the little creature.

When the boat drew up to the beach, the fox waved his paw towards the prince's clothes, which he took to mean that he was to put them on again. This done, they both got in, and had just pushed off, when the prince suddenly recollected that the sight of the comb had frightened away the beautiful lady. In a transport of fury he raised his hand to fling it into the sea, but the fox sprang on him and held on so tightly to his arm that he could not lift it. At that moment a horseman on the shore let fly an arrow at the fox, with so true an aim that the little creature fell heavily into the well of the boat, and closed its eyes, like one who has received his death-blow. The grief of the prince was sore. He instantly leaped to land, but the murderer was already far distant. When the young man turned round again, the boat and the fox were nowhere to be seen.

An approaching storm drove him into the grotto, which was lighted up by a multitude of tapers, each one being in the shape of a knife half out of its sheath. Over the bath was a tent-shaped covering of white, embroidered with sheaths, and from beneath it came a voice:

'Prince, will you trust me whatever happens, knowing that my heart is yours, and as I feel that yours is mine? But, beware, for if you give the smallest sign of fear, when the tent is opened, you will lose me for ever.'

She did well to warn him; and even then he had much ado to keep the colour in his cheeks and his hand from trembling, for a crocodile's head with snapping jaws advanced towards him. With a mighty effort he managed to remain still, and to gaze steadily at the horrible beast, and as he did so, the head bent backwards, and beneath it was seen the lovely countenance of the Lady of the Shell.

'Quick! prince! quick! the time is flying, comb me at once or I shall vanish from your sight.' At her words he took out the comb, but found to his surprise that it needed all his strength to draw it from its sheath. And, strange to say, that in proportion as the comb emerged from its sheath the lady's head was freed from its horrible covering, and her body rose a little more out of the water. When her shoulders and arms were freed, she called to him:

'Enough, so far you have obeyed my orders. Now burn my skin.'

'Ah, that I can *never* do,' cried he; but the lady cut him short.

'Then we shall both rue it for ever,' she said gravely; 'for I can only be the wife of him who will burn my skin.' And while he still stood

hesitating, the curtains of the tent fell back on her, and the tapers fizzled out.

Bitterly repenting his slowness, he wandered towards the forest where a fire was burning, hardly knowing what he did; but on his way he almost fell over the skin, which was lying across his path.

‘Ah, fool that I was! This must be the skin she wished me to burn,’ said he. And seizing it in both hands he flung it into the fire, where it exploded with a terrific noise. At first he rushed off to some distance, not knowing what might next befall, but after a while found that his steps had led him back to the place of the fire. The skin had gone and left no traces, but among the cinders he beheld something shining, which proved to be the magic collar. Ah! then his sister, for whom he had so greatly longed, must be near at last! And before he could turn his head or pick up the collar, her arms were round his neck, and everything else was forgotten.

‘You shall tell your story first,’ she said, when at length they could speak. And so he did; but his head was so full of the Lady of the Shell that he forgot to say anything about the fox. And it was well that he had forgotten, for when the princess had poured forth her own adventures, she ended up by speaking of all she owed to the little white fox.

‘You cannot even guess the care he took of me in the little palace. But though nothing could exceed his kindness, I saw by his eyes that there was something he wanted me to give him, but I could not tell what. Alas! the day came that I learnt it to my cost. I had hidden the collar in a thick bush, lest the fox should catch sight of it and be scared away as the other animals had been. But, one day, when we were in the garden, the sun happened to shine straight on it, and he sprang towards it with every sign of delight. He was about to seize it between his teeth when it closed with a loud noise. The fox fled away with a piercing scream, and though I have sought him far and wide, I have never seen him since. I was here when you flung the skin into the cinders, and no doubt, in my hurry to escape, the collar must have dropped from me. Ah, dear brother,’ she continued with tears in her eyes, ‘I can no longer live without my beloved fox; help me, I entreat you, to find him.’

So great was her grief that the prince dared not tell her what sad fate had overtaken the poor little animal, and trusted that time might soothe her. He assured her that he would go with her wherever she desired if she

would grant him this one day to spend on the sea-shore; and with this the princess was forced to be content.

The prince was standing on the rock, looking out towards the lovely island, and straining his eyes to see the white sail once more, when frightful shrieks from the wood a little way off caused him to hasten with all his speed in that direction. He soon perceived a knight on horseback with a bow slung to his back, struggling to lift a woman on to his saddle. The knights' surprise at the sight of a man in this desolate spot caused him to drop the woman's arm, and she rushed to take shelter behind her defender, who, to his amazement, then recognised his step-mother.

'How did you come here?' he asked coldly, more than half regretting that he had not left her to her fate; but she read what was in his heart, and fell on her knees before him.

'Oh, forgive me my wickedness,' she cried, 'for indeed I have repented of it long ago, and come to the aid of your father who has been sorely smitten by that mad archduke from whom you have just saved me! There is no time to pursue him,' she added, as the prince started at the sound of the vanishing hoofs; and as they pushed their way along the path she told him all that had happened since they had last met.

'From the moment that the king knew of my cruelty to your sister,' said she, 'he vowed he would never see me again, and left the court in search of you both. I followed him secretly, but not being able to gain any tidings of him, consulted the Mother of Sheaths, who took me to rest in that island where the palm trees are waving. There she showed me a lovely princess who, under a spell, was forced daily to take the form of a crocodile, and when the dreaded moment arrived the skin appeared before her, and, shudder as she might, some unseen power impelled her to wrap herself in it and plunge into the sea. It is to this island I am leading you; but first we must find your sister, for on her presence hangs the life of the white fox—if, indeed, he is not dead already.'

'The white fox!' exclaimed the prince. 'What do you know of him?'

'Not much,' answered the queen; 'but, since I arrived on the island, he was always with us, and charmed us all. Yesterday we missed him, but in the evening a little boat drifted up on the sands, and in it lay the fox, covered with blood. While his wounds were being tended in the palace with all the care imaginable, I set out to consult a wizard, who told me that

I must enter the skiff and seek for the prince and princess of Lombardy, and that if, in twenty-four hours, I could bring them into the presence of the fox, his life would be saved. On a rock along the beach I found your father with an arrow through his shoulder, from the bow of his cousin the mad archduke, who was drawing another from his quiver, destined for me, when I fled into the forest!'

'My father so near!' cried the prince. 'We must return and seek him, and also look for my sister.'

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They found her in the grotto, with her father's head in her lap, trying vainly to staunch his wounds. Between them they contrived to carry him to the boat, which sailed swiftly towards the island. On the way the prince gently broke to his sister the sad state of the white fox.

'Take me to him!' she said, as soon as the boat touched the island; and in silence the queen went down the path to the palace.

The white fox was lying on a soft mattress in front of a fire, his eyes closed, and a look on his face which told that death was not far distant. But he knew, somehow, that the princess was near him, and opened his eyes and wagged his tail feebly. The princess burst into sobs and tears, till a hand on her shoulder checked her.

'Why do you waste the few moments that are left you in this manner?' asked the governor of the island sternly. 'Place the collar you wear round his neck, and he will be cured at once. But you must act quickly.'

The princess seemed turned to stone as she listened. 'The collar!' she gasped. 'But I have not got it, I lost it in the forest!' And the thousand sheaths with which the walls were hung took up the cry:

'The collar is lost! The collar is lost!'

'What collar are you talking about?' asked the king, who was lying on another bed, with the physicians bending over him. 'Here is one that I picked up among some cinders, before that madman shot me—perhaps it may be the one you want, or, at all events, it may do as well.' And he signed to an attendant to take the collar from the pocket of his velvet jerkin.

The princess leapt forward with joy at the sight of the precious thing, and snatching it from the hand of the man she placed it round the neck of the fox. All present held their breath as they watched what was happening; and what *did* happen was that his legs grew longer and longer, and his nose grew shorter and shorter. The fox was gone, and in his stead there lay Perarthrites, in a coat of thick white fur.

But though the prince of Lombardy was rejoiced to see his friend and cousin again, his heart still bled for the beautiful lady who had vanished so mysteriously. His face was so troubled that the governor of the island marked it, and asked what was the matter. ‘Oh! help me, if you can,’ cried the prince. ‘The thought of the sufferings that the enchanted nymph may be undergoing tortures me!’

‘They are far worse than you can imagine,’ gravely replied the governor; ‘but if you still possess your comb, you may yet relieve her of them. Ah! that is well,’ he continued, as the prince quickly drew the comb from its case. ‘Now follow me.’

Not only the prince, but every one else followed; and the governor led them down a long gallery to a heavy iron door, which flew open at its own accord. But what a sight met the prince’s eyes! The lady whom he had last beheld in peerless beauty was sitting in a chair wrapped in flames, which were twisting like hair about her head. Her face was swollen and red; her mouth was open as if gasping for breath. Only her arms and neck were as lovely as ever in their whiteness.

‘This is your doing,’ said the governor to the prince; ‘you brought her to this when you burnt the crocodile’s skin. Now try if, by combing, you can soothe her agony.’

At the first touch of the comb the flames became suddenly extinguished; at the second, the look of pain vanished from the face, and it shrank into its usual size; at the third, she rose from the chair, lovelier than she ever was before, and flung herself into the arms of her brother Perarthrites.

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After this there was nothing more to be done but to marry the two couples as fast as possible. And when the wedding was over, Perarthrites and his

bride returned to Placenza, and Ferrandina and her husband to Lombardy, and they all lived happily till they died.

(From Count Anthony Hamilton's *Fairy Tales*.)

THE THANKSGIVING OF THE WAZIR

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Once upon a time there lived in Hindustan two kings whose countries bordered upon each other; but, as they were rivals in wealth and power, and one was a Hindu rajah and the other a Mohammedan bâdshah, they were not good friends at all. In order, however, to escape continual quarrels, the rajah and the bâdshah had drawn up an agreement, stamped and signed, declaring that if any of their subjects, from the least to the greatest, crossed the boundary between the two kingdoms, he might be seized and punished.

One morning the bâdshah and his chief wazir, or prime minister, were just about to begin their morning's work over the affairs of the kingdom, and the bâdshah had taken up a pen and was cutting it to his liking with a sharp knife, when the knife slipped and cut off the tip of his finger.

'Oh-he, wazir!' cried the king, 'I've cut the tip of my finger off!'

'That is good hearing!' said the wazir in answer.

'Insolent one,' exclaimed the king. 'Do you take pleasure in the misfortunes of others, and in mine also? Take him away, my guards, and put him in the court prison until I have time to punish him as he deserves!'

Instantly the officers in attendance seized upon the luckless wazir, and dragged him out of the king's presence towards the narrow doorway, through which unhappy criminals were wont to be led to prison or execution. As the door opened to receive him, the wazir muttered something into his great white beard which the soldiers could not hear.

'What said the rascal?' shouted the angry king.

He says, 'he thanks your majesty,' replied one of the gaolers. And at his words, the king stared at the closing door, in anger and amazement.

'He must be mad,' he cried, 'for he is grateful, not only for the misfortunes of others, but for his own; surely something has turned his head!'

Now the king was very fond of his old wazir, and although the court physician came and bound up his injured finger with cool and healing

ointment, and soothed the pain, he could not soothe the soreness of the king's heart, nor could any of all his ministers and courtiers, who found his majesty very cross all the day long.

Early next morning the king ordered his horse and declared that he would go hunting. Instantly all was bustle and preparation in stable and hall, and by the time he was ready a score of ministers and huntsmen stood ready to mount and accompany him; but to their astonishment the king would have none of them. Indeed, he glared at them so fiercely that they were glad to leave him. So away and away he wandered, over field and through forest, so moody and thoughtful that many a fat buck and gaudy pheasant escaped without notice, and so careless was he whither he was going that he strayed without perceiving it over into the rajah's territory, and only discovered the fact when, suddenly, men stepped from all sides out of a thicket, and there was nothing left but surrender. Then the poor bâdshah was seized and bound and taken to the rajah's prison, thinking most of the time of his wazir, who was suffering a similar fate, and wishing that, like the wazir, he could feel that there was something to give thanks for.

That night the rajah held a special council to consider what should be done to his rival who had thus given himself into his hands. All the Brahmans were sent for—fat priests who understood all about everything, and what days were lucky and what unlucky—and, whilst all the rest of the rajah's councillors were offering him different advice until he was nearly crazy with anger and indecision, the chief Brahman was squatting in a corner figuring out sums and signs to himself with an admiring group of lesser priests around him. At last he arose, and advanced towards the throne.

'Well,' said the rajah anxiously, 'what have you to advise?'

'A very unlucky day!' exclaimed the chief Brahman. 'Oh, a very unlucky day! The god Devi is full of wrath, and commands that to-morrow you must chop off this bâdshah's head and offer it in to him in sacrifice.'

'Ah, well,' said the rajah, 'let it be done. I leave it to you to carry out the sentence.' And he bowed to the priests and left the room.

Before dawn great preparations were being made for a grand festival in honour of the great idol Devi. Hundreds of banners waved, hundreds of drummers drummed, hundreds of singers chanted chants, hundreds of

priests, well washed and anointed, performed their sacred rites, whilst the rajah sat, nervous and ill at ease, amongst hundreds of courtiers and servants, wishing it were all well over. At last the time came for the sacrifice to be offered, and the poor bâdshah was led out bound, to have his head chopped off.

The chief Brahman came along with a smile on his face, and a big sword in his hand, when, suddenly, he noticed that the bâdshah's finger was tied up in a bit of rag. Instantly he dropped the sword, and, with his eyes starting out of his head with excitement, pounced upon the rag and tore it off, and there he saw that the tip of his victim's finger was missing. At this he got very red and angry indeed, and he led the bâdshah up to where the rajah sat wondering.

'Behold! O rajah,' he said, 'this sacrifice is useless, the tip of his finger is gone! A sacrifice is no sacrifice unless it is complete.' And he began to weep with rage and mortification.

But of instead of wailing likewise, the rajah gave a sigh of relief, and answered: 'Well, that settles the matter. If it had been anyone else I should not have minded; but, somehow—a king and all—well, it doesn't seem quite right to sacrifice a king.' And with that he jumped up and with his jewelled dagger cut the bâdshah's cords, and marched with him out of the temple back to the palace.

After having bathed and refreshed his guest, the rajah loaded him with gifts, and himself accompanied him with a large escort as far as the frontier between their kingdoms, where, amidst salutes and great rejoicings, they tore up the old agreement and drew up another in which each king promised welcome and safe conduct to any of the other's people, from the least to the greatest, who came over the border on any errand whatever. And so they embraced, and each went his own way.

When the bâdshah got home that very evening he sent for his imprisoned wazir.

'Well, O wazir!' he said, when the old man had been brought before him, 'what think you has been happening to me?'

'How can a man in prison know what is happening outside it?' answered the wazir.

Then the bâdshah told him all his adventures. And when he had reached the end he added:

‘I have made up my mind, as a token of gratitude for my escape, to pardon you freely, if you will tell me why you gave thanks when I cut off the tip of my finger.’

‘Sire,’ replied the old wazir, ‘am I not right in thinking that it was a very lucky thing for you that you *did* cut off the tip of your finger, for otherwise you would certainly have lost your head. And to lose a scrap of one’s finger is surely the least of the two evils.’

‘Very true,’ answered the king, touching his head as he spoke, as if to make quite certain that it was still there, ‘but yet—why did you likewise give thanks when I put you into prison?’

‘I gave thanks,’ said the wazir, ‘because it is good always to give thanks. And had I known that my being in prison was to prevent the god Devi claiming me instead of your majesty, as a perfect offering, I should have given greater thanks still.’

(Punjâbi story.)

SAMBA THE COWARD

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In the great country far away south, through which flows the river Nile, there lived a king who had an only child called Samba.

Now, from the time that Samba could walk he showed signs of being afraid of everything, and as he grew bigger he became more and more frightened. At first his father's friends made light of it, and said to each other:

'It is strange to see a boy of our race running into a hut at the trumpeting of an elephant, and trembling with fear if a lion cub half his size comes near him; but, after all, he is only a baby, and when he is older he will be as brave as the rest.'

'Yes, he is only a baby,' answered the king who overheard them, 'it will be all right by-and-by.' But, somehow, he sighed as he said it, and the men looked at him and made no reply.

The years passed away, and Samba had become a tall and strong youth. He was good-natured and pleasant, and was liked by all, and if during his father's hunting parties he was seldom to be seen in any place of danger, he was too great a favourite for much to be said.

'When the king holds the feast and declares him to be his heir, he will cease to be a child,' murmured the rest of the people, as they had done before; and on the day of the ceremony their hearts beat gladly, and they cried to each other:

'It is Samba, Samba, whose chin is above the heads of other men, who will defend us against the tribes of the robbers!'

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Not many weeks after, the dwellers in the village awoke to find that during the night their herds had been driven away, and their herdsmen carried off into slavery by their enemies. Now was the time for Samba to show the brave spirit that had come to him with his manhood, and to ride forth at

the head of the warriors of his race. But Samba could nowhere be found, and a party of the avengers went on their way without him.

It was many days later before he came back, with his head held high, and a tale of a lion which he had tracked to its lair and killed, at the risk of his own life. A little while earlier and his people would have welcomed his story, and believed it all, but now it was too late.

‘Samba the Coward,’ cried a voice from the crowd; and the name stuck to him, even the very children shouted it at him, and his father did not spare him. At length he could bear it no longer, and made up his mind to leave his own land for another where peace had reigned since the memory of man. So, early next morning, he slipped out to the king’s stables, and choosing the quietest horse he could find, he rode away northwards.

Never as long as he lived did Samba forget the terrors of that journey. He could hardly sleep at night for dread of the wild beasts that might be lurking behind every rock or bush, while, by day, the distant roar of a lion would cause him to start so violently, that he almost fell from his horse. A dozen times he was on the point of turning back, and it was not the terror of the mocking words and scornful laughs that kept him from doing so, but the terror lest he should be forced to take part in their wars. Therefore he held on, and deeply thankful he felt when the walls of a city, larger than he had ever dreamed of, rose before him.

Drawing himself up to his full height, he rode proudly through the gate and past the palace, where, as was her custom, the princess was sitting on the terrace roof, watching the bustle in the street below.

‘That is a gallant figure,’ thought she, as Samba, mounted on his big black horse, steered his way skilfully among the crowds; and, beckoning to a slave, she ordered him to go and meet the stranger, and ask him who he was and whence he came.

‘Oh, princess, he is the son of a king, and heir to a country which lies near the Great River,’ answered the slave, when he had returned from questioning Samba. And the princess on hearing this news summoned her father, and told him that if she was not allowed to wed the stranger she would die unmarried.

Like many other fathers, the king could refuse his daughter nothing, and besides, she had rejected so many suitors already that he was quite alarmed lest no man should be good enough for her. Therefore, after a talk

with Samba, who charmed him by his good humour and pleasant ways, he gave his consent, and three days later the wedding feast was celebrated with the utmost splendour.

The princess was very proud of her tall handsome husband, and for some time she was quite content that he should pass the days with her under the palm trees, telling her the stories that she loved, or amusing her with tales of the manners and customs of his country, which were so different to those of her own. But, by-and-by, this was not enough; she wanted other people to be proud of him too, and one day she said:

‘I really almost wish that those Moorish thieves from the north would come on one of their robbing expeditions. I should love so to see you ride out at the head of our men, to chase them home again. Ah, how happy I should be when the city rang with your noble deeds!’

She looked lovingly at him as she spoke; but, to her surprise, his face grew dark, and he answered hastily:

‘Never speak to me again of the Moors or of war. It was to escape from them that I fled from my own land, and at the first word of invasion I should leave you for ever.’

‘How funny you are,’ cried she, breaking into a laugh. ‘The idea of anyone as big as you being afraid of a Moor! But still, you mustn’t say those things to anyone except me, or they might think you were in earnest.’

* * * * *

Not very long after this, when the people of the city were holding a great feast outside the walls of the town, a body of Moors, who had been in hiding for days, drove off all the sheep and goats which were peacefully feeding on the slopes of a hill. Directly the loss was discovered, which was not for some hours, the king gave orders that the war drum should be beaten, and the warriors assembled in the great square before the palace, trembling with fury at the insult which had been put upon them. Loud were the cries for instant vengeance, and for Samba, son-in-law of the king, to lead them to battle. But shout as they might, Samba never came.

And where was he? No further than in a cool, dark cellar of the palace, crouching among huge earthenware pots of grain. With a rush of pain at

her heart, there his wife found him, and she tried with all her strength to kindle in him a sense of shame, but in vain. Even the thought of the future danger he might run from the contempt of his subjects was as nothing when compared with the risks of the present.

‘Take off your tunic of mail,’ said the princess at last; and her voice was so stern and cold that none would have known it. ‘Give it to me, and hand me besides your helmet, your sword and your spear.’ And with many fearful glances to right and to left, Samba stripped off the armour inlaid with gold, the property of the king’s son-in-law. Silently his wife took, one by one, the pieces from him, and fastened them on her with firm hands, never even glancing at the tall form of her husband who had slunk back to his corner. When she had fastened the last buckle, and lowered her vizor, she went out, and mounting Samba’s horse, gave the signal to the warriors to follow.

Now, although the princess was much shorter than her husband, she was a tall woman, and the horse which she rode was likewise higher than the rest, so that when the men caught sight of the gold-inlaid suit of chain armour, they did not doubt that Samba was taking his rightful place, and cheered him loudly. The princess bowed in answer to their greeting, but kept her vizor down; and touching her horse with the spur, she galloped at the head of her troops to charge the enemy. The Moors, who had not expected to be so quickly pursued, had scarcely time to form themselves into battle array, and were speedily put to flight. Then the little troop of horsemen returned to the city, where all sung the praises of Samba their leader.

The instant they reached the palace the princess flung her reins to a groom, and disappeared up a side staircase, by which she could, unseen, enter her own rooms. Here she found Samba lying idly on a heap of mats; but he raised his head uneasily as the door opened and looked at his wife, not feeling sure how she might act towards him. However, he need not have been afraid of harsh words: she merely unbuttoned her armour as fast as possible, and bade him put it on with all speed. Samba obeyed, not daring to ask any questions; and when he had finished the princess told him to follow her, and led him on to the flat roof of the house, below which a crowd had gathered, cheering lustily.

‘Samba, the king’s son-in-law! Samba, the bravest of the brave! Where is he? Let him show himself!’ And when Samba did show himself the shouts and applause became louder than ever. ‘See how modest he is! He leaves the glory to others!’ cried they. And Samba only smiled and waved his hand, and said nothing.

Out of all the mass of people assembled there to do honour to Samba, one alone there was who did not shout and praise with the rest. This was the princess’s youngest brother, whose sharp eyes had noted certain things during the fight which recalled his sister much more than they did her husband. Under promise of secrecy, he told his suspicions to the other princes, but only got laughed at, and was bidden to carry his dreams elsewhere.

‘Well, well,’ answered the boy, ‘we shall see who is right; but the next time we give battle to the Moors I will take care to place a private mark on our commander.’

In spite of their defeat, not many days after the Moors sent a fresh body of troops to steal some cattle, and again Samba’s wife dressed herself in her husband’s armour, and rode out at the head of the avenging column. This time the combat was fiercer than before, and in the thick of it her youngest brother drew near, and gave his sister a slight wound on the leg. At the moment she paid no heed to the pain, which, indeed, she scarcely felt; but when the enemy had been put to flight and the little band returned to the palace, faintness suddenly overtook her, and she could hardly stagger up the staircase to her own apartments.

‘I am wounded,’ she cried, sinking down on the mats where he had been lying, ‘but do not be anxious; it is really nothing. You have only got to wound yourself slightly in the same spot and no one will guess that it was I and not you who were fighting.’

‘What!’ cried Samba, his eyes nearly starting from his head in surprise and terror. ‘Can you possibly imagine that I should agree to anything so useless and painful? Why, I might as well have gone to fight myself!’

‘Ah, I ought to have known better, indeed,’ answered the princess, in a voice that seemed to come from a long way off; but, quick as thought, the moment Samba turned his back she pierced one of his bare legs with a spear.

He gave a loud scream and staggered backwards, from astonishment, much more than from pain. But before he could speak his wife had left the room and had gone to seek the medicine man of the palace.

‘My husband has been wounded,’ said she, when she had found him, ‘come and tend him with speed, for he is faint from loss of blood.’ And she took care that more than one person heard her words, so that all that day the people pressed up to the gate of the palace, asking for news of their brave champion.

‘You see,’ observed the king’s eldest sons, who had visited the room where Samba lay groaning, ‘you see, O wise young brother, that we were right and you were wrong about Samba, and that he really *did* go into the battle.’ But the boy answered nothing, and only shook his head doubtfully.

It was only two days later that the Moors appeared for the third time, and though the herds had been tethered in a new and safer place, they were promptly carried off as before. ‘For,’ said the Moors to each other, ‘the tribe will never think of our coming back so soon when they have beaten us so badly.’

When the drum sounded to assemble all the fighting men, the princess rose and sought her husband.

‘Samba,’ cried she, ‘my wound is worse than I thought. I can scarcely walk, and could not mount my horse without help. For to-day, then, I cannot do your work, so you must go instead of me.’

‘What nonsense,’ exclaimed Samba, ‘I never heard of such a thing. Why, I might be wounded, or even killed! You have three brothers. The king can choose one of them.’

‘They are all too young,’ replied his wife; ‘the men would not obey them. But if, indeed, you will not go, at least you can help me harness my horse.’ And to this Samba, who was always ready to do anything he was asked when there was no danger about it, agreed readily.

So the horse was quickly harnessed, and when it was done the princess said:

‘Now ride the horse to the place of meeting outside the gates, and I will join you by a shorter way, and will change places with you.’ Samba, who loved riding in times of peace, mounted as she had told him, and when he was safe in the saddle, his wife dealt the horse a sharp cut with her whip, and he dashed off through the town and through the ranks of the

warriors who were waiting for him. Instantly the whole place was in motion. Samba tried to check his steed, but he might as well have sought to stop the wind, and it seemed no more than a few minutes before they were grappling hand to hand with the Moors.

Then a miracle happened. Samba the coward, the skulker, the terrified, no sooner found himself pressed hard, unable to escape, than something sprang into life within him, and he fought with all his might. And when a man of his size and strength begins to fight he generally fights well.

That day the victory was really owing to Samba, and the shouts of the people were louder than ever. When he returned, bearing with him the sword of the Moorish chief, the old king pressed him in his arms and said:

‘Oh, my son, how can I ever show you how grateful I am for this splendid service?’

But Samba, who was good and loyal when fear did not possess him, answered straightly:

‘My father, it is to your daughter and not to me to whom thanks are due, for it is she who has turned the coward that I was into a brave man.’

(*Contes Soudainais.* Par C. Monteil.)

KUPTI AND IMANI

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Once there was a king who had two daughters; and their names were Kupti and Imani. He loved them both very much, and spent hours in talking to them, and one day he said to Kupti, the elder:

‘Are you satisfied to leave your life and fortune in my hands?’

‘Verily yes,’ answered the princess, surprised at the question. ‘In whose hands should I leave them, if not in yours?’

But when he asked his younger daughter Imani the same question, she replied:

‘No, indeed! If I had the chance I would make my own fortune.’

At this answer the king was very displeased, and said:

‘You are too young to know the meaning of your words. But, be it so; I will give you the chance of gratifying your wish.’

Then he sent for an old lame fakir who lived in a tumbledown hut on the outskirts of the city, and when he had presented himself, the king said:

‘No doubt, as you are very old and nearly crippled, you would be glad of some young person to live with you and serve you; so I will send you my younger daughter. She wants to earn her living, and she can do so with you.’

Of course the old fakir had not a word to say, or, if he had, he was really too astonished and troubled to say it; but the young princess went off with him smiling, and tripped along quite gaily, whilst he hobbled home with her in perplexed silence.

Directly they got to the hut the fakir began to think what he could arrange for the princess’s comfort; but after all he was a fakir, and his house was bare except for one bedstead, two old cooking pots and an earthen jar for water, and one cannot get much comfort out of those things. However, the princess soon ended his perplexity by asking:

‘Have you any money?’

‘I have a penny somewhere,’ replied the fakir.

‘Very well,’ rejoined the princess, ‘give me the penny and go out and borrow me a spinning-wheel and a loom.’

After much seeking the fakir found the penny and started on his errand, whilst the princess went off shopping. First she bought a farthing’s worth of oil, and then she bought three farthings’ worth of flax. When she got back with her purchases she set the old man on the bedstead and rubbed his crippled leg with the oil for an hour. Then she sat down to the spinning-wheel and spun and spun all night long whilst the old man slept, until, in the morning, she had spun the finest thread that ever was seen. Next she went to the loom and wove and wove until by the evening she had woven a beautiful silver cloth.

‘Now,’ said she to the fakir, ‘go into the market-place and sell my cloth whilst I rest.’

‘And what am I to ask for it?’ said the old man.

‘Two gold pieces,’ replied the princess.

So the fakir hobbled away, and stood in the market-place to sell the cloth. Presently the elder princess drove by, and when she saw the cloth she stopped and asked the price.

‘Two gold pieces,’ said the fakir. And the princess gladly paid them, after which the old fakir hobbled home with the money. As she had done before so Imani did again day after day. Always she spent a penny upon oil and flax, always she tended the old man’s lame limb, and spun and wove the most beautiful cloths and sold them at high prices. Gradually the city became famous for her beautiful stuffs, the old fakir’s lame leg became straighter and stronger, and the hole under the floor of the hut where they kept their money became fuller and fuller of gold pieces. At last, one day, the princess said:

‘I really think we have got enough to live in greater comfort.’ And she sent for builders, and they built a beautiful house for her and the old fakir, and in all the city there was none finer except the king’s palace. Presently this reached the ears of the king, and when he inquired whose it was they told him that it belonged to his daughter.

‘Well,’ exclaimed the king, ‘she said that she would make her own fortune, and somehow or other she seems to have done it!’

A little while after this, business took the king to another country, and before he went he asked his elder daughter what she would like him to

bring her back as a gift.

‘A necklace of rubies,’ answered she. And then the king thought he would like to ask Imani too; so he sent a messenger to find out what sort of a present she wanted. The man happened to arrive just as she was trying to disentangle a knot in her loom, and bowing low before her, he said:

‘The king sends me to inquire what you wish him to bring you as a present from the country of Dûr?’ But Imani, who was only considering how she could best untie the knot without breaking the thread, replied:

‘Patience!’ meaning that the messenger should wait till she was able to attend to him. But the messenger went off with this as an answer, and told the king that the only thing the princess Imani wanted was ‘patience.’

‘Oh!’ said the king, ‘I don’t know whether that’s a thing to be bought at Dûr; I never had it myself, but if it is to be got I will buy it for her.’

Next day the king departed on his journey, and when his business at Dûr was completed he bought for Kupti a beautiful ruby necklace. Then he said to a servant:

‘The princess Imani wants some patience. I did not know there was such a thing, but you must go to the market and inquire, and if any is to be sold, get it and bring it to me.’

The servant saluted and left the king’s presence. He walked about the market for some time crying: ‘Has anyone patience to sell? patience to sell?’ And some of the people mocked, and some (who had no patience) told him to go away and not be a fool; and some said: ‘The fellow’s mad! As though one could buy or sell patience!’

At length it came to the ears of the king of Dûr that there was a madman in the market trying to buy patience. And the king laughed and said:

‘I should like to see that fellow, bring him here!’

And immediately his attendants went to seek the man, and brought him to the king, who asked:

‘What is this you want?’

And the man replied: ‘Sire! I am bidden to ask for patience.’

‘Oh,’ said the king, ‘you must have a strange master! What does he want with it?’

‘My master wants it as a present for his daughter Imani,’ replied the servant.

‘Well,’ said the king, ‘I know of some patience which the young lady might have if she cares for it; but it is not to be bought.’

Now the king’s name was Subbar Khan, and Subbar *means* ‘patience’; but the messenger did not know that, or understand that he was making a joke. However, he declared that the princess Imani was not only young and beautiful, but also the cleverest, most industrious, and kindest-hearted of princesses; and he would have gone on explaining her virtues had not the king laughingly put up his hand and stopped him saying:

‘Well, well, wait a minute, and I will see what can be done.’

With that he got up and went to his own apartments and took out a little casket. Into the casket he put a fan, and shutting it up carefully he brought it to the messenger and said:

‘Here is a casket. It has no lock nor key, and yet will open only to the touch of the person who needs its contents—and whoever opens it will obtain patience; but I can’t tell whether it will be quite the kind of patience that is wanted.’ And the servant bowed low, and took the casket; but when he asked what was to be paid, the king would take nothing. So he went away and gave the casket and an account of his adventures to his master.

As soon as their father got back to his country Kupti and Imani each got the presents he had brought for them. Imani was very surprised when the casket was brought to her by the hand of a messenger.

‘But,’ she said, ‘what is this? I never asked for anything! Indeed I had no time, for the messenger ran away before I had unravelled my tangle.’

But the servant declared that the casket was for her, so she took it with some curiosity, and brought it to the old fakir. The old man tried to open it, but in vain—so closely did the lid fit that it seemed to be quite immovable, and yet there was no lock, nor bolt, nor spring, nor anything apparently by which the casket was kept shut. When he was tired of trying he handed the casket to the princess, who hardly touched it before it opened quite easily, and there lay within a beautiful fan. With a cry of surprise and pleasure Imani took out the fan, and began to fan herself.

Hardly had she finished three strokes of the fan before there suddenly appeared from nowhere in particular, king Subbar Khan of Dûr! The princess gasped and rubbed her eyes, and the old fakir sat and gazed in such astonishment that for some minutes he could not speak. At length he said:

‘Who may you be, fair sir, if you please?’

‘My name,’ said the king, ‘is Subbar Khan of Dûr. This lady,’ bowing to the princess, ‘has summoned me, and here I am!’

‘I?’—stammered the princess—‘I have summoned you? I never saw or heard of you in my life before, so how could that be?’

Then the king told them how he had heard of a man in his own city of Dûr trying to buy patience, and how he had given him the fan in the casket.

‘Both are magical,’ he added; ‘when anyone uses the fan, in three strokes of it I am with them; if they fold it and tap it on the table, in three taps I am at home again. The casket will not open to all, but you see it was this fair lady who asked for patience, and, as that is my name, here I am, very much at her service.’

Now the princess Imani, being of a high spirit, was anxious to fold up the fan, and give the three taps which would send the king home again; but the old fakir was very pleased with his guest, and so in one way and another they spent quite a pleasant evening together before Subbar Khan took his leave.

After that he was often summoned; and as both the fakir and he were very fond of chess and were good players, they used to sit up half the night playing, and at last a little room in the house began to be called the king’s room, and whenever he stayed late he used to sleep there and go home again in the morning.

By-and-by it came to the ears of the princess Kupti that there was a rich and handsome young man visiting at her sister’s house, and she was very jealous. So she went one day to pay Imani a visit, and pretended to be very affectionate, and interested in the house, and in the way in which Imani and the old fakir lived, and of their mysterious and royal visitor. As the sisters went from place to place, Kupti was shown Subbar Khan’s room; and presently, making some excuse, she slipped in there by herself and swiftly spread under the sheet which lay upon the bed a quantity of very finely powdered and splintered glass which was poisoned, and which she had brought with her concealed in her clothes. Shortly afterwards she took leave of her sister, declaring that she could never forgive herself for not having come near her all this time, and that she would now begin to make amends for her neglect.

That very evening Subbar Khan came and sat up late with the old fakir playing chess as usual. Very tired, he at length bade him and the princess good-night and, as soon as he lay down on the bed, thousands of tiny, tiny splinters of poisoned glass ran into him. He could not think what was the matter, and started this way and that until he was pricked all over, and he felt as though he were burning from head to foot. But he never said a word, only he sat up all night in agony of body and in worse agony of mind to think that he should have been poisoned, as he guessed he was, in Imani's own house. In the morning, although he was nearly fainting, he still said nothing, and by means of the magic fan was duly transported home again. Then he sent for all the physicians and doctors in his kingdom, but none could make out what his illness was; and so he lingered on for weeks and weeks trying every remedy that anyone could devise, and passing sleepless nights and days of pain and fever and misery, until at last he was at the point of death.

Meanwhile the princess Imani and the old fakir were much troubled because, although they waved the magic fan again and again, no Subbar Khan appeared, and they feared that he had tired of them, or that some evil fate had overtaken him. At last the princess was in such a miserable state of doubt and uncertainty that she determined to go herself to the kingdom of Dûr and see what was the matter. Disguising herself in man's clothes as a young fakir, she set out upon her journey alone and on foot, as a fakir should travel. One evening she found herself in a forest, and lay down under a great tree to pass the night. But she could not sleep for thinking of Subbar Khan, and wondering what had happened to him. Presently she heard two great monkeys talking to one another in the tree above her head.

'Good evening, brother,' said one, 'whence come you—and what is the news?'

'I come from Dûr,' said the other, 'and the news is that the king is dying.'

'Oh,' said the first, 'I'm sorry to hear that, for he is a master hand at slaying leopards and creatures that ought not to be allowed to live. What is the matter with him?'

'No man knows,' replied the second monkey, 'but the birds, who see all and carry all messages, say that he is dying of poisoned glass that Kupti the king's daughter spread upon his bed.'

‘Ah!’ said the first monkey, ‘that is sad news; but if they only knew it, the berries of the very tree we sit in, steeped in hot water, will cure such a disease as that in three days at most.’

‘True!’ said the other, ‘it’s a pity that we can’t tell some man of a medicine so simple, and so save a good man’s life. But men are so silly; they go and shut themselves up in stuffy houses in stuffy cities instead of living in nice airy trees, and so they miss knowing all the best things.’

Now when Imani heard that Subbar Khan was dying she began to weep silently; but as she listened she dried her tears and sat up; and as soon as daylight dawned over the forest she began to gather the berries from the tree until she had filled her cloth with a load of them. Then she walked on as fast as she could, and in two days reached the city of Dûr. The first thing she did was to pass through the market crying:

‘Medicine for sale! Are any ill that need my medicine?’ And presently one man said to his neighbour:

‘See, there is a young fakir with medicine for sale, perhaps he could do something for the king.’

‘Pooh!’ replied the other, ‘where so many grey-beards have failed, how should a lad like that be of any use?’

‘Still,’ said the first, ‘he might try.’ And he went up and spoke to Imani, and together they set out for the palace and announced that another doctor was come to try and cure the king.

After some delay Imani was admitted to the sick room, and, whilst *she* was so well disguised that the king did not recognize her, *he* was so wasted by illness that she hardly knew *him.* But she began at once, full of hope, by asking for some apartments all to herself and a pot in which to boil water. As soon as the water was heated she steeped some of her berries in it and gave the mixture to the king’s attendants and told them to wash his body with it. The first washing did so much good that the king slept quietly all the night. Again the second day she did the same, and this time the king declared he was hungry, and called for food. After the third day he was quite well, only very weak from his long illness. On the fourth day he got up and sat upon his throne, and then sent messengers to fetch the physician who had cured him. When Imani appeared everyone marvelled that so young a man should be so clever a doctor; and the king wanted to give him immense presents of money and of all kinds of precious things. At first

Imani would take nothing, but at last she said that, if she must be rewarded, she would ask for the king's signet ring and his handkerchief. So, as she would take nothing more, the king gave her his signet ring and his handkerchief, and she departed and travelled back to her own country as fast as she could.

A little while after her return, when she had related to the fakir all her adventures, they sent for Subbar Khan by means of the magic fan; and when he appeared they asked him why he had stayed away for so long. Then he told them all about his illness, and how he had been cured, and when he had finished the princess rose up and, opening a cabinet, brought out the ring and handkerchief, and said, laughing:

'Are these the rewards you gave to your doctor?'

At that the king looked, and he recognised her, and understood in a moment all that had happened; and he jumped up and put the magic fan in his pocket, and declared that no one should send him away to his own country any more unless Imani would come with him and be his wife. And so it was settled, and the old fakir and Imani went to the city of Dûr, where Imani was married to the king and lived happily ever after.

(Punjâbi story.)

THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF LITTLE MAIA

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Once upon a time there lived a woman who had a pretty cottage and garden right in the middle of a forest. All through the summer she was quite happy tending her flowers and listening to the birds singing in the trees, but in the winter, when snow lay on the ground and wolves came howling about the door, she felt very lonely and frightened. ‘If I only had a child to speak to, however small, what a comfort it would be!’ she said to herself. And the heavier the snow fell the oftener she repeated the words. And at last a day arrived when she could bear the silence and solitude no longer, and set off to walk to the nearest village to beg someone to sell her or lend her a child.

The snow was very deep, and reached above her ankles, and it took her almost an hour to go a few hundred yards.

‘It will be dark at this rate before I get to the first house,’ thought she, and stopped to look about her. Suddenly a little woman in a high-crowned hat stepped from behind a tree in front of her.

‘This is a bad day for walking! Are you going far?’ inquired the little woman.

‘Well, I want to go to the village; but I don’t see how I am ever to get there,’ answered the other.

‘And may I ask what important business takes you there?’ asked the little woman, who was really a witch.

‘My house is so dreary, with no one to speak to; I cannot stay in it alone, and I am seeking for a child—I don’t mind how small she is—who will keep me company.’

‘Oh, if that is all, you need go no further,’ replied the witch, putting her hand in her pocket. ‘Look, here is a barley corn, as a favour you shall have it for twelve shillings, and if you plant it in a flower-pot, and give it plenty of water, in a few days you will see something wonderful.’

This promise raised the woman’s spirits. She gladly paid down the price, and as soon as she returned home she dug a hole in a flower-pot and put in the seed.

For three days she waited, hardly taking her eyes from the flower-pot in its warm corner, and on the third morning she saw that, while she was asleep, a tall red tulip had shot up, sheathed in green leaves.

‘What a beautiful blossom,’ cried the woman, stooping to kiss it, when, as she did so, the red petals burst asunder, and in the midst of them was a lovely little girl only an inch high. This tiny little creature was seated on a mattress of violets, and covered with a quilt of rose leaves, and she opened her eyes and smiled at the woman as if she had known her all her life.

‘Oh! you darling; I shall never be lonely any more!’ she exclaimed in rapture; and the baby nodded her head as much as to say:

‘No, of course you won’t!’

The woman lost no time in seeking for a roomy walnut-shell, which she lined thickly with white satin, and on it she placed the mattress, with the child, whom she called Maia, upon it. This was her bed, and stood on a chair close to where her foster-mother was sleeping; but in the morning she was lifted out, and placed on a leaf in the middle of a large bowl of water, and given two white horse-hairs to row herself about with. She was the happiest baby that ever was seen, and passed the whole day singing to herself, in a language of her own, that nobody else could understand.

* * * * *

For some weeks the two lived together and never grew tired of each other’s society, and then a terrible misfortune happened. One night, when the foster-mother lay sound asleep after a hard day’s work, a big, ugly, wet frog hopped in through the open window and stood staring at Maia under her quilt of rose leaves.

‘Dear me! that is quite a pretty little girl,’ thought the frog to herself; ‘she would make a nice wife for my son.’ And picking up the walnut cradle in her mouth, she hopped with it to the edge of a stream which ran through the garden.

‘Come and see what I have brought you,’ called the old frog, when she reached her home in the mud.

‘Croak! croak! croak!’ uttered the son, gazing with pleasure at the sleeping child.

‘Hush; don’t make such a noise or you will wake her!’ whispered the mother. ‘I mean her to be a wife for you, and while we are preparing for the wedding we will set her on that water-lily leaf in the middle of the brook, so that she may not be able to run away from us.’

It was on this green floating prison that Maia awoke, frightened and puzzled, with the first rays of the sun. She stood up straight on the leaf, looking about her for a way of escape, and, finding none, she sat down again and began to weep bitterly. At length her sobs were heard by the old frog, who was busy in her house at the bottom of the marsh, twisting rushes into a soft carpet for Maia’s feet, and twining reeds and grapes over the doorway, to make it look pretty for the bride.

‘Ah! the poor child feels lost and unhappy,’ she thought pitifully, for her heart was kind. ‘Well, I have just done, and then my son and I will go to fetch her. When she sees how handsome he is she will be all smiles again.’ And in a few minutes they both appeared beside the leaf.

‘This is your future husband. Did you ever see anyone like him?’ asked the proud mother, pushing him forward. But, after one glance, Maia only cried the more; and the little fishes who lived in the stream came swimming round to see what was the matter.

‘It is absurd that such a pretty creature should be forced to take a husband whom she does not want,’ said they to each other. ‘And such an ugly one too! However, we can easily prevent it.’ And by turns they gnawed the stem of the lily-leaf close to the root, till at length it was free, and taking it in their mouths they bore Maia far away, till the little stream grew into a great river.

Oh, how Maia enjoyed that voyage, when once she became quite certain that the frogs could no longer reach her. Past many towns she went, and the people on the banks all turned to look at her, and exclaimed:

‘What a lovely little girl! Where can she have come from?’

‘What a lovely little girl!’ twittered the birds in the bushes. And a blue butterfly fell in love with her, and would not leave her; so she took off her

sash, which just matched him, and tied it round his body, so that with this new kind of horse she travelled much faster than before.

Unluckily, a great cockchafer, who was buzzing over the river, happened to catch sight of her, and caught her up in his claws. The poor butterfly was terribly frightened at the sight of him, and he struggled hard to free himself, so that the sash bow gave way, and he flew off into the sunshine. But Maia wasn't so fortunate, and though the cockchafer collected honey from the flowers for her dinner, and told her several times how pretty she was, she could not feel at ease with him. The cockchafer noticed this, and summoned his sisters to play with her; but they only stared rudely, and said:

'Where did you pick up that strange object? She is very ugly to be sure, but one ought to pity her for she has only two legs.'

'Yes, and no feelers,' added another; 'and she is so thin! Well, our brother has certainly very odd taste!'

'Indeed he has!' echoed the others. And they repeated it so loud and so often that, in the end, he believed it too, and snatching her up from the tree where he had placed her, set her down upon a daisy which grew near the ground.

Here Maia stayed for the whole summer, and really was not at all unhappy. She ventured to walk about by herself, and wove herself a bed of some blades of grass, and placed it under a clover leaf for shelter. The red cups that grew in the moss held as much dew as she wanted, and the cockchafer had taught her how to get honey. But summer does not last for ever, and by-and-by the flowers withered, and instead of dew there was snow and ice. Maia did not know what to do, for her clothes were worn to rags, and though she tried to roll herself up in a dry leaf it broke under her fingers. It soon was plain to her that if she did not get some other shelter she would die of hunger and cold.

So, gathering up all her courage, she left the forest and crossed the road into what had been, in the summer, a beautiful field of waving corn, but was now only a mass of hard stalks. She wandered on, seeing nothing but the sky above her head, till she suddenly found herself close to an opening which seemed to lead underground.

'It will be warm, at any rate,' thought Maia, 'and perhaps the person who lives there will give me something to eat. At any rate, I can't be worse

off than I am now.' And she walked boldly down the passage. By-and-by she came to a door which stood ajar, and, peeping in, discovered a whole room full of corn. This gave her heart, and she went on more swiftly, till she reached a kitchen where an old field mouse was baking a cake.

'You poor little animal,' cried the mouse, who had never seen anything like her before, 'you look starved to death! Come and sit here and get warm, and share my dinner with me.'

Maia almost wept with joy at the old mouse's kind words. She needed no second bidding, but ate more than she had ever done in her life, though it was not a breakfast for a humming-bird! When she had quite finished she put out her hand and smiled, and the old mouse said to her:

'Can you tell stories? If so you may stay with me till the sun gets hot again, and you shall help me with my house. But it is dull here in the winter unless you have somebody clever enough to amuse you.'

Yes, Maia had learned a great many stories from her foster-mother, and, besides, there were all her own adventures, and her escapes from death. She knew also how a room should be swept, and never failed to get up early in the morning and have everything clean and tidy for the old mouse.

So the winter passed away pleasantly, and Maia began to talk of the spring, and of the time when she would have to go out into the world again and seek her fortune.

'Oh, you need not begin to think of *that* for a while yet,' answered the field-mouse. 'Up on the earth they have a proverb:

When the day lengthens
Then the cold strengthens;

it has been quite warm up to now, and the snow may fall any time. Never a winter goes by without it, and *then* you will be very thankful you are *here*, and not outside! But I dare say it is quiet for a young thing like you,' she added, 'and I have invited my neighbour the mole to come and pay us a visit. He has been asleep all these months, but I hear he is waking up again. You would be a lucky girl if he took into his head to marry you, only, unfortunately, he is blind, and cannot see how pretty you are.' And

for this blindness Maia felt truly glad, as she did not want a mole for a husband.

However, by-and-by he paid his promised visit, and Maia did not like him at all. He might be as rich and learned as possible, but he hated the sun, and the trees, and the flowers, and all that Maia loved best. To be sure, being blind, he had never seen them, and, like many other people, he thought that anything *he* did not know was not worth knowing. But Maia's tales amused him, though he would not for the world have let her see it, and he admired her voice when she sang:

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?

Hush-a-bye, baby, on the tree-top;

though he told her that it was all nonsense, and that trees and gardens were mere foolishness. When she was *his* wife he would teach her things better worth learning.

'Meanwhile,' he said, with a grand air, 'I have burrowed a passage from this house to my own, in which you can walk; but I warn you not to be frightened at a great dead creature that has fallen through a hole in the roof, and is lying on one side.'

'What sort of creature is it?' asked Maia eagerly.

'Oh, I really can't tell you,' answered the mole, indifferently; 'it is covered with something soft, and it has two thin legs, and a long sharp thing sticking out of its head.'

'It is a bird,' cried Maia joyfully, 'and I love birds! It must have died of cold,' she added, dropping her voice. 'Oh! good Mr. Mole, do take me to see it!'

'Come then, as I am going home,' replied the mole. And calling to the old field-mouse to accompany them, they all set out.

'Here it is,' said the mole at last; 'dear me, how thankful I am Fate did not make me a bird. They can't say anything but "twit, twit," and die with the first breath of cold.'

'Ah, yes, poor useless creature,' answered the field-mouse. But while they were talking, Maia crept round to the other side and stroked the

feathers of the little swallow, and kissed his eyes.

All that night she lay awake, thinking of the swallow lying dead in the passage. At length she could bear it no longer, and stole away to the place where the hay was kept, and wove a thick carpet. Next she went to the field-mouse's store of cotton which she picked in the summer from some of the marsh flowers, and carrying them both down the passage, she tucked the cotton underneath the bird and spread the hay quilt over him.

'Perhaps you were one of the swallows who sang to me in the summer,' said she. 'I wish I could have brought you to life again; but now, good-bye!' And she laid her face, wet with tears, on the breast of the bird. Surely she felt a faint movement against her cheek? Yes, there it was again! Suppose the bird was not dead after all, but only senseless with cold and hunger! And at this thought Maia hastened back to the house, and brought some grains of corn, and a drop of water in a leaf. This she held close to the swallow's beak, which he opened unconsciously, and when he had sipped the water she gave him the grains one by one.

'Make no noise, so that no one may guess you are not dead,' she said. 'To-night I will bring you some more food, and I will tell the mole that he must stuff up the hole again, as it makes the passage too cold for me to walk in. And now farewell.' And off she went, back to the field-mouse, who was sound asleep.

* * * * *

After some days of Maia's careful nursing, the swallow felt strong enough to talk, and he told Maia how he came to be in the place where she found him. Before he was big enough to fly very high he had torn his wing in a rosebush, so that he could not keep up with his family and friends when they took their departure to warmer lands. In their swift course they never noticed that their little brother was not with them, and at last he dropped on the ground from sheer fatigue, and must have rolled down the hole into the passage.

It was very lucky for the swallow that both the mole and the field-mouse thought he was dead, and did not trouble about him, so that when the spring *really* came, and the sun was hot, and blue hyacinths grew in the

woods and primroses in the hedges, he was as tall and strong as any of his companions.

‘You have saved my life, dear little Maia,’ said he; ‘but now the time has come for me to leave you—unless,’ he added, ‘you will let me carry you on my back far away from this gloomy prison.’

Maia’s eyes sparkled at the thought, but she shook her head bravely.

‘Yes, you must go; but I must stay behind,’ she answered. ‘The field-mouse has been good to me, and I cannot desert her like that. Do you think you can open the hole for yourself?’ she asked anxiously. ‘If so, you had better begin now, for this evening we are to have supper with the mole, and it would never do for my foster-mother to find you working at it.’

‘That is true,’ answered the swallow. And flying up to the roof,—which, after all, was not very high above them—he set to work with his bill, and soon let a flood of sunshine into the dark place.

‘*Won’t* you come with me, Maia?’ said he. And though her heart longed for the trees and the flowers, she answered as before:

‘No, I cannot.’

That one glimpse of the sun was all Maia had for some time, for the corn sprung up so thickly over the hole and about the house, that there might almost as well have been no sun at all. However, though she missed her bird friend every moment, she had no leisure to be idle, for the field-mouse had told her that very soon she was to be married to the mole, and kept her spinning wool and cotton for her outfit. And as she had never in her life made a dress, four clever spiders were persuaded to spend the days underground, turning the wool and cotton into tiny garments. Maia liked the clothes, but hated the thought of the blind mole, only she did not know how to escape him. In the evenings, when the spiders were going to their homes for the night, she would walk with them to the door and wait till a puff of wind blew the corn ears apart, and she could see the sky.

‘If the swallow would only come now,’ she said to herself, ‘I would go with him to the end of the world.’ But he never came!

‘Your outfit is all finished,’ said the field-mouse one day when the berries were red and the leaves yellow, ‘and the mole and I have decided that your wedding shall be in four weeks’ time.’

‘Oh, not so soon! not so soon!’ cried Maia, bursting into tears; which made the field-mouse very angry, and declare that Maia had no more sense

than other girls, and did not know what was good for her. Then the mole arrived, and carried her on his back to see the new house he had dug for her, which was so very far under ground that Maia's tiny legs could never bring her up even as high as the field-mouse's dwelling, from which she might see the sunlight. Her heart grew heavier and heavier as the days went by, and in the last evening of all she crept out into the field among the stubble, to watch the sun set before she bade it good-bye for ever.

'Farewell, farewell,' she said 'and farewell to my little swallow. Ah! if he only knew, he would come to help me.'

'Twit! twit,' cried a voice just above her; and the swallow fluttered to the ground beside her. 'You look sad; are you *really* going to let that ugly mole marry you?'

'I shall soon die, that is one comfort,' she answered weeping. But the swallow only said:

'Tut! tut! get on my back, as I told you before, and I will take you to a land where the sun always shines, and you will soon forget that such a creature as a mole ever existed.'

'Yes, I will come,' said Maia.

Then the swallow tore off one of the corn stalks with his strong beak, and bade her tie it safely to his wing. And they started off, flying, flying south for many a day.

Oh! how happy Maia was to see the beautiful earth again! A hundred times she longed for the swallow to stop, but he always told her that the best was yet to be; and they flew on and on, only halting for short rests, till they reached a place covered with tall white marble pillars, some standing high, wreathed in vines, out of which endless swallows' heads were peeping; others lying stretched among the flowers, white, yellow, and blue.

'I live up there,' said the swallow, pointing to the tallest of the pillars. 'But such a house would never do for you, as you would only fall out of it and kill yourself. So choose one of those flowers below, and you shall have it for your own, and sleep all night curled up in its leaves.'

'I will have that one,' answered Maia, pointing to a white flower shaped like a star, with a tiny crinkled wreath of red and yellow in its centre, and a long stem that swayed in the wind; 'that one is the prettiest of all, and it smells so sweet.' Then the swallow flew down towards it; but as they drew near they saw a tiny little manikin with a crown on his head,

and wings on his shoulders, balancing himself on one of the leaves. ‘Ah, that is the king of the flower-spirits,’ whispered the swallow. And the king stretched out his hands to Maia, and helped her to jump from the swallow’s back.

‘I have waited for you for a long while,’ said he, ‘and now you have come at last to be my queen.’

And Maia smiled, and stood beside him as all the fairies that dwelt in the flowers ran to fetch presents for her; and the best of them all was a pair of lovely gauzy blue wings to help fly about like one of themselves.

So instead of marrying the mole, Little Maia was crowned a queen, and the fairies danced round her in a ring, while the swallow sang the wedding song.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

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In a village in Hindustan there once lived a merchant who, although he rose early, worked hard, and rested late, remained very poor; and ill-luck so dogged him that he determined at last to go to some distant country and there to try his fortune. Twelve years passed by; his luck had turned, and now he had gathered great wealth, so that having plenty to keep him in comfort for the rest of his days, he thought once more of his native village, where he desired to spend the remainder of his life among his own people. In order to carry his riches with him in safety over the many weary miles that lay between him and his home, he bought some magnificent jewels, which he locked up in a little box and wore concealed upon his person; and, so as not to draw the attention of the thieves who infested the highways and made their living by robbing travellers, he started off in the poor clothes of a man who has nothing to lose.

Thus prepared, he travelled quickly, and within a few days' journey from his own village came to a city where he determined to buy better garments and—now that he was no longer afraid of thieves—to look more like the rich man he had become. In his new raiment he approached the city, and near the great gate he found a bazaar where, amongst many shops filled with costly silks, and carpets, and goods of all countries, was one finer than all the rest. There, amidst his goods, spread out to the best advantage, sat the owner smoking a long silver pipe, and thither the merchant bent his steps, and saluting the owner politely, sat down also and began to make some purchases. Now, the proprietor of the shop, Beeka Mull by name, was a very shrewd man, and as he and the merchant conversed, he soon felt sure that his customer was richer than he seemed, and was trying to conceal the fact. Certain purchases having been made, he invited the new-comer to refresh himself and in a short time they were chatting pleasantly together. In the course of the conversation Beeka Mull asked the merchant whither he was travelling, and hearing the name of the village, he observed:

‘Ah, you had better be careful on that road—it’s a very bad place for thieves.’

The merchant turned pale at these words. It would be such a bitter thing, he thought, just at the end of his journey to be robbed of all the fortune he had heaped up with such care. But this bland and prosperous Beeka Mull must surely know best, so presently he said:

‘Lala-ji,[3] could you oblige me by locking up for me a small box for a short while? When once I get to my village I could bring back half-a-dozen sturdy men of my own kinsfolk and claim it again.’

The Lala shook his head. ‘I could not do it,’ replied he. ‘I am sorry; but such things are not my business. I should be afraid to undertake it.’

‘But,’ pleaded the merchant, ‘I know no one in this city, and you must surely have some place where you keep your own precious things. Do this, I pray you, as a great favour.’

Still Beeka Mull politely but firmly refused; but the merchant, feeling that he had now betrayed the fact that he was richer than he seemed, and being loth to make more people aware of it by inquiring elsewhere, continued to press him, until at last he consented. The merchant produced the little box of jewels, and Beeka Mull locked it up for him in a strong chest with other precious stones; and so, with many promises and compliments, they parted.

In a place like an Eastern bazaar, where the shops lie with wide open fronts, and with their goods displayed not only within but without on terraces and verandahs raised a few feet above the public roadway, such a long talk as that between Beeka Mull and the merchant could not but attract some attention from the other shop-keepers in the narrow street. If the merchant had but known it, nearly every shop-owner in that district was a thief, and the cleverest and biggest of all was Beeka Mull. But he did not know it, only he could not help feeling a little uneasy at having thus parted with all his wealth to a stranger. And so, as he wandered down the street, making a purchase here and there, he managed in one way and another to ask some questions about the honesty of Beeka Mull, and each rascal whom he spoke to, knowing that there was some good reason in the question, and hoping to get in return some share of the spoils, replied in praise of Beeka Mull as a model of all the virtues.

In this way the merchant's fears were stilled, and, with a comparatively light heart, he travelled on to his village; and within a week or so returned to the city with half-a-dozen sturdy young nephews and friends whom he had enlisted to help him carry home his precious box.

At the great market-place in the centre of the city the merchant left his friends, saying that he would go and get the box of jewels and rejoin them, to which they consented, and away he went. Arrived at the shop of Beeka Mull, he went up and saluted him.

'Good-day, Lala-ji,' said he. But the Lala pretended not to see him. So he repeated the salutation. 'What do you want?' snapped Beeka Mull; 'you've said your "good-day" twice, why don't you tell me your business?'

'Don't you remember me?' asked the merchant.

'Remember you?' growled the other; 'no, why should I? I have plenty to do to remember good customers without trying to remember every beggar who comes whining for charity.'

When he heard this the merchant began to tremble.

'Lala-ji!' he cried, 'surely you remember me and the little box I gave you to take care of? And you promised—yes, indeed, you promised very kindly—that I might return to claim it, and——'

'You scoundrel,' roared Beeka Mull, 'get out of my shop! Be off with you, you impudent scamp! Every one knows that I never keep treasures for anyone; I have trouble enough to do to keep my own! Come, off with you!' With that he began to push the merchant out of the shop; and, when the poor man resisted, two of the bystanders came to Beeka Mull's help, and flung the merchant out into the road, like a bale of goods dropped from a camel. Slowly he picked himself up out of the dust, bruised, battered, and bleeding, but feeling nothing of the pain in his body, nothing but a dreadful numbing sensation that, after all, he was ruined and lost! Slowly he dragged himself a little further from where the fat and furious Beeka Mull still stood amongst his disordered silks and carpets, and coming to a friendly wall he crouched and leant against it, and putting his head into his hands gave himself up to an agony of misery and despair.

There he sat motionless, like one turned to stone, whilst darkness fell around him; and when, about eleven o'clock that night, a certain gay young fellow named Kooshy Ram passed by with a friend, he saw the

merchant sitting hunched against the wall, and remarked: ‘A thief, no doubt.’ ‘You are wrong,’ returned the other, ‘thieves don’t sit in full view of people like that, even at night.’ And so the two passed on, and thought no more of him. About five o’clock next morning Kooshy Ram was returning home again, when, to his astonishment, he saw the miserable merchant still sitting as he had seen him sit hours before. Surely something must be the matter with a man who sat all night in the open street, and Kooshy Ram resolved to see what it was; so he went up and shook the merchant gently by the shoulder. ‘Who are you?’ asked he —‘and what are you doing here—are you ill?’

‘Ill?’ said the merchant in a hollow voice, ‘yes; ill with a sickness for which there is no medicine.’

‘Oh, nonsense!’ cried Kooshy Ram. ‘Come along with me, I know a medicine that will cure you, I think.’ So the young man seized the merchant by the arm, and hoisting him to his feet, dragged him to his own lodging; where he first of all gave him a large glass of wine, and then, after he had refreshed him with food, bade him tell his adventures.

* * * * *

Meanwhile the merchant’s companions in the market-place, being dull-witted persons, thought that as he did not return he must have gone home by himself; and as soon as they were tired of waiting they went back to their village and left him to look after his own affairs. He would therefore have fared badly had it not been for his rescuer, Kooshy Ram, who, whilst still a boy, had been left a great deal of money with no one to advise him how to spend it. He was high-spirited, kind-hearted, and shrewd into the bargain; but he threw away his money like water, and generally upon the nearest thing or person in his way, and that, alas! most often was himself! Now, however, he had taken it into his head to befriend this miserable merchant, and he meant to do it; and on his side the merchant felt confidence revive, and without further ado told all that had happened.

Kooshy Ram laughed heartily at the idea of any stranger entrusting his wealth to Beeka Mull.

‘Why, he is the greatest rascal in the city,’ he cried, ‘unless you believe what some of them say of me! Well, there is nothing to be done for the

present, but just to stay here quietly, and I think that at the end of a short time I shall find a medicine which will heal your sickness.' At this the merchant again took courage, and a little ease crept into his heart as he gratefully accepted his new friend's invitation.

A few days later Kooshy Ram sent for some friends to see him, and talked with them long, and, although the merchant did not hear the conversation, he did hear shouts of laughter as though at some good joke; but the laughter echoed dully in his own heart, for the more he considered the more he despaired of ever recovering his fortune from the grasp of Beeka Mull.

One day, soon after this, Kooshy Ram came to him and said:

'You remember the wall where I found you that night, near Beeka Mull's shop?'

'Yes, indeed I do,' answered the merchant.

'Well,' continued Kooshy Ram, 'this afternoon you must go and stand in that same spot and watch; and when someone gives you a signal, you must go up to Beeka Mull and salute him and say, "Oh, Lala-ji, will you kindly let me have back that box of mine which you have on trust?"'

'What's the use of that?' asked the merchant. 'He won't do it any more now than he would when I asked him before.'

'Never mind!' replied Kooshy Ram, 'do exactly what I tell you, and repeat exactly what I say, word for word, and I will answer for the rest.'

So, that afternoon, the merchant at a certain time went and stood by the wall as he was told. He noticed that Beeka Mull saw him, but neither took any heed of the other. Presently up the bazaar came a gorgeous palanquin like those in which ladies of rank are carried about. It was borne by four bearers well dressed in rich liveries, and its curtains and trappings were truly magnificent. In attendance was a grave-looking personage whom the merchant recognized as one of the friends who visited Kooshy Ram; and behind him came a servant with a box covered with a cloth upon his head.

The palanquin was borne along at a smart pace and was set down at Beeka Mull's shop. The fat shop-keeper was on his feet at once, and bowed deeply as the gentleman in attendance advanced.

'May I inquire,' he said, 'who this is in the palanquin that deigns to favour my humble shop with a visit? And what may I do for her?'

The gentleman, after whispering at the curtain of the palanquin, explained that this was a relative of his who was travelling, but as her husband could go no further with her, she desired to leave with Beeka Mull a box of jewels for safe custody. Lala bowed again to the ground. ‘It was not,’ he said, ‘quite in his way of business; but of course, if he could please the lady, he would be most happy, and would guard the box with his life.’ Then the servant carrying the box was called up; the box was unlocked, and a mass of jewellery laid open to the gaze of the enraptured Lala, whose mouth watered as he turned over the rich gems.

All this the merchant had watched from the distance, and now he saw —could he be mistaken?—no, he distinctly saw a hand beckoning through the curtain on that side of the palanquin away from the shop. ‘The signal! Was this the signal?’ thought he. The hand beckoned again, impatiently it seemed to him. So forward he went, very quietly, and saluting Beeka Mull, who was sitting turning over the contents of this amazing box of jewels which fortune and some fools were putting into his care, he said:

‘Oh, Lala-ji, will you kindly let me have back that box of mine which you have on trust?’

The Lala looked up as though he had been stung; but quickly the thought flashed through his mind that if this man began making a fuss again he would lose the confidence of these new and richer customers; so he controlled himself, and answered:

‘Dear me, of course, yes! I had forgotten all about it.’ And he went off and brought the little box and put it into the merchant’s trembling hands. Quickly the latter pulled out the key, which hung by a string round his neck, and opened the box; and when he saw that his treasures were all there he rushed into the road, and, with the box under his arm, began dancing like a madman, with great shouts and screams of laughter. Just then a messenger came running up and, saluting the gentleman attending the palanquin, he said:

‘The lady’s husband has returned, and is prepared to travel with her, so that there is no necessity to deposit the jewels.’ Whereat the gentleman quickly closed and relocked the box, and handed it back to the waiting servant. Then from the palanquin came a yell of laughter, and out jumped —not a lady—but Kooshy Ram, who immediately ran and joined the merchant in the middle of the road and danced as madly as he. Beeka Mull

stood and stared stupidly at them; then, with a shrill cackle of laughter, he flung off his turban, bounced out into the road with the other two, and fell to dancing and snapping his fingers until he was out of breath.

‘Lala-ji,’ said the gentleman who had played the part of the relative attendant on the palanquin, ‘why do you dance? The merchant dances because he has recovered his fortune; Kooshy Ram dances because he is a madman and has tricked you; but why do *you* dance?’

‘I dance,’ panted Beeka Ram, glaring at him with a bloodshot eye, ‘I dance because I knew thirteen different ways of deceiving people by pretending confidence in them. I didn’t know there were any more, and now here’s a fourteenth! That’s why I dance!’

(Punjâbi Story, Major Campbell, Feroshepore.)

FOOTNOTE:

3. ‘Lala’ is a complimentary title: ‘ji’ a polite affix; the expression is somewhat equivalent to ‘Dear Sir.’

THE GREEN KNIGHT

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There lived once a king and queen who had an only daughter, a charming and beautiful girl, dearer to them than anything else in the world. When the princess was twelve years old the queen fell sick, and nothing that could be done for her was of any use. All the doctors in the kingdom did their best to cure her, but in spite of their efforts she grew worse and worse. As she was about to die, she sent for the king and said to him:

‘Promise me that whatever our daughter asks, you will do, no matter whether you wish to or not.’

The king at first hesitated, but as she added:

‘Unless you promise this I cannot die in peace,’ he at length did as she desired, and gave the promise, after which she became quite happy and died.

It happened that near the king’s palace lived a noble lady, whose little girl was of about the same age as the princess, and the two children were always together. After the queen’s death the princess begged that this lady should come to live with her in the palace. The king was not quite pleased with this arrangement, for he distrusted the lady; but the princess wished so much for it that he did not like to refuse.

‘I am lonely, father,’ she said, ‘and all the beautiful presents you give me cannot make up to me for the loss of my mother. If this lady comes to live here I shall almost feel as if the queen had come back to me.’

So a magnificent suite of rooms was prepared and set aside for the new-comers, and the little princess was wild with joy at the thought of having her friends so near her. The lady and her daughter arrived, and for a long time all went well. They were very kind to the motherless princess, and she almost began to forget how dull she had been before they came. Then, one day, as she and the other girl were playing together in the gardens of the palace, the lady came to them, dressed for a journey, and kissed the princess tenderly, saying:

‘Farewell, my child; my daughter and I must leave you and go far away.’

The poor princess began to cry bitterly. ‘Oh! you must not leave me!’ she sobbed. ‘What shall I do without you? Please, oh! please stay.’

The lady shook her head.

‘It almost breaks my heart to go, dear child,’ she said, ‘but, alas! it must be.’

‘Is there nothing that can keep you here?’ asked the princess.

‘Only one thing,’ answered the lady, ‘and as that is impossible, we will not speak of it.’

‘Nothing is impossible,’ persisted the princess. ‘Tell me what it is, and it shall be done.’

So at last her friend told her.

‘If the king, your father, would make me his queen I would stay,’ she said; ‘but that he would never do.’

‘Oh, yes! *that* is easy enough!’ cried the princess, delighted to think that, after all, they need not be parted. And she ran off to find her father, and beg him to marry the lady at once. He had done everything she asked, and she was quite certain he would do it.

‘What is it, my daughter?’ he asked, when he saw her. ‘You have been crying—are you not happy?’

‘Father,’ she said, ‘I have come to ask you to marry the countess’—(for that was the lady’s real title)—‘if you do not she will leave us, and then I shall be as lonely as before. You have never refused me what I have asked before, do not refuse me now.’

The king turned quite pale when he heard this. He did not like the countess, and so, of course, he did not wish to marry her; besides, he still loved his dead wife.

‘No, that I cannot do, my child,’ he said at last.

At these words the princess began to cry once more, and the tears ran down her cheeks so fast, and she sobbed so bitterly, that her father felt quite miserable too. He remembered the promise he had given always to do what his daughter asked him and in the end he gave way, and promised to marry the countess. The princess at once was all smiles, and ran away to tell the good news.

Soon after, the wedding was celebrated with great festivities, and the countess became queen; but, in spite of all the joy and merriment that filled the palace, the king looked pale and sad, for he was certain that ill would come of the marriage. Sure enough, in a very short time the queen's manner towards the princess began to change. She was jealous of her because she, instead of her own daughter, was heir to the throne, and very soon she could no longer hide her thoughts. Instead of speaking kindly and lovingly as before, her words became rough and cruel, and once or twice she even slapped the princess's face.

The king was very unhappy at seeing his dearly loved daughter suffer, and at last she became so wretched that he could no longer bear it. Calling her to him one day he said:

'My daughter, you are no longer merry as you should be, and I fear that it is the fault of your step-mother. It will be better for you to live with her no longer; therefore I have built you a castle on the island in the lake, and that is to be your home in future. There you can do just as you like, and your step-mother will never enter it.'

The princess was delighted to hear this, and still more pleased when she saw the castle, which was full of beautiful things, and had a great number of windows looking out on the lovely blue water. There was a boat in which she might row herself about, and a garden where she could walk whenever she wished without fear of meeting the unkind queen; and the king promised to visit her every day.

For a long time she dwelt in peace, and grew more and more beautiful every day. Everyone who saw her said 'The princess is the loveliest lady in the land.' And this was told to the queen, who hated her step-daughter still more because her own daughter was ugly and stupid.

One day it was announced that a great meeting of knights and nobles was to be held in a neighbouring kingdom distant about two days' journey. There were to be all kinds of festivities, and a tournament was to be fought and a banquet held, in honour of the coming of age of the prince of the country.

The princess's father was amongst those invited, but before he set out he went to take leave of his daughter. Although she had such a beautiful home, and was no longer scolded by the queen, the poor princess was dreadfully lonely, and she told her father that it would be better if she were

dead. He did his best to comfort her and promised that he would soon return. Was there anything he could do to help her?

‘Yes,’ she said. ‘You may greet the Green Knight from me.’

Now the king wondered a little at these words, for he had never heard of the Green Knight; but there was no time to ask questions, therefore he gave the promise, and rode off on his journey. When he came to the palace where the festivities were to take place, the first thing he did was to ask:

‘Can anyone tell me where I may find the Green Knight?’

No, they were very sorry; but none had ever heard of such a person either—certainly he was not to be found there. At this the king grew troubled, and not even the banquet or the tournament could make him feel happier. He inquired of everyone he saw, ‘Do you know the Green Knight?’ but the only answer he got was:

‘No, your majesty, we have never heard of him.’

At length he began to believe that the princess was mistaken, and that there was no such person; and he started on his homeward journey sorrowfully enough, for this was the first time for many months that the princess had asked him to do anything for her and he could not do it. He thought so much about it that he did not notice the direction his horse was taking, and presently he found himself in the midst of a dense forest where he had never been before. He rode on and on, looking for the path, but as the sun began to set he realised that he was lost. At last, to his delight, he saw a man driving some pigs, and riding up to him, he said:

‘I have lost my way. Can you tell me where I am?’

‘You are in the Green Knight’s forest,’ answered the man, ‘and these are his pigs.’

At that the king’s heart grew light. ‘Where does the Green Knight live?’ he asked.

‘It is a very long way from here,’ said the swineherd; ‘but I will show you the path.’ So he went a little farther with the king and put him on the right road, and the king bade him farewell.

Presently he came to a second forest, and there he met another swineherd driving pigs.

‘Whose beasts are those, my man?’ he asked.

‘They are the Green Knight’s,’ said the man.

‘And where does he live?’ inquired the king.

‘Oh, not far from here,’ was the reply.

Then the king rode on, and about midday he reached a beautiful castle standing in the midst of the loveliest garden you can possibly imagine, where fountains played in marble basins, and peacocks walked on the smooth lawns. On the edge of a marble basin sat a young and handsome man, who was dressed from head to foot in a suit of green armour, and was feeding the goldfish which swam in the clear water.

‘This must be the Green Knight,’ thought the king; and going up to the young man he said courteously:

‘I have come, sir, to give you my daughter’s greeting. But I have wandered far, and lost my way in your forest.’

The knight looked at him for a moment as though puzzled.

‘I have never met either you or your daughter,’ he said at last; ‘but you are very welcome all the same.’ And he waved his hand towards the castle. However, the king took no notice, and told him that his daughter had sent a message to the Green Knight, and as he was the only Green Knight in the kingdom this message must be for him.

‘You must pass the night with me here,’ said the knight; and as the sun was already set, the king was thankful to accept the invitation. They sat down in the castle hall to a magnificent banquet, and although he had travelled much and visited many monarchs in their palaces, the king had never fared better than at the table of the Green Knight, whilst his host himself was so clever and agreeable, that he was delighted, and thought ‘what a charming son-in-law this knight would make!’

Next morning, when he was about to set forth on his journey home, the Green Knight put into his hand a jewelled casket, saying:

‘Will your highness graciously condescend to carry this gift to the princess, your daughter? It contains my portrait, that when I come she may know me; for I feel certain that she is the lady I have seen night after night in a dream, and I must win her for my bride.’

The king gave the knight his blessing, and promised to take the gift to his daughter. With that he set off, and ere long reached his own country.

The princess was awaiting him anxiously when he arrived, and ran to his arms in her joy at seeing her dear father again.

‘And did you see the Green Knight?’ she asked.

‘Yes,’ answered the king, drawing out the casket the knight had sent, ‘and he begged me to give you this that you may know him when he arrives and not mistake him for somebody else.’

When the princess saw the portrait she was delighted, and exclaimed: ‘It is indeed the man whom I have seen in my dreams! Now I shall be happy, for he and no other shall be my husband.’

Very soon after the Green Knight arrived, and he looked so handsome in his green armour, with a long green plume in his helmet, that the princess fell still more in love with him than before, and when he saw her, and recognised her as the lady whom he had so often dreamt of, he immediately asked her to be his bride. The princess looked down and smiled as she answered him:

‘We must keep the secret from my step-mother until the wedding-day,’ said she, ‘for otherwise she will find a way to do us some evil.’

‘As you please,’ replied the prince; ‘but I must visit you daily, for I can live no longer without you! I will come early in the morning and not leave until it is dark; thus the queen will not see me row across the lake.’

For a long time, the Green Knight visited the princess every day, and spent many hours wandering with her through the beautiful gardens where they knew the queen could not see them. But secrets, as you know, are dangerous things, and at last, one morning, a girl who was in service at the palace happened to be walking by the lake early in the morning and beheld a wonderfully handsome young man, in a beautiful suit of green satin, come down to the edge of the lake. Not guessing that he was watched, he got into a little boat that lay moored to the bank, rowed himself over to the island where the princess’s castle stood. The girl went home wondering who the knight could be; and as she was brushing the queen’s hair, she said to her:

‘Does your majesty know that the princess has a suitor?’

‘Nonsense!’ replied the queen crossly. But she was dreadfully vexed at the mere idea, as her own daughter was still unmarried, and was likely to remain so, because she was so ill-tempered and stupid that no one wanted her.

‘It is true,’ persisted the girl. ‘He is dressed all in green, and is very handsome. I saw him myself, though he did not see me, and he got into a

boat and rowed over to the island, and the princess was waiting for him at the castle door.'

'I must find out what this means,' thought the queen. But she bade her maid of honour cease chattering and mind her own business.

Early next morning the queen got up and went down to the shore of the lake, where she hid herself behind a tree. Sure enough there came a handsome knight dressed in green, just as the maid of honour had said, and he got into a boat and rowed over to the island where the princess awaited him. The angry queen remained by the lake all day, but it was not until the evening that the knight returned, and leaping on shore, he tied the boat to its moorings and went away through the forest.

* * * * *

'I have caught my step-daughter nicely,' thought the queen. 'But she shall not be married before my own sweet girl. I must find a way to put a stop to this.'

Accordingly she took a poisoned nail and stuck it in the handle of the oar in such a way that the knight would be sure to scratch his hand when he picked up the oar. Then she went home laughing, very much pleased with her cleverness.

The next day the Green Knight went to visit the princess as usual; but directly he took up the oars to row over to the island he felt a sharp scratch on his hand.

'Oof!' he said, dropping the oars from pain, 'what can have scratched so?' But, look as he might, only a tiny mark was to be seen.

'Well, it's strange how a nail could have come here since yesterday,' he thought. 'Still, it is not very serious, though it hurts a good deal.' And, indeed, it seemed such a little thing that he did not mention it to the princess. However, when he reached home in the evening, he felt so ill he was obliged to go to bed, with no one to attend on him except his old nurse. But of this, of course, the princess knew nothing; and the poor girl, fearing lest some evil should have befallen him, or some other maiden more beautiful than she should have stolen his heart from her, grew almost sick with waiting. Lonely, indeed, she was, for her father, who would have

helped her, was travelling in a foreign country, and she knew not how to obtain news of her lover.

* * * * *

In this manner time passed away, and one day, as she sat by the open window crying and feeling very sad, a little bird came and perched on the branch of a tree that stood just underneath. It began to sing, and so beautifully that the princess was obliged to stop crying and listen to it, and very soon she found out that the bird was trying to attract her attention.

‘*Tu-whit, tu-whit!* your lover is sick!’ it sang.

‘Alas!’ cried the princess. ‘What can I do?’

‘*Tu-whit, tu-whit!* you must go to your father’s palace!’

‘And what shall I do there?’ she asked.

‘*Tu-whit!* there you will find a snake with nine young ones.’

‘Ugh!’ answered the princess with a shiver, for she did not like snakes. But the little bird paid no heed.

‘Put them in a basket and go to the Green Knight’s palace,’ said she.

‘And what am I to do with them when I get there?’ she cried, blushing all over, though there was no one to see her but the bird.

‘Dress yourself as a kitchen-maid and ask for a place. *Tu-whit!* Then you must make soup out of the snakes. Give it three times to the knight and he will be cured. *Tu-whit!*’

‘But what has made him ill?’ asked the princess. The bird, however, had flown away, and there was nothing for it but to go to her father’s palace and look for the snakes. When she came there she found the mother snake with the nine little snakes all curled up so that you could hardly tell their heads from their tails. The princess did not like having to touch them, but when the old snake had wriggled out of the nest to bask a little in the sun, she picked up the young ones and put them in a basket as the bird had told her, and ran off to find the Green Knight’s castle. All day she walked along, sometimes stopping to pick the wild berries, or to gather a nosegay; but though she rested now and then, she would not lie down to sleep before she reached the castle. At last she came in sight of it, and just then she met a girl driving a flock of geese.

‘Good-day!’ said the princess; ‘can you tell me if this is the castle of the Green Knight?’

‘Yes, that it is,’ answered the goose girl, ‘for I am driving his geese. But the Green Knight is very ill, and they say that unless he can be cured within three days he will surely die.’

At this news the princess grew as white as death. The ground seemed to spin round, and she closed her hand tight on a bush that was standing beside her. By-and-by, with a great effort, she recovered herself and said to the goose girl:

‘Would you like to have a fine silk dress to wear?’

The goose girl’s eyes glistened.

‘Yes, that I would!’ answered she.

‘Then take off your dress and give it to me, and I will give you mine,’ said the princess.

The girl could scarcely believe her ears, but the princess was already unfastening her beautiful silk dress, and taking off her silk stockings and pretty red shoes; and the goose girl lost no time in slipping out of her rough linen skirt and tunic. Then the princess put on the other’s rags and let down her hair, and went to the kitchen to ask for a place.

‘Do you want a kitchen-maid?’ she said.

‘Yes, we do,’ answered the cook, who was too busy to ask the new-comer many questions.

The following day, after a good night’s rest, the princess set about her new duties. The other servants were speaking of their master, and saying to each other how ill he was, and that unless he could be cured within three days he would surely die.

The princess thought of the snakes, and the bird’s advice, and lifting her head from the pots and pans she was scouring, she said: ‘I know how to make a soup that has such a wonderful power that whoever tastes it is sure to be cured, whatever his illness may be. As the doctors cannot cure your master shall I try?’

At first they all laughed at her.

‘What! a scullion cure the knight when the best physicians in the kingdom have failed?’

But at last, just because all the physicians *had* failed, they decided that it would do no harm to try; and she ran off joyfully to fetch her basket of

snakes and make them into broth. When this was ready she carried some to the knight's room and entered it boldly, pushing aside all the learned doctors who stood beside his bed. The poor knight was too ill to know her, besides, she was so ragged and dirty that he would not have been likely to do so had he been well; but when he had taken the soup he was so much better that he was able to sit up.

The next day he had some more, and then he was able to dress himself.

'That is certainly wonderful soup!' said the cook.

The third day, after he had eaten his soup, the knight was quite well again.

'Who are you?' he asked the girl; 'was it you who made this soup that has cured me?'

'Yes,' answered the princess.

'Choose, then, whatever you wish as a reward,' said the knight, 'and you shall have it.'

'I would be your bride!' said the princess.

The knight frowned in surprise at such boldness, and shook his head.

'That is the one thing I cannot grant,' he said, 'for I am pledged to marry the most beautiful princess in the world. Choose again.'

Then the princess ran away and washed herself and mended her rags, and when she returned the Green Knight recognised her at once.

You can think what a joyful meeting that was!

* * * * *

Soon after, they were married with great splendour. All the knights and princes in the kingdom were summoned to the wedding, and the princess wore a dress that shone like the sun, so that no one had ever beheld a more gorgeous sight. The princess's father, of course, was present, but the wicked queen and her daughter were driven out of the country, and as nobody has seen them since, very likely they were eaten by wild beasts in the forest. But the bride and bridegroom were so happy that they forgot all about them, and they lived with the old king till he died, when they succeeded him.

(From "*Eventyr fra Jylland*," *samlede og optegnede af Evald Tang Kristensen*. Translated from the Danish by Mrs. Skovgaard-Pedersen.)

THE FIVE WISE WORDS OF THE GURU[4]

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Once there lived a handsome young man named Ram Singh, who, though a favourite with everyone, was unhappy because he had a scold for a step-mother. All day long she went on talking, until the youth was driven so distracted that he determined to go away somewhere and seek his fortune. No sooner had he decided to leave his home than he made his plans, and the very next morning he started off with a few clothes in a wallet, and a little money in his pocket.

But there was one person in the village to whom he wished to say good-bye, and that was a wise old guru, or teacher, who had taught him much. So he turned his face first of all towards his master's hut, and before the sun was well up was knocking at his door. The old man received his pupil affectionately; but he was wise in reading faces, and saw at once that the youth was in trouble.

'My son,' said he, 'what is the matter?'

'Nothing, father,' replied the young man, 'but I have determined to go into the world and seek my fortune.'

'Be advised,' returned the guru, 'and remain in your father's house; it is better to have half a loaf at home than to seek a whole one in distant countries.'

But Ram Singh was in no mood to heed such advice, and very soon the old man ceased to press him.

'Well,' said he at last, 'if your mind is made up I suppose you must have your way. But listen carefully, and remember five parting counsels which I will give you; and if you keep these no evil shall befall you. First—always obey without question the orders of him whose service you enter; second—never speak harshly or unkindly to anyone; third—never lie; fourth—never try to appear the equal of those above you in station; and fifth—wherever you go, if you meet those who read or teach from the

holy books, stay and listen, if but for a few minutes, that you may be strengthened in the path of duty.'

Then Ram Singh started out upon his journey, promising to bear in mind the old man's words.

After some days he came to a great city. He had spent all the money which he had at starting, and therefore resolved to look for work however humble it might be. Catching sight of a prosperous-looking merchant standing in front of a shop full of grain of all kinds, Ram Singh went up to him and asked whether he could give him anything to do. The merchant gazed at him so long that the young man began to lose heart, but at length he answered:

'Yes, of course; there is a place waiting for you.'

'What do you mean?' asked Ram Singh.

'Why,' replied the other, 'yesterday our rajah's chief wazir dismissed his body servant and is wanting another. Now you are just the sort of person that he needs, for you are young and tall, and handsome; I advise you to apply there.'

Thanking the merchant for this advice, the young man set out at once for the wazir's house, and soon managed, thanks to his good looks and appearance, to be engaged as the great man's servant.

One day, soon after this, the rajah of the place started on a journey and the chief wazir accompanied him. With them was an army of servants and attendants, soldiers, muleteers, camel-drivers, merchants with grain and stores for man and beast, singers to make entertainment by the way and musicians to accompany them, besides elephants, camels, horses, mules, ponies, donkeys, goats, and carts and wagons of every kind and description, so that it seemed more like a large town on the march than anything else.

Thus they travelled for several days, till they entered a country that was like a sea of sand, where the swirling dust floated in clouds, and men and beasts were half choked by it. Towards the close of that day they came to a village, and when the headmen hurried out to salute the rajah and to pay him their respects, they began, with very long and serious faces, to explain that, whilst they and all that they had were of course at the disposal of the rajah, the coming of so large a company had nevertheless put them into a dreadful difficulty because they had never a well nor

spring of water in their country; and they had no water to give drink to such an army of men and beasts!

Great fear fell upon the host at the words of the headmen, but the rajah merely told the wazir that he must get water somehow, and that settled the matter so far as *he* was concerned. The wazir sent off in haste for all the oldest men in the place, and began to question them as to whether there were no wells near by.

They all looked helplessly at each other, and said nothing; but at length one old grey-beard replied:

'Truly, Sir Wazir, there is, within a mile or two of this village, a well which some former king made hundreds of years ago. It is, they say, great and inexhaustible, covered in by heavy stone-work and with a flight of steps leading down to the water in the very bowels of the earth; but no man ever goes near it because it is haunted by evil spirits, and it is known that whoso disappears down the well shall never be seen again.'

The wazir stroked his beard and considered a moment. Then he turned to Ram Singh who stood behind his chair.

'There is a proverb,' said he, 'that no man can be trusted until he has been tried. Go you and get the rajah and his people water from this well.'

Then there flashed into Ram Singh's mind the first counsel of the old guru—'*Always obey without question the orders of him whose service you enter.*' So he replied at once that he was ready, and left to prepare for his adventure. Two great brazen vessels he fastened to a mule, two lesser ones he bound upon his shoulders, and thus provided he set out, with the old villager for his guide. In a short time they came to a spot where some big trees towered above the barren country, whilst under their shadow lay the dome of an ancient building. This the guide pointed out as the well, but excused himself from going further as he was an old man and tired, and it was already nearly sunset, so that he must be returning home. So Ram Singh bade him farewell, and went on alone with the mule.

Arrived at the trees, Ram Singh tied up his beast, lifted the vessels from his shoulder, and having found the opening of the well, descended by a flight of steps which led down into the darkness. The steps were broad white slabs of alabaster which gleamed in the shadows as he went lower and lower. All was very silent. Even the sound of his bare feet upon the pavements seemed to wake an echo in that lonely place, and when one of

the vessels which he carried slipped and fell upon the steps it clanged so loudly that he jumped at the noise. Still he went on, until at last he reached a wide pool of sweet water, and there he washed his jars with care before he filled them, and began to remount the steps with the lighter vessels, as the big ones were so heavy he could only take up one at a time. Suddenly, something moved above him, and looking up he saw a great giant standing on the stairway! In one hand he held clasped to his heart a dreadful looking mass of bones, in the other was a lamp which cast long shadows about the walls, and made him seem even more terrible than he really was.

‘What think you, O mortal,’ said the giant, ‘of my fair and lovely wife?’ And he held the light towards the bones in his arms and looked lovingly at them.

Now I must tell you that this poor giant had had a very beautiful wife, whom he had loved dearly; but, when she died, her husband refused to believe in her death, and always carried her about long after she had become nothing but bones. Ram Singh of course did not know of this, but there came to his mind the second wise saying of the guru, which forbade him to speak harshly or inconsiderately to others; so he replied:

‘Truly, sir, I am sure you could find nowhere such another.’

‘Ah, what eyes you have!’ cried the delighted giant, ‘you at least can see! I do not know how often I have slain those who insulted her by saying she was but dried bones! You are a fine young man, and I will help you.’

So saying, he laid down the bones with great tenderness, and snatching up the huge brass vessels, carried them up again, and replaced them with such ease that it was all done by the time that Ram Singh had reached the open air with the smaller ones.

‘Now,’ said the giant, ‘you have pleased me, and you may ask of me one favour, and whatever you wish I will do it for you. Perhaps you would like me to show you where lies buried the treasure of dead kings?’ he added eagerly.

But Ram Singh shook his head at the mention of buried wealth.

‘The favour that I would ask,’ said he, ‘is that you will leave off haunting this well, so that men may go in and out and obtain water.’

Perhaps the giant expected some favour more difficult to grant, for his face brightened, and he promised to depart at once; and as Ram Singh went off through the gathering darkness with his precious burden of water,

he beheld the giant striding away with the bones of his dead wife in his arms.

Great was the wonder and rejoicing in the camp when Ram Singh returned with the water. He never said anything, however, about his adventure with the giant, but merely told the rajah that there was nothing to prevent the well being used; and used it was, and nobody ever saw any more of the giant.

The rajah was so pleased with the bearing of Ram Singh that he ordered the wazir to give the young man to him in exchange for one of his own servants. So Ram Singh became the rajah's attendant; and as the days went by the king became more and more delighted with the youth because, mindful of the old guru's third counsel, he was always honest and spoke the truth. He grew in favour rapidly, until at last the rajah made him his treasurer, and thus he reached a high place in the court and had wealth and power in his hands. Unluckily the rajah had a brother who was a very bad man; and this brother thought that if he could win the young treasurer over to himself he might by this means manage to steal little by little any of the king's treasure which he needed. Then, with plenty of money, he could bribe the soldiers and some of the rajah's counsellors, head a rebellion, dethrone and kill his brother, and reign himself instead. He was too wary, of course, to tell Ram Singh of all these wicked plans; but he began by flattering him whenever he saw him, and at last offered him his daughter in marriage. But Ram Singh remembered the fourth counsel of the old guru—never to try to appear the equal of those above him in station—therefore he respectfully declined the great honour of marrying a princess. Of course the prince, baffled at the very beginning of his enterprise, was furious, and determined to work Ram Singh's ruin, and entering the rajah's presence he told him a story about Ram Singh having spoken insulting words of his sovereign and of his daughter. What it was all about nobody knew, and, as it was not true, the wicked prince did not know either; but the rajah grew very angry and red in the face as he listened, and declared that until the treasurer's head was cut off neither he nor the princess nor his brother would eat or drink.

'But,' added he, 'I do not wish any one to know that this was done by my desire, and anyone who mentions the subject will be severely punished.' And with this the prince was forced to be content.

Then the rajah sent for an officer of his guard, and told him to take some soldiers and ride at once to a tower which was situated just outside the town, and if anyone should come to inquire when the building was going to be finished, or should ask any other questions about it, the officer must chop his head off, and bring it to him. As for the body, that could be buried on the spot. The old officer thought these instructions rather odd, but it was no business of his, so he saluted, and went off to do his master's bidding.

Early in the morning the rajah, who had not slept all night, sent for Ram Singh, and bade him go to the new hunting-tower, and ask the people there how it was getting on and when it was going to be finished, and to hurry back with the answer! Away went Ram Singh upon his errand, but, on the road, as he was passing a little temple on the outskirts of the city, he heard someone inside reading aloud; and, remembering the guru's fifth counsel, he just stepped inside and sat down to listen for a minute. He did not mean to stay longer, but became so deeply interested in the wisdom of the teacher, that he sat, and sat, and sat, while the sun rose higher and higher.

In the meantime, the wicked prince, who dared not disobey the rajah's command, was feeling very hungry; and as for the princess, she was quietly crying in a corner waiting for the news of Ram Singh's death, so that she might eat her breakfast.

Hours passed, and stare as he might from the window no messenger could be seen.

At last the prince could bear it no longer, and hastily disguising himself so that no one should recognise him, he jumped on a horse and galloped out to the hunting-tower, where the rajah had told him that the execution was to take place. But, when he got there, there was no execution going on. There were only some men engaged in building, and a number of soldiers idly watching them. He forgot that he had disguised himself and that no one would know him, so, riding up, he cried out:

'Now then, you men, why are you idling about here instead of finishing what you came to do? When is it to be done?'

At his words the soldiers looked at the commanding officer, who was standing a little apart from the rest. Unperceived by the prince he made a

slight sign, a sword flashed in the sun, and off flew a head on the ground beneath!

As part of the prince's disguise had been a thick beard, the men did not recognise the dead man as the rajah's brother; but they wrapped the head in a cloth, and buried the body as their commander bade them. When this was ended, the officer took the cloth, and rode off in the direction of the palace.

Meanwhile the rajah came home from his council, and to his great surprise found neither head nor brother awaiting him; as time passed on, he became uneasy, and thought that he had better go himself and see what the matter was. So ordering his horse he rode off alone.

It happened that, just as the rajah came near to the temple where Ram Singh still sat, the young treasurer, hearing the sound of a horse's hoofs, looked over his shoulder and saw that the rider was the rajah himself! Feeling much ashamed of himself for having forgotten his errand, he jumped up and hurried out to meet his master, who reined up his horse, and seemed very surprised (as indeed he was) to see *him.* At that moment there arrived the officer of the guard carrying his parcel. He saluted the rajah gravely, and, dismounting, laid the bundle in the road and began to undo the wrappings, whilst the rajah watched him with wonder and interest. When the last string was undone, and the head of his brother was displayed to his view, the rajah sprang from his horse and caught the soldier by the arm. As soon as he could speak he questioned the man as to what had occurred, and little by little a dark suspicion darted through him. Then, briefly telling the soldier that he had done well, the rajah drew Ram Singh to one side, and in a few minutes learned from him how, in attending to the guru's counsel, he had delayed to do the king's message.

In the end the rajah found from some papers the proofs of his dead brother's treachery; and Ram Singh established his innocence and integrity. He continued to serve the rajah for many years with unswerving fidelity; and married a maiden of his own rank in life, with whom he lived happily; dying at last honoured and loved by all men. Sons were born to him; and, in time, to them also he taught the five wise sayings of the old guru.

(A Punjâbi story.)

FOOTNOTE:

4. A Hindu religious teacher or saint; in this case a Sikh.

THE GOLDEN-HEADED FISH

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Once upon a time there lived in Egypt a king who lost his sight from a bad illness. Of course he was very unhappy, and became more so as months passed, and all the best doctors in the land were unable to cure him. The poor man grew so thin from misery that everyone thought he was going to die, and the prince, his only son, thought so too.

Great was therefore the rejoicing through Egypt when a traveller arrived in a boat down the river Nile, and after questioning the people as to the reason of their downcast looks, declared that he was court physician to the king of a far country, and would, if allowed, examine the eyes of the blind man. He was at once admitted into the royal presence, and after a few minutes of careful study announced that the case, though very serious, was not quite hopeless.

‘Somewhere in the Great Sea,’ he said, ‘there exists a Golden-headed Fish. If you can manage to catch this creature, bring it to me, and I will prepare an ointment from its blood which will restore your sight. For a hundred days I will wait here, but if at the end of that time the fish should still be uncaught I must return to my own master.’

The next morning the young prince set forth in quest of the fish, taking with him a hundred men, each man carrying a net. Quite a little fleet of boats was awaiting them and in these they sailed to the middle of the Great Sea. During three months they laboured diligently from sunrise to sunset, but though they caught large multitudes of fishes, not one of them had a golden head.

‘It is quite useless now,’ said the prince on the very last night. ‘Even if we find it this evening, the hundred days will be over in an hour, and long before we could reach the Egyptian capital the doctor will be on his way home. Still, I will go out again, and cast the net once more myself.’ And so he did, and at the very moment that the hundred days were up, he drew in the net with the Golden-headed Fish entangled in its meshes.

‘Success has come, but, as happens often, it is too late,’ murmured the young man, who had studied in the schools of philosophy; ‘but, all the same, put the fish in that vessel full of water, and we will take it back to show my father that we have done what we could.’ But when he drew near the fish it looked up at him with such piteous eyes that he could not make up his mind to condemn it to death. For he knew well that, though the doctors of his own country were ignorant of the secret of the ointment, they would do all in their power to extract something from the fish’s blood. So he picked up the prize of so much labour, and threw it back into the sea, and then began his journey back to the palace. When at last he reached it he found the king in a high fever, caused by his disappointment, and he refused to believe the story told him by his son.

‘Your head shall pay for it! Your head shall pay for it!’ cried he; and bade the courtiers instantly summon the executioner to the palace.

But of course somebody ran at once to the queen, and told her of the king’s order, and she put common clothes on the prince, and filled his pockets with gold, and hurried him on board a ship which was sailing that night for a distant island.

‘Your father will repent some day, and then he will be thankful to know you are alive,’ said she. ‘But one last counsel will I give you, and that is, take no man into your service who desires to be paid every month.’

The young prince thought this advice rather odd. If the servant had to be paid anyhow, he did not understand what difference it could make whether it was by the year or by the month. However, he had many times proved that his mother was wiser than he, so he promised obedience.

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After a voyage of several weeks, he arrived at the island of which his mother had spoken. It was full of hills and woods and flowers, and beautiful white houses stood everywhere in gardens.

‘What a charming spot to live in,’ thought the prince. And he lost no time in buying one of the prettiest of the dwellings.

Then servants came pressing to offer their services; but as they all declared that they must have payment at the end of every month, the young man, who remembered his mother’s words, declined to have

anything to say to them. At length, one morning, an Arab appeared and begged that the prince would engage him.

‘And what wages do you ask?’ inquired the prince, when he had questioned the new-comer and found him suitable.

‘I do not want money,’ answered the Arab; ‘at the end of a year you can see what my services are worth to you, and can pay me in any way you like.’ And the young man was pleased, and took the Arab for his servant.

Now, although no one would have guessed it from the look of the side of the island where the prince had landed, the other part was a complete desert, owing to the ravages of a horrible monster which came up from the sea, and devoured all the corn and cattle. The governor had sent bands of soldiers to lie in wait for the creature in order to kill it; but, somehow, no one ever happened to be awake at the moment that the ravages were committed. It was in vain that the sleepy soldiers were always punished severely—the same thing invariably occurred next time; and at last heralds were sent throughout the island to offer a great reward to the man who could slay the monster.

As soon as the Arab heard the news, he went straight to the governor’s palace.

‘If my master can succeed in killing the monster, what reward will you give him?’ asked he.

‘My daughter and anything besides that he chooses,’ answered the governor. But the Arab shook his head.

‘Give him your daughter and keep your wealth,’ said he; ‘but, henceforward, let her share in your gains, whatever they are.’

‘It is well,’ replied the governor; and ordered a deed to be prepared, which was signed by both of them.

That night the Arab stole down to the shore to watch, but, before he set out, he rubbed himself all over with some oil which made his skin smart so badly that there was no chance of *his* going to sleep as the soldiers had done. Then he hid himself behind a large rock and waited. By-and-by a swell seemed to rise on the water, and, a few minutes later, a hideous monster—part bird, part beast, and part serpent—stepped noiselessly on to the rocks. It walked stealthily up towards the fields, but the Arab was ready for it, and, as it passed, plunged his dagger into the soft part behind

the ear. The creature staggered and gave a loud cry, and then rolled over dead, with its feet in the sea.

The Arab watched for a little while, in order to make sure that there was no life left in his enemy, but as the huge body remained quite still, he quitted his hiding-place, and cut off the ears of his foe. These he carried to his master, bidding him show them to the governor, and declare that he himself, and no other, had killed the monster.

‘But it was you, and not I, who slew him,’ objected the prince.

‘Never mind; do as I bid you. I have a reason for it,’ answered the Arab. And though the young man did not like taking credit for what he had never done, at length he gave in.

The governor was so delighted at the news that he begged the prince to take his daughter to wife that very day; but the prince refused, saying that all he desired was a ship which would carry him to see the world. Of course this was granted him at once, and when he and his faithful Arab embarked they found, heaped up in the vessel, stores of diamonds and precious stones, which the grateful governor had secretly placed there.

So they sailed, and they sailed, and they sailed; and at length they reached the shores of a great kingdom. Leaving the prince on board, the Arab went into the town to find out what sort of a place it was. After some hours he returned, saying that he heard that the king’s daughter was the most beautiful princess in the world, and that the prince would do well to ask for her hand.

Nothing loth, the prince listened to this advice, and taking some of the finest necklaces in his hand, he mounted a splendid horse which the Arab had bought for him, and rode up to the palace, closely followed by his faithful attendant.

The strange king happened to be in a good humour, and they were readily admitted to his presence. Laying down his offerings on the steps of the throne, he prayed the king to grant him his daughter in marriage.

The monarch listened to him in silence; but answered, after a pause:

‘Young man, I will give you my daughter to wife, if that is your wish; but first I must tell you that she has already gone through the marriage ceremony with a hundred and ninety young men, and not one of them lived for twelve hours after. So think, while there is yet time.’

The prince *did* think, and was so frightened that he very nearly went back to his ship without any more words. But just as he was about to withdraw his proposal the Arab whispered:

‘Fear nothing, but take her.’

‘The luck must change some time,’ he said, at last; ‘and who would not risk his head for the hand of such a peerless princess?’

‘As you will,’ replied the king. ‘Then I will give orders that the marriage shall be celebrated to-night.’

And so it was done; and after the ceremony the bride and bridegroom retired to their own apartments to sup by themselves, for such was the custom of the country. The moon shone bright, and the prince walked to the window to look out upon the river and upon the distant hills, when his gaze suddenly fell on a silken shroud neatly laid out on a couch, with his name embroidered in gold thread across the front; for this also was the pleasure of the king.

Horrified at the spectacle, he turned his head away, and this time his glance rested on a group of men, digging busily beneath the window. It was a strange hour for any one to be at work, and what was the hole for? It was a curious shape, so long and narrow, almost like—— Ah! yes, that was what it was! It was *his* grave that they were digging!

The shock of the discovery rendered him speechless, yet he stood fascinated and unable to move. At this moment a small black snake darted from the mouth of the princess, who was seated at the table, and wriggled quickly towards him. But the Arab was watching for something of the sort to happen, and seizing the serpent with some pincers that he held in one hand, he cut off its head with a sharp dagger.

The king could hardly believe his eyes when, early the next morning, his new son-in-law craved an audience of his Majesty.

‘What, you?’ he cried, as the young man entered.

‘Yes, I. Why not?’ asked the bridegroom, who thought it best to pretend not to know anything that had occurred. ‘You remember, I told you that the luck must turn at last, and so it has. But I came to ask whether you would be so kind as to bid the gardeners fill up a great hole right underneath my window, which spoils the view.’

‘Oh! certainly, yes; of course it shall be done!’ stammered the king. ‘Is there anything else?’

‘No, nothing, thank you,’ replied the prince, as he bowed and withdrew.

Now, from the moment that the Arab cut off the snake’s head, the spell, or whatever it was, seemed to have been taken off the princess, and she lived very happily with her husband. The days passed swiftly in hunting in the forests, or sailing on the broad river that flowed past the palace, and when night fell she would sing to her harp, or the prince would tell her tales of his own country.

One evening a man in a strange garb, with a face burnt brown by the sun, arrived at court. He asked to see the bridegroom, and falling on his face announced that he was a messenger sent by the queen of Egypt, proclaiming him king in succession to his father, who was dead.

‘Her Majesty begs you will set out without delay, and your bride also, as the affairs of the kingdom are somewhat in disorder,’ ended the messenger.

Then the young man hastened to seek an audience of his father-in-law, who was delighted to find that his daughter’s husband was not merely the governor of a province, as he had supposed, but the king of a powerful country. He at once ordered a splendid ship to be made ready, and in a week’s time rode down to the harbour, to bid farewell to the young couple.

In spite of her grief for the dead king, the queen was overjoyed to welcome her son home, and commanded the palace to be hung with splendid stuffs to do honour to the bride. The people expected great things from their new sovereign, for they had suffered much from the harsh rule of the old one, and crowds presented themselves every morning with petitions in their hands, which they hoped to persuade the king to grant. Truly, he had enough to keep him busy; but he was very happy for all that, till, one night, the Arab came to him, and begged permission to return to his own land.

Filled with dismay the young man said: ‘Leave me! Do you really wish to leave me?’ Sadly the Arab bowed his head.

‘No, my master; never could I wish to leave you! But I have received a summons, and I dare not disobey it.’

The king was silent, trying to choke down the grief he felt at the thought of losing his faithful servant.

‘Well, I must not try to keep you,’ he faltered out at last. ‘That would be a poor return for all that you have done for me! Everything I have is

yours; take what you will, for without you I should long ago have been dead!'

'And without *you*, *I* should long ago have been dead,' answered the Arab. '*I* am the Golden-headed Fish.'

(Adapted from *Contes Arméniens*. Par Frédéric Macler, Paris.
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DORANI

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Once upon a time there lived in a city of Hindustan a seller of scents and essences, who had a very beautiful daughter named Dorani. This maiden had a friend who was a fairy, and the two were high in favour with Indra, the king of fairyland, because they were able to sing so sweetly and dance so deftly that no one in the kingdom could equal them for grace and beauty. Dorani had the most lovely hair in the world, for it was like spun gold, and the smell of it was like the smell of fresh roses. But her locks were so long and thick that the weight of it was often unbearable, and one day she cut off a shining tress, and wrapping it in a large leaf, threw it in the river which ran just below her window. Now it happened that the king's son was out hunting, and had gone down to the river to drink, when there floated towards him a folded leaf, from which came a perfume of roses. The prince, with idle curiosity, took a step into the water and caught the leaf as it was sailing by. He opened it, and within he found a lock of hair like spun gold, and from which came a faint, exquisite odour.

When the prince reached home that day he looked so sad and was so quiet that his father wondered if any ill had befallen him, and asked what was the matter. Then the youth took from his breast the tress of hair which he had found in the river, and holding it up to the light, replied:

'See, my father, was ever hair like this? Unless I may win and marry the maiden that owns that lock I must die!'

So the king immediately sent heralds throughout all his dominions to search for the damsel with hair like spun gold; and at last he learned that she was the daughter of the scent-seller. The object of the herald's mission was quickly noised abroad, and Dorani heard of it with the rest; and, one day, she said to her father:

'If the hair is mine, and the king requires me to marry his son, I must do so; but, remember, you must tell him that if, after the wedding, I stay all day at the palace, every night will be spent in my old home.'

The old man listened to her with amazement, but answered nothing, as he knew she was wiser than he. Of course the hair was Dorani's, and heralds soon returned and informed the king, their master, who summoned the scent-seller, and told him that he wished for his daughter to be given in marriage to the prince. The father bowed his head three times to the ground, and replied:

'Your highness is our lord, and all that you bid us we will do. The maiden asks this only—that if, after the wedding, she stays all day at the palace, she may go back each night to her father's house.'

The king thought this a very strange request; but said to himself it was, after all, his son's affair, and the girl would surely soon get tired of going to and fro. So he made no difficulty, and everything was speedily arranged and the wedding was celebrated with great rejoicings.

At first, the condition attaching to his wedding with the lovely Dorani troubled the prince very little, for he thought that he would at least see his bride all day. But, to his dismay, he found that she would do nothing but sit the whole time upon a stool with her head bowed forward upon her knees, and he could never persuade her to say a single word. Each evening she was carried in a palanquin to her father's house, and each morning she was brought back soon after daybreak; and yet never a sound passed her lips, nor did she show by any sign that she saw, or heard, or heeded her husband.

One evening the prince, very unhappy and troubled, was wandering in an old and beautiful garden near the palace. The gardener was a very aged man, who had served the prince's great grandfather; and when he saw the prince he came and bowed himself to him, and said:

'Child! child! why do you look so sad—is aught the matter?' Then the prince replied, 'I am sad, old friend, because I have married a wife as lovely as the stars, but she will not speak to me, and I know not what to do. Night after night she leaves me for her father's house, and day after day she sits in mine as though turned to stone, and utters no word, whatever I may do or say.'

The old man stood thinking for a moment, and then he hobbled off to his own cottage. A little later he came back to the prince with five or six small packets, which he placed in his hands and said:

‘To-morrow, when your bride leaves the palace, sprinkle the powder from one of these packets upon your body, and while seeing clearly, you will become yourself invisible. More I cannot do for you, but may all go well!’

And the prince thanked him, and put the packets carefully away in his turban.

The next night, when Dorani left for her father’s house in her palanquin, the prince took out a packet of the magic powder and sprinkled it over himself, and then hurried after her. He soon found that, as the old man had promised, he was invisible to everyone, although he felt as usual, and could see all that passed. He speedily overtook the palanquin and walked beside it to the scent-seller’s dwelling. There it was set down, and, when his bride, closely veiled, left it and entered the house, he, too, entered unperceived.

At the first door Dorani removed one veil; then she entered another doorway at the end of a passage where she removed another veil; next she mounted the stairs, and at the door of the women’s quarters removed a third veil. After this she proceeded to her own room where were set two large basins, one of attar of roses and one of water; in these she washed herself, and afterwards called for food. A servant brought her a bowl of curds, which she ate hastily, and then arrayed herself in a robe of silver, and wound about her strings of pearls, while a wreath of roses crowned her hair. When fully dressed, she seated herself upon a four-legged stool over which was a canopy with silken curtains, these she drew around her, and then called out:

‘Fly, stool, to the palace of rajah Indra.’

Instantly the stool rose in the air, and the invisible prince, who had watched all these proceedings with great wonder, seized it by one leg as it flew away, and found himself being borne through the air at a rapid rate.

In a short while they arrived at the house of the fairy who, as I told you before, was the favourite friend of Dorani. The fairy stood waiting on the threshold, as beautifully dressed as Dorani herself was, and when the stool stopped at her door she cried in astonishment:

‘Why, the stool is flying all crooked to-day! What is the reason of that, I wonder? I suspect that you have been talking to your husband, and so it will not fly straight.’

But Dorani declared that she had not spoken one word to him, and she couldn’t think why the stool flew as if weighed down at one side. The fairy still looked doubtful, but made no answer, and took her seat beside Dorani, the prince again holding tightly one leg. Then the stool flew on through the air until it came to the palace of Indra the rajah.

All through the night the women sang and danced before the rajah Indra, whilst a magic lute played of itself the most bewitching music; till the prince, who sat watching it all, was quite entranced. Just before dawn the rajah gave the signal to cease; and again the two women seated themselves on the stool, and, with the prince clinging to the leg, it flew back to earth, and bore Dorani and her husband safely to the scent-seller’s shop. Here the prince hurried away by himself past Dorani’s palanquin with its sleepy bearers, straight on to the palace; and, as he passed the threshold of his own rooms he became visible again. Then he lay down upon a couch and waited for Dorani’s arrival.

As soon as she arrived she took a seat and remained as silent as usual, with her head bowed on her knees. For a while not a sound was heard, but presently the prince said:

‘I dreamed a curious dream last night, and as it was all about you I am going to tell it you, although you heed nothing.’

The girl, indeed, took no notice of his words, but in spite of that he proceeded to relate every single thing that had happened the evening before, leaving out no detail of all that he had seen or heard. And when he praised her singing—and his voice shook a little—Dorani just looked at him; but she said naught, though, in her own mind, she was filled with wonder. ‘What a dream!’ she thought. ‘Could it have been a dream? How could he have learnt in a dream all she had done or said?’ Still she kept silent; only she looked that once at the prince, and then remained all day as before, with her head bowed upon her knees.

When night came the prince again made himself invisible and followed her. The same things happened again as had happened before, but Dorani sang better than ever. In the morning the prince a second time told Dorani all that she had done, pretending that he had dreamt of it. Directly he had finished Dorani gazed at him, and said:

‘Is it true that you dreamt this, or were you really there?’

‘I was there,’ answered the prince.

‘But why do you follow me?’ asked the girl.

‘Because,’ replied the prince, ‘I love you, and to be with you is happiness.’

This time Dorani’s eyelids quivered; but she said no more, and was silent the rest of the day. However, in the evening, just as she was stepping into her palanquin, she said to the prince:

‘If you love me, prove it by not following me to-night.’

And so the prince did as she wished, and stayed at home.

That evening the magic stool flew so unsteadily that they could hardly keep their seats, and at last the fairy exclaimed:

‘There is only one reason that it should jerk like this! You have been talking to your husband!’

And Dorani replied: ‘Yes, I have spoken; oh, yes, I have spoken!’ But no more would she say.

That night Dorani sang so marvellously that at the end the rajah Indra rose up and vowed that she might ask what she would and he would give it to her. At first she was silent; but, when he pressed her, she answered:

‘Give me the magic lute.’

The rajah, when he heard this, was displeased with himself for having made so rash a promise, because this lute he valued above all his possessions. But as he had promised, so he must perform, and with an ill grace he handed it to her.

‘You must never come here again,’ said he, ‘for, once having asked so much, how will you in future be content with smaller gifts?’

Dorani bowed her head silently as she took the lute, and passed with the fairy out of the great gate, where the stool awaited them. More unsteadily than before, it flew back to earth.

When Dorani got to the palace that morning she asked the prince whether he had dreamt again. He laughed with happiness, for this time she had spoken to him of her own free will; and he replied:

‘No; but I begin to dream now—not of what *has* happened in the past, but of what *may* happen in the future.’

That day Dorani sat very quietly, but she answered the prince when he spoke to her; and when evening fell, and with it the time for her departure, she still sat on. Then the prince came close to her and said softly:

‘Are you not going to your house, Dorani?’

At that she rose and threw herself weeping into his arms, whispering gently:

‘Never again, my lord, never again would I leave thee!’

So the prince won his beautiful bride; and though they neither of them dealt any further with fairies and their magic, they learnt more daily of the magic of Love, which one may still learn, although fairy magic has fled away.

(Punjâbi Story, Major Campbell, Feroshepore.)

THE SATIN SURGEON

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Once upon a time there was a very rich and powerful king who, in spite of having been married several times, had only two daughters.

The elder was extremely plain—she squinted and was hunchbacked; but at the same time she was very clever and amusing, so, though at heart both spiteful and untruthful, she was her father's favourite.

The younger princess, on the other hand, was both lovely and sweet-tempered, and those who knew her well could hardly say whether her charming face or pleasant manners was the more attractive.

The neighbouring country was governed by a young emperor, who, though not much over twenty years of age, had shown great courage in battle, and, had he wished it, might very likely have conquered the whole world. Luckily he preferred peace to war, and occupied his time with trying to rule his own kingdom well and wisely. His people were very anxious that he should marry, and as the two princesses were the only ladies to be heard of of suitable age and rank, the emperor sent envoys to their father's court to ask for the hand of one of them in marriage. But, as he was resolved only to marry a woman whom he could love and be happy with, he determined to see the lady himself before making up his mind. For this purpose he set out in disguise not long after the departure of his ambassadors, and arrived at the palace very soon after they did; but as he had foolishly kept his plan secret, he found, when he reached the court, that they had already made proposals for the elder princess.

Now the emperor might just as well have gone openly, for his presence soon became known; and when the king heard of it he prepared to receive him royally, though of course he had to pretend that he had no idea who he was. So it was settled that the ambassadors should present their master under the name of one of the princes, and in this manner he was received by the king.

At night there was a grand ball at which the young emperor was able to see the two princesses and to make their acquaintance. The ugly face and

figure and spiteful remarks of the elder displeased him so greatly that he felt he could not marry her even if she owned ten kingdoms, whilst the sweet face and gentle manners of the younger sister charmed him so much that he would gladly have shared his throne with her had she been only a simple shepherdess.

He found it very difficult to conceal his thoughts and to pay the elder princess the amount of attention due to her, though he did his best to be polite; while all he saw or heard during the next few days only increased his love for her younger sister, and at last he confessed that his dearest wish was to make her his wife, if she and her father would grant his desire.

He had commanded his ambassadors to put off their farewell audience for a little time, hoping that the king might perceive the state of his feelings; but when it could be deferred no longer, he bade them propose in his name for the younger princess.

On hearing this news, so different from what he had been led to expect, the king who—as we have said before—was devoted to his elder daughter and entirely under her influence, could hardly contain his displeasure. Directly the audience was over he sent for the princess and told her of the insolent proposal the emperor had made for her sister. The princess was even more furious than her father, and after consulting together they decided to send the younger daughter to some distant place out of reach of the young emperor; but *where* this should be they did not quite know. However, at length, after they had both racked their brains to find a suitable prison, they fixed on a lonely castle called the Desert Tower, where they thought she would be quite safe.

Meantime, it was thought best to let the court gaieties go on as usual, and orders were given for all sorts of splendid entertainments; and on the day that was fixed for carrying off the princess, the whole court was invited to a great hunt in the forest.

The emperor and the young princess were counting the hours till this morning, which promised to be so delightful, should dawn. The king and his guest arrived together at the meeting-place, but what was the surprise and distress of the young man at not seeing the object of his love amongst the ladies present. He waited anxiously, looking up and down, not hearing anything that the king said to him; and when the hunt began and she still

was absent, he declined to follow, and spent the whole day seeking her, but in vain.

On his return, one of his attendants told him that some hours before he had met the princess's carriage, escorted by a troop of soldiers who were riding on each side, so that no one could get speech of her. He had followed them at a distance, and saw them stop at the Desert Tower, and on its return he noticed that the carriage was empty. The emperor was deeply grieved by this news. He left the court at once, and ordered his ambassadors to declare war the very next day, unless the king promised to set free the princess. And more than this, no sooner had he reached his own country than he raised a large army, with which he seized the frontier towns, before his enemy had had time to collect any troops. But, ere he quitted the court, he took care to write a letter to his beloved princess, imploring her to have patience and trust to him; and this he gave into the hands of his favourite equerry, who would he knew lay down his life in his service.

With many precautions the equerry managed to examine the surroundings of the tower, and at last discovered, not only where the princess lodged, but that a little window in her room looked out on a desolate plot full of brambles.

Now the unhappy princess was much annoyed that she was not even allowed to take the air at this little window, which was the only one in her room. Her keeper was her elder sister's former nurse, a woman whose eyes never slept. Not for an instant could she be induced to stir from the side of the princess, and she watched her slightest movement.

One day, however, the spy was for once busy in her room writing an account of the princess to her elder sister, and the poor prisoner seized the opportunity to lean out of the window. As she looked about her she noticed a man hidden amongst the bushes, who stepped forward as soon as he caught sight of her, and showed her a letter, which he took from his jerkin. She at once recognised him as one of the emperor's attendants, and let down a long string, to which he tied the letter. You can fancy how quickly she drew it up again, and luckily she had just time to read it before her gaoler had finished her report and entered the room.

The princess's delight was great, and next day she managed to write an answer on a sheet of her note book, and to throw it down to the equerry,

who hastened to carry it back to his master. The emperor was so happy at having news of his dear princess, that he resolved, at all risks, to visit the Desert Tower himself, if only to see her for a moment. He ordered his equerry to ask leave to visit her, and the princess replied that she should indeed rejoice to see him, but that she feared that her gaoler's watchfulness would make his journey useless, unless he came during the short time when the old woman was writing alone in her own room.

Naturally, the bare idea of difficulties only made the emperor more eager than ever. He was ready to run any risks, but, by the advice of the equerry, he decided to try cunning rather than force. In his next letter he enclosed a sleeping powder, which the princess managed to mix with her gaoler's supper, so that when the emperor reached the tower in the evening the princess appeared fearlessly at her window on hearing his signal. They had a long and delightful conversation, and parted in the fond hope that their meeting had not been observed. But in this they were sadly mistaken. The watchful eyes of the old nurse were proof against any sleeping draught —she had seen and heard all; and lost no time in writing to report everything to her mistress.

The news made the spiteful little hunchback furious, and she resolved to be cruelly revenged for the contempt with which the emperor had treated her. She ordered her nurse to pretend not to notice what might be passing, and meantime she had a trap made so that if the emperor pushed his way through the brambles at the foot of the tower, it would not only catch him, as if he were a mouse, but would let loose a number of poisoned arrows, which would pierce him all over. When it was ready, the trap was hidden amongst the brambles without being observed by the princess.

That same evening the emperor hurried to the tower with all the impatience of love. As he came near he heard the princess break into a long, joyous peal of laughter. He advanced quickly to give the usual signal, when suddenly his foot trod on something, he knew not what. A sharp, stinging pain ran through him, and he turned white and faint, but, luckily, the trap had only opened a little way, and only a few of the arrows flew out. For a moment he staggered, and then fell to the ground covered with blood.

Had he been alone he would have died very shortly, but his faithful squire was close at hand, and carried his master off to the wood where the rest of his escort were waiting for him. His wounds were bound up, and some poles were cut to make a rough litter, and, almost unconscious, the emperor was borne away out of his enemy's country to his own palace.

All this time the princess was feeling very anxious. She had been whiling away the hours before this meeting by playing with a little pet monkey, which had been making such funny faces that, in spite of her troubles, she had burst into the hearty laugh overheard by the emperor. But by-and-by she grew restless, waiting for the signal which never came, and, had she dared, would certainly have rebelled when her gaoler, whom she believed to be fast asleep, ordered her to go to bed at once.

A fortnight passed, which was spent in great anxiety by the poor girl, who grew thin and weak with the uncertainty. At the end of this period, when the nurse went to her room one morning as usual in order to write her daily report, she carelessly left the key in the door. This was perceived by the princess, who turned it upon her so quickly and quietly that she never found out she was locked in till she had finished writing, and got up to seek her charge.

Finding herself free, the princess flew to the window, and to her horror saw the arrows lying about amongst the bloodstained brambles. Distracted with terror she slipped down the stairs and out of the tower, and ran for some time along a path, when with great good luck she met the husband of her own nurse, who had only just learned of her imprisonment, and was on his way to try and find out whether he could serve her. The princess begged him to get her some men's clothes while she awaited him in a little wood close by. The good man was overjoyed to be of use, and started at once for the nearest town, where he soon discovered a shop where the court lackeys were accustomed to sell their masters' cast-off clothes. The princess dressed herself at once in the disguise he had brought, which was of rich material and covered with precious stones; and, putting her own garments into a bag, which her servant hung over his shoulders, they both set out on their journey.

This lasted longer than either of them expected. They walked by day as far as the princess could manage, and by night they slept in the open air. One evening they camped in a lovely valley watered by a rippling stream,

and towards morning the princess was awakened by a charming voice singing one of the songs of her own childhood. Anxious to find out where the sound came from, she walked to a thicket of myrtles, where she saw a little boy with a quiver at his back and an ivory bow in his hand, singing softly to himself as he smoothed the feathers of his shafts.

‘Are you surprised at seeing my eyes open?’ he asked, with a smile. ‘Ah! I am not always blind. And sometimes it is well to know what sort of a heart needs piercing. It was I who sent out my darts the day that you and the emperor met, so, as I have caused the wound, I am in duty bound to find the cure!’

Then he gave her a little bottle full of a wonderful salve with which to dress the emperor’s wounds when she found him.

‘In two days you can reach his palace,’ he said. ‘Do not waste time, for sometimes time is life.’

The princess thanked the boy with tears in her eyes, and hastened to awake her guide so that they might start, and set off at once on their way.

As the boy had foretold, in two days the tower and walls of the city came in sight, and her heart beat wildly at the thought that she would soon be face to face with the emperor, but on inquiring after his health she learned, to her horror, that he was sinking fast. For a moment her grief was so great that she nearly betrayed herself. Then, calling all her courage to her aid, she announced that she was a doctor, and that if they would leave him in her charge for a few days she would promise to cure him.

Now, in order to make a good appearance at court the new doctor resolved to have an entire suit made of pale blue satin. She bought the richest, most splendid stuff to be had in the shops, and summoned a tailor to make it for her, engaging to pay him double if he would finish the work in two hours. Next she went to the market, where she bought a fine mule, bidding her servant see that its harness was adorned with trappings of blue satin also.

Whilst all was being made ready the princess asked the woman in whose house she lived whether she knew any of the emperor’s attendants, and found to her satisfaction that her cousin was his majesty’s chief valet. The doctor then bade the woman inform everyone she met that on hearing of the emperor’s illness a celebrated surgeon had hastened to attend him,

and had undertaken to cure him entirely; declaring himself prepared to be burnt alive in case of failure.

The good woman, who loved nothing better than a bit of gossip, hurried to the palace with her news. Her story did not lose in telling. The court physicians were very scornful about the new-comer, but the emperor's attendants remarked that as, in spite of their remedies, his majesty was dying before their eyes, there could be no harm in consulting this stranger.

So the lord chamberlain begged the young doctor to come and prescribe for the royal patient without delay; and the doctor sent a message at once, that he would do himself the honour to present himself at the palace, and he lost no time in mounting his mule and setting out. As the people and soldiers saw him ride past they cried out:

'Here comes the Satin Surgeon! Look at the Satin Surgeon! Long live the Satin Surgeon!' And, on arriving, he was announced by this name, and at once taken to the sick room of the dying man.

The emperor was lying with his eyes closed, and his face as white as the pillow itself; but directly he heard the new-comer's voice, he looked up and smiled, and signed that he wished the new doctor to remain near him. Making a low bow, the Satin Surgeon assured the emperor that he felt certain of curing his malady, but insisted that everyone should leave the room except the emperor's favourite equerry. He then dressed the wounds with the magic salve which the boy had given him, and it so relieved the emperor's pain that he slept soundly all that night.

When morning broke, the courtiers and doctors hurried to the emperor's chamber, and were much surprised to find him free of pain. But they were promptly ordered out of the room by the Satin Surgeon, who renewed the dressings with such good results that next morning the emperor was nearly well, and able to leave his bed. As he grew stronger, his thoughts dwelt more and more on the cause of all his sufferings, and his spirits grew worse as his health grew better. The face and voice of his new doctor reminded him of the princess who had, he imagined, betrayed him, and caused him such dreadful torture; and, unable to bear the thought, his eyes filled with tears.

The doctor noticed his sad countenance and did all he could to enliven his patient with cheerful talk and amusing stories, till at last he won the

emperor’s confidence and heard all the story of his love for a lady who had treated him cruelly, but whom, in spite of everything, he could not help loving. The Satin Surgeon listened with sympathy, and tried to persuade the emperor that possibly the princess was not so much to blame as might appear; but, eager though the sick man was to believe this, it took a long while to persuade him of it. At length a day came when the emperor was nearly well, and for the last time the doctor dressed the wounds with the precious salve. Then, both patient and surgeon, being wearied out with something they could not explain, fell asleep and slept for hours.

Early next morning, the princess, having decided to resume her own clothes which she had brought with her in a bag, dressed herself with great care and put on all her jewels so as to make herself look as lovely as possible. She had just finished when the emperor awoke, feeling so strong and well that he thought he must be dreaming, nor could he believe himself to be awake when he saw the princess draw aside his curtains.

For some minutes they gazed at each other, unable to speak, and then they only uttered little gasps of joy and thankfulness. By-and-by the princess told him the whole story of her adventures since their last interview at the Desert Tower; and the emperor, weak as he was, threw himself at her feet with vows of love and gratitude, without ever giving a thought to the fact that the household and court physicians were awaiting their summons in the ante-room.

The emperor, anxious to prove how much he owed to the Satin Surgeon, opened his door himself, and great was everyone’s surprise and joy at seeing him in such perfect health. Like good courtiers, they hastened in to praise and compliment the Satin Surgeon, but what was their astonishment on finding that he had disappeared, leaving in his place the loveliest princess in the whole world.

‘Whilst thanking the surgeon for his miraculous cure, you might at the same time do homage to your empress,’ observed the emperor. He wished to have the marriage celebrated the same day, but the princess declared that she must wait to get her father’s permission first.

Messengers were therefore instantly despatched to the neighbouring capital, and soon returned with the king’s consent, for he had lately discovered all the mischief caused by his elder daughter.

The spiteful princess was so furious at the failure of her plans that she took to her bed, and died in a fit of rage and jealousy. No one grieved for her, and the king, being tired of the fatigues of Government, gave up his crown to his younger daughter; so the two kingdoms henceforth became one.

(From the *Cabinet des Fées*.)

THE BILLY GOAT AND THE KING

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Once there lived a certain king who understood the language of all birds and beasts and insects. This knowledge had of course been given him by a fairy godmother; but it was rather a troublesome present, for he knew that if he were ever to reveal anything he had thus learned he would turn into a stone. How he managed to avoid doing so long before this story opens I cannot say, but he had safely grown up to manhood, and married a wife, and was as happy as monarchs generally are.

This king, I must tell you, was a Hindu; and when a Hindu eats his food he has a nice little place on the ground freshly plastered with mud, and he sits in the middle of it with very few clothes on—which is quite a different way from ours.

Well, one day the king was eating his dinner in just such a nice, clean, mud-plastered spot, and his wife was sitting opposite to wait upon him and keep him company. As he ate he dropped some grains of rice upon the ground, and a little ant, who was running about seeking a living, seized upon one of the grains and bore it off towards his hole. Just outside the king's circle this ant met another ant, and the king heard the second one say:

'Oh, dear friend, do give me that grain of rice, and get another one for yourself. You see my boots are so dirty that, if I were to go upon the king's eating place, I should defile it, and I can't do that, it would be so very rude.'

But the owner of the grain of rice only replied:

'If you want rice go and get it. No one will notice your dirty boots; and you don't suppose that I am going to carry rice for all our kindred?'

Then the king laughed.

The queen looked at herself up and down, but she could not see or feel anything in her appearance to make the king laugh, so she said:

'What are you laughing at?'

'Did I laugh?' replied the king.

‘Of course you did,’ retorted the queen; ‘and if you think that I am ridiculous I wish you would say so, instead of behaving in that stupid way! What are you laughing at?’

‘I’m not laughing at anything,’ answered the king.

‘Very well, but you *did* laugh, and I want to know why.’

‘Well, I’m afraid I can’t tell you,’ said the king.

‘You *must* tell me,’ replied the queen impatiently. ‘If you laugh when there’s nothing to laugh at you must be ill or mad. What is the matter?’

Still the king refused to say, and still the queen declared that she must and would know. For days the quarrel went on, and the queen gave her husband no rest, until at last the poor man was almost out of his wits, and thought that, as life had become for him hardly worth living while this went on, he might as well tell her the secret and take the consequences.

‘But,’ thought he, ‘if I am to become a stone, I am not going to lie, if I can help it, on some dusty highway, to be kicked here and there by man and beast, flung at dogs, be used as the plaything of naughty children, and become generally restless and miserable. I will be a stone at the bottom of the cool river, and roll gently about there until I find some secure resting-place where I can stay for ever.’

So he told his wife that if she would ride with him to the middle of the river he would tell her what he had laughed at. She thought he was joking, and laughingly agreed; their horses were ordered and they set out.

On the way they came to a fine well beneath the shade of some lofty, wide-spreading trees, and the king proposed that they should get off and rest a little, drink some of the cool water, and then pass on. To this the queen consented; so they dismounted and sat down in the shade by the well-side to rest.

It happened that an old goat and his wife were browsing in the neighbourhood, and, as the king and queen sat there, the nanny goat came to the well’s brink and peering over saw some lovely green leaves that sprang in tender shoots out of the side of the well.

‘Oh!’ cried she to her husband, ‘come quickly and look. Here are some leaves which make my mouth water; come and get them for me!’

Then the billy goat sauntered up and looked over, and after that he eyed his wife a little crossly.

‘You expect me to get you those leaves, do you? I suppose you don’t consider how in the world I am to reach them? You don’t seem to think at all; if you did you would know that if I tried to reach those leaves I should fall into the well and be drowned!’

‘Oh,’ cried the nanny goat, ‘why should you fall in? Do try and get them!’

‘I am not going to be so silly,’ replied the billy goat.

But the nanny goat still wept and entreated.

‘Look here,’ said her husband, ‘there are plenty of fools in the world, but I am not one of them. This silly king here, because he can’t cure his wife of asking questions, is going to throw his life away. But I know how to cure you of your follies, and I’m going to.’

And with that he butted the nanny goat so severely that in two minutes she was submissively feeding somewhere else, and had made up her mind that the leaves in the well were not worth having.

Then the king, who had understood every word, laughed once more.

The queen looked at him suspiciously, but the king got up and walked across to where she sat.

‘Are you still determined to find out what I was laughing at the other day?’ he asked.

‘Quite,’ answered the queen angrily.

‘Because,’ said the king, tapping his leg with his riding whip, ‘I’ve made up my mind not to tell you, and moreover, I have made up my mind to stop you mentioning the subject any more.’

‘What *do* you mean?’ asked the queen nervously.

‘Well,’ replied the king, ‘I notice that if that goat is displeased with his wife, he just butts her, and that seems to settle the question——’

‘Do you mean to say you would *beat* me?’ cried the queen.

‘I should be extremely sorry to have to do so,’ replied the king; ‘but I have got to persuade you to go home quietly, and to ask no more silly questions when I say I cannot answer them. Of course, if you *will* persist, why——’

And the queen went home, and so did the king; and it is said that they are both happier and wiser than ever before.

(Punjâbi Story, Major Campbell, Feroshepore)

THE STORY OF ZOULVISIA

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In the midst of a sandy desert, somewhere in Asia, the eyes of travellers are refreshed by the sight of a high mountain covered with beautiful trees, among which the glitter of foaming waterfalls may be seen in the sunlight. In that clear, still air it is even possible to hear the song of the birds, and smell of the flowers; but though the mountain is plainly inhabited—for here and there a white tent is visible—none of the kings or princes who pass it on the road to Babylon or Baalbec ever plunge into its forests—or, if they do, they never come back. Indeed, so great is the terror caused by the evil reputation of the mountain that fathers, on their death-beds, pray their sons never to try to fathom its mysteries. But in spite of its ill-fame, a certain number of young men every year announce their intention of visiting it and, as we have said, are never seen again.

* * * * *

Now there was once a powerful king who ruled over a country on the other side of the desert, and, when dying, gave the usual counsel to his seven sons. Hardly, however, was he dead than the eldest, who succeeded to the throne, announced his intention of hunting in the enchanted mountain. In vain the old men shook their heads and tried to persuade him to give up his mad scheme. All was useless; he went, but did not return; and in due time the throne was filled by his next brother.

And so it happened to the other five, but when the youngest became king, and he also proclaimed a hunt in the mountain, a loud lament was raised in the city.

‘Who will reign over us when you are dead? For dead you surely will be,’ cried they. ‘Stay with us, and we will make you happy.’ And for a while he listened to their prayers, and the land grew rich and prosperous under his rule. But in a few years the restless fit again took possession of him, and this time he would hear nothing. Hunt in that forest he would,

and calling his friends and attendants round him, he set out one morning across the desert.

They were riding through a rocky valley, when a deer sprang up in front of them and bounded away. The king instantly gave chase, followed by his attendants; but the animal ran so swiftly that they never could get up to it, and at length it vanished in the depths of the forest.

Then the young man drew rein for the first time, and looked about him. He had left his companions far behind, and, glancing back, he beheld them entering some tents, dotted here and there amongst the trees. For himself, the fresh coolness of the woods was more attractive to him than any food, however delicious, and for hours he strolled about as his fancy led him.

By-and-by, however, it began to grow dark, and he thought that the moment had arrived for them to start for the palace. So, leaving the forest with a sigh, he made his way down to the tents, but what was his horror to find his men lying about, some dead, some dying. These were past speech, but speech was needless. It was as clear as day that the wine they had drunk contained deadly poison.

‘I am too late to help you, my poor friends,’ he said, gazing at them sadly; ‘but at least I can avenge you! Those that have set the snare will certainly return to see to its working. I will hide myself somewhere, and discover who they are!’

Near the spot where he stood he noticed a large walnut tree, and into this he climbed. Night soon fell, and nothing broke the stillness of the place; but with the earliest glimpse of dawn a noise of galloping hoofs was heard.

Pushing the branches aside the young man beheld a youth approaching, mounted on a white horse. On reaching the tents the cavalier dismounted, and closely inspected the dead bodies that lay about them. Then, one by one, he dragged them to a ravine close by and threw them into a lake at the bottom. While he was doing this, the servants who had followed him led away the horses of the ill-fated men, and the courtiers were ordered to let loose the deer, which was used as a decoy, and to see that the tables in the tents were covered as before with food and wine.

Having made these arrangements he strolled slowly through the forest, but great was his surprise to come upon a beautiful horse hidden in the depths of a thicket.

‘There was a horse for every dead man,’ he said to himself. ‘Then whose is this?’

‘Mine!’ answered a voice from a walnut tree close by. ‘Who are you that lure men into your power and then poison them? But you shall do so no longer. Return to your house, wherever it may be, and we will fight before it!’

The cavalier remained speechless with anger at these words; then with a great effort he replied:

‘I accept your challenge. Mount and follow me. I am Zoulvisia.’ And, springing on his horse, he was out of sight so quickly that the king had only time to notice that light seemed to flow from himself and his steed, and that the hair under his helmet was like liquid gold.

Clearly, the cavalier was a woman. But who could she be? Was she queen of all the queens? Or was she chief of a band of robbers? She was neither: only a beautiful maiden.

Wrapped in these reflections, he remained standing beneath the walnut tree, long after horse and rider had vanished from sight. Then he awoke with a start, to remember that he must find the way to the house of his enemy, though where it was he had no notion. However, he took the path down which the rider had come, and walked along it for many hours till he came to three huts side by side, in each of which lived an old fairy and her sons.

The poor king was by this time so tired and hungry that he could hardly speak, but when he had drunk some milk, and rested a little, he was able to reply to the questions they eagerly put to him.

‘I am going to seek Zoulvisia,’ said he, ‘she has slain my brothers and many of my subjects, and I mean to avenge them.’

He had only spoken to the inhabitants of one house, but from all three came an answering murmur.

‘What a pity we did not know! Twice this day has she passed our door, and we might have kept her prisoner.’

But though their words were brave their hearts were not, for the mere thought of Zoulvisia made them tremble.

‘Forget Zoulvisia, and stay with us,’ they all said, holding out their hands; ‘you shall be our big brother, and we will be your little brothers.’ But the king would not.

Drawing from his pocket a pair of scissors, a razor and a mirror, he gave one to each of the old fairies, saying:

‘Though I may not give up my vengeance I accept your friendship, and therefore leave you these three tokens. If blood should appear on the face of either know that my life is in danger, and, in memory of our sworn brotherhood, come to my aid.’

‘We will come,’ they answered. And the king mounted his horse and set out along the road they showed him.

By the light of the moon he presently perceived a splendid palace, but, though he rode twice round it, he could find no door. He was considering what he should do next, when he heard the sound of loud snoring, which seemed to come from his feet. Looking down, he beheld an old man lying at the bottom of a deep pit, just outside the walls, with a lantern by his side.

‘Perhaps *he* may be able to give me some counsel,’ thought the king; and, with some difficulty, he scrambled into the pit and laid his hand on the shoulder of the sleeper.

‘Are you a bird or a snake that you can enter here?’ asked the old man, awakening with a start. But the king answered that he was a mere mortal, and that he sought Zoulvisia.

‘Zoulvisia? The world’s curse?’ replied he, gnashing his teeth. ‘Out of all the thousands she has slain I am the only one who has escaped, though why she spared me only to condemn me to this living death I cannot guess.’

‘Help me if you can,’ said the king. And he told the old man his story, to which he listened intently.

‘Take heed then to my counsel,’ answered the old man. ‘Know that every day at sunrise Zoulvisia dresses herself in her jacket of pearls, and mounts the steps of her crystal watch-tower. From there she can see all over her lands, and behold the entrance of either man or demon. If so much as one is detected she utters such fearful cries that those who hear her die of fright. But hide yourself in a cave that lies near the foot of the tower, and plant a forked stick in front of it; then, when she has uttered her third cry, go forth boldly, and look up at the tower. And go without fear, for you will have broken her power.’

Word for word the king did as the old man had bidden him, and when he stepped forth from the cave, their eyes met.

‘You have conquered me,’ said Zoulvisia, ‘and are worthy to be my husband, for you are the first man who has not died at the sound of my voice!’ And letting down her golden hair, she drew up the king to the summit of the tower as with a rope. Then she led him into the hall of audience, and presented him to her household.

‘Ask of me what you will, and I will grant it to you,’ whispered Zoulvisia with a smile, as they sat together on a mossy bank by the stream. And the king prayed her to set free the old man to whom he owed his life, and to send him back to his own country.

* * * * *

‘I have finished with hunting, and with riding about my lands,’ said Zoulvisia, the day that they were married. ‘The care of providing for us all belongs henceforth to you.’ And turning to her attendants, she bade them bring the horse of fire before her.

‘This is your master, O my steed of flame,’ cried she; ‘and you will serve him as you have served me.’ And kissing him between his eyes, she placed the bridle in the hand of her husband.

The horse looked for a moment at the young man, and then bent his head, while the king patted his neck and smoothed his tail, till they felt themselves old friends. After this he mounted to do Zoulvisia’s bidding, but before he started she gave him a case of pearls containing one of her hairs, which he tucked into the breast of his coat.

He rode along for some time, without seeing any game to bring home for dinner. Suddenly a fine stag started up almost under his feet, and he at once gave chase. On they sped, but the stag twisted and turned so that the king had no chance of a shot till they reached a broad river, when the animal jumped in and swam across. The king fitted his cross-bow with a bolt, and took aim, but though he succeeded in wounding the stag, it contrived to gain the opposite bank, and in his excitement he never observed that the case of pearls had fallen into the water.

* * * * *

The stream, though deep, was likewise rapid, and the box was swirled along miles, and miles, and miles, till it was washed up in quite another country. Here it was picked up by one of the water-carriers belonging to the palace, who showed it to the king. The workmanship of the case was so curious, and the pearls so rare, that the king could not make up his mind to part with it, but he gave the man a good price, and sent him away. Then, summoning his chamberlain, he bade him find out its history in three days, or lose his head.

But the answer to the riddle, which puzzled all the magicians and wise men, was given by an old woman, who came up to the palace and told the chamberlain that, for two handfuls of gold, she would reveal the mystery.

Of course the chamberlain gladly gave her what she asked, and in return she informed him that the case and the hair belonged to Zoulvisia.

‘Bring her hither, old crone, and you shall have gold enough to stand up in,’ said the chamberlain. And the old woman answered that she would try what she could do.

She went back to her hut in the middle of the forest, and standing in the doorway, whistled softly. Soon the dead leaves on the ground began to move and to rustle, and from underneath them there came a long train of serpents. They wriggled to the feet of the witch, who stooped down and patted their heads, and gave each one some milk in a red earthen basin. When they had all finished, she whistled again, and bade two or three coil themselves round her arms and neck, while she turned one into a cane and another into a whip. Then she took a stick, and on the river bank changed it into a raft, and seating herself comfortably, she pushed off into the centre of the stream.

All that day she floated, and all the next night, and towards sunset the following evening she found herself close to Zoulvisia’s garden, just at the moment that the king, on the horse of flame, was returning from hunting.

‘Who are you?’ he asked in surprise; for old women travelling on rafts were not common in that country. ‘Who are you, and why have you come here?’

‘I am a poor pilgrim, my son,’ answered she, ‘and having missed the caravan, I have wandered foodless for many days through the desert, till at length I reached the river. There I found this tiny raft, and to it I committed myself, not knowing if I should live or die. But since you have

found me, give me, I pray you, bread to eat, and let me lie this night by the dog who guards your door!'

This piteous tale touched the heart of the young man, and he promised that he would bring her food, and that she should pass the night in his palace.

'But mount behind me, good woman,' cried he, 'for you have walked far, and it is still a long way to the palace.' And as he spoke he bent down to help her, but the horse swerved on one side.

And so it happened twice and thrice, and the old witch guessed the reason, though the king did not.

'I fear to fall off,' said she; 'but as your kind heart pities my sorrows, ride slowly, and lame as I am, I think I can manage to keep up.'

At the door he bade the witch to rest herself, and he would fetch her all she needed. But Zoulvisia his wife grew pale when she heard whom he had brought, and besought him to feed the old woman and send her away, as she would cause mischief to befall them.

The king laughed at her fears, and answered lightly:

'Why, one would think she was a witch to hear you talk! And even if she were, what harm could she do to us?' And calling to the maidens he bade them carry her food, and to let her sleep in their chamber.

Now the old woman was very cunning, and kept the maidens awake half the night with all kinds of strange stories. Indeed, the next morning, while they were dressing their mistress, one of them suddenly broke into a laugh, in which the others joined her.

'What is the matter with you?' asked Zoulvisia. And the maid answered that she was thinking of a droll adventure told them the evening before by the new-comer.

'And, oh, madam!' cried the girl, 'it may be that she is a witch, as they say; but I am sure she never would work a spell to harm a fly! And as for her tales, they would pass many a dull hour for you, when my lord was absent!'

So, in an evil hour, Zoulvisia consented that the crone should be brought to her, and from that moment the two were hardly ever apart.

* * * * *

One day the witch began to talk about the young king, and to declare that in all the lands she had visited she had seen none like him.

‘It was so clever of him to guess your secret so as to win your heart,’ said she. ‘And of course he told you his, in return?’

‘No, I don’t think he has got any,’ returned Zoulvisia.

‘Not got any secrets?’ cried the old woman scornfully. ‘That is nonsense! Every man has a secret, which he always tells to the woman he loves. And if he has not told it to *you*, it is that he does not love you!’

These words troubled Zoulvisia mightily, though she would not confess it to the witch. But the next time she found herself alone with her husband, she began to coax him to tell her in what lay the secret of his strength. For a long while he put her off with caresses, but when she would be no longer denied, he answered:

‘It is my sabre that gives me strength, and day and night it lies by my side. But now that I have told you, swear upon this ring, that I will give you in exchange for yours, that you will reveal it to nobody.’ And Zoulvisia swore; and instantly hastened to betray the great news to the old woman.

Four nights later, when all the world was asleep, the witch softly crept into the king’s chamber and took the sabre from his side as he lay sleeping. Then, opening her lattice, she flew on to the terrace and dropped the sword into the river.

The next morning everyone was surprised because the king did not, as usual, rise early and go off to hunt. The attendants listened at the keyhole and heard the sound of heavy breathing, but none dared enter, till Zoulvisia pushed past. And what a sight met their gaze! There lay the king almost dead, with foam on his mouth, and eyes that were already closed. They wept, and they cried to him, but no answer came.

Suddenly a shriek broke from those who stood hindmost, and in strode the witch, with serpents round her neck and arms and hair. At a sign from her they flung themselves with a hiss upon the maidens, whose flesh was pierced with their poisonous fangs. Then turning to Zoulvisia, she said:

‘I give you your choice—will you come with me, or shall the serpents slay you also?’ And as the terrified girl stared at her, unable to utter one word, she seized her by the arm and led her to the place where the raft was hidden among the rushes. When they were both on board she took the oars,

and they floated down the stream till they had reached the neighbouring country, where Zoulvisia was sold for a sack of gold to the king.

Now, since the young man had entered the three huts on his way through the forest, not a morning had passed without the sons of the three fairies examining the scissors, the razor and the mirror, which the young king had left them. Hitherto the surfaces of all three things had been bright and undimmed, but on this particular morning, when they took them out as usual, drops of blood stood on the razor and the scissors, while the little mirror was clouded over.

‘Something terrible must have happened to our little brother,’ they whispered to each other, with awestruck faces; ‘we must hasten to his rescue ere it be too late.’ And putting on their magic slippers they started for the palace.

The servants greeted them eagerly, ready to pour forth all they knew, but that was not much; only that the sabre had vanished, none knew where. The new-comers passed the whole of the day in searching for it, but it could not be found, and when night closed in, they were very tired and hungry. But how were they to get food? The king had not hunted that day, and there was nothing for them to eat. The little men were in despair, when a ray of the moon suddenly lit up the river beneath the walls.

‘How stupid! Of course there are fish to catch,’ cried they; and running down to the bank they soon succeeded in landing some fine fish, which they cooked on the spot. Then they felt better, and began to look about them.

Further out, in the middle of the stream, there was a strange splashing, and by-and-by the body of a huge fish appeared, turning and twisting as if in pain. The eyes of all the brothers were fixed on the spot, when the fish leapt in the air, and a bright gleam flashed through the night. ‘The sabre!’ they shouted, and plunged into the stream, and with a sharp tug, pulled out the sword, while the fish lay on the water, exhausted by its struggles. Swimming back with the sabre to land, they carefully dried it in their coats, and then carried it to the palace and placed it on the king’s pillow. In an instant colour came back to the waxen face, and the hollow cheeks filled out. The king sat up, and opening his eyes he said:

‘Where is Zoulvisia?’

‘That is what we do not know,’ answered the little men; ‘but now that you are saved you will soon find out.’ And they told him what had happened since Zoulvisia had betrayed his secret to the witch.

‘Let me go to my horse,’ was all he said. But when he entered the stable he could have wept at the sight of his favourite steed, which was nearly in as sad a plight as his master had been. Languidly he turned his head as the door swung back on its hinges, but when he beheld the king he rose up, and rubbed his head against him.

‘Oh, my poor horse! How much cleverer were you than I! If I had acted like you I should never have lost Zoulvisia; but we will seek her together, you and I.’

* * * * *

For a long while the king and his horse followed the course of the stream, but nowhere could he learn anything of Zoulvisia. At length, one evening, they both stopped to rest by a cottage not far from a great city, and as the king was lying outstretched on the grass, lazily watching his horse cropping the short turf, an old woman came out with a wooden bowl of fresh milk, which she offered him.

He drank it eagerly, for he was very thirsty, and then laying down the bowl, began to talk to the woman, who was delighted to have someone to listen to her conversation.

‘You are in luck to have passed this way just now,’ said she, ‘for in five days the king holds his wedding banquet. Ah! but the bride is unwilling, for all her blue eyes and her golden hair! And she keeps by her side a cup of poison, and declares that she will swallow it rather than become his wife. Yet he is a handsome man too, and a proper husband for her—more than she could have looked for, having come no one knows whither, and bought from a witch——’

The king started. Had he found her after all? His heart beat violently, as if it would choke him; but he gasped out:

‘Is her name Zoulvisia?’

‘Ay, so she says, though the old witch—— But what ails you?’ she broke off, as the young man sprang to his feet and seized her wrists.

‘Listen to me,’ he said. ‘Can you keep a secret?’

‘Ay,’ answered the old woman again, ‘if I am paid for it.’

‘Oh, you shall be paid, never fear—as much as your heart can desire! Here is a handful of gold: you shall have as much again if you will do my bidding.’ The old crone nodded her head.

‘Then go and buy a dress such as ladies wear at court, and manage to get admitted into the palace, and into the presence of Zoulvisia. When there, show her this ring, and after that she will tell you what to do.’

So the old woman set off, and clothed herself in a garment of yellow silk, and wrapped a veil closely round her head. In this dress she walked boldly up the palace steps behind some merchants whom the king had sent for to bring presents for Zoulvisia.

At first the bride would have nothing to say to any of them; but on perceiving the ring, she suddenly grew as meek as a lamb. And thanking the merchants for their trouble, she sent them away, and remained alone with her visitor.

‘Grandmother,’ asked Zoulvisia, as soon as the door was safely shut, ‘where is the owner of this ring?’

‘In my cottage,’ answered the old woman, ‘waiting for orders from you.’

‘Tell him to remain there for three days; and now go to the king of this country, and say that you have succeeded in bringing me to reason. Then he will let me alone and will cease to watch me. On the third day from this I shall be wandering about the garden near the river, and there your guest will find me. The rest concerns myself only.’

* * * * *

The morning of the third day dawned, and with the first rays of the sun a bustle began in the palace; for that evening the king was to marry Zoulvisia. Tents were being erected of fine scarlet cloth, decked with wreaths of sweet-smelling white flowers, and in them the banquet was spread. When all was ready a procession was formed to fetch the bride, who had been wandering in the palace gardens since daylight, and crowds lined the way to see her pass. A glimpse of her dress of golden gauze might be caught, as she passed from one flowery thicket to another; then suddenly the multitude swayed, and shrank back, as a thunderbolt seemed

to flash out of the sky to the place where Zoulvisia was standing. Ah! but it was no thunderbolt, only the horse of fire! And when the people looked again, it was bounding away with two persons on its back.

* * * * *

Zoulvisia and her husband both learnt how to keep happiness when they had got it; and *that* is a lesson that many men and woman never learn at all. And besides, it is a lesson which nobody can teach, and that every boy and girl must learn for themselves.

(From *Contes Arméniens*. Par Frédéric Macler.)

GRASP ALL, LOSE ALL

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Once, in former times, there lived in a certain city in India a poor oil-seller, called Déna, who never could keep any money in his pockets; and when this story begins he had borrowed from a banker, of the name of Léna, the sum of one hundred rupees; which, with the interest Léna always charged, amounted to a debt of three hundred rupees. Now Déna was doing a very bad business, and had no money with which to pay his debt, so Léna was very angry, and used to come round to Déna's house every evening and abuse him until the poor man was nearly worried out of his life. Léna generally fixed his visit just when Déna's wife was cooking the evening meal, and would make such a scene that the poor oil-seller and his wife and daughter quite lost their appetites, and could eat nothing. This went on for some weeks, till, one day, Déna said to himself that he could stand it no longer, and that he had better run away; and, as a man cannot fly easily with a wife and daughter, he thought he must leave them behind. So that evening, instead of turning into his house as usual after his day's work, he just slipped out of the city without knowing very well where he was going.

At about ten o'clock that night Déna came to a well by the wayside, near which grew a giant peepul tree; and, as he was very tired, he determined to climb it, and rest for a little before continuing his journey in the morning. Up he went and curled himself so comfortably amongst the great branches that, overcome with weariness, he fell fast asleep. Whilst he slept, some spirits, who roam about such places on certain nights, picked up the tree and flew away with it to a far-away shore where no creature lived, and there, long before the sun rose, they set it down. Just then the oil-seller awoke; but instead of finding himself in the midst of a forest, he was amazed to behold nothing but waste shore and wide sea, and was dumb with horror and astonishment. Whilst he sat up, trying to collect his senses, he began to catch sight here and there of twinkling, flashing lights, like little fires, that moved and sparkled all about, and wondered what they were. Presently he saw one so close to him that he reached out

his hand and grasped it, and found that it was a sparkling red stone, scarcely smaller than a walnut. He opened a corner of his loin-cloth and tied the stone in it; and by-and-by he got another, and then a third, and a fourth, all of which he tied up carefully in his cloth. At last, just as the day was breaking, the tree rose, and, flying rapidly through the air, was deposited once more by the well where it had stood the previous evening.

When Déna had recovered a little from the fright which the extraordinary antics of the tree had caused him, he began to thank Providence that he was alive, and, as his love of wandering had been quite cured, he made his way back to the city and to his own house. Here he was met and soundly scolded by his wife, who assailed him with a hundred questions and reproaches. As soon as she paused for breath, Déna replied:

'I have only this one thing to say, just look what I have got!' And, after carefully shutting all the doors, he opened the corner of his loin-cloth and showed her the four stones, which glittered and flashed as he turned them over and over.

'Pooh!' said his wife, 'the silly pebbles! If it was something to eat, now, there'd be some sense in them; but what's the good of *such* things?' And she turned away with a sniff, for it had happened that the night before, when Léna had come round as usual to storm at Déna, he had been rather disturbed to find that his victim was from home, and had frightened the poor woman by his threats. Directly, however, he heard that Déna had come back, Léna appeared in the doorway. For some minutes he talked to the oil-seller at the top of his voice, until he was tired, then Déna said:

'If your honour would deign to walk into my humble dwelling, I will speak.'

So Léna walked in, and the other, shutting as before all the doors, untied the corner of his loin-cloth and showed him the four great flashing stones.

'This is all,' said he, 'that I have in the world to set against my debt, for, as your honour knows, I haven't a penny, but the stones are pretty!'

Now Léna looked and saw at once that these were magnificent rubies, and his mouth watered for them; but as it would never do to show what was in his mind, he went on:

'What do I care about your stupid stones? It is my money I want, my lawful debt which you owe me, and I shall get it out of you yet somehow

or another, or it will be the worst for you.’

To all his reproaches Déna could answer nothing, but sat with his hands joined together beseechingly, asking for patience and pity. At length Léna pretended that, rather than have a bad debt on his hand, he would be at the loss of taking the stones in lieu of his money; and, whilst Déna nearly wept with gratitude, he wrote out a receipt for the three hundred rupees; and, wrapping the four stones in a cloth, he put them into his bosom, and went off to his house.

‘How shall I turn these rubies into money?’ thought Léna, as he walked along; ‘I daren’t keep them, for they are of great value, and if the rajah heard that I had them he would probably put me into prison on some pretence and seize the stones and all else that I have as well. But what a bargain I have got! Four rubies worth a king’s ransom, for one hundred rupees! Well, well, I must take heed not to betray my secret.’ And he went on making plans. Presently he made up his mind what to do, and, putting on his cleanest clothes, he set off to the house of the chief wazir, whose name was Musli, and, after seeking a private audience, he brought out the four rubies and laid them before him.

The wazir’s eyes sparkled as he beheld the splendid gems.

‘Fine, indeed,’ murmured he. ‘I can’t buy them at their real value; but, if you like to take it, I will give you ten thousand rupees for the four.’

To this the banker consented gratefully; and handing over the stones in exchange for the rupees, he hurried home, thanking his stars that he had driven such a reasonable bargain and obtained such an enormous profit.

After Léna had departed the wazir began casting about in his mind what to do with the gems; and very soon determined that the best thing to do was to present them to the rajah, whose name was Kahré. Without losing a moment, he went that very day to the palace, and sought a private interview with the rajah; and when he found himself alone with his royal master, he brought the four jewels and laid them before him.

‘Oh, ho!’ said the rajah, ‘these are priceless gems, and you have done well to give them to me. In return I give you and your heirs the revenues of ten villages.’

Now the wazir was overjoyed at these words, but only made his deepest obeisance; and, whilst the king put the rubies into his turban, hurried away beaming with happiness at the thought that for ten thousand

rupees he had become lord of ten villages. The rajah was also equally pleased, and strolled off with his new purchases to the women's quarters and showed them to the queen, who was nearly out of her mind with delight. Then, as she turned them over and over in her hands, she said: 'Ah! if I had eight more such gems, what a necklace they would make! Get me eight more of them or I shall die!'

'Most unreasonable of women,' cried the rajah, 'where am I to get eight more such jewels as these? I gave ten villages for them, and yet you are not satisfied!'

'What does it matter?' said the rani; 'do you want me to die? Surely you can get some more where these came from?' And then she fell to weeping and wailing until the rajah promised that in the morning he would make arrangements to get some more such rubies, and that if she would be patient she should have her desire.

In the morning the rajah sent for the wazir, and said that he must manage to get eight more rubies like those he had brought him the day before, 'and if you don't I shall hang you,' cried the rajah, for he was very cross. The poor wazir protested in vain that he knew not where to seek them; his master would not listen to a word he said.

'You *must*,' said he; 'the rani shall not die for the want of a few rubies! Get more where those came from.'

* * * * *

The wazir left the palace, much troubled in mind, and bade his slaves bring Léna before him. 'Get me eight more such rubies as those you brought yesterday,' commanded the wazir, directly the banker was shown into his presence. 'Eight more, and be quick, or I am a dead man.'

'But how can I?' wailed Léna; 'rubies like those don't grow upon bushes!'

'Where did you get them from?' asked the wazir.

'From Déna, the oil-seller,' said the banker.

'Well, send for him and ask him where *he* got them,' answered the wazir. 'I am not going to hang for twenty Dénas!' And more slaves were sent to summon Déna.

When Déna arrived he was closely questioned, and then all three started to see the rajah, and to him Déna told the whole story.

‘What night was it that you slept in the peepul tree?’ demanded the rajah.

‘I can’t remember,’ said Déna; ‘but my wife will know.’

Then Déna’s wife was sent for, and she explained that it was on the last Sunday of the new moon.

Now everyone knows that it is on the Sunday of the new moon that spirits have special power to play pranks upon mortals. So the rajah forbade them all, on pain of death, to say a word to anyone; and declared that, on the next Sunday of the new moon, they four—Kahré, Musli, Léna and Déna—would go and sit in the peepul tree and see what happened.

The days dragged on to the appointed Sunday, and that evening the four met secretly, and entered the forest. They had not far to go before they reached the peepul tree, into which they climbed as the rajah had planned. At midnight the tree began to sway, and presently it moved through the air.

‘See, sire,’ whispered Déna, ‘the tree is flying!’

‘Yes, yes,’ said the rajah, ‘you have told the truth. Now sit quiet, and we shall see what happens.’

Away and away flew the tree with the four men clinging tightly to its branches, until at last it was set down by the waste sea-shore where a great wide sea came tumbling in on a desert beach. Presently, as before, they began to see little points of light that glistened like fires all around them. Then Déna thought to himself:

‘Think! last time I only took four that came close to me, and I got rid of all my debt in return. This time I will take all I can get and be rich!’

‘If I got ten thousand rupees for four stones,’ thought Léna, ‘I will gather forty now for myself, and become so wealthy that they will probably make me a wazir at least!’

‘For four stones I received ten villages,’ Musli was silently thinking; ‘now I will get stones enough to purchase a kingdom, become a rajah, and employ wazirs of my own!’

And Kahré thought: ‘What is the good of only getting eight stones? Why, here are enough to make twenty necklaces; and wealth means power!’

Full of avarice and desire, each scrambled down from the tree, spread his cloth, and darted hither and thither picking up the precious jewels, looking the while over his shoulder to see whether his neighbour fared better than he. So engrossed were they in the business of gathering wealth that the dawn came upon them unawares; and suddenly the tree rose up again and flew away, leaving them upon the sea-shore staring after it, each with his cloth heavy with priceless jewels.

* * * * *

Morning broke in the city, and great was the consternation in the palace when the chamberlains declared that the rajah had gone out the evening before and had not returned.

‘Ah!’ said one, ‘it is all right! Musli wazir will know where he is, for it was he who was the king’s companion.’

Then they went to the wazir’s house, and there they learnt that the wazir had left it the evening before and had not returned; ‘but,’ said a servant, ‘Léna the banker will know where he is, for it was with him that Musli went.’

Then they visited the house of Léna, and there they learnt that the banker had gone out the evening before, and that he too had not returned; but the porter told them that he was accompanied by Déna the oil-seller, so he would know where they were.

So they departed to Déna’s house, and Déna’s wife met them with a torrent of reproaches and wailings, for Déna too had gone off the evening before to Léna’s house and had not returned.

In vain they waited, and searched—never did any of the hapless four return to their homes; and the confused tale which was told by Déna’s wife was the only clue to their fate.

To this day, in that country, when a greedy man has overreached himself, and lost all in grasping at too much, folks say:

‘All has he lost!—neither Déna, nor Léna, nor Musli, nor Kahré remain.’ And not five men in a hundred know how the proverb began, nor what it really signifies.

(Major Campbell, Feroshepore.)

THE FATE OF THE TURTLE

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In a very hot country, far away to the east, was a beautiful little lake where two wild ducks made their home, and passed their days swimming and playing in its clear waters. They had it all to themselves, except for a turtle, who was many years older than they were, and had come there before them, and, luckily, instead of taking a dislike to the turtle, as so often happens when you have only one person to speak to, they became great friends, and spent most of the day in each other's company.

All went on smoothly and happily till one summer, when the rains failed and the sun shone so fiercely that every morning there was a little less water in the lake and a little more mud on the bank. The water-lilies around the edge began to droop, and the palms to hang their heads, and the ducks' favourite swimming place, where they could dive the deepest, to grow shallower and shallower. At length there came a morning when the ducks looked at each other uneasily, and before nightfall they had whispered that if at the end of two days rain had not come, they must fly away and seek a new home, for if they stayed in their old one, which they loved so much, they would certainly die of thirst.

Earnestly they watched the sky for many hours before they tucked their heads under their wings and fell asleep from sheer weariness, but not the tiniest cloud was to be seen covering the stars that shone so big and brilliant, and hung so low in the heavens that you felt as if you could touch them. So, when the morning broke, they made up their minds that they must go and tell the turtle of their plans, and bid him farewell.

They found him comfortably curled up on a pile of dead rushes, more than half asleep, for he was old, and could not venture out in the heat as he once used.

'Ah! here you are,' he cried; 'I began to wonder if I was ever going to see you again, for, somehow, though the lake has grown smaller, I seem to have grown weaker, and it is lonely spending all day and night by oneself!'

‘Oh! my friend,’ answered the elder of the two ducks, ‘if you have suffered we have suffered also. Besides, I have something to tell you, that I fear will cause you greater pain still. If we do not wish to die of thirst we must leave this place at once, and seek another where the sun’s rays do not come. My heart bleeds to say this, for there is nothing—nothing else in the world—which would have induced us to separate from you.’

The turtle was so astonished as well as so distressed at the duck’s speech that for a moment he could find no words to reply. But when he had forced back his tears, he said in a shaky voice:

‘How can you think that I am able to live without you, when for so long you have been my only friends? If you leave me, death will speedily put an end to my grief.’

‘*Our* sorrow is as great as yours,’ answered the other duck, ‘but what can we do? And remember that if we are not here to drink the water, there will be the more for you! If it had not been for this terrible misfortune, be sure that nothing would have parted us from one whom we love so dearly.’

‘My friends,’ replied the turtle, ‘water is as necessary to me as to you, and if death stares in your faces, it stares in mine also. But in the name of all the years we have passed together, do not, I beseech you, leave me to perish here alone! Wherever you may go take me with you!’

There was a pause. The ducks felt wretched at the thought of abandoning their old comrade, yet, at the same time, how could they grant his prayer? It seemed quite impossible, and at length one of them spoke:

‘Oh, how can I find words to refuse?’ cried he, ‘yet how can we do what you ask? Consider that, like yours, our bodies are heavy and our feet small. Therefore, how could we walk with you over mountains and deserts, till we reached a land where the sun’s rays no longer burn? Why, before the day was out we should all three be dead of fatigue and hunger! No, our only hope lies in our wings—and, alas! you cannot fly!’

‘No, I cannot fly, of course,’ answered the turtle, with a sigh. ‘But you are so clever, and have seen so much of the world—surely you can think of some plan?’ And he fixed his eyes eagerly on them. Now, when the ducks saw how ardently the turtle wished to accompany them their hearts were touched, and making a sign to their friend that they wished to be alone they swam out into the lake to consult together. Though he could not hear what they said, the turtle could watch, and the half-hour that their talk

lasted felt to him like a hundred years. At length he beheld them returning side by side, and so great was his anxiety to know his fate he almost died from excitement before they reached him.

‘We hope we have found a plan that may do for you,’ said the big duck gravely, ‘but we must warn you that it is not without great danger, especially if you are not careful to follow our directions.’

‘How is it possible that I should not follow your directions when my life and happiness are at stake?’ asked the turtle joyfully. ‘Tell me what they are, and I will promise to obey them gratefully.’

‘Well, then,’ answered the duck, ‘whilst we are carrying you through the air, in the manner that we have fixed upon, you must remain as quiet as if you were dead. However high above the earth you may find yourself, you must not feel afraid, nor move your feet nor open your mouth. No matter what you see or hear, it is absolutely needful for you to be perfectly still, or I cannot answer for the consequences.’

‘I will be absolutely obedient,’ answered the turtle, ‘not only on this occasion but during all my life; and once more I promise faithfully not to move head or foot, to fear nothing, and never to speak a word during the whole journey.’

This being settled, the ducks swam about till they found, floating in the lake, a good stout stick. This they tied to their necks with some of the tough water-lily roots, and returned as quickly as they could to the turtle.

‘Now,’ said the elder duck, pushing the stick gently towards his friend, ‘take this stick firmly in your mouth, and do not let it go till we have set you down on earth again.’

The turtle did as he was told, and the ducks in their turn seized the stick by the two ends, spread their wings and mounted swiftly into the air, the turtle hanging between them.

For a while all went well. They swept across valleys, over great mountains, above ruined cities, but no lake was to be seen anywhere. Still, the turtle had faith in his friends, and bravely hung on to the stick.

At length they saw in the distance a small village, and very soon they were passing over the roofs of the houses. The people were so astonished at the strange sight, that they all—men, women and children—ran out to see it, and cried to each other:

‘Look! look! behold a miracle! Two ducks supporting a turtle! Was ever such a thing known before!’ Indeed, so great was the surprise that men left their ploughing and women their weaving in order to add their voices to their friends’.

The ducks flew steadily on, heeding nothing of the commotion below; but not so the turtle. At first he kept silence, as he had been bidden to do, but at length the clamour below proved too much for him, and he began to think that everyone was envying him the power of travelling through the air. In an evil moment he forgot the promises he had made so solemnly, and opened his mouth to reply, but, before he could utter a word, he was rushing so swiftly through the air that he quickly became unconscious, and in this state was dashed to pieces against the side of a house. Then the ducks let fall after him the stick that had held up their friend, and which was of no further use. Sadly they looked at each other and shook their heads.

‘We feared it would end so,’ said they, ‘yet, perhaps, he was right after all. Certainly this death was better than the one which awaited him.’

(From *Les Contes et Fables Indiennes*. Par M. Galland, 1724.)

THE SNAKE PRINCE

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Once upon a time there lived by herself, in a city, an old woman who was desperately poor. One day she found that she had only a handful of flour left in the house, and no money to buy more nor hope of earning it. Carrying her little brass pot, very sadly she made her way down to the river to bathe and to obtain some water, thinking afterwards to come home and to make herself an unleavened cake of what flour she had left; and after that she did not know what was to become of her.

Whilst she was bathing she left her little brass pot on the river bank covered with a cloth, to keep the inside nice and clean; but when she came up out of the river and took the cloth off to fill the pot with water, she saw inside it the glittering folds of a deadly snake. At once she popped the cloth again into the mouth of the pot and held it there; and then she said to herself:

‘Ah, kind death! I will take thee home to my house, and there I will shake thee out of my pot and thou shalt bite me and I will die, and then all my troubles will be ended.’

With these sad thoughts in her mind the poor old woman hurried home, holding her cloth carefully in the mouth of the pot; and when she got home she shut all the doors and windows, and took away the cloth, and turned the pot upside down upon her hearthstone. What was her surprise to find that, instead of the deadly snake which she expected to see fall out of it, there fell out with a rattle and a clang a most magnificent necklace of flashing jewels!

For a few minutes she could hardly think or speak, but stood staring; and then with trembling hands she picked the necklace up, and folding it in the corner of her veil, she hurried off to the king’s hall of public audience.

‘A petition, O king!’ she said. ‘A petition for thy private ear alone!’ And when her prayer had been granted, and she found herself alone with the king, she shook out her veil at his feet, and there fell from it in glittering coils the splendid necklace. As soon as the king saw it he was

filled with amazement and delight, and the more he looked at it the more he felt that he must possess it at once. So he gave the old woman five hundred silver pieces for it, and put it straightway into his pocket. Away she went full of happiness; for the money that the king had given her was enough to keep her for the rest of her life.

As soon as he could leave his business the king hurried off and showed his wife his prize, with which she was as pleased as he, if not more so; and, as soon as they had finished admiring the wonderful necklace, they locked it up in the great chest where the queen's jewellery was kept, the key of which hung always round the king's neck.

A short while afterwards, a neighbouring king sent a message to say that a most lovely girl baby had been born to him; and he invited his neighbours to come to a great feast in honour of the occasion. The queen told her husband that of course they must be present at the banquet, and she would wear the new necklace which he had given her. They had only a short time to prepare for the journey, and at the last moment the king went to the jewel chest to take out the necklace for his wife to wear, but he could see no necklace at all, only, in its place, a fat little boy baby crowing and shouting. The king was so astonished that he nearly fell backwards, but presently he found his voice, and called for his wife so loudly that she came running, thinking that the necklace must at least have been stolen.

'Look here! look!' cried the king, 'haven't we always longed for a son? And now heaven has sent us one!'

'What do you mean?' cried the queen. 'Are you mad?'

'Mad? no, I hope not,' shouted the king, dancing in excitement round the open chest. 'Come here, and look! Look what we've got instead of that necklace!'

Just then the baby let out a great crow of joy, as though he would like to jump up and dance with the king; and the queen gave a cry of surprise, and ran up and looked into the chest.

'Oh!' she gasped, as she looked at the baby, 'what a darling! Where could he have come from?'

'I'm sure I can't say,' said the king; 'all I know is that we locked up a necklace in the chest, and when I unlocked it just now there was no necklace, but a baby, and as fine a baby as ever was seen.'

By this time the queen had the baby in her arms. ‘Oh, the blessed one!’ she cried, ‘fairer ornament for the bosom of a queen than any necklace that ever was wrought. Write,’ she continued, ‘write to our neighbour and say that we cannot come to his feast, for we have a feast of our own, and a baby of our own! Oh, happy day!’

So the visit was given up; and, in honour of the new baby, the bells of the city, and its guns, and its trumpets, and its people, small and great, had hardly any rest for a week; there was such a ringing, and banging, and blaring, and such fireworks, and feasting, and rejoicing, and merry-making, as had never been seen before.

A few years went by; and, as the king’s boy baby and his neighbour’s girl baby grew and throve, the two kings arranged that as soon as they were old enough they should marry; and so, with much signing of papers and agreements, and wagging of wise heads, and stroking of grey beards, the compact was made, and signed, and sealed, and lay waiting for its fulfilment. And this too came to pass; for, as soon as the prince and princess were eighteen years of age, the kings agreed that it was time for the wedding; and the young prince journeyed away to the neighbouring kingdom for his bride, and was there married to her with great and renewed rejoicings.

Now, I must tell you that the old woman who had sold the king the necklace had been called in by him to be the nurse of the young prince; and although she loved her charge dearly, and was a most faithful servant, she could not help talking just a little, and so, by-and-by, it began to be rumoured that there was some magic about the young prince’s birth; and the rumour of course had come in due time to the ears of the parents of the princess. So now that she was going to be the wife of the prince, her mother (who was curious, as many other people are) said to her daughter on the eve of the ceremony:

‘Remember that the first thing you must do is to find out what this story is about the prince. And in order to do it, you must not speak a word to him whatever he says until he asks you why you are silent; then you must ask him what the truth is about his magic birth; and until he tells you, you must not speak to him again.’

And the princess promised that she would follow her mother’s advice.

Therefore when they were married, and the prince spoke to his bride, she did not answer him. He could not think what was the matter, but even about her old home she would not utter a word. At last he asked why she would not speak; and then she said:

‘Tell me the secret of your birth.’

Then the prince was very sad and displeased, and although she pressed him sorely he would not tell her, but always reply:

‘If I tell you, you will repent that ever you asked me.’

For several months they lived together; and it was not such a happy time for either as it ought to have been, for the secret was still a secret, and lay between them like a cloud between the sun and the earth, making what should be fair, dull and sad.

At length the prince could bear it no longer; so he said to his wife one day: ‘At midnight I will tell you my secret if you still wish it; but you will repent it all your life.’ However, the princess was overjoyed that she had succeeded, and paid no attention to his warnings.

That night the prince ordered horses to be ready for the princess and himself a little before midnight. He placed her on one, and mounted the other himself, and they rode together down to the river to the place where the old woman had first found the snake in her brass pot. There the prince drew rein and said sadly: ‘Do you still insist that I should tell you my secret?’ And the princess answered ‘Yes.’ ‘If I do,’ answered the prince, ‘remember that you will regret it all your life.’ But the princess only replied ‘Tell me!’

‘Then,’ said the prince, ‘know that I am the son of the king of a far country, but by enchantment I was turned into a snake.’

The word ‘snake’ was hardly out of his lips when he disappeared, and the princess heard a rustle and saw a ripple on the water; and in the faint moonlight she beheld a snake swimming into the river. Soon it disappeared and she was left alone. In vain she waited with beating heart for something to happen, and for the prince to come back to her. Nothing happened and no one came; only the wind mourned through the trees on the river bank, and the night birds cried, and a jackal howled in the distance, and the river flowed black and silent beneath her.

In the morning they found her, weeping and dishevelled, on the river bank; but no word could they learn from her or from anyone as to the fate

of her husband. At her wish they built on the river bank a little house of black stone; and there she lived in mourning, with a few servants and guards to watch over her.

A long, long time passed by, and still the princess lived in mourning for her prince, and saw no one, and went nowhere away from her house on the river bank and the garden that surrounded it. One morning, when she woke up, she found a stain of fresh mud upon the carpet. She sent for the guards, who watched outside the house day and night, and asked them who had entered her room while she was asleep. They declared that no one *could* have entered, for they kept such careful watch that not even a bird could fly in without their knowledge; but none of them could explain the stain of mud. The next morning, again, the princess found another stain of wet mud, and she questioned everyone most carefully; but none could say how the mud came there. The third night the princess determined to lie awake herself and watch; and, for fear that she might fall asleep, she cut her finger with a penknife and rubbed salt into the cut, that the pain of it might keep her from sleeping. So she lay awake, and at midnight she saw a snake come wriggling along the ground with some mud from the river in its mouth; and when it came near the bed, it reared up its head and dropped its muddy head on the bedclothes. She was very frightened, but tried to control her fear, and called out:

‘Who are you, and what do you here?’

And the snake answered:

‘I am the prince, your husband, and I am come to visit you.’

Then the princess began to weep; and the snake continued:

‘Alas! did I not say that if I told you my secret you would repent it? and have you not repented?’

‘Oh, indeed!’ cried the poor princess, ‘I have repented it, and shall repent it all my life! Is there nothing I can do?’

And the snake answered:

‘Yes, there is one thing, if you dared to do it.’

‘Only tell me,’ said the princess, ‘and I will do *anything*!’

‘Then,’ replied the snake, ‘on a certain night you must put a large bowl of milk and sugar in each of the four corners of this room. All the snakes in the river will come out to drink the milk, and the one that leads the way will be the queen of the snakes. You must stand in her way at the door, and

say: “Oh, Queen of Snakes, Queen of Snakes, give me back my husband!” and perhaps she will do it. But if you are frightened, and do not stop her, you will never see me again.’ And he glided away.

On the night of which the snake had told her, the princess got four large bowls of milk and sugar, and put one in each corner of the room, and stood in the doorway waiting. At midnight there was a great hissing and rustling from the direction of the river, and presently the ground appeared to be alive with horrible writhing forms of snakes, whose eyes glittered and forked tongues quivered as they moved on in the direction of the princess’s house. Foremost among them was a huge, repulsive scaly creature that led the dreadful procession. The guards were so terrified that they all ran away; but the princess stood in the doorway, as white as death, and with her hands clasped tight together for fear she should scream or faint, and fail to do her part. As they came closer and saw her in the way, all the snakes raised their horrid heads and swayed them to and fro, and looked at her with wicked beady eyes, while their breath seemed to poison the very air. Still the princess stood firm, and, when the leading snake was within a few feet of her, she cried: ‘Oh, Queen of Snakes, Queen of Snakes, give me back my husband!’ Then all the rustling, writhing crowd of snakes seemed to whisper to one another ‘Her husband? her husband?’ But the queen of snakes moved on until her head was almost in the princess’s face, and her little eyes seemed to flash fire. And still the princess stood in the doorway and never moved, but cried again: ‘Oh, Queen of Snakes, Queen of Snakes, give me back my husband!’ Then the queen of snakes replied: ‘To-morrow you shall have him—to-morrow!’ When she heard these words and knew that she had conquered, the princess staggered from the door, and sank upon her bed and fainted. As in a dream, she saw that her room was full of snakes, all jostling and squabbling over the bowls of milk until it was finished. And then they went away.

In the morning the princess was up early, and took off the mourning dress which she had worn for five whole years, and put on gay and beautiful clothes. And she swept the house and cleaned it, and adorned it with garlands and nosegays of sweet flowers and ferns, and prepared it as though she were making ready for her wedding. And when night fell she lit up the woods and gardens with lanterns, and spread a table as for a feast,

and lit in the house a thousand wax candles. Then she waited for her husband, not knowing in what shape he would appear. And at midnight there came striding from the river the prince, laughing, but with tears in his eyes; and she ran to meet him, and threw herself into his arms, crying and laughing too.

So the prince came home; and the next day they two went back to the palace, and the old king wept with joy to see them. And the bells, so long silent, were set a-ringing again, and the guns firing, and the trumpets blaring, and there was fresh feasting and rejoicing.

And the old woman who had been the prince's nurse became nurse to the prince's children—at least she was called so; though she was far too old to do anything for them but love them. Yet she still thought that she was useful, and knew that she was happy. And happy, indeed, were the prince and princess, who in due time became king and queen, and lived and ruled long and prosperously.

(Major Campbell, Feroshepore.)

THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS IN THE FOREST

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There were, once upon a time, a king and queen of Denmark who had an only son, a handsome and clever lad. When he was eighteen, his father, the old king, fell very ill, and there was no hope that he would ever get well again. The queen and the prince were very unhappy, for they loved him dearly; but though they did all they could, he only grew worse and worse, and, one day, when the summer had come and the birds were singing, he raised his head and, taking a long look out of the window, fell back dead.

During many weeks the queen could hardly eat or sleep, so sorely did she grieve for him, and the prince feared that she would die also if she went on weeping; so he begged her to go with him to a beautiful place that he knew of on the other side of the forest, and after some time she consented. The prince was overjoyed, and arranged that they should set off early next morning.

They travelled all day, only stopping now and then to rest, and already the queen began to be better and to take a little interest in the things she saw. Just as the evening was coming on they entered the forest. Here it was quite dark, for the trees grew so close together that the sun could not shine through them, and very soon they lost the path, and wandered helplessly about wondering what they should do.

‘If we sleep in this dreadful place,’ said the queen, who was tired and frightened, ‘the wild beasts will eat us.’ And she began to cry.

‘Cheer up, mother,’ answered her son, ‘I have a feeling that luck is coming to us.’ And at the next turning they came to a little house, in the window of which a light was burning.

‘Didn’t I tell you so?’ cried the prince. ‘Stay here a moment and I will go and see if I can get food and shelter for the night.’ And away he ran as fast as he could go, for by this time they were very hungry, as they had brought very little food with them and had eaten up every scrap! When one takes a long journey on foot one does not like to have too much to carry.

The prince entered the house and looked about him, going from one room to the other, but seeing nobody and finding nothing to eat. At last, as he was going sorrowfully away, he caught sight of a sword and shirt of mail hanging on the wall in an inner room, with a piece of paper fastened under them. On the paper was some writing, which said that whoever wore the coat and carried the sword would be safe from all danger.

The prince was so delighted at the sight that he forgot how hungry he was, and instantly slipped on the coat of chain armour under his tunic, and hid the sword under his cloak, for he did not mean to say anything about what he had found. Then he went back to his mother, who was waiting impatiently for him.

‘What have you been doing all this time?’ she asked angrily. ‘I thought you had been killed by robbers!’

‘Oh, just looking round,’ he answered; ‘but though I searched everywhere I could find nothing to eat.’

‘I am very much afraid that it is a robbers’ den,’ said the queen. ‘We had better go on, hungry though we are.’

‘No, it isn’t; but still, we had better not stay here,’ replied the prince, ‘especially as there is nothing to eat. Perhaps we shall find another house.’

They went on for some time, until, sure enough, they came to another house, which also had a light in the window.

‘We’ll go in here,’ said the prince.

‘No, no; I am afraid!’ cried the queen. ‘We shall be attacked and killed! It is a robbers’ den: I am sure it is!’

‘Yes, it looks like it; but we can’t help that,’ said her son. ‘We have had nothing to eat for hours, and I’m nearly as tired as you.’

The poor queen was, indeed, quite worn out; she could hardly stand for fatigue, and in spite of her terror was half anxious to be persuaded.

‘And there’s going to be a storm,’ added the prince; who feared nothing now that he had the sword.

So they went into the house, where they found nobody. In the first room stood a table laid for a meal, with all sorts of good things to eat and drink, though some of the dishes were empty.

‘Well, this looks nice,’ said the prince, sitting down and helping himself to some delicious strawberries piled on a golden dish, and some iced lemonade. Never had anything tasted so nice; but, all the same, it *was*

a robbers' den they had come to, and the robbers, who had only just dined, had gone out into the forest to see whom they could rob.

When the queen and the prince could eat no more they remembered that they were very tired, and the prince looked about till he discovered a comfortable bed, with silken sheets, standing in the next room.

'You get into bed, mother,' he said, 'and I'll lie down by the side. Don't be alarmed; you can sleep quite safely till the morning.' And he lay down with his sword in his hand, and kept watch until the day began to break; then the queen woke up and said she was quite rested and ready to start again.

'First I'll go out into the forest and see if I can find our road,' said the prince. 'And while I'm gone you light the fire and make some coffee. We must eat a good breakfast before we start.'

And he ran off into the wood.

After he had gone the queen lit the fire, and then thought she would like to see what was in the other rooms; so she went from one to another, and presently came to one that was very prettily furnished, with lovely pictures on the walls, and pale blue curtains and soft yellow cushions and comfortable easy chairs. As she was looking at all these things, suddenly a trap-door opened in the floor, and the robber-chief came out of the hole and seized her ankles. The queen almost died of fright, and shrieked loudly, then fell on her knees and begged him to spare her life.

'Yes, if you will promise me two things,' he replied; 'first that you will take me home to your country and let me be crowned king instead of your son; and secondly, that you will kill him in case he should try to take the throne from me—if you will not agree to this I shall kill you.'

'Kill my own son!' gasped the queen, staring at him in horror.

'You need not do that exactly,' said the robber. 'When he returns, just lie on the bed and say that you have been taken ill, and add that you have dreamed that in a forest, a mile away, there are some beautiful apples. If you could only get some of these you would be well again, but if not you will die.'

The queen shuddered as she listened. She was fond of her son, but she was a terrible coward; and so in the end she agreed, hoping that something would occur to save the prince. She had hardly given her promise when a step was heard, and the robber hastily hid himself.

‘Well, mother,’ cried the prince as he entered, ‘I have been through the forest and found the road, so we will start directly we have had some breakfast.’

‘Oh, I feel so ill!’ said the queen. ‘I could not walk a single step; and there is only one thing that will cure me.’

‘What is that?’ asked the prince.

‘I dreamed,’ answered the queen, in a faint voice, ‘that, a mile away, there is a forest where the most beautiful apples grow, and if I could have some of them I should soon be well again.’

‘Oh! but dreams don’t mean anything,’ said the prince. ‘There is a magician who lives near here. I’ll go to him and ask for a spell to cure you.’

‘My dreams always mean something,’ said the queen, shaking her head. ‘If I don’t get any apples I shall die.’ She did not know why the robber wanted to send the prince to this particular forest, but as a matter of fact it was full of wild animals who would tear to pieces any traveller who entered it.

‘Well, I’ll go,’ answered the prince. ‘But I really must have some breakfast first; I shall walk all the faster.’

‘If you do not hurry you will find me dead when you come back,’ murmured the queen fretfully. She thought her son was not nearly anxious enough about her, and by this time she had begun to believe that she really was as ill as she had said.

* * * * *

When the prince had eaten and drunk, he set off, and soon came to a forest, and sure enough it was full of lions and tigers, and bears and wolves, who came rushing towards him; but instead of springing on him and tearing him to pieces, they lay down on the ground and licked his hands. He speedily found the tree with the apples which his mother wanted, but the branches were so high he could not reach them, and there was no way of climbing up the smooth trunk.

‘It is no use after all, I can’t get up there,’ he said to himself. ‘What am I to do now?’

But, as he turned away, his sword chanced to touch the tree, and immediately two apples fell down. He picked them up joyfully, and was going away when a little dog came out of a hill close by, and running up to him, began tugging at his clothes and whining.

‘What do you want, little dog?’ asked the prince, stooping down to pat his soft black head.

The dog ran to a hole that was in the hill and sat there looking out, as much as to say: ‘Come along in with me.’

‘I may as well go and see what is in there,’ thought the prince, and he went over to the hill. But the hole was so small that he could not get through it, so he thrust his sword into it, and immediately it became larger.

‘Ha, ha!’ he chuckled; ‘it’s worth something to have a sword like that.’ And he bent down and crept through the hole.

The first thing he beheld, when he entered a room at the very end of a dark passage, was a beautiful princess, who was bound by an iron chain to an iron pillar.

‘What evil fate brought you here?’ he asked in surprise: and the lady answered:

‘It isn’t much use for me to tell you lest my lot becomes yours.’

‘I am not afraid of that. Tell me who you are and what has brought you here,’ begged the prince.

‘My story is not long,’ she said, smiling sadly. ‘I am a princess from Arabia, and twelve robbers who dwell in this place are fighting among themselves as to which shall have me to wife.’

‘Shall I save you?’ asked the prince. And she answered:

‘Yes; but you can’t do it. To begin with, how could you break the chain I am bound with?’

‘Oh, that’s easy enough,’ said he, taking out his sword; and directly it touched the chain the links fell apart and the princess was free.

‘Come!’ said the prince, taking her hand. But she drew back.

‘No, I dare not!’ she cried. ‘If we should meet the robbers in the passage they would kill us both.’

‘Not they!’ said the prince, brandishing his sword. ‘But how long have you been here?’ he added quickly.

‘About twenty years, I think,’ said the princess, reckoning with her fingers.

‘Twenty years!’ exclaimed the prince. ‘Then you had better shut your eyes, for when you have been sitting there so long it might hurt you to go too suddenly into the daylight. So you are the Princess of Arabia, whose beauty is famous throughout all the world! I, too, am a prince.’

‘Will you not come back to Arabia and marry me, now you have saved my life?’ asked the princess. ‘Even if my father is living still, he must be old, and after his death you can be king.’

‘No,’ replied the prince, ‘I cannot do that—I must live and die in my own country. But at the end of a year I will follow you and marry you.’ And that was all he would say.

Then the princess took a heavy ring from her finger and put it on his. Her father’s and her mother’s names were engraved in it, as well as her own, and she asked him to keep it as a reminder of his promise.

‘I will die before I part from it,’ said the prince. ‘And if at the end of a year I am still living, I will come. I believe I have heard that at the other side of this forest there is a port from which ships sail to Arabia. Let us hasten there at once.’

Hand in hand they set off through the forest, and when they came to the port they found a ship just ready to sail. The princess said good-bye to the prince, and went on board the vessel, and when she reached her own country there were great rejoicings, for her parents had never expected to see her again. She told them how a prince had saved her from the robbers, and was coming in a year’s time to marry her, and they were greatly pleased.

‘All the same,’ said the king, ‘I wish he were here now. A year is a long time.’

When the princess was no longer before his eyes, the prince recollected why he had entered the forest, and made all the haste he could back to the robbers’ home.

The robber-chief could smell the apples from afar, for he had a nose like an ogre, and he said to the queen:

‘That is a strange fellow! If he had gone into the forest the wild beasts must have eaten him unless he has a powerful charm to protect him. If that is so we must get it away from him.’

‘No, he has nothing,’ answered the queen, who was quite fascinated by the robber.

But the robber did not believe her.

‘We must think of a way to get it,’ he said. ‘When he comes in say you are well again, and have some food ready for him. Then, whilst he is eating, tell him you dreamed that he was attacked by wild beasts, and ask him how he managed to escape from them. After he has told you I can easily find a way to take his charm from him.’

Shortly after the prince came in.

‘How are you, mother!’ he said gaily. ‘Here are your apples. Now you will soon be well again, and ready to come away with me.’

‘Oh, I am better already,’ she said. ‘And see, your dinner is all hot for you, eat it up, and then we will start.’

Whilst he was eating she said to him: ‘I had a horrible dream while you were away. I saw you in a forest full of wild animals, and they were running round you and growling fiercely. How did you manage to escape from them?’

‘Oh, it was only a dream!’ laughed the prince.

‘But *my* dreams are always true,’ said his mother. ‘Tell me how it was.’

The prince wondered for some time whether he should tell her or not, but at last he decided to let her into the secret.

‘One should tell one’s mother everything,’ he thought. And he told her.

‘See, mother, here are a sword and a mail shirt which I found in the first house we entered in the forest, and as long as I carry them nothing can hurt me. That is what saved me from the wild beasts.’

‘How can I be thankful enough!’ exclaimed the queen. And directly the prince’s back was turned, she hurried to tell the robber.

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The robber, as soon as he heard the news, made a sleeping-draught, and bade the queen give it to her son before he went to bed that night.

Accordingly, as soon as the prince began to get sleepy, the queen handed him the cup containing the draught.

‘Drink this, to please me,’ she said. ‘It will do you good after all you’ve gone through, and make you sleep well.’

‘What an odd taste it has!’ murmured the prince as he drank it.

Immediately he fell asleep; and the robber came in and took away his sword and shirt of mail.

‘These things belong to my brother,’ he said. After he had got them both in his hand the robber woke him.

‘I am the master now,’ said he. ‘Choose one of two things—either you must die, or your eyes will be put out, and you will be sent back to the forest.’

The prince’s blood grew cold at these words. Then a thought struck him, and he turned to his mother: ‘Is this *your* doing?’ he asked sternly. And though she burst into tears and denied it, the prince knew she was not telling the truth.

‘Well,’ said he, ‘“whilst there is life there is hope.” I will go back to the forest.’

Then the robber put out his eyes, gave him a stick, and some food and drink, and drove him into the forest, hoping that the wild beasts would kill him, as he no longer had the sword and shirt to protect him.

‘Now,’ he said to the queen, ‘we will return to your country.’

The next day they set sail, and as soon as they reached home, they were married, and the robber became king.

Meanwhile the poor prince was wandering about in the forest, hoping to find someone who would help him, and perhaps take him into service, for now he had no money and no home. It so happened that there had been a great hunt in the forest, and the wild beasts had all fled before the hunters and were hiding, so nothing did him any harm. At last one day, just when his food was all gone and he had made up his mind that he must surely die of hunger, he came to the port whence the ships sailed for Arabia. One vessel was just ready to start, and the captain was going on board when he saw the prince.

‘Why, here is a poor blind fellow!’ he said. ‘No doubt that is the work of the robbers. Let us take him to Arabia with us. Would you like to come, my good man?’ he asked the prince.

Oh, how glad he was to hear someone speak kindly to him again! And he answered that he would, and the sailors helped him to climb up the side of the ship. When they got to Arabia the captain took him to the public baths, and ordered one of the slaves to wash him. Whilst he was being washed the princess’s ring slipped off his finger and was afterwards found

by the slave who cleaned out the bath. The man showed it to a friend of his who lived at the palace.

‘Why, it is the princess’s ring!’ he said. ‘Where did it come from?’

‘It fell off a blind man’s finger,’ said the slave. ‘He must have stolen it; but I dare say you will be able to return it to the princess.’

So that evening the man took the ring to the palace and gave it to his daughter, who was the princess’s favourite slave, and the girl gave it to her mistress. When the princess saw it she uttered a cry of joy.

‘It is the ring I gave my betrothed!’ she said. ‘Take me to him at once.’

The bath-keeper thought it strange that the princess should be betrothed to a blind beggar, but he did as she bade him, and when she saw the prince she cried:

‘At last you have come! The year is over, and I thought you were dead. Now we will be married immediately.’ And she went home and told the king that he was to send an escort to bring her betrothed to the palace. Naturally the king was rather surprised at the sudden arrival of the prince; but when he heard that he was blind he was very much annoyed.

‘I cannot have a blind person to succeed me,’ he said. ‘It is perfectly absurd!’

But the princess had had her own way all her life, and in the end the king gave way as he had always done. The prince was taken to the palace with much ceremony and splendour; but in spite of this the king was not contented. Still, it could not be helped, and really it was time the princess was married, though she looked as young as ever. There had been hundreds of knights and princes who had begged her to bestow her hand upon them, but she would have nothing to do with anyone; and now she had taken it into her head to marry this blind prince, and nobody else would she have.

* * * * *

One evening, as it was fine, the prince and princess went into the garden, and sat down under a tree.

Two ravens were perched on a bush near by, and the prince, who could understand bird language, heard one of them say: ‘Do you know that it is Midsummer-eve to-night?’

‘Yes,’ said the other.

‘And do you know that part of the garden which is known as the Queen’s Bed?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, perhaps you don’t know this, that whoever has bad eyes, or no eyes at all, should bathe his eye-sockets in the dew that falls there to-night, because then he will get his sight back. Only he must do it between twelve and one o’clock.’

That was good news for the prince and princess to hear, and the young man begged the princess to lead him to the place called the Queen’s Bed, which was the little plot of grass where the queen used often to lie down and take her midday nap. Then, between twelve and one o’clock, he bathed his eyes with the dew that was falling there, and found he could see again as well as ever.

‘I can see you!’ he said to the princess, gazing at her as if he had never seen anything before.

‘I don’t believe it,’ she answered.

‘Well, go and hang your handkerchief on a bush, and if I find it at once you *must* believe me,’ he said.

And so she did, and he went straight up to the handkerchief.

‘Yes, indeed, you can see,’ cried the princess. ‘To think that my mother’s bed has really given back your sight!’ and she went to the bank and sat down again; and by-and-by, as the day was hot, the princess fell asleep. As the prince watched her he suddenly saw something shining on her neck. It was a little golden lamp that gave out a bright light, and it hung from a golden chain. The prince thought he would like to examine it more closely, so he unfastened the chain, but as he did so the lamp fell to the ground. Before he could pick it up a hawk flew in, snatched up the little lamp and flew away again with it. The prince set off in pursuit, and ran on and on without being able to catch the bird, until at length he had lost his way. Trying to find it, he wandered on, up and down, until he came to the forest where he had found the princess.

Meantime, the princess woke up, and finding herself alone she set out to look for him. In the end she also lost her way, and as she was walking about, not knowing what to do, the robbers captured her and took her back to the cave from which the prince had rescued her. So there they were after all their trouble—no better off than before!

The prince wandered on, trying to find his way back to Arabia, until he chanced one day to meet twelve youths, walking gaily through the forest, singing and laughing. ‘Where are you going?’ he asked. And they told him they were looking for work.

‘I’ll join you, if I may,’ said the prince. And they answered: ‘The more the merrier.’

Then the prince went with them, and they all journeyed on until they met an old troll.

‘Where are you going, my masters?’ asked the troll.

‘To seek service,’ they told him.

‘Then come and serve me,’ he said; ‘there will be plenty to eat and drink, and not much work to do, and if, at the end of a year, you can answer three questions, I’ll give you each a sack of gold. Otherwise you must be turned into beasts.’

The youths thought this sounded easy enough, so they went home with the troll to his castle.

‘You will find all that you want here,’ he said; ‘and all you need do is to take care of the house, for I am going away, and shall only return when the year is over.’

Then he went away, and the young men, left to themselves, had a fine time of it; for they did no work, and only amused themselves with singing and drinking. Every day they found the table laid with good things to eat and drink, and when they had finished, the plates and dishes were cleared away by invisible hands. Only the prince, who was sad for his lost princess, ate and drank sparingly, and worked hard keeping the house in order.

One day, as he sat in his own room, he heard the voice of the old troll beneath his window talking to another troll.

‘To-morrow,’ said he, ‘the year is up.’

‘And what questions will you ask?’ inquired the other.

‘First I shall ask how long they have been here—they don’t know, the young fools! Secondly I shall ask what shines on the roof of the castle.’

‘And what is that?’

‘The lamp that was stolen by me from the princess as she slept in the garden.’

‘And what is the third question?’

‘I shall ask where the food and drink they consume every day come from. I steal it from the king’s table; but they don’t know that.’

* * * * *

The day after, the troll entered.

‘Now I shall ask my questions,’ said he. ‘To begin with: How long have you been here?’

The young men had been so busy drinking and making merry that they had forgotten all about the agreement, so they remained silent.

‘One week,’ said one, at last.

‘Two months,’ guessed another. But the prince answered, ‘One year.’

‘Right,’ replied the troll. But the second question was more difficult.

‘What is it that shines on the roof?’

The young men guessed and guessed. ‘The sun—the moon.’ But none of them really knew.

‘May I answer?’ asked the prince.

‘Yes, certainly,’ replied the troll; and the prince spoke.

‘The lamp that you stole from the princess whilst she was asleep in the garden.’ And again the troll nodded.

The third question was harder still.

‘Where does the meat and drink you have had here come from?’

None of the young men could guess.

‘May I say?’ asked the prince.

‘Yes, if you can,’ replied the troll.

‘It comes from the king’s table,’ said the prince.

And that was all. Now they might take the sacks of gold and go, and the young men went off in such a hurry that the prince was left behind. Presently, they met an old man who asked for money.

‘No, we haven’t any,’ they answered.

So they hurried on, and by-and-by up came the prince.

‘Has your lordship a piece of money for a poor man?’ asked the old fellow.

‘Yes,’ said the prince, and gave him his whole sackful.

‘I don’t want it,’ said the old man, who was really the troll they had just left in disguise. ‘But since you’re so generous, here is the princess’s

lamp, and the princess herself is in the cave where you found her; but how you're going to save her again without the magic sword I don't know.'

When he heard that, the prince knew where she was; and that was the beginning of her rescue. So he disguised himself to look like a peddler and travelled on until he reached his own city, where his mother, the queen, and the robber-chief were living. Then he went in to a goldsmith's shop and ordered a great number of kitchen pots to be made out of pure gold. That was not an order the goldsmith had every day, but the things were ready at last, saucepans and kettles and gridirons all of pure gold. Then the prince put them in his basket and went up to the palace, and asked to see the queen.

Directly she heard about the wonderful gold pots and pans she came out at once, and began unpacking the basket and admiring the things. She was so absorbed in them that the prince soon found an opportunity to steal into the bedroom and take the sword and shirt which were hung there, and go back again without his mother having noticed his absence.

'The things are all beautiful!' she said. 'How much would you take for them?'

'Name your own price, your majesty,' answered the prince.

'I really don't know what to say,' said the queen. 'Wait till my husband comes back—men understand such things better; and then, as you are a stranger, he would like to chat with you a little.' The prince bowed, and waited silently in a corner.

* * * * *

Soon after the robber returned.

'Come and see all these lovely gold saucepans!' cried the queen.

But, as the robber entered the room, the prince touched him with the magic sword, and he fell to the ground.

'Perhaps, now you know me, mother,' the prince said, taking off his disguise, 'you had better repent for all the wrong you have done me, or your life will be short.'

'Oh, have mercy!' she cried, 'I could not help it. I was so frightened.'

The prince had mercy. He ordered the wicked king to be stripped of his fine clothes, and to be driven into the forest, where the wild beasts tore

him to pieces. The queen he sent to her own country. Then he set off for the cave where the princess was sitting chained as before, and with the help of the magic sword he rescued her again without any difficulty. They soon reached the port and set sail for Arabia, where they were married; and till they died, a long while after, they reigned happily over both countries.

(From *Eventyr fra Gylbauck samlede og optegnede af Evald Tang Kristensen*. Translated from the Danish by Mrs. Skovgaard-Pedersen.)

THE CLEVER WEAVER

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Once upon a time the king of a far country was sitting on his throne, listening to the complaints of his people, and judging between them. That morning there had been fewer cases than usual to deal with, and the king was about to rise and go into his gardens, when a sudden stir was heard outside, and the lord high chamberlain entered, and inquired if his majesty would be graciously pleased to receive the ambassador of a powerful emperor who lived in the east, and was greatly feared by the neighbouring sovereigns. The king, who stood as much in dread of him as the rest, gave orders that the envoy should be admitted at once, and that a banquet should be prepared in his honour. Then he settled himself again on his throne, wondering what the envoy had to say.

The envoy said nothing. He advanced to the throne where the king was awaiting him, and stooping down, traced on the floor with a rod which he held in his hand a black circle all round it. Then he sat down on a seat that was near, and took no further notice of anyone.

The king and his courtiers were equally mystified and enraged at this strange behaviour, but the envoy sat as calm and still as an image, and it soon became plain that they would get no explanation from *him*. The ministers were hastily summoned to a council, but not one of them could throw any light upon the subject. This made the king more angry than ever, and he told them that unless before sunset they could find someone capable of solving the mystery he would hang them all.

The king was, as the ministers knew, a man of his word; and they quickly mapped out the city into districts, so that they might visit house by house, and question the occupants as to whether they could fathom the action of the ambassador. Most of them received no reply except a puzzled stare; but, luckily, one of them was more observant than the rest, and on entering an empty cottage where a swing was swinging of itself, he began to think it might be worth while for him to see the owner. Opening a door leading into another room, he found a second swing, swinging gently like

the first, and from the window he beheld a patch of corn, and a willow which moved perpetually without any wind, in order to frighten away the sparrows. Feeling more and more curious, he descended the stairs and found himself in a large light workshop in which was seated a weaver at his loom. But all the weaver did was to guide his threads, for the machine that he had invented to set in motion the swings and the willow pole made the loom work.

When he saw the great wheel standing in the corner, and had guessed the use of it, the merchant heaved a sigh of relief. At any rate, if the weaver could not guess the riddle, he at least might put the minister on the right track. So without more ado he told the story of the circle, and ended by declaring that the person who could explain its meaning should be handsomely rewarded.

‘Come with me at once,’ he said. ‘The sun is low in the heavens, and there is no time to lose.’

The weaver stood thinking for a moment and then walked across to a window, outside of which was a hen-coop with two knuckle-bones lying beside it. These he picked up, and taking the hen from the coop, he tucked it under his arm.

‘I am ready,’ he answered, turning to the minister.

In the hall the king still sat on his throne, and the envoy on his seat. Signing to the minister to remain where he was, the weaver advanced to the envoy, and placed the knuckle-bones on the floor beside him. For answer, the envoy took a handful of millet seed out of his pocket and scattered it round; upon which the weaver set down the hen, who ate it up in a moment. At that the envoy rose without a word, and took his departure.

As soon as he had left the hall, the king beckoned to the weaver.

‘You alone seem to have guessed the riddle,’ said he, ‘and great shall be your reward. But tell me, I pray you, what it all means?’

‘The meaning, O king,’ replied the weaver, ‘is this: The circle drawn by the envoy round your throne is the message of the emperor, and signifies, “If I send an army and surround your capital, will you lay down your arms?” The knuckle-bones which I placed before him told him, “You are but children in comparison with us. Toys like these are the only playthings you are fit for.” The millet that he scattered was an emblem of

the number of soldiers that his master can bring into the field; but by the hen which ate up the seed he understood that one of our men could destroy a host of theirs.'

'I do not think,' he added, 'that the emperor will declare war.'

'You have saved me and my honour,' cried the king, 'and wealth and glory shall be heaped upon you. Name your reward, and you shall have it even to the half of my kingdom.'

'The small farm outside the city gates, as a marriage portion for my daughter, is all I ask,' answered the weaver, and it was all he would accept. 'Only, O king,' were his parting words, 'I would beg of you to remember that weavers also are of value to a state, and that they are sometimes cleverer even than ministers!'

(From *Contes Arméniens*. Par Frédéric Macler.)

THE BOY WHO FOUND FEAR AT LAST

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Once upon a time there lived a woman who had one son whom she loved dearly. The little cottage in which they dwelt was built on the outskirts of a forest, and as they had no neighbours, the place was very lonely, and the boy was kept at home by his mother to bear her company.

They were sitting together on a winter's evening, when a storm suddenly sprang up, and the wind blew the door open. The woman started and shivered, and glanced over her shoulder as if she half expected to see some horrible thing behind her. 'Go and shut the door,' she said hastily to her son, 'I feel frightened.'

'Frightened?' repeated the boy. 'What does it feel like to be frightened?'

'Well—just frightened,' answered the mother. 'A fear of something, you hardly know what, takes hold of you.'

'It must be very odd to feel like that,' replied the boy. 'I will go through the world and seek fear till I find it.' And the next morning, before his mother was out of bed, he had left the forest behind him.

After walking for some hours he reached a mountain, which he began to climb. Near the top, in a wild and rocky spot, he came upon a band of fierce robbers, sitting round a fire. The boy, who was cold and tired, was delighted to see the bright flames, so he went up to them and said, 'Good greeting to you, sirs,' and wriggled himself in between the men, till his feet almost touched the burning logs.

The robbers stopped drinking and eyed him curiously, and at last the captain spoke.

'No caravan of armed men would dare to come here, even the very birds shun our camp, and who are you to venture in so boldly?'

'Oh, I have left my mother's house in search of fear. Perhaps you can show it to me?'

'Fear is wherever *we* are,' answered the captain.

'But *where*?' asked the boy, looking round. 'I see nothing.'

‘Take this pot and some flour and butter and sugar over to the churchyard which lies down there, and bake us a cake for supper,’ replied the robber. And the boy, who was by this time quite warm, jumped up cheerfully, and slinging the pot over his arm, ran down the hill.

When he got to the churchyard he collected some sticks and made a fire; then he filled the pot with water from a little stream close by, and mixing the flour and butter and sugar together, he set the cake on to cook. It was not long before it grew crisp and brown, and then the boy lifted it from the pot and placed it on a stone, while he put out the fire. At that moment a hand was stretched from a grave, and a voice said:

‘Is that cake for me?’

‘Do you think I am going to give to the dead the food of the living?’ replied the boy, with a laugh. And giving the hand a tap with his spoon, and picking up the cake, he went up the mountain side, whistling merrily.

‘Well, have you found fear?’ asked the robbers when he held out the cake to the captain.

‘No; was it there?’ answered the boy. ‘I saw nothing but a hand which came from a grave, and belonged to someone who wanted my cake, but I just rapped the fingers with my spoon, and said it was not for him, and then the hand vanished. Oh, how nice the fire is!’ And he flung himself on his knees before it, and so did not notice the glances of surprise cast by the robbers at each other.

‘There is another chance for you,’ said one at length. ‘On the other side of the mountain lies a deep pool; go to that, and perhaps you may meet fear on the way.’

‘I hope so, indeed,’ answered the boy. And he set out at once.

He soon beheld the waters of the pool gleaming in the moonlight, and as he drew near he saw a tall swing standing just over it, and in the swing a child was seated, weeping bitterly.

‘That is a strange place for a swing,’ thought the boy; ‘but I wonder what he is crying about.’ And he was hurrying on towards the child, when a maiden ran up and spoke to him.

‘I want to lift my little brother from the swing,’ cried she, ‘but it is so high above me, that I cannot reach. If you will get closer to the edge of the pool, and let me mount on your shoulder, I think I can reach him.’

‘Willingly,’ replied the boy, and in an instant the girl had climbed to his shoulders. But instead of lifting the child from the swing, as she could easily have done, she pressed her feet so firmly on either side of the youth’s neck, that he felt that in another minute he would be choked, or else fall into the water beneath him. So gathering up all his strength, he gave a mighty heave, and threw the girl backwards. As she touched the ground a bracelet fell from her arm, and this the youth picked up.

‘I may as well keep it as a remembrance of all the queer things that have happened to me since I left home,’ he said to himself, and turning to look for the child, he saw that both it and the swing had vanished, and that the first streaks of dawn were in the sky.

With the bracelet on his arm, the youth started for a little town which was situated in the plain on the further side of the mountain, and as, hungry and thirsty, he entered its principal street, a Jew stopped him. ‘Where did you get that bracelet?’ asked the Jew. ‘It belongs to me.’

‘No, it is mine,’ replied the boy.

‘It is not. Give it to me at once, or it will be the worse for you!’ cried the Jew.

‘Let us go before a judge, and tell him our stories,’ said the boy. ‘If he decides in your favour, you shall have it; if in mine, I will keep it!’

To this the Jew agreed, and the two went together to the great hall, in which the kadi was administering justice. He listened very carefully to what each had to say, and then pronounced his verdict. Neither of the two claimants had proved his right to the bracelet, therefore it must remain in the possession of the judge till its fellow was brought before him.

When they heard this, the Jew and the boy looked at each other, and their eyes said: ‘Where are we to go to find the other one?’ But as they knew there was no use in disputing the decision, they bowed low and left the hall of audience.

* * * * *

Wandering he knew not whither, the youth found himself on the sea-shore. At a little distance was a ship which had struck on a hidden rock, and was rapidly sinking, while on deck the crew were gathered, with faces white as death, shrieking and wringing their hands.

‘Have you met with fear?’ shouted the boy. And the answer came above the noise of the waves.

‘Oh, help! help! We are drowning!’

Then the boy flung off his clothes, and swam to the ship, where many hands were held out to draw him on board.

‘The ship is tossed hither and thither, and will soon be sucked down,’ cried the crew again. ‘Death is very near, and we are frightened!’

‘Give me a rope,’ said the boy in reply, and he took it, and made it safe round his body at one end, and to the mast at the other, and sprang into the sea. Down he went, down, down, down, till at last his feet touched the bottom, and he stood up and looked about him. There, sure enough, a sea-maiden with a wicked face was tugging hard at a chain which she had fastened to the ship with a grappling iron, and was dragging it bit by bit beneath the waves. Seizing her arms in both his hands, he forced her to drop the chain, and the ship above remaining steady, the sailors were able gently to float her off the rock. Then taking a rusty knife from a heap of seaweed at his feet, he cut the rope round his waist and fastened the sea-maiden firmly to a stone, so that she could do no more mischief, and bidding her farewell, he swam back to the beach, where his clothes were still lying.

The youth dressed himself quickly and walked on till he came to a beautiful shady garden filled with flowers, and with a clear little stream running through. The day was hot, and he was tired, so he entered the gate, and seated himself under a clump of bushes covered with sweet-smelling red blossoms, and it was not long before he fell asleep. Suddenly a rush of wings and a cool breeze awakened him, and raising his head cautiously, he saw three doves plunging into the stream. They splashed joyfully about, and shook themselves, and then dived to the bottom of a deep pool. When they appeared again they were no longer three doves, but three beautiful damsels, bearing between them a table made of mother of pearl. On this they placed drinking cups fashioned from pink and green shells, and one of the maidens filled a cup from a crystal goblet, and was raising it to her mouth, when her sister stopped her.

‘To whose health do you drink?’ asked she.

‘To the youth who prepared the cake, and rapped my hand with the spoon when I stretched it out of the earth,’ answered the maiden, ‘and was

never afraid as other men were! But to whose health do you drink?'

'To the youth on whose shoulders I climbed at the edge of the pool, and who threw me off with such a jerk, that I lay unconscious on the ground for hours,' replied the second. 'But you, my sister,' added she, turning to the third girl, 'to whom do you drink?'

'Down in the sea I took hold of a ship and shook it and pulled it till it would soon have been lost,' said she. And as she spoke she looked quite different from what she had done with the chain in her hands, seeking to work mischief. 'But a youth came, and freed the ship and bound me to a rock. To his health I drink,' and they all three lifted their cups and drank silently.

As they put their cups down, the youth appeared before them.

'Here am I, the youth whose health you have drunk; and now give me the bracelet that matches a jewelled band which of a surety fell from the arm of one of you. A Jew tried to take it from me, but I would not let him have it, and he dragged me before the kadi, who kept my bracelet till I could show him its fellow. And I have been wandering hither and thither in search of it, and that is how I have found myself in such strange places.'

'Come with us, then,' said the maidens, and they led him down a passage into a hall, out of which opened many chambers, each one of greater splendour than the last. From a shelf heaped up with gold and jewels the eldest sister took a bracelet, which in every way was exactly like the one which was in the judge's keeping, and fastened it to the youth's arm.

'Go at once and show this to the kadi,' said she, 'and he will give you the fellow to it.'

'I shall never forget you,' answered the youth, 'but it may be long before we meet again, for I shall never rest till I have found fear.' Then he went his way, and won the bracelet from the kadi. After this, he again set forth in his quest of fear.

On and on walked the youth, but fear never crossed his path, and one day he entered a large town, where all the streets and squares were so full of people, he could hardly pass between them.

'Why are all these crowds gathered together?' he asked of a man who stood next him.

‘The ruler of this country is dead,’ was the reply, ‘and as he had no children, it is needful to choose a successor. Therefore each morning one of the sacred pigeons is let loose from the tower yonder, and on whomsoever the bird shall perch, that man is our king. In a few minutes the pigeon will fly. Wait and see what happens.’

Every eye was fixed on the tall tower which stood in the centre of the chief square, and the moment that the sun was seen to stand straight over it, a door was opened and a beautiful pigeon, gleaming with pink and grey, blue and green, came rushing through the air. Onward it flew, onward, onward, till at length it rested on the head of the boy. Then a great shout arose:

‘The king! the king!’ but as he listened to the cries, a vision, swifter than lightning, flashed across his brain. He saw himself seated on a throne, spending his life trying, and never succeeding, to make poor people rich; miserable people happy; bad people good; never doing anything he wished to do, not able even to marry the girl that he loved.

‘No! no!’ he shrieked, hiding his face in his hands; but the crowds who heard him thought he was overcome by the grandeur that awaited him, and paid no heed.

‘Well, to make quite sure, let fly more pigeons,’ said they, but each pigeon followed where the first had led, and the cries arose louder than ever:

‘The king! the king!’ And as the young man heard, a cold shiver, that he knew not the meaning of, ran through him.

‘This is fear whom you have so long sought,’ whispered a voice, which seemed to reach his ears alone. And the youth bowed his head as the vision once more flashed before his eyes, and he accepted his doom, and made ready to pass his life with fear beside him.

(Adapted from *Türkische Volksmärchen*. Von Dr. Ignaz Künos. E. J. Brill, Leiden.)

HE WINS WHO WAITS

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Once upon a time there reigned a king who had an only daughter. The girl had been spoiled by everybody from her birth, and, besides being beautiful, was clever and wilful, and when she grew old enough to be married she refused to have anything to say to the prince whom her father favoured, but declared she would choose a husband for herself. By long experience the king knew that when once she had made up her mind, there was no use expecting her to change it, so he inquired meekly what she wished him to do.

‘Summon all the young men in the kingdom to appear before me a month from to-day,’ answered the princess; ‘and the one to whom I shall give this golden apple shall be my husband.’

‘But, my dear—’ began the king, in tones of dismay.

‘The one to whom I shall give this golden apple shall be my husband,’ repeated the princess, in a louder voice than before. And the king understood the signal, and with a sigh proceeded to do her bidding.

* * * * *

The young men arrived—tall and short, dark and fair, rich and poor. They stood in rows in the great courtyard in front of the palace, and the princess, clad in robes of green, with a golden veil flowing behind her, passed before them all, holding the apple. Once or twice she stopped and hesitated, but in the end she always passed on, till she came to a youth near the end of the last row. There was nothing specially remarkable about him, the bystanders thought; nothing that was likely to take a girl’s fancy. A hundred others were handsomer, and all wore finer clothes; but he met the princess’s eyes frankly and with a smile, and she smiled too, and held out the apple.

‘There is some mistake,’ cried the king, who had anxiously watched her progress, and hoped that none of the candidates would please her. ‘It is impossible that she can wish to marry the son of a poor widow, who has

not a farthing in the world! Tell her that I will not hear of it, and that she must go through the rows again and fix upon someone else'; and the princess went through the rows a second and a third time, and on each occasion she gave the apple to the widow's son. 'Well, marry him if you will,' exclaimed the angry king; 'but at least you shall not stay here.' And the princess answered nothing, but threw up her head, and taking the widow's son by the hand, they left the castle.

That evening they were married, and after the ceremony went back to the house of the bridegroom's mother, which, in the eyes of the princess, did not look much bigger than a hen-coop.

The old woman was not at all pleased when her son entered bringing his bride with him.

'As if we were not poor enough before,' grumbled she. 'I dare say this is some fine lady who can do nothing to earn her living.' But the princess stroked her arm, and said softly:

'Do not be vexed, dear mother; I am a famous spinner, and can sit at my wheel all day without breaking a thread.'

And she kept her word; but in spite of the efforts of all three, they became poorer and poorer; and at the end of six months it was agreed that the husband should go to the neighbouring town to get work. Here he met a merchant who was about to start on a long journey with a train of camels laden with goods of all sorts, and needed a man to help him. The widow's son begged that he would take him as a servant, and to this the merchant assented, giving him his whole year's salary beforehand. The young man returned home with the news, and next day bade farewell to his mother and his wife, who were very sad at parting from him.

'Do not forget me while you are absent,' whispered the princess as she flung her arms round his neck; 'and as you pass by the well which lies near the city gate, stop and greet the old man you will find sitting there. Kiss his hand, and then ask him what counsel he can give you for your journey.'

Then the youth set out, and when he reached the well where the old man was sitting he asked the questions as his wife had bidden him.

'My son,' replied the old man, 'you have done well to come to me, and in return remember three things: "She whom the heart loves, is ever the most beautiful." "Patience is the first step on the road to happiness." "He wins who waits."'

The young man thanked him and went on his way. Next morning early the caravan set out, and before sunset it had arrived at the first halting place, round some wells, where another company of merchants had already encamped. But no rain had fallen for a long while in that rocky country, and both men and beasts were parched with thirst. To be sure, there *was* another well about half a mile away, where there was always water; but to get it you had to be lowered deep down, and, besides, no one who had ever descended that well had been known to come back.

However, till they could store some water in their bags of goat-skin, the caravans dared not go further into the desert, and on the night of the arrival of the widow's son and his master, the merchants had decided to offer a large reward to anyone who was brave enough to go down into the enchanted well and bring some up. Thus it happened that at sunrise the young man was aroused from his sleep by a herald making his round of the camp, proclaiming that every merchant present would give a thousand piastres to the man who would risk his life to bring water for themselves and their camels.

The youth hesitated for a little while when he heard the proclamation. The story of the well had spread far and wide, and long ago had reached his ears. The danger was great, he knew; but then, if he came back alive, he would be the possessor of eighty thousand piastres. He turned to the herald who was passing the tent:

'*I* will go,' said he.

'What madness!' cried his master, who happened to be standing near. 'You are too young to throw away your life like that. Run after the herald and tell him you take back your offer.' But the young man shook his head, and the merchant saw that it was useless to try and persuade him.

'Well, it is your own affair,' he observed at last. 'If you must go, you must. Only, if you ever return, I will give you a camel's load of goods and my best mule besides.' And touching his turban in token of farewell, he entered the tent.

Hardly had he done so than a crowd of men were seen pouring out of the camp.

'How can we thank you!' they exclaimed, pressing round the youth. 'Our camels as well as ourselves are almost dead of thirst. See! here is the rope we have brought to let you down.'

‘Come, then,’ answered the youth. And they all set out.

On reaching the well, the rope was knotted securely under his arms, a big goat-skin bottle was given him, and he was gently lowered to the bottom of the pit. Here a clear stream was bubbling over the rocks, and, stooping down, he was about to drink, when a huge Arab appeared before him, saying in a loud voice:

‘Come with me!’

The young man rose, never doubting that his last hour had come; but as he could do nothing, he followed the Arab into a brilliantly lighted hall, on the further side of the little river. There his guide sat down, and drawing towards him two boys, one black and the other white, he said to the stranger:

‘I have a question to ask you. If you answer it right, your life shall be spared. If not, your head will be forfeit, as the head of many another has been before you. Tell me: which of my two children do I think the handsomer.’

The question did not seem a hard one, for while the white boy was as beautiful a child as ever was seen, his brother was ugly even for a negro. But, just as the youth was going to speak, the old man’s counsel flashed into the youth’s mind, and he replied hastily: ‘The one whom we love best is always the handsomest.’

‘You have saved me!’ cried the Arab, rising quickly from his seat, and pressing the young man in his arms. ‘Ah! if you could only guess what I have suffered from the stupidity of all the people to whom I have put that question, and I was condemned by a wicked genius to remain here until it was answered! But what brought you to this place, and how can I reward you for what you have done for me?’

‘By helping me to draw enough water for my caravan of eighty merchants and their camels, who are dying for want of it,’ replied the youth.

‘That is easily done,’ said the Arab. ‘Take these three apples, and when you have filled your skin, and are ready to be drawn up, lay one of them on the ground. Half-way to the earth, let fall another, and at the top, drop the third. If you follow my directions no harm will happen to you. And take, besides, these three pomegranates, green, red and white. One day you will find a use for them!’

The young man did as he was told, and stepped out on the rocky waste, where the merchants were anxiously awaiting him. Oh, how thirsty they all were! But even after the camels had drunk, the skin seemed as full as ever.

Full of gratitude for their deliverance, the merchants pressed the money into his hands, while his own master bade him choose what goods he liked, and a mule to carry them.

So the widow's son was rich at last, and when the merchant had sold his merchandise, and returned home to his native city, his servant hired a man by whom he sent the money and the mule back to his wife.

'I will send the pomegranates also,' thought he 'for if I leave them in my turban they may some day fall out,' and he drew them out of his turban. But the fruit had vanished, and in their places were three precious stones, green, white and red.

For a long time he remained with the merchant, who gradually trusted him with all his business, and gave him a large share of the money he made. When his master died, the young man wished to return home, but the widow begged him to stay and help her; and one day he awoke with a start, to remember that twenty years had passed since he had gone away.

'I want to see my wife,' he said next morning to his mistress. 'If at any time I can be of use to you, send a messenger to me; meanwhile, I have told Hassan what to do.' And mounting a camel he set out.

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Now, soon after he had taken service with the merchant a little boy had been born to him, and both the princess and the old woman toiled hard all day to get the baby food and clothing. When the money and the pomegranates arrived there was no need for them to work any more, and the princess saw at once that they were not fruit at all, but precious stones of great value. The old woman, however, not being accustomed, like her daughter-in-law, to the sight of jewels, took them only for common fruit, and wished to give them to the child to eat. She was very angry when the princess hastily took them from her and hid them in her dress, while she went to the market and bought the three finest pomegranates she could find, which she handed the old woman for the little boy.

Then she bought beautiful new clothes for all of them, and when they were dressed they looked as fine as could be. Next, she took out one of the precious stones which her husband had sent her, and placed it in a small silver box. This she wrapped up in a handkerchief embroidered in gold, and filled the old woman's pockets with gold and silver pieces.

'Go, dear mother,' she said, 'to the palace, and present the jewel to the king, and if he asks you what he can give you in return, tell him that you want a paper, with his seal attached, proclaiming that no one is to meddle with anything you may choose to do. Before you leave the palace distribute the money amongst the servants.'

The old woman took the box and started for the palace. No one there had ever seen a ruby of such beauty, and the most famous jeweller in the town was summoned to declare its value. But all he could say was:

'If a boy threw a stone into the air with all his might, and you could pile up gold as high as the flight of the stone, it would not be sufficient to pay for this ruby.'

At these words the king's face fell. Having once seen the ruby he could not bear to part with it, yet all the money in his treasury would not be enough to buy it. So for a little while he remained silent, wondering what offer he could make the old woman, and at last he said:

'If I cannot give you its worth in money, is there anything you will take in exchange?'

'A paper signed by your hand, and sealed with your seal, proclaiming that I may do what I will, without let or hindrance,' answered she promptly. And the king, delighted to have obtained what he coveted at so small a cost, gave her the paper without delay. Then the old woman took her leave and returned home.

The fame of this wonderful ruby soon spread far and wide, and envoys arrived at the little house to know if there were more stones to sell. Each king was so anxious to gain possession of the treasure that he bade his messenger outbid all the rest, and so the princess sold the two remaining stones for a sum of money so large that if the gold pieces had been spread out they would have reached from here to the moon. The first thing she did was to build a palace by the side of the cottage, and it was raised on pillars of gold, in which were set great diamonds, which blazed night and day. Of course the news of this palace was the first thing that reached the king her

father, on his return from the wars, and he hurried to see it. In the doorway stood a young man of twenty, who was his grandson, though neither of them knew it, and so pleased was the king with the appearance of the youth, that he carried him back to his own palace, and made him commander of the whole army.

Not long after this, the widow's son returned to his native land. There, sure enough, was the tiny cottage where he had lived with his mother, but the gorgeous building beside it was quite new to him. What had become of his wife and his mother, and who could be dwelling in that other wonderful place. These were the first thoughts that flashed through his mind; but not wishing to betray himself by asking questions of passing strangers, he climbed up into a tree that stood opposite the palace and watched.

By-and-by a lady came out, and began to gather some of the roses and jessamine that hung about the porch. The twenty years that had passed since he had last beheld her vanished in an instant, and he knew her to be his own wife, looking almost as young and beautiful as on the day of their parting. He was about to jump down from the tree and hasten to her side, when she was joined by a young man who placed his arm affectionately round her neck. At this sight the angry husband drew his bow, but before he could let fly the arrow, the counsel of the wise man came back to him: 'Patience is the first step on the road to happiness.' And he laid it down again.

At this moment the princess turned, and drawing her companion's head down to hers, kissed him on each cheek. A second time blind rage filled the heart of the watcher, and he snatched up his bow from the branch where it hung, when words, heard long since, seemed to sound in his ears:

'He wins who waits.' And the bow dropped to his side. Then, through the silent air came the sound of the youth's voice:

'Mother, can you tell me nothing about my father? Does he still live, and will he never return to us?'

'Alas! my son, how can I answer you?' replied the lady. 'Twenty years have passed since he left us to make his fortune, and, in that time, only once have I heard aught of him. But what has brought him to your mind just now?'

'Because last night I dreamed that he was here,' said the youth, 'and then I remembered what I have so long forgotten, that I *had* a father,

though even his very history was strange to me. And now, tell me, I pray you, all you can concerning him.'

And standing under the jessamine, the son learnt his father's history, and the man in the tree listened also.

'Oh,' exclaimed the youth, when it was ended, while he twisted his hands in pain, 'I am general-in-chief, you are the king's daughter, and we have the most splendid palace in the whole world, yet my father lives we know not where, and for all we can guess, may be poor and miserable. To-morrow I will ask the king to give me soldiers, and I will seek him over the whole earth till I find him.'

Then the man came down from the tree, and clasped his wife and son in his arms. All that night they talked, and when the sun rose it still found them talking. But as soon as it was proper, he went up to the palace to pay his homage to the king, and to inform him of all that had happened and who they all really were. The king was overjoyed to think that his daughter, whom he had long since forgiven and sorely missed, was living at his gates, and was, besides, the mother of the youth who was so dear to him. 'It was written beforehand,' cried the monarch. 'You are my son-in-law before the world, and shall be king after me.'

And the man bowed his head.

He had waited; and he had won.

(From *Contes Arméniens*. Par Frédéric Macler.)

THE STEEL CANE

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Once upon a time there lived an old woman who had a small cottage on the edge of the forest. Behind the cottage was a garden in which all sorts of vegetables grew, and, beyond that, a field with two or three cows in it, so her neighbours considered her quite rich, and envied her greatly.

As long as she was strong enough to work all day in her garden the old woman never felt lonely, but after a while she had a bad illness, which left her much weaker than before, and she began to think that now and then it would be nice to have some one to speak to. Just at this moment she heard of the death of a shepherd and his wife, who dwelt on the other side of the plain, leaving a little boy quite alone in the world.

‘That will just suit me,’ she said; and sent a man over to bring the child, whom she intended to adopt for her own.

Now the boy, who was about twelve years old, ought to have considered himself very lucky, for his new mother was as kind to him as the old one. But, unfortunately, he made friends with some bad rude companions whose tricks caused them to be a terror to everyone, and the poor old woman never ceased regretting her lost solitude.

Things went on in this way for some years, till the boy became a man.

‘Perhaps, if he were to be married he might sober down,’ she thought to herself. And she inquired among the neighbours what girls there were of an age to choose from. At length one was found, good and industrious, as well as pretty; and as the young man raised no objections the wedding took place at once, and the bride and bridegroom went to live in the cottage with the old woman. But no change was to be seen in the husband’s conduct. All day long he was out amusing himself in the company of his former friends, and if his wife dared to say anything to him on his return home he beat her with his stick. And next year, when a baby was born to them, he beat it also.

At length the old woman’s patience was worn out. She saw that it was quite useless to expect the lazy, idle creature to mend his ways, and one

day she said to him:

‘Do you mean to go on like this for ever? Remember, you are no longer a boy, and it is time that you left off behaving like one. Come, shake off your bad habits, and work for your wife and child, and above all, stop beating them. If not I will transform you into an ass, and heavy loads shall be piled on your back, and men shall ride you. Briars shall be your food, a goad shall prick you, and in your turn you shall know how it feels to be beaten.’

But if she expected her words to do any good she soon found out her mistake, for the young man only grew angry and cried rudely:

‘Bah! hold your tongue or I will whip you also.’

‘*Will* you?’ she answered grimly: and, swift as lightning she picked up a steel cane that stood in the corner and laid it across his shoulders. In an instant his ears had grown long and his face longer, his arms had become legs, and his body was covered with close grey hair. Truly, he was an ass; and a very ugly one, too!

‘Leave the house!’ commanded the old woman. And, shambling awkwardly, he went.

As he was standing in the path outside, not knowing what to do, a man passed by.

‘Ho! my fine fellow, you are exactly what I was looking for! You don’t seem to have a master, so come with me. I will find something for you to do.’ And taking him by the ear he led him from the cottage.

For seven years the ass led a hard life, just as the old woman had foretold. But instead of remembering that he had brought all his suffering on himself, and being sorry for his evil ways, he grew harder, and more bitter. At the end of the seven years his ass skin wore out, and he became a man again, and one day returned to the cottage.

His wife opened the door in answer to his knock; then, letting fall the latch, she ran inside, crying:

‘Grandmother! grandmother! your son has come back!’

‘I thought he would,’ replied the old woman, going on with her spinning. ‘Well, we could have done very well without him. But as he is here I suppose he must come in.’

And come in he did. But as the old woman expected, he behaved still worse than before. For some weeks she allowed him to do what he liked;

then at last she said:

‘So experience has taught you nothing! After all, there are very few people who have sense to learn by it. But take care lest I change you into a wolf, to be a prey for dogs and men!’

‘You talk too much. I shall break your head for you!’ was all the answer she got.

Had the young man looked at her face he might have taken warning, but he was busy making a pipe, and took no notice. The next moment the steel cane had touched his shoulders, and a big grey wolf bounded through the door.

Oh! what a yapping among the dogs, and what a shouting among the neighbours as they gave chase.

For seven years he led the life of a hunted animal, often cold and nearly always hungry, and never daring to allow himself a sound sleep. At the end of that time his wolf skin wore out also, and again he appeared at the cottage door. But the second seven years had taught him no more than the first—his conduct was worse than before; and one day he beat his wife and son so brutally that they screamed to the old woman to come to their aid.

She did, and brought the steel cane with her. In a second the ruffian had vanished, and a big black crow was flying about the room, crying ‘Gour! Gour!’

The window was open, and he darted through it; and seeking the companions who had ruined him, he managed to make them understand what had happened.

‘We will avenge you,’ said they; and taking up a rope, set out to strangle the old woman.

But she was ready for them. One stroke of her cane and they were all changed into a troop of black crows, and *this* time their feathers are lasting still.

(From *Contes Arméniens*. Par Frédéric Macler.)

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE FAIRY GANGANA

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Once upon a time there lived a king and queen who ruled over a country so small that you could easily walk round it in one day. They were both very good, simple people; not very wise, perhaps, but anxious to be kind to everybody; and this was often a mistake, for the king allowed all his subjects to talk at once, and offer advice upon the government of the kingdom as well as upon private matters. And the end of it all was, that it was very difficult to get any laws made, and, still more, to get anyone to obey them.

Now, no traveller ever passed through the kingdom without inquiring how it came to be so small. And this was the reason. As soon as Petaldo (for that was the king's name) had been born, his father and mother betrothed him to the niece of their friend the fairy Gangana—if she should ever have one. But as the years passed on, and Gangana was still without a niece, the young prince forgot all about his destined bride, and when he was twenty-five he secretly married the beautiful daughter of a rich farmer, with whom he had fallen violently in love.

When the fairy heard the news she fell into a violent rage, and hurried off to tell the king. The old man thought in his heart that his son had waited quite long enough; but he did not dare to say so, lest some dreadful spell might be thrown over them all, and they should be changed into birds or snakes, or, worst of all, into stones. So, much against his will, he was obliged to disinherit the young man, and to forbid him to come to court. Indeed, he would have been a beggar had it not been for the property his wife had had given her by the farmer, which the youth obtained permission to erect into a kingdom.

Most princes would have been very angry at this treatment, especially as the old king soon died, and the queen was delighted to reign in his place. But Petaldo was a contented young man, and was quite satisfied with arranging his tiny court on the model of his father's, and having a

lord chamberlain, and a high steward and several gentlemen in attendance; while the young queen appointed her own ladies-in-waiting and maids of honour. He likewise set up a mint to coin money, and chose a seneschal as head of the five policemen who kept order in the capital and punished the boys who were caught in the act of throwing stones at the palace windows.

The first to fill this important office was the young king's father-in-law, an excellent man of the name of Caboche. He was much beloved by everyone, and so sensible that he was not at all vain at rising at once to the dignity of seneschal, when he had only been a common farmer, but went about his fields every day as usual. This conduct so struck his king that very soon he never did anything without consulting him.

Each morning Caboche and his son-in-law had breakfast together, and when they had finished, the king took out of his iron chest great bundles of state papers, which he desired to talk over with his seneschal. Sometimes they would spend two hours at least in deciding these important matters, but more often after a few minutes Caboche would say:

'Excuse me, sire, but your majesty does not understand this affair in the least. Leave it to me, and I will settle it.'

'But what am I to do, then?' asked the king. And his minister answered:

'Oh, you can rule your wife, and see after your fruit garden. You will find that those two things will take up all your time.'

'Well, perhaps you are right,' the king replied; secretly glad to be rid of the cares of government. But though Caboche did all the work, Petaldo never failed to appear on grand occasions, in his royal mantle of red linen, holding a sceptre of gilded wood. Meanwhile he passed his mornings in studying books, from which he learned the proper seasons to plant his fruit trees, and when they should be pruned; and his afternoons in his garden, where he put his knowledge into practice. In the evening he played cards with his father-in-law, and supped in public with the queen, and by ten o'clock everybody in the palace was fast asleep.

The queen, on her side, was quite as happy as her husband. She loved to be in her dairy, and nobody in the kingdom could make such delicious cheeses. But however busy she might be, she never forgot to bake a little barley cake, and make a tiny cream cheese, and to put them under a particular rose-tree in the garden. If you had asked her whom they were

for, and where they went to, she could not have told you, but would have said that on the night of her marriage a fairy had appeared to her in a dream, and had bidden her to perform this ceremony.

After the king and the queen had six children, a little boy was born, with a small red cap on his head, so that he was quite different from his brothers and sisters, and his parents loved Cadichon better than any of them.

The years went on, and the children were growing big, when, one day, after Gillette the queen had finished baking her cake, and had turned it out on a plate, a lovely blue mouse crept up the leg of the table and ran to the plate. Instead of chasing it away, as most women would have done, the queen pretended not to notice what the mouse was doing, and was much surprised to see the little creature pick up the cake and carry it off to the chimney. She sprang forwards to stop it, when, suddenly, both the mouse and cake vanished, and in their place stood an old woman only a foot high, whose clothes hung in rags about her. Taking up a sharp pointed iron stick, she drew on the earthen floor some strange signs, uttering seven cries as she did so, and murmuring something in a low voice, among which the queen was sure she caught the words, ‘faith,’ ‘wisdom,’ ‘happiness.’ Then, seizing the kitchen broom, she whirled it three times round her head, and vanished. Immediately there arose a great noise in the next room, and on opening the door, the queen beheld three large cockchafers, each one with a princess between its feet, while the princes were seated on the backs of three swallows. In the middle was a car formed of a single pink shell, and drawn by two robin redbreasts, and in this car Cadichon was sitting by the side of the blue mouse, who was dressed in a splendid mantle of black velvet fastened under her chin. Before the queen had recovered from her surprise, cockchafers, redbreasts, mouse and children had all flown, singing, to the window, and disappeared from view.

The loud shrieks of the queen brought her husband and father running into the room, and when at last they made out from her broken sentences what had really happened, they hastily snatched up some stout sticks that were lying about and set off to the rescue—one going in one direction and the other in another.

For at least an hour the queen sat sobbing where they had left her, when at last she was roused by a piece of folded paper falling at her feet.

She stooped and picked it up eagerly, hoping that it might contain some news of her lost children. It was very short, but when she had read the few words, Gillette was comforted, for it bade her take heart, as they were well and happy under the protection of a fairy. ‘On your own faith and prudence depend your happiness,’ ended the writer. ‘It is I who have all these years eaten the food you placed under the rose-tree, and some day I shall reward you for it. “Everything comes to him who knows how to wait,” is the advice given by,—The Fairy of the Fields.’

Then the queen rose up, and bathed her face, and combed her shining hair; and as she turned away from her mirror she beheld a linnet sitting on her bed. No one would have known that it was anything but a common linnet, and yesterday the queen would have thought so too. But this morning so many wonderful things had happened that she did not doubt for a moment that the writer of the letter was before her.

‘Pretty linnet,’ said she, ‘I will try to do all you wish. Only give me, I pray you, now and then, news of my little Cadichon.’

And the linnet flapped her wings and sang, and flew away. So the queen knew that she had guessed rightly, and thanked her in her heart.

By-and-by the king and his seneschal returned, hungry and tired with their fruitless search. They were amazed and rather angry to find the queen, whom they had left weeping, quite cheerful. Could she *really* care for her children so little and have forgotten them so soon? What *could* have caused this sudden change? But to all their questions Gillette would only answer: ‘Everything comes to him who knows how to wait.’

‘That is true,’ replied her father; ‘and, after all, your majesty must remember that the revenues of your kingdom would hardly bear the cost of seven princes and princesses brought up according to their rank. Be grateful, then, to those who have relieved you of the burden.’

‘You are right! You are always right!’ cried the king, whose face once more beamed with smiles. And life at the palace went on as before, till Petaldo received a piece of news which disturbed him greatly.

The queen, his mother, who had for some time been a widow, suddenly made up her mind to marry again, and her choice had fallen on the young king of the Green Isles, who was younger than her own son, and, besides, handsome and fond of pleasure, which Petaldo was not. Now the grandmother, foolish though she was in many respects, had the sense to

see that a woman as old and as plain as she was, could hardly expect a young man to fall in love with her, and that, if this was to happen, it would be needful to find some spell which would bring back her youth and beauty. Of course, the fairy Gangana could have wrought the change with one wave of her wand; but unluckily the two were no longer friends, because the fairy had tried hard to persuade the queen to declare her niece heiress to the crown, which the queen refused to do. Naturally, therefore, it was no use asking the help of Gangana to enable the queen to take a second husband, who would be certain to succeed her; and messengers were sent all over the neighbouring kingdoms, seeking to find a witch or a fairy who would work the wished-for miracle. None, however, could be found with sufficient skill, and at length the queen saw that if ever the king of the Green Isles was to be her husband she must throw herself on the mercy of the fairy Gangana.

The fairy's wrath was great when she heard the queen's story, but she knew very well that, as the king of the Green Isles had spent all his money, he would probably be ready to marry even an old woman, like her friend, in order to get more. So, in order to gain time, she hid her feelings, and told the queen that in three days the spell would be accomplished.

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Her words made the queen so happy that twenty years seemed to fall from her at once, and she counted, not only the hours, but the minutes to the appointed time. It came at last, and the fairy stood before her in a long robe of pink and silver, held up by a tiny brown dwarf, who carried a small box under his arm. The queen received her with all the marks of respect that she could think of, and at the request of Gangana, ordered the doors and windows of the great hall to be closed, and her attendants to retire, so that she and her guest might be quite alone. Then, opening the box, which was presented to her on one knee by the dwarf, the fairy took from it a small vellum book with silver clasps, a wand that lengthened out as you touched it, and a crystal bottle filled with very clear green water. She next bade the queen sit on a seat in the middle of the room, and the dwarf to stand opposite her, after which she stooped down and drew three circles round them with a golden rod, touched each of them thrice with her wand,

and sprinkled the liquid over both. Gradually the queen's big features began to grow smaller and her face fresher, while at the same time the dwarf became about twice as tall as he had been before. This sight, added to the blue flames which sprang up from the three circles, so frightened the queen that she fainted in her chair, and when she recovered, both the page and the fairy had vanished.

At first she felt vaguely puzzled, not remembering clearly what had happened; then it all came back to her, and jumping up she ran to the nearest mirror. Oh! how happy she was! Her long nose and her projecting teeth had become things of beauty, her hair was thick and curly, and bright gold. The fairy had indeed fulfilled her promise! But, in her hurry and pleasure, the queen never noticed that she had not been changed into a beautiful young lady, but into a very tall little girl of eight or nine years old! Instead of her magnificent velvet dress, edged with fur and embroidered in gold, she wore a straight muslin frock, with a little lace apron, while her hair, which was always combed and twisted and fastened with diamond pins, hung in curls down her back. But if she had only known, something besides this had befallen her, for except as regards her love for the king of the Green Isles, her mind as well as her face had become that of a child, and this her courtiers were aware of, if she was not. Of course they could not imagine what had occurred, and did not know how to behave themselves, till the chief minister set them the example by ordering his wife and daughters to copy the queen's clothes and way of speaking. Then, in a short time, the whole court, including the men, talked and dressed like children, and played with dolls, or little tin soldiers, while at the state dinners nothing was seen but iced fruits, or sweet cakes made in the shape of birds and horses. But whatever she might be doing, the queen hardly ceased talking about the king of the Green Isles, whom she always spoke of as 'my little husband,' and as weeks passed on, and he did not come, she began to get very cross and impatient, so that her courtiers kept away from her as much as they could. By this time, too, they were growing tired of pretending to be children, and whispered their intention of leaving the palace and taking service under a neighbouring sovereign, when, one day, a loud blast of trumpets announced the arrival of the long-expected guest. In an instant all was smiles again, and in spite of the strictest rules of court etiquette, the queen insisted on receiving the young

king at the bottom of the stairs. Unfortunately, in her haste, she fell over her dress, and rolled down several steps, screaming like a child, from fright. She was not really much hurt, though she had scratched her nose and bruised her forehead, but she was obliged to be carried to her room and have her face bathed in cold water. Still, in spite of this, she gave strict orders that the king should be brought to her presence the moment he entered the palace.

A shrill blast outside her door sent a twinge of pain through the queen's head, which by this time was aching badly; but in her joy at welcoming her future husband she paid no heed to it. Between two lines of courtiers, bowing low, the young king advanced quickly; but at the sight of the queen and her bandages, broke out into such violent fits of laughter that he was forced to leave the room, and even the palace.

When the queen had recovered from the vexation caused by the king's rude behaviour, she bade her attendants to hasten after him and fetch him back, but no promises or entreaties would persuade him to return. This of course made the queen's temper even worse than it was before, and a plot was set on foot to deprive her of the crown, which would certainly have succeeded had not the fairy Gangana, who had only wished to prevent her marriage, restored her to her proper shape. But, far from thanking her friend for this service, the sight of her old face in the mirror filled her with despair; and from that day she hated Gangana with a deadly hatred.

And where were Petaldo's children all this while? Why, in the island of Bambini, where they had playfellows to their hearts' content, and plenty of fairies to take care of them all. But out of all the seven princes and princesses whom the queen had seen carried off through the window, there was only Cadichon who was good and obedient; the other six were so rude and quarrelsome that they could get no one to play with them, and at last, as a punishment, the fairy changed them all into marionettes, till they should learn to behave better.

Now, in an unlucky moment, the Fairy of the Fields determined to visit her friend the queen of the fairies, who lived in a distant island, in order to consult her as to what was to become of Cadichon.

As she was entering the Hall of Audience, Gangana was leaving it, and sharp words were exchanged between them. After her enemy had flown off

in a rage, the Fairy of the Fields poured out the whole story of Gangana's wickedness to the queen, and implored her counsel.

'Be comforted,' answered the fairy queen. 'For a while she must work her will, and at this moment she is carrying off Cadichon to the island where she still holds her niece captive. But should she make an evil use of the power she has, her punishment will be swift and great. And now I will give you this precious phial. Guard it carefully, for the liquid it contains will cause you to become invisible, and safe from the piercing eyes of all fairies. Against the eyes of mortals it has no charm!'

With a heart somewhat lighter, the Fairy of the Fields returned to her own island, and, the better to protect the six new marionettes from the wicked fairy, she sprinkled them with a few drops of the liquid, only avoiding just the tips of their noses, so that she might be able to know them again. Then she set off for the kingdom of Petaldo, which she found in a state of revolt, because for the first time since he had ascended the throne he had dared to impose a tax. Indeed, matters might have ended in a war, or in cutting off the king's head, had not the fairy discovered a means of contenting everybody, and of whispering anew to the queen that all was well with her children, for she dared not tell her of the loss of Cadichon.

And what had become of Cadichon? Well, the Fairy of the Fields had found out—by means of her books, which had told her—that the poor little boy had been placed by Gangana in an enchanted island, round which flowed a rapid river, sweeping rocks and trees in its current. Besides the river, the island was guarded by twenty-four enormous dragons, breathing flames, and forming a rampart of fire which it seemed as if none could pass.

The Fairy of the Fields knew all this, but she had a brave heart, and determined that by some means or other she would overcome all obstacles, and rescue Cadichon from the power of Gangana. So, taking with her the water of invisibility, she sprinkled it over her, and mounting her favourite winged lizard, set out for the island. When it appeared in sight she wrapped herself in her fireproof mantle; then, bidding the lizard return home, she slipped past the dragons and entered the island.

Scarcely had she done so than she beheld Gangana approaching her, talking loudly and angrily to a genius who flew by her side. From what she said, the fairy learned that Petaldo's mother, the old queen, had died of

rage on hearing of the marriage of the king of the Green Isles to a young and lovely bride, and instead of leaving her kingdom to Gangana, had bequeathed it to one of the children of her son Petaldo.

‘But all the trouble I have had with that foolish old woman shall not go for nothing,’ cried Gangana. ‘Go at once to my stables, and fetch out the strongest and swiftest griffins you can find in the stalls, and harness them to the yellow coach. Drive this, with all the speed you may, to the Isle of Bambini, and carry off the six children of Petaldo that are still there. I will see to Petaldo and Gillette myself. When I have got them all safe here I will change the parents into rabbits and the children into dogs. As for Cadichon, I have not quite made up my mind what I shall do with him.’

The Fairy of the Fields did not wait to hear more. No time was to be lost in seeking the help of the fairy queen if Petaldo and his family were to be saved from this dreadful doom. So, without waiting to summon her lizard, she flew across the island and past the dragons till her feet once more touched the ground again. But at that instant a black cloud rolled over her, loud thunder rent the air, and the earth rocked beneath her. Then wild lightnings lit up the sky, and by their flashes she saw the four-and-twenty dragons fighting together, uttering shrieks and yells, till the whole earth must have heard the uproar. Trembling with terror, the fairy stood rooted to the spot; and when day broke, island, torrent, and dragons had vanished, and in their stead was a barren rock. On the summit of the rock stood a black ostrich, and on its back were seated Cadichon, and the little niece of the fairy Gangana, for whose sake she had committed so many evil deeds. While the Fairy of the Fields was gazing in surprise at this strange sight, the ostrich spread its wings and flew off in the direction of the Fortunate Isle, and, followed unseen by the good fairy, entered the great hall where the queen was sitting on her throne.

Proud and exultant was Gangana in her new shape, for, by all the laws of fairydom, if she succeeded in laying Cadichon at the feet of the queen, and received him back from her, he was in her power for life, and she might do with him as she would. This the good fairy knew well, and pressed on with all her strength, for the dreadful events of the night had almost exhausted her. But, with a mighty effort, she snatched the children away from the back of the ostrich, and placed them on the lap of the queen.

With a scream of baffled rage the ostrich turned away, and Gangana stood in her place, waiting for the doom which she had brought upon herself.

‘You have neglected all my warnings,’ said the queen, speaking more sternly than any fairy had ever heard her; ‘and my sentence is that during two hundred years you lose all your privileges as a fairy, and under the form of an ostrich shall become the slave of the lowest and wickedest of the genii whom you have made your friends. As for these children, I shall keep them with me, and they shall be brought up at my court.’

And so they were, until they grew up and were old enough to be married. Then the Fairy of the Fields took them back to the kingdom of the old queen, where Petaldo was now reigning. But the cares of state proved too heavy both for him and Gillette, after the quiet life they had led for so many years, and they were rejoiced to be able to lay aside their crowns, and place them on the heads of Cadichon and his bride, who was as good as she was beautiful, though she *was* the niece of the wicked Gangana! And so well had Cadichon learned the lessons taught him at the court of the fairy queen, that never since the kingdom *was* a kingdom had the people been so well governed or so happy. And they went about the streets and the fields smiling with joy at the difference between the old times and the new, and whispering softly to each other:

‘Everything comes to him who knows how to wait.’

(From *Le Cabinet des Fées*.)

THE SILENT PRINCESS

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Once upon a time there lived in Turkey a pasha who had only one son, and so dearly did he love this boy that he let him spend the whole day amusing himself, instead of learning how to be useful like his friends.

Now the boy's favourite toy was a golden ball, and with this he would play from morning till night, without troubling anybody. One day, as he was sitting in the summer-house in the garden, making his ball run all along the walls and catching it again, he noticed an old woman with an earthen pitcher coming to draw water from a well which stood in a corner of the garden. In a moment he had caught his ball and flung it straight at the pitcher, which fell to the ground in a thousand pieces. The old woman started with surprise, but said nothing; only turned round to fetch another pitcher, and as soon as she had disappeared, the boy hurried out to pick up his ball.

Scarcely was he back in the summer-house when he beheld the old woman a second time, approaching the well with the pitcher on her shoulder. She had just taken hold of the handle to lower it into the water, when—crash! And the pitcher lay in fragments at her feet. Of course she felt very angry, but for fear of the pasha she still held her peace, and spent her last pence in buying a fresh pitcher. But when this also was broken by a blow from the ball, her wrath burst forth, and shaking her fist towards the summer-house where the boy was hiding, she cried:

'I wish you may be punished by falling in love with the silent princess.' And having said this she vanished.

For some time the boy paid no heed to her words—indeed he forgot them altogether; but as years went by, and he began to think more about things, the remembrance of the old woman's wish came back to his mind.

'Who is the silent princess? And why should it be a punishment to fall in love with her?' he asked himself, and received no answer. However, that did not prevent him from putting the question again and again, till at length he grew so weak and ill that he could eat nothing, and in the end

was forced to lie in bed altogether. His father the pasha became so frightened by this strange disease, that he sent for every physician in the kingdom to cure him, but no one was able to find a remedy.

‘How did your illness first begin, my son?’ asked the pasha one day. ‘Perhaps, if we knew that, we should also know better what to do for you.’

Then the youth told him what had happened all those years before, when he was a little boy, and what the old woman had said to him.

‘Give me, I pray you,’ he cried, when his tale was finished, ‘give me, I pray you, leave to go into the world in search of the princess, and perhaps this evil state may cease.’ And, sore though his heart was to part from his only son, the pasha felt that the young man would certainly die if he remained at home any longer.

‘Go, and peace be with you,’ he answered; and went out to call his trusted steward, whom he ordered to accompany his young master.

Their preparations were soon made, and early one morning the two set out. But neither old man nor young had the slightest idea where they were going, or what they were undertaking. First they lost their way in a dense forest, and from that they at length emerged in a wilderness where they wandered for six months, not seeing a living creature and finding scarcely anything to eat or drink, till they became nothing but skin and bone, while their garments hung in tatters about them. They had forgotten all about the princess, and their only wish was to find themselves back in the palace again, when, one day, they discovered that they were standing on the shoulder of a mountain. The stones beneath them shone as brightly as diamonds, and both their hearts beat with joy at beholding a tiny old man approaching them. The sight awoke all manner of recollections; the numb feeling that had taken possession of them fell away as if by magic, and it was with glad voices that they greeted the new-comer. ‘Where are we, my friend?’ asked they; and the old man told them that this was the mountain where the sultan’s daughter sat, covered by seven veils, and the shining of the stones was only the reflection of her own brilliance.

On hearing this news all the dangers and difficulties of their past wandering vanished from their minds.

‘How can I reach her soonest?’ asked the youth eagerly. But the old man only answered:

‘Have patience, my son, yet awhile. Another six months must go by before you arrive at the palace where she dwells with the rest of the women. And, even so, think well, when you can, as should you fail to make her speak, you will have to pay forfeit with your life, as others have done. So beware!’

But the prince only laughed at this counsel—as others had also done.

* * * * *

After three months they found themselves on the top of another mountain, and the prince saw with surprise that its sides were coloured a beautiful red. Perched on some cliffs, not far off, was a small village, and the prince proposed to his friend that they should go and rest there. The villagers, on their part, welcomed them gladly, and gave them food to eat and beds to sleep on, and thankful indeed were the two travellers to repose their weary limbs.

The next morning they asked their host if he could tell them whether they were still many days’ journey from the princess, and whether he knew why the mountain was so much redder than other mountains.

‘For three and a half more months you must still pursue your way,’ answered he, ‘and by that time you will find yourselves at the gate of the princess’s palace. As for the colour of the mountain, that comes from the soft hue of her cheeks and mouth, which shines through the seven veils which cover her. But none have ever beheld her face, for she sits there, uttering no word, though one hears whispers of many having lost their lives for her sake.’

The prince, however, would listen no further; and thanking the man for his kindness, he jumped up and, with the steward, set out to climb the mountain.

On and on and on they went, sleeping under the trees or in caves, and living upon berries and any fish they could catch in the rivers. But at length, when their clothes were nearly in rags and their legs so tired that they could hardly walk any further, they saw on the top of the next mountain a palace of yellow marble.

‘There it is, at last,’ cried the prince; and fresh blood seemed to spring in his veins. But as he and his companion began to climb towards the top

they paused in horror, for the ground was white with dead men's skulls. It was the prince who first recovered his voice, and he said to his friend, as carelessly as he could:

'These must be the skulls of the men who tried to make the princess speak and failed. Well, if we fail too, our bones will strew the ground likewise.'

'Oh! turn back now, my prince, while there is yet time,' entreated his companion. 'Your father gave you into my charge; but when we set out I did not know that certain death lay before us.'

'Take heart, O Lala, take heart!' answered the prince. 'A man can but die once. And, besides, the princess will have to speak *some* day, you know.'

So they went on again, past skulls and dead men's bones in all degrees of whiteness. And by-and-by they reached another village, where they determined to rest for a little while, so that their wits might be fresh and bright for the task that lay before them. But this time, though the people were kind and friendly, their faces were gloomy, and every now and then woeful cries would rend the air.

'Oh! my brother, have I lost you?' 'Oh! my son, shall I see you no more?' And then, as the prince and his companion asked the meaning of these laments—which, indeed, was plain enough—the answer was given:

'Ah, you also have come hither to die! This town belongs to the father of the princess, and when any rash man seeks to move the princess to speech he must first obtain leave of the sultan. If that is granted him he is then led into the presence of the princess. What happens afterwards, perhaps the sight of these bones may help you to guess.'

The young man bowed his head in token of thanks, and stood thoughtful for a short time. Then, turning to the Lala, he said:

'Well, our destiny will soon be decided! Meanwhile we will find out all we can, and do nothing rashly.'

For two or three days they wandered about the bazaars, keeping their eyes and ears open, when, one morning, they met a man carrying a nightingale in a cage. The bird was singing so joyously that the prince stopped to listen, and at once offered to buy him from his owner.

'Oh, why cumber yourself with such a useless thing,' cried the Lala in disgust; 'have you not enough to occupy your hands and mind, without

taking an extra burden?’ But the prince, who liked having his own way, paid no heed to him, and paying the high price asked by the man, he carried the bird back to the inn, and hung him up in his chamber. That evening, as he was sitting alone, trying to think of something that would make the princess talk, and failing altogether, the nightingale pecked open her cage door, which was lightly fastened by a stick, and, perching on his shoulder, murmured softly in his ear:

‘What makes you so sad, my prince?’ The young man started. In his native country birds did not talk, and, like many people, he was always rather afraid of what he did not understand. But in a moment he felt ashamed of his folly, and explained that he had travelled for more than a year, and over thousands of miles, to win the hand of the sultan’s daughter. And now that he had reached his goal he could think of no plan to force her to speak.

‘Oh! do not trouble your head about that,’ replied the bird, ‘it is quite easy! Go this evening to the women’s apartments, and take me with you, and when you enter the princess’s private chamber hide me under the pedestal which supports the great golden candlestick. The princess herself will be wrapped so thickly in her seven veils that she can see nothing, neither can her face be seen by anyone. Then inquire after her health, but she will remain quite silent; and next say that you are sorry to have disturbed her, and that you will have a little talk with the pedestal of the candlestick. When you speak I will answer.’

The prince threw his mantle over the bird, and started for the palace, where he begged an audience of the sultan. This was soon granted him, and leaving the nightingale hidden by the mantle, in a dark corner outside the door, he walked up to the throne on which his highness was sitting, and bowed low before him.

‘What is your request?’ asked the sultan, looking closely at the young man, who was tall and handsome; but when he heard the tale he shook his head pityingly.

‘If you can make her speak she shall be your wife,’ answered he; ‘but if not—did you mark the skulls that strewed the mountain side?’

‘Some day a man is bound to break the spell, O sultan,’ replied the youth boldly; ‘and why should not I be he as well as another? At any rate, my word is pledged, and I cannot draw back now.’

‘Well, go if you must,’ said the sultan. And he bade his attendants lead the way to the chamber of the princess, but to allow the young man to enter alone.

Catching up, unseen, his mantle and the cage as they passed into the dark corridor—for by this time night was coming on—the youth found himself standing in a room bare except for a pile of silken cushions, and one tall golden candlestick. His heart beat high as he looked at the cushions, and knew that, shrouded within the shining veils that covered them, lay the much longed-for princess. Then, fearful that after all other eyes might be watching him, he hastily placed the nightingale under the open pedestal on which the candlestick was resting, and turning again he steadied his voice, and besought the princess to tell him of her well-being.

Not by even a movement of her hand did the princess show that she had heard, and the young man, who of course expected this, went on to speak of his travels and of the strange countries he had passed through; but not a sound broke the silence.

* * * * *

‘I see clearly that you are interested in none of these things,’ said he at last, ‘and as I have been forced to hold my peace for so many months, I feel that now I really *must* talk to somebody, so I shall go and address my conversation to the candlestick.’ And with that he crossed the room behind the princess, and cried: ‘O fairest of candlesticks, how are you?’

‘Very well indeed, my lord,’ answered the nightingale; ‘but I wonder how many years have gone by since any one has spoken with me. And, now that you have come, rest, I pray you, awhile, and listen to my story.’

‘Willingly,’ replied the youth, curling himself up on the floor, for there was no cushion for him to sit on.

‘Once upon a time,’ began the nightingale, ‘there lived a pasha whose daughter was the most beautiful maiden in the whole kingdom. Suitors she had in plenty, but she was not easy to please, and at length there were only three whom she felt she could even *think* of marrying. Not knowing which of the three she liked best, she took counsel with her father, who summoned the young men into his presence, and then told them that they must each of them learn some trade, and whichever of them proved the

cleverest at the end of six months should become the husband of the princess.

‘Though the three suitors may have been secretly disappointed, they could not help feeling that this test was quite fair, and left the palace together, talking as they went of what handicrafts they might set themselves to follow. The day was hot, and when they reached a spring that gushed out of the side of the mountain, they stopped to drink and rest, and then one of them said:

‘“It will be best that we should each seek our fortunes alone; so let us put our rings under this stone, and go our separate ways. And the first one who returns hither will take his ring, and the others will take theirs. Thus we shall know whether we have all fulfilled the commands of the pasha, or if some accident has befallen any of us.”

‘“Good,” replied the other two. And three rings were placed in a little hole, and carefully covered again by the stone.

‘Then they parted, and for six months they knew naught of each other, till, on the day appointed, they met at the spring. Right glad they all were, and eagerly they talked of what they had done, and how the time had been spent.

‘“I think I shall win the princess,” said the eldest, with a laugh, “for it is not everybody that is able to accomplish a whole year’s journey in an hour!”

‘“That is very clever, certainly,” answered his friend; “but if you are to govern a kingdom it may be still more useful to have the power of seeing what is happening at a distance; and that is what *I* have learnt,” replied the second.

‘“No, no, my dear comrades,” cried the third, “your trades are all very well; but when the pasha hears that I can bring back the dead to life he will know which of us three is to be his son-in-law. But come, there only remain a few hours of the six months he granted us. It is time that we hastened back to the palace.”

‘“Stop a moment,” said the second, “it would be well to know what is going on in the palace.” And plucking some small leaves from a tree near by, he muttered some words and made some signs, and laid them on his eyes. In an instant he turned pale, and uttered a cry.

‘“What is it? What is it?” exclaimed the others; and, with a shaking voice, he gasped:

‘“The princess is lying on her bed, and has barely a few minutes to live. Oh! can no one save her?”

‘“*I* can,” answered the third, taking a small box from his turban; “this ointment will cure any illness. But how to reach her in time?”

‘“Give it to me,” said the first. And he wished himself by the bedside of the princess, which was surrounded by the sultan and his weeping courtiers. Clearly there was not a second to lose, for the princess had grown unconscious, and her face cold. Plunging his finger into the ointment he touched her eyes, mouth and ears with the paste, and with beating heart awaited the result.

‘It was swifter than he supposed. As he looked the colour came back into her cheeks, and she smiled up at her father. The sultan, almost speechless with joy at this sudden change, embraced his daughter tenderly, and then turned to the young man to whom he owed her life:

‘“Are you not one of those three whom I sent forth to learn a trade six months ago?” asked he. And the young man answered yes, and that the other two were even now on their way to the palace, so that the sultan might judge between them.’

At this point in his story the nightingale stopped, and asked the prince which of the three he thought had the best right to the princess.

‘The one who had learned how to prepare the ointment,’ replied he.

‘But if it had not been for the man who could see what was happening at a distance they would never have known that the princess was ill,’ said the nightingale. ‘I would give it to *him.*’ And the strife between them waxed hot, till, suddenly, the listening princess started up from her cushions and cried:

‘Oh, you fools! cannot you understand that if it had not been for him who had power to reach the palace in time the ointment itself would have been useless, for death would have claimed her? It is he and no other who ought to have the princess!’

At the first sound of the princess’s voice, a slave, who was standing at the door, ran at full speed to tell the sultan of the miracle which had taken place, and the delighted father hastened to the spot. But by this time the princess perceived that she had fallen into a trap which had been cunningly

laid for her, and would not utter another word. All she could be prevailed on to do was to make signs to her father that the man who wished to be her husband must induce her to speak three times. And she smiled to herself beneath her seven veils as she thought of the impossibility of *that*.

When the sultan told the prince that though he had succeeded once, he would have twice to pass through the same test, the young man's face clouded over. It did not seem to him fair play, but he dared not object, so he only bowed low, and contrived to step back close to the spot where the nightingale was hidden. As it was now quite dark he tucked unseen the little cage under his cloak, and left the palace.

'Why are you so gloomy?' asked the nightingale, as soon as they were safely outside. 'Everything has gone exactly right! Of course the princess was very angry with herself for having spoken. And did you see that, at her first words, the veils that covered her began to rend? Take me back to-morrow evening, and place me on the pillar by the lattice. Fear nothing, you have only to trust to me!'

The next evening, towards sunset, the prince left the cage behind him, and with the bird in the folds of his garment slipped into the palace and made his way straight to the princess's apartments. He was at once admitted by the slaves who guarded the door, and took care to pass near the window so that the nightingale hopped unseen to the top of a pillar. Then he turned and bowed low to the princess, and asked her several questions; but, as before, she answered nothing, and, indeed, gave no sign that she heard. After a few minutes the young man bowed again, and crossing over to the window, he said:

'Oh, pillar! it is no use speaking to the princess, she will not utter one word; and as I must talk to somebody, I have come to you. Tell me how you have been all this long while?'

'I thank you,' replied a voice from the pillar, 'I am feeling very well. And it is lucky for me that the princess is silent, or else you would not have wanted to speak to me. To reward you, I will relate to you an interesting tale that I lately overheard, and about which I should like to have your opinion.'

'That will be charming,' answered the prince, 'so pray begin at once.'

'Once upon a time,' said the nightingale, 'there lived a woman who was so beautiful that every man who saw her fell in love with her. But she

was very hard to please, and refused to wed any of them, though she managed to keep friends with all. Years passed away in this manner, almost without her noticing them, and one by one the young men grew tired of waiting, and sought wives who may have been less handsome, but were also less proud, and at length only three of her former wooers remained—Baldschi, Jagdschi, and Firedschi. Still she held herself apart, thought herself better and lovelier than other women, when, on a certain evening, her eyes were opened at last to the truth. She was sitting before her mirror, combing her curls, when amongst her raven locks she found a long white hair!

‘At this dreadful sight her heart gave a jump, and then stood still.

‘“I am growing old,” she said to herself, “and if I do not choose a husband soon, I shall never get one! I know that either of those men would gladly marry me to-morrow, but I cannot decide between them. I must invent some way to find out which of them is the best, and lose no time about it.”

‘So instead of going to sleep, she thought all night long of different plans, and in the morning she arose and dressed herself.

‘“That will have to do,” she muttered as she pulled out the white hair which had cost her so much trouble. “It is not very good, but I can think of nothing better; and—well, they are none of them clever, and I dare say they will easily fall into the trap.” Then she called her slave and bade her let Jagdschi know that she would be ready to receive him in an hour’s time. After that she went into the garden and dug a grave under a tree, by which she laid a white shroud.

‘Jagdschi was delighted to get the gracious message; and, putting on his newest garments, he hastened to the lady’s house, but great was his dismay at finding her stretched on her cushions, weeping bitterly.

‘“What is the matter, O Fair One?” he asked, bowing low before her.

‘“A terrible thing has happened,” said she, her voice choked with sobs. “My father died two nights ago, and I buried him in my garden. But now I find that he was a wizard, and was not dead at all, for his grave is empty and he is wandering about somewhere in the world.”

‘“That is evil news indeed,” answered Jagdschi; “but can I do nothing to comfort you?”

‘“There is one thing you can do,” replied she, “and that is to wrap yourself in the shroud and lay yourself in the grave. If he should not return till after three hours have elapsed he will have lost his power over me, and be forced to go and wander elsewhere.”

‘Now Jagdschi was proud of the trust reposed in him, and wrapping himself in the shroud, he stretched himself at full length in the grave. After some time Baldschi arrived in his turn, and found the lady groaning and lamenting. She told him that her father had been a wizard, and that in case, as was very likely, he should wish to leave his grave and come to work her evil, Baldschi was to take a stone and be ready to crush in his head, if he showed signs of moving.

‘Baldschi, enchanted at being able to do his lady a service, picked up a stone, and seated himself by the side of the grave wherein lay Jagdschi.

‘Meanwhile the hour arrived in which Firedschi was accustomed to pay his respects, and, as in the case of the other two, he discovered the lady overcome with grief. To him she said that a wizard who was an enemy of her father’s had thrown the dead man out of his grave, and had taken his place. “But,” she added, “if you can bring the wizard into my presence, all his power will go from him; if not, then I am lost.”

‘“Ah, lady, what is there that I would not do for you!” cried Firedschi; and running down to the grave, he seized the astonished Jagdschi by the waist, and flinging the body over his shoulder, he hastened with him into the house. At the first moment Baldschi was so surprised at this turn of affairs, for which the lady had not prepared him, that he sat still and did nothing. But by-and-by he sprang up and hurled the stone after the two flying figures, hoping that it might kill them both. Fortunately it touched neither, and soon all three were in the presence of the lady. Then Jagdschi, thinking that he had delivered her from the power of the wizard, slid off the back of Firedschi, and threw the shroud from him.’

‘Tell me, my prince,’ said the nightingale, when he had finished his story, ‘which of the three men deserved to win the lady? I myself should choose Firedschi.’

‘No, no,’ answered the prince, who understood the wink the bird had given him; ‘it was Baldschi who took the most trouble, and it was certainly he who deserved the lady.’

But the nightingale would not agree; and they began to quarrel, till a third voice broke in:

‘How can you talk such nonsense?’ cried the princess—and as she spoke a sound of tearing was heard. ‘Why, you have never even thought of Jagdschi, who lay for three hours in the grave, with a stone held over his head! Of course it was *he* whom the lady chose for her husband!’

* * * * *

It was not many minutes before the news reached the sultan; but even now he would not consent to the marriage till his daughter had spoken a third time. On hearing this, the young man took counsel with the nightingale how best to accomplish this, and the bird told him that as the princess, in her fury at having fallen into the snare laid for her, had ordered the pillar to be broken in pieces, he must be hidden in the folds of a curtain that hung by the door.

The following evening the prince entered the palace, and walked boldly up to the princess’s apartments. As he entered the nightingale flew from under his arm and perched himself on top of the door, where he was entirely concealed by the folds of the dark curtain. The young man talked as usual to the princess without obtaining a single word in reply, and at length he left her lying under the heap of shining veils—now rent in many places—and crossed the room towards the door, from which came a voice that gladly answered him.

For a while the two talked together: then the nightingale asked if the prince was fond of stories, as he had lately heard one which interested and perplexed him greatly. In reply, the prince begged that he might hear it at once, and without further delay the nightingale began:

‘Once upon a time, a carpenter, a tailor, and a student set out together to see the world. After wandering about for some months they grew tired of travelling, and resolved to stay and rest in a small town that took their fancy. So they hired a little house, and looked about for work to do, returning at sunset to smoke their pipes and talk over the events of the day.

‘One night in the middle of summer it was hotter than usual, and the carpenter found himself unable to sleep. Instead of tossing about on his cushions, making himself more uncomfortable than he was already, the

man wisely got up and drank some coffee and lit his long pipe. Suddenly his eye fell on some pieces of wood in a corner and, being very clever with his fingers, he had soon set up a perfect statue of a girl about fourteen years old. This so pleased and quieted him that he grew quite drowsy, and going back to bed fell fast asleep.

‘But the carpenter was not the only person who lay awake that night. Thunder was in the air, and the tailor became so restless that he thought he would go downstairs and cool his feet in the little fountain outside the garden door. To reach the door he had to pass through the room where the carpenter had sat and smoked, and against the wall he beheld standing a beautiful girl. He stood speechless for an instant before he ventured to touch her hand, when, to his amazement, he found that she was fashioned out of wood.

‘“Ah! I can make you more beautiful still,” said he. And fetching from a shelf a roll of yellow silk which he had bought that day from a merchant, he cut and draped and stitched, till at length a lovely robe clothed the slender figure. When this was finished, the restlessness had departed from him, and he went back to bed.

‘As dawn approached the student arose and prepared to go to the mosque with the first ray of sunlight. But, when he saw the maiden standing there, he fell on his knees and lifted his hands in ecstasy.

‘“Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air, clad in the beauty of ten thousand stars,” he murmured to himself. “Surely a form so rare was never meant to live without a soul.” And forthwith he prayed with all his might that life should be breathed into it.

‘And his prayer was heard, and the beautiful statue became a living girl, and the three men all fell in love with her, and each desired to have her to wife.

‘Now,’ said the nightingale, ‘to which of them did the maiden really belong? It seems to me that the carpenter had the best right to her.’

‘Oh, but the student would never have thought of praying that she might be given a soul had not the tailor drawn attention to her loveliness by the robe which he put upon her,’ answered the prince, who guessed what he was expected to say: and they soon set up quite a pretty quarrel. Suddenly the princess, furious that neither of them alluded to the part played by the student, quite forgot her vow of silence and cried loudly:

‘Idiots that you are! how could she belong to any one but the student? If it had not been for him, all that the others did would have gone for nothing! Of course it was he who married the maiden!’ And as she spoke the seven veils fell from her, and she stood up, the fairest princess that the world has ever seen.

‘You have won me,’ she said smiling, holding out her hand to the prince.

And so they were married: and after the wedding-feast was over they sent for the old woman whose pitcher the prince had broken so long ago, and she dwelt in the palace, and became nurse to their children, and lived happily till she died.

(Adapted from *Türkische Volksmärchen aus Stambul gesammelt, übersetzt und eingeleitet* von Dr. Ignaz Künos. Brill, Leiden.)

THE LILAC FAIRY BOOK

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PREFACE

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‘What cases are you engaged in at present?’ ‘Are you stopping many teeth just now?’ ‘What people have you converted lately?’ Do ladies put these questions to the men—lawyers, dentists, clergymen, and so forth—who happen to sit next them at dinner parties?

I do not know whether ladies thus indicate their interest in the occupations of their casual neighbours at the hospitable board. But if they do not know me, or do not know me well, they generally ask ‘Are you writing anything now?’ (as if they should ask a painter ‘Are you painting anything now?’ or a lawyer ‘Have you any cases at present?’). Sometimes they are more definite and inquire ‘What are you writing now?’ as if I must be writing something—which, indeed, is the case, though I dislike being reminded of it. It is an awkward question, because the fair being does not care a bawbee what I am writing; nor would she be much enlightened if I replied ‘Madam, I am engaged on a treatise intended to prove that Normal is prior to Conceptional Totemism’—though that answer would be as true in fact as obscure in significance. The best plan seems to be to answer that I have entirely abandoned mere literature, and am contemplating a book on ‘The Causes of Early Blight in the Potato,’ a melancholy circumstance which threatens to deprive us of our chief esculent root. The inquirer would never be undeceived. One nymph who, like the rest, could not keep off the horrid topic of my occupation, said ‘You never write anything but fairy books, do you?’ A French gentleman, too, an educationist and expert in portraits of Queen Mary, once sent me a newspaper article in which he had written that I was exclusively devoted to the composition of fairy books, and nothing else. He then came to England, visited me, and found that I knew rather more about portraits of Queen Mary than he did.

In truth I never did write any fairy books in my life, except ‘Prince Prigio,’ ‘Prince Ricardo,’ and ‘Tales from a Fairy Court’—that of the aforesaid Prigio. I take this opportunity of recommending these fairy

books—poor things, but my own—to parents and guardians who may never have heard of them. They are rich in romantic adventure, and the Princes always marry the right Princesses and live happy ever afterwards; while the wicked witches, stepmothers, tutors and governesses are never cruelly punished, but retire to the country on ample pensions. I hate cruelty: I never put a wicked stepmother in a barrel and send her tobogganing down a hill. It is true that Prince Ricardo did kill the Yellow Dwarf; but that was in fair fight, sword in hand, and the dwarf, peace to his ashes! died in harness.

The object of these confessions is not only that of advertising my own fairy books (which are not ‘out of print’; if your bookseller says so, the truth is not in him), but of giving credit where credit is due. The fairy books have been almost wholly the work of Mrs. Lang, who has translated and adapted them from the French, German, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, and other languages.

My part has been that of Adam, according to Mark Twain, in the Garden of Eden. Eve worked, Adam superintended. I also superintend. I find out where the stories are, and advise, and, in short, superintend. I do not write the stories out of my own head. The reputation of having written all the fairy books (an European reputation in nurseries and the United States of America) is ‘the burden of an honour unto which I was not born.’ It weighs upon and is killing me, as the general fash of being the wife of the Lord of Burleigh, Burleigh House by Stamford Town, was too much for the village maiden espoused by that peer.

Nobody really wrote most of the stories. People told them in all parts of the world long before Egyptian hieroglyphics or Cretan signs or Cyprian syllabaries, or alphabets were invented. They are older than reading and writing, and arose like wild flowers before men had any education to quarrel over. The grannies told them to the grandchildren, and when the grandchildren became grannies they repeated the same old tales to the new generation. Homer knew the stories and made up the ‘Odyssey’ out of half a dozen of them. All the history of Greece till about 800 B.C. is a string of the fairy tales, all about Theseus and Heracles and Oedipus and Minos and Perseus is a Cabinet des Fes, a collection of fairy tales. Shakespeare took them and put bits of them into ‘King Lear’ and other plays; he could not have made them up himself, great as he was. Let ladies

and gentlemen think of this when they sit down to write fairy tales, and have them nicely typed, and send them to Messrs. Longman & Co. to be published. They think that to write a new fairy tale is easy work. They are mistaken: the thing is impossible. Nobody can write a new fairy tale; you can only mix up and dress up the old, old stories, and put the characters into new dresses, as Miss Thackeray did so well in ‘Five Old Friends.’ If any big girl of fourteen reads this preface, let her insist on being presented with ‘Five Old Friends.’

But the three hundred and sixty-five authors who try to write new fairy tales are very tiresome. They always begin with a little boy or girl who goes out and meets the fairies of polyanthuses and gardenias and apple blossoms: ‘Flowers and fruits, and other winged things.’ These fairies try to be funny, and fail; or they try to preach, and succeed. Real fairies never preach or talk slang. At the end, the little boy or girl wakes up and finds that he has been dreaming.

Such are the new fairy stories. May we be preserved from all the sort of them!

Our stories are almost all old, some from Ireland, before that island was as celebrated for her wrongs as for her verdure; some from Asia, made, I dare say, before the Aryan invasion; some from Moydart, Knoydart, Morar and Ardnamurchan, where the sea streams run like great clear rivers and the saw-edged hills are blue, and men remember Prince Charlie. Some are from Portugal, where the golden fruits grow in the Garden of the Hesperides; and some are from wild Wales, and were told at Arthur’s Court; and others come from the firesides of the kinsmen of the Welsh, the Bretons. There are also modern tales by a learned Scandinavian named Topelius.

All the stories were translated or adapted by Mrs. Lang, except ‘The Jogi’s Punishment’ and ‘Moti,’ done by Major Campbell out of the Pushtoo language; ‘How Brave Walter hunted Wolves,’ which, with ‘Little Lasse’ and ‘The Raspberry Worm,’ was done from Topelius by Miss Harding; and ‘The Sea King’s Gift,’ by Miss Christie, from the same author.

It has been suggested to the Editor that children and parents and guardians would like ‘The Grey True Ghost-Story Book.’ He knows that the children would like it well, and he would gladly give it to them; but

about the taste of fond anxious mothers and kind aunts he is not quite so certain. Before he was twelve the Editor knew true ghost stories enough to fill a volume. They were a pure joy till bedtime, but then, and later, were not wholly a source of unmixed pleasure. At that time the Editor was not afraid of the dark, for he thought, ‘If a ghost is here, we can’t see him.’ But when older and better informed persons said that ghosts brought their own light with them (which is too true), then one’s emotions were such as parents do not desire the young to endure. For this reason ‘The Grey True Ghost-Story Book’ is never likely to be illustrated by Mr. Ford.

THE SHIFTY LAD

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In the land of Erin there dwelt long ago a widow who had an only son. He was a clever boy, so she saved up enough money to send him to school, and, as soon as he was old enough, to apprentice him to any trade that he would choose. But when the time came, he said he would not be bound to any trade, and that he meant to be a thief.

Now his mother was very sorrowful when she heard of this, but she knew quite well that if she tried to stop his having his own way he would only grow more determined to get it. So all the answer she made was that the end of thieves was hanging at the bridge of Dublin, and then she left him alone, hoping that when he was older he might become more sensible.

One day she was going to church to hear a sermon from a great preacher, and she begged the Shifty Lad, as the neighbours called him from the tricks he played, to come with her. But he only laughed and declared that he did not like sermons, adding:

‘However, I will promise you this, that the first trade you hear named after you come out from church shall be my trade for the rest of my life.’

These words gave a little comfort to the poor woman, and her heart was lighter than before as she bade him farewell.

When the Shifty Lad thought that the hour had nearly come for the sermon to be over, he hid himself in some bushes in a little path that led straight to his mother’s house, and, as she passed along, thinking of all the good things she had heard, a voice shouted close to her ear ‘Robbery! Robbery! Robbery!’ The suddenness of it made her jump. The naughty boy had managed to change his voice, so that she did not know it for his, and he had concealed himself so well that, though she peered about all round her, she could see no one. As soon as she had turned the corner the Shifty Lad came out, and by running very fast through the wood he contrived to reach home before his mother, who found him stretched out comfortably before the fire.

‘Well, have you got any news to tell me?’ asked he.

‘No, nothing; for I left the church at once, and did not stop to speak to anyone.’

‘Oh, then no one has mentioned a trade to you?’ he said in tones of disappointment.

‘Ye—es,’ she replied slowly. ‘At least, as I walked down the path a voice cried out “Robbery! Robbery! Robbery!” but that was all.’

‘And quite enough too,’ answered the boy. ‘What did I tell you? That is going to be my trade.’

‘Then your end will be hanging at the bridge of Dublin,’ said she. But there was no sleep for her that night, for she lay in the dark thinking about her son.

‘If he is to be a thief at all, he had better be a good one. And who is there that can teach him?’ the mother asked herself. But an idea came to her, and she arose early, before the sun was up, and set off for the home of the Black Rogue, or Gallows Bird, who was such a wonderful thief that, though all had been robbed by him, no one could catch him.

‘Good-morning to you,’ said the woman as she reached the place where the Black Gallows Bird lived when he was not away on his business. ‘My son has a fancy to learn your trade. Will you be kind enough to teach him?’

‘If he is clever, I don’t mind trying,’ answered the Black Gallows Bird; ‘and, of course, if ANY one can turn him into a first-rate thief, it is I. But if he is stupid, it is of no use at all; I can’t bear stupid people.’

‘No, he isn’t stupid,’ said the woman with a sigh. ‘So to-night, after dark, I will send him to you.’

The Shifty Lad jumped for joy when his mother told him where she had been.

‘I will become the best thief in all Erin!’ he cried, and paid no heed when his mother shook her head and murmured something about ‘the bridge of Dublin.’

Every evening after dark the Shifty Lad went to the home of the Black Gallows Bird, and many were the new tricks he learned. By-and-by he was allowed to go out with the Bird and watch him at work, and at last there came a day when his master though that he had grown clever enough to help in a big robbery.

‘There is a rich farmer up there on the hill, who has just sold all his fat cattle for much money and has bought some lean ones which will cost him little. Now it happens that, while he has received the money for the fat cattle, he has not yet paid the price of the thin ones, which he has in the cowhouse. To-morrow he will go to the market with the money in his hand, so to-night we must get at the chest. When all is quiet we will hide in the loft.’

There was no moon, and it was the night of Hallowe’en, and everyone was burning nuts and catching apples in a tub of water with their hands tied, and playing all sorts of other games, till the Shifty Lad grew quite tired of waiting for them to get to bed. The Black Gallows Bird, who was more accustomed to the business, tucked himself up on the hay and went to sleep, telling the boy to wake him when the merry-makers had departed. But the Shifty Lad, who could keep still no longer, crept down to the cowshed and loosened the heads of the cattle which were tied, and they began to kick each other and bellow, and made such a noise that the company in the farmhouse ran out to tie them up again. Then the Shifty Lad entered the room and picked up a big handful of nuts, and returned to the loft, where the Black Rogue was still sleeping. At first the Shifty Lad shut his eyes too, but very soon he sat up, and taking a big needle and thread from his pocket, he sewed the hem of the Black Gallows Bird’s coat to a heavy piece of bullock’s hide that was hanging at his back.

By this time the cattle were all tied up again, but as the people could not find their nuts they sat round the fire and began to tell stories.

‘I will crack a nut,’ said the Shifty Lad.

‘You shall not,’ cried the Black Gallows Bird; ‘they will hear you.’

‘I don’t care,’ answered the Shifty Lad. ‘I never spend Hallowe’en yet without cracking a nut’; and he cracked one.

‘Some one is cracking nuts up there,’ said one of the merry-makers in the farmhouse. ‘Come quickly, and we will see who it is.’

He spoke loudly, and the Black Gallows Bird heard, and ran out of the loft, dragging the big leather hide after him which the Shifty Lad had sewed to his coat.

‘He is stealing my hide!’ shouted the farmer, and they all darted after him; but he was too swift for them, and at last he managed to tear the hide from his coat, and then he flew like a hare till he reached his old hiding-

place. But all this took a long time, and meanwhile the Shifty Lad got down from the loft, and searched the house till he found the chest with the gold and silver in it, concealed behind a load of straw and covered with loaves of bread and a great cheese. The Shifty Lad slung the money bags round his shoulders and took the bread and the cheese under his arm, then set out quietly for the Black Rogue's house.

'Here you are at last, you villain!' cried his master in great wrath. 'But I will be revenged on you.'

'It is all right,' replied the Shifty Lad calmly. 'I have brought what you wanted'; and he laid the things he was carrying down on the ground.

'Ah! you are the better thief,' said the Black Rogue's wife; and the Black Rogue added:

'Yes, it is you who are the clever boy'; and they divided the spoil and the Black Gallows Bird had one half and the Shifty Lad the other half.

A few weeks after that the Black Gallows Bird had news of a wedding that was to be held near the town; and the bridegroom had many friends and everybody sent him a present. Now a rich farmer who lived up near the moor thought that nothing was so useful to a young couple when they first began to keep house as a fine fat sheep, so he bade his shepherd go off to the mountain where the flock were feeding, and bring him back the best he could find. And the shepherd chose out the largest and fattest of the sheep and the one with the whitest fleece; then he tied its feet together and put it across his shoulder, for he had a long way to go.

That day, the Shifty Lad happened to be wandering over the moor, when he saw the man with the sheep on his shoulder walking along the road which led past the Black Rogue's house. The sheep was heavy and the man was in no hurry, so he came slowly and the boy knew that he himself could easily get back to his master before the shepherd was even in sight.

'I will wager,' he cried, as he pushed quickly through the bushes which hid the cabin—'I will wager that I will steal the sheep from the man that is coming before he passes here.'

'Will you indeed?' said the Gallows Bird. 'I will wager you a hundred silver pieces that you can do nothing of the sort.'

'Well, I will try it, anyway,' replied the boy, and disappeared in the bushes. He ran fast till he entered a wood through which the shepherd must go, and then he stopped, and taking off one of his shoes smeared it with

mud and set it in the path. When this was done he slipped behind a rock and waited.

Very soon the man came up, and seeing the shoe lying there, he stooped and looked at it.

‘It is a good shoe,’ he said to himself, ‘but very dirty. Still, if I had the fellow, I would be at the trouble of cleaning it’; so he threw the shoe down again and went on.

The Shifty Lad smiled as he heard him, and, picking up the shoe, he crept round by a short way and laid the other shoe on the path. A few minutes after the shepherd arrived, and beheld the second shoe lying on the path.

‘Why, that is the fellow of the dirty shoe!’ he exclaimed when he saw it. ‘I will go back and pick up the other one, and then I shall have a pair of good shoes,’ and he put the sheep on the grass and returned to fetch the shoe. Then the Shifty Lad put on his shoes, and, picking up the sheep, carried it home. And the Black Rogue paid him the hundred marks of his wager.

When the shepherd reached the farmhouse that night he told his tale to his master, who scolded him for being stupid and careless, and bade him go the next day to the mountain and fetch him a kid, and he would send that as a wedding gift. But the Shifty Lad was on the look-out, and hid himself in the wood, and the moment the man drew near with the kid on his shoulders began to bleat like a sheep, and no one, not even the sheep’s own mother, could have told the difference.

‘Why, it must have got its feet loose, and have strayed after all,’ thought the man; and he put the kid on the grass and hurried off in the direction of the bleating. Then the boy ran back and picked up the kid, and took it to the Black Gallows Bird.

The shepherd could hardly believe his eyes when he returned from seeking the sheep and found that the kid had vanished. He was afraid to go home and tell the same tale that he had told yesterday; so he searched the wood through and through till night was nearly come. Then he felt that there was no help for it, and he must go home and confess to his master.

Of course, the farmer was very angry at this second misfortune; but this time he told him to drive one of the big bulls from the mountain, and warned him that if he lost THAT he would lose his place also. Again the

Shifty Lad, who was on the watch, perceived him pass by, and when he saw the man returning with the great bull he cried to the Black Rogue:

‘Be quick and come into the wood, and we will try to get the bull also.’

‘But how can we do that?’ asked the Black Rogue.

‘Oh, quite easily! You hide yourself out there and baa like a sheep, and I will go in the other direction and bleat like a kid. It will be all right, I assure you.’

The shepherd was walking slowly, driving the bull before him, when he suddenly heard a loud baa amongst the bushes far away on one side of the path, and a feeble bleat answering it from the other side.

‘Why, it must be the sheep and the kid that I lost,’ said he. ‘Yes, surely it must’; and tying the bull hastily to a tree, he went off after the sheep and the kid, and searched the wood till he was tired. Of course by the time he came back the two thieves had driven the bull home and killed him for meat, so the man was obliged to go to his master and confess that he had been tricked again.

After this the Black Rogue and the Shifty Lad grew bolder and bolder, and stole great quantities of cattle and sold them and grew quite rich. One day they were returning from the market with a large sum of money in their pockets when they passed a gallows erected on the top of a hill.

‘Let us stop and look at that gallows,’ exclaimed the Shifty Lad. ‘I have never seen one so close before. Yet some say that it is the end of all thieves.’

There was no one in sight, and they carefully examined every part of it.

‘I wonder how it feels to be hanged,’ said the Shifty Lad. ‘I should like to know, in case they ever catch me. I’ll try first, and then you can do so.’

As he spoke he fastened the loose cord about his neck, and when it was quite secure he told the Black Rogue to take the other end of the rope and draw him up from the ground.

‘When I am tired of it I will shake my legs, and then you must let me down,’ said he.

The Black Rogue drew up the rope, but in half a minute the Shifty Lad’s legs began to shake, and he quickly let it down again.

‘You can’t imagine what a funny feeling hanging gives you,’ murmured the Shifty Lad, who looked rather purple in the face and spoke in an odd voice. ‘I don’t think you have every tried it, or you wouldn’t

have let me go up first. Why, it is the pleasantest thing I have ever done. I was shaking my legs from sheer delight, and if you had been there you would have shaken your legs too.'

'Well, let me try, if it is so nice,' answered the Black Rogue. 'But be sure you tie the knot securely, for I don't want to fall down and break my neck.'

'Oh, I will see to that!' replied the Shifty Lad. 'When you are tired, just whistle, and I'll let you down.'

So the Black Rogue was drawn up, and as soon as he was as high as the rope would allow him to go the Shifty Lad called to him:

'Don't forest to whistle when you want to come down; but if you are enjoying yourself as I did, shake your legs.'

And in a moment the Black Rogue's legs began to shake and to kick, and the Shifty Lad stood below, watching him and laughing heartily.

'Oh, how funny you are! If you could only see yourself! Oh, you ARE funny! But when you have had enough, whistle and you shall be let down'; and he rocked again with laughter.

But no whistle came, and soon the legs ceased to shake and to kick, for the Black Gallows Bird was dead, as the Shifty Lad intended he should be.

Then he went home to the Black Rogue's wife, and told her that her husband was dead, and that he was ready to marry her if she liked. But the woman had been fond of the Black Rogue, thief though he was, and she shrank from the Shifty Lad in horror, and set the people after him, and he had to fly to another part of the country where none knew of his doings.

Perhaps if the Shifty Lad's mother knew anything of this, she may have thought that by this time her son might be tired of stealing, and ready to try some honest trade. But in reality he loved the tricks and danger, and life would have seemed very dull without them. So he went on just as before, and made friends whom he taught to be as wicked as himself, till they took to robbing the king's storehouses, and by the advice of the Wise Man the king sent out soldiers to catch the band of thieves.

For a long while they tried in vain to lay hands on them. The Shifty Lad was too clever for them all, and if they laid traps he laid better ones. At last one night he stole upon some soldiers while they were asleep in a barn and killed them, and persuaded the villagers that if THEY did not kill the other soldiers before morning they would certainly be killed

themselves. Thus it happened that when the sun rose not a single soldier was alive in the village.

Of course this news soon reached the king's ears, and he was very angry, and summoned the Wise Man to take counsel with him. And this was the counsel of the Wise Man—that he should invite all the people in the countryside to a ball, and among them the bold and impudent thief would be sure to come, and would be sure to ask the king's daughter to dance with him.

'Your counsel is good,' said the king, who made his feast and prepared for his ball; and all the people of the countryside were present, and the Shifty Lad came with them.

When everyone had eaten and drunk as much as they wanted they went into the ballroom. There was a great throng, and while they were pressing through the doorway the Wise Man, who had a bottle of black ointment hidden in his robes, placed a tiny dot on the cheek of the Shifty Lad near his ear. The Shifty Lad felt nothing, but as he approached the king's daughter to ask her to be his partner he caught sight of the black dot in a silver mirror. Instantly he guessed who had put it there and why, but he said nothing, and danced so beautifully that the princess was quite delighted with him. At the end of the dance he bowed low to his partner and left her, to mingle with the crowd that was filling the doorway. As he passed the Wise Man he contrived not only to steal the bottle but to place two black dots on his face, and one on the faces of twenty other men. Then he slipped the bottle back in the Wise Man's robe.

By-and-by he went up to the king's daughter again, and begged for the honour of another dance. She consented, and while he was stooping to tie the ribbons on his shoe she took out from her pocket another bottle, which the Wizard had given her, and put a black dot on his cheek. But she was not as skilful as the Wise Man, and the Shifty Lad felt the touch of her fingers; so as soon as the dance was over he contrived to place a second black dot on the faces of the twenty men and two more on the Wizard, after which he slipped the bottle into her pocket.

At length the ball came to an end, and then the king ordered all the doors to be shut, and search made for a man with two black dots on his cheek. The chamberlain went among the guests, and soon found such a man, but just as he was going to arrest him and bring him before the king

his eye fell on another with the same mark, and another, and another, till he had counted twenty—besides the Wise Man—on whose face were found spots.

Not knowing what to do, the chamberlain hurried back with his tale to the king, who immediately sent for the Wise Man, and then for his daughter.

‘The thief must have stolen your bottle,’ said the king to the Wizard.

‘No, my lord, it is here,’ answered the Wise Man, holding it out.

‘Then he must have got yours,’ he cried, turning to his daughter.

‘Indeed, father, it is safe in my pocket,’ replied she, taking it out as she spoke; and they all three looked at each other and remained silent.

‘Well,’ said the king at last, ‘the man who has done this is cleverer than most men, and if he will make himself known to me he shall marry the princess and govern half my kingdom while I am alive, and the whole of it when I am dead. Go and announce this in the ballroom,’ he added to an attendant, ‘and bring the fellow hither.’

So the attendant went into the ballroom and did as the king had bidden him, when, to his surprise, not one man, but twenty, stepped forward, all with black dots on their faces.

‘I am the person you want,’ they all exclaimed at once, and the attendant, as much bewildered as the chamberlain had been, desired them to follow him into the king’s presence.

But the question was too difficult for the king to decide, so he called together his council. For hours they talked, but to no purpose, and in the end they hit upon a plan which they might just as well have thought of at the beginning.

And this was the plan. A child was to be brought to the palace, and next the king’s daughter would give her an apple. Then the child was to take the apple and be led into a room where the twenty men with the black dots were sitting in a ring. And to whomsoever the child gave the apple, that man should marry the king’s daughter.

‘Of course,’ said the king, ‘it may not be the right man, after all, but then again it MAY be. Anyhow, it is the best we can do.’

The princess herself led the child into the room where the twenty men were now seated. She stood in the centre of the ring for a moment, looking at one man after another, and then held out the apple to the Shifty Lad,

who was twisting a shaving of wood round his finger, and had the mouthpiece of a bagpipe hanging from his neck.

‘You ought not to have anything which the others have not got,’ said the chamberlain, who had accompanied the princess; and he bade the child stand outside for a minute, while he took away the shaving and the mouthpiece, and made the Shifty Lad change his place. Then he called the child in, but the little girl knew him again, and went straight up to him with the apple.

‘This is the man whom the child has twice chosen,’ said the chamberlain, signing to the Shifty Lad to kneel before the king. ‘It was all quite fair; we tried it twice over.’ In this way the Shifty Lad won the king’s daughter, and they were married the next day.

A few days later the bride and bridegroom were taking a walk together, and the path led down to the river, and over the river was a bridge.

‘And what bridge may this be?’ asked the Shifty Lad; and the princess told him that this was the bridge of Dublin.

‘Is it indeed?’ cried he. ‘Well, now, many is the time that my mother has said, when I played her a trick, that my end would be that I should hang on the bridge of Dublin.’

‘Oh, if you want to fulfil her prophecies,’ laughed the princess, ‘you have only to let me tie my handkerchief round your ankle, and I will hold you as you hang over the wall of the bridge.’

‘That would be fine fun,’ said he; ‘but you are not strong enough to hold me up.’

‘Oh, yes, I am,’ said the princess; ‘just try.’ So at last he let her bind the handkerchief round his ankle and hang him over the wall, and they both laughed and jested at the strength of the princess.

‘Now pull me up again,’ called he; but as he spoke a great cry arose that the palace was burning. The princess turned round with a start, and let go her handkerchief, and the Shifty Lad fell, and struck his head on a stone, and died in an instant.

So his mother’s prophecy had come true, after all.

West Highland Tales.

THE FALSE PRINCE AND THE TRUE

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The king had just awakened from his midday sleep, for it was summer, and everyone rose early and rested from twelve to three, as they do in hot countries. He had dressed himself in cool white clothes, and was passing through the hall on his way to the council chamber, when a number of young nobles suddenly appeared before him, and one amongst them stepped forward and spoke.

‘Sire, this morning we were all playing tennis in the court, the prince and this gentleman with the rest, when there broke out some dispute about the game. The prince lost his temper, and said many insulting things to the other, who was playing against him, till at length the gentleman whom you see there struck him violently in the face, so that the blood ran from his mouth and nose. We were all so horrified at the sight, that we should most likely have killed the man then and there, for daring to lay hands on the prince, had not his grandfather the duke stepped between and commanded us to lay the affair before you.’

The king had listened attentively to the story, and when it was ended he said:

‘I suppose the prince had no arms with him, or else he would have used them?’

‘Yes, sire, he had arms; he always carries a dagger in his belt. But when he saw the blood pouring from his face, he went to a corner of the court and began to cry, which was the strangest thing of all.’

On hearing this the king walked to the window and stood for a few minutes with his back to the room, where the company of young men remained silent. Then he came back, his face white and stern.

‘I tell you,’ he said, ‘and it is the solemn truth, that I would rather you had told me that the prince was dead, though he is my only son, than know that he would suffer such an injury without attempting to avenge it. As for the gentleman who struck him, he will be brought before my judges, and

will plead his own cause, but I hardly think he can escape death, after having assaulted the heir to the crown.'

The young man raised his head as if to reply, but the king would not listen, and commanded his guards to put him under arrest, adding, however, that if the prisoner wished to visit any part of the city, he was at liberty to do so properly guarded, and in fifteen days he would be brought to trial before the highest judges in the land.

The young man left the king's presence, surrounded by soldiers, and accompanied by many of his friends, for he was a great favourite. By their advice he spent the fourteen days that remained to him going about to seek counsel from wise men of all sorts, as to how he might escape death, but no one could help him, for none could find any excuse for the blow he had given to the prince.

The fourteenth night had come, and in despair the prisoner went out to take his last walk through the city. He wandered on hardly knowing where he went, and his face was so white and desperate that none of his companions dared speak to him. The sad little procession had passed some hours in this manner, when, near the gate of a monastery, an old woman appeared round a corner, and suddenly stood before the young man. She was bent almost double, and was so wizened and wrinkled that she looked at least ninety; only her eyes were bright and quick as those of a girl.

'Sir,' she said, 'I know all that has happened to you, and how you are seeking if in any wise you can save your life. But there is none that can answer that question save only I myself, if you will promise to do all I ask.'

At her words the prisoner felt as if a load had all at once been rolled off him.

'Oh, save me, and I will do anything!' he cried. 'It is so hard to leave the world and go out into the darkness.'

'You will not need to do that,' answered the old woman, 'you have only got to marry me, and you will soon be free.'

'Marry you?' exclaimed he, 'but—but—I am not yet twenty, and you —why, you must be a hundred at least! Oh, no, it is quite impossible.'

He spoke without thinking, but the flash of anger which darted from her eyes made him feel uncomfortable. However, all she said was:

‘As you like; since you reject me, let the crows have you,’ and hurried away down the street.

Left to himself, the full horror of his coming death rushed upon the young man, and he understood that he had thrown away his sole chance of life. Well, if he must, he must, he said to himself, and began to run as fast as he could after the old crone, who by this time could scarcely be seen, even in the moonlight. Who would have believed a woman past ninety could walk with such speed? It seemed more like flying! But at length, breathless and exhausted, he reached her side, and gasped out:

‘Madam, pardon me for my hasty words just now; I was wrong, and will thankfully accept the offer you made me.’

‘Ah, I thought you would come to your senses,’ answered she, in rather an odd voice. ‘We have no time to lose—follow me at once,’ and they went on silently and swiftly till they stopped at the door of a small house in which the priest lived. Before him the old woman bade the prisoner swear that she should be his wife, and this he did in the presence of witnesses. Then, begging the priest and the guards to leave them alone for a little, she told the young man what he was to do, when the next morning he was brought before the king and the judges.

The hall was full to overflowing when the prisoner entered it, and all marvelled at the brightness of his face. The king inquired if he had any excuse to plead for the high treason he had committed by striking the heir to the throne, and, if so, to be quick in setting it forth. With a low bow the youth made answer in a clear voice:

‘O my lord and gracious king, and you, nobles and wise men of the land, I leave my cause without fear in your hands, knowing that you will listen and judge rightly, and that you will suffer me to speak to the end, before you give judgment.

‘For four years, you, O king, had been married to the queen and yet had no children, which grieved you greatly. The queen saw this, and likewise that your love was going from her, and thought night and day of some plan that might put an end to this evil. At length, when you were away fighting in distant countries, she decided what she would do, and adopted in secret the baby of a poor quarryman, sending a messenger to tell you that you had a son. No one suspected the truth except a priest to whom the queen confessed the truth, and in a few weeks she fell ill and died, leaving the

baby to be brought up as became a prince. And now, if your highness will permit me, I will speak of myself.'

'What you have already told me,' answered the king, 'is so strange that I cannot imagine what more there is to tell, but go on with your story.'

'One day, shortly after the death of the queen,' continued the young man, 'your highness was hunting, and outstripped all your attendants while chasing the deer. You were in a part of the country which you did not know, so seeing an orchard all pink and white with apple-blossoms, and a girl tossing a ball in one corner, you went up to her to ask your way. But when she turned to answer you, you were so struck with her beauty that all else fled from your mind. Again and again you rode back to see her, and at length persuaded her to marry you. She only thought you a poor knight, and agreed that as you wished it, the marriage should be kept secret.

'After the ceremony you gave her three rings and a charm with a cross on it, and then put her in a cottage in the forest, thinking to hide the matter securely.

'For some months you visited the cottage every week; but a rebellion broke out in a distant part of the kingdom, and called for your presence. When next you rode up to the cottage, it was empty, and none could inform you whither your bride had gone. That, sire, I can now tell you,' and the young man paused and looked at the king, who coloured deeply. 'She went back to her father the old duke, once your chamberlain, and the cross on her breast revealed at once who you were. Fierce was his anger when he heard his daughter's tale, and he vowed that he would hide her safely from you, till the day when you would claim her publicly as your queen.

'By and bye I was born, and was brought up by my grandfather in one of his great houses. Here are the rings you gave to my mother, and here is the cross, and these will prove if I am your son or not.'

As he spoke the young man laid the jewels at the feet of the king, and the nobles and the judges pressed round to examine them. The king alone did not move from his seat, for he had forgotten the hall of justice and all about him, and saw only the apple-orchard, as it was twenty years ago, and the beautiful girl playing at ball. A sudden silence round him made him look up, and he found the eyes of the assembly fixed on him.

'It is true; it is he who is my son, and not the other,' he said with an effort, 'and let every man present swear to acknowledge him as king, after

my death.’

Therefore one by one they all knelt before him and took the oath, and a message was sent to the false prince, forbidding him ever again to appear at court, though a handsome pension was granted him.

At last the ceremony was over, and the king, signing to his newly found son to follow him, rose and went into another room.

‘Tell me how you knew all that,’ he said, throwing himself into a carved chair filled with crimson cushions, and the prince told of his meeting with the old woman who had brought him the jewels from his mother, and how he had sworn before a priest to marry her, though he did not want to do it, on account of the difference in their ages, and besides, he would rather receive a bride chosen by the king himself. But the king frowned, and answered sharply:

‘You swore to marry her if she saved your life, and, come what may, you must fulfil your promise.’ Then, striking a silver shield that hung close by, he said to the equerry who appeared immediately:

‘Go and seek the priest who lives near the door of the prison, and ask him where you can find the old woman who visited him last night; and when you have found her, bring her to the palace.’

It took some time to discover the whereabouts of the old woman, but at length it was accomplished, and when she arrived at the palace with the equerry, she was received with royal honours, as became the bride of the prince. The guards looked at each other with astonished eyes, as the wizened creature, bowed with age, passed between their lines; but they were more amazed still at the lightness of her step as she skipped up the steps to the great door before which the king was standing, with the prince at his side. If they both felt a shock at the appearance of the aged lady they did not show it, and the king, with a grave bow, took her band, and led her to the chapel, where a bishop was waiting to perform the marriage ceremony.

For the next few weeks little was seen of the prince, who spent all his days in hunting, and trying to forget the old wife at home. As for the princess, no one troubled himself about her, and she passed the days alone in her apartments, for she had absolutely declined the services of the ladies-in-waiting whom the king had appointed for her.

One night the prince returned after a longer chase than usual, and he was so tired that he went up straight to bed. Suddenly he was awakened by a strange noise in the room, and suspecting that a robber might have stolen in, he jumped out of bed, and seized his sword, which lay ready to his hand. Then he perceived that the noise proceeded from the next room, which belonged to the princess, and was lighted by a burning torch. Creeping softly to the door, he peeped through it, and beheld her lying quietly, with a crown of gold and pearls upon her head, her wrinkles all gone, and her face, which was whiter than the snow, as fresh as that of a girl of fourteen. Could that really be his wife—that beautiful, beautiful creature?

The prince was still gazing in surprise when the lady opened her eyes and smiled at him.

‘Yes, I really am your wife,’ she said, as if she had guessed his thoughts, ‘and the enchantment is ended. Now I must tell you who I am, and what befell to cause me to take the shape of an old woman.

‘The king of Granada is my father, and I was born in the palace which overlooks the plain of the Vega. I was only a few months old when a wicked fairy, who had a spite against my parents, cast a spell over me, bending my back and wrinkling my skin till I looked as if I was a hundred years old, and making me such an object of disgust to everyone, that at length the king ordered my nurse to take my away from the palace. She was the only person who cared about me, and we lived together in this city on a small pension allowed me by the king.

‘When I was about three an old man arrived at our house, and begged my nurse to let him come in and rest, as he could walk no longer. She saw that he was very ill, so put him to bed and took such care of him that by and bye he was as strong as ever. In gratitude for her goodness to him, he told her that he was a wizard and could give her anything she chose to ask for, except life or death, so she answered that what she longed for most in the world was that my wrinkled skin should disappear, and that I should regain the beauty with which I was born. To this he replied that as my misfortune resulted from a spell, this was rather difficult, but he would do his best, and at any rate he could promise that before my fifteenth birthday I should be freed from the enchantment if I could get a man who would swear to marry me as I was.

‘As you may suppose, this was not easy, as my ugliness was such that no one would look at me a second time. My nurse and I were almost in despair, as my fifteenth birthday was drawing near, and I had never so much as spoken to a man. At last we received a visit from the wizard, who told us what had happened at court, and your story, bidding me to put myself in your way when you had lost all hope, and offer to save you if you would consent to marry me.

‘That is my history, and now you must beg the king to send messengers at once to Granada, to inform my father of our marriage, and I think,’ she added with a smile, ‘that he will not refuse us his blessing.’

Adapted from the Portuguese.

THE JOGI’S PUNISHMENT

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Once upon a time there came to the ancient city of Rahmatabad a jogi[FN#1: A Hindu holy man.] of holy appearance, who took up his abode under a tree outside the city, where he would sit for days at a time fasting from food and drink, motionless except for the fingers that turned restlessly his string of beads. The fame of such holiness as this soon spread, and daily the citizens would flock to see him, eager to get his blessing, to watch his devotions, or to hear his teaching, if he were in the mood to speak. Very soon the rajah himself heard of the jogi, and began regularly to visit him to seek his counsel and to ask his prayers that a son might be vouchsafed to him. Days passed by, and at last the rajah became so possessed with the thought of the holy man that he determined if possible to get him all to himself. So he built in the neighbourhood a little shrine, with a room or two added to it, and a small courtyard closely walled up; and, when all was ready, besought the jogi to occupy it, and to receive no other visitors except himself and his queen and such pupils as the jogi might choose, who would hand down his teaching. To this the jogi consented; and thus he lived for some time upon the king’s bounty, whilst the fame of his godliness grew day by day.

Now, although the rajah of Rahmatabad had no son, he possessed a daughter, who as she grew up became the most beautiful creature that eye ever rested upon. Her father had long before betrothed her to the son of the neighbouring rajah of Dilaram, but as yet she had not been married to him, and lived the quiet life proper to a maiden of her beauty and position. The princess had of course heard of the holy man and of his miracles and his fasting, and she was filled with curiosity to see and to speak to him; but this was difficult, since she was not allowed to go out except into the palace grounds, and then was always closely guarded. However, at length she found an opportunity, and made her way one evening alone to the hermit’s shrine.

Unhappily, the hermit was not really as holy as he seemed; for no sooner did he see the princess than he fell in love with her wonderful beauty, and began to plot in his heart how he could win her for his wife. But the maiden was not only beautiful, she was also shrewd; and as soon as she read in the glance of the jogi the love that filled his soul, she sprang to her feet, and, gathering her veil about her, ran from the place as fast as she could. The jogi tried to follow, but he was no match for her; so, beside himself with rage at finding that he could not overtake her, he flung at her a lance, which wounded her in the leg. The brave princess stooped for a second to pluck the lance out of the wound, and then ran on until she found herself safe at home again. There she bathed and bound up the wound secretly, and told no one how naughty she had been, for she knew that her father would punish her severely.

Next day, when the king went to visit the jogi, the holy man would neither speak to nor look at him.

‘What is the matter?’ asked the king. ‘Won’t you speak to me to-day?’

‘I have nothing to say that you would care to hear,’ answered the jogi.

‘Why?’ said the king. ‘Surely you know that I value all that you say, whatever it may be.’

But still the jogi sat with his face turned away, and the more the king pressed him the more silent and mysterious he became. At last, after much persuasion, he said:

‘Let me tell you, then, that there is in this city a creature which, if you do not put an end to it, will kill every single person in the place.’

The king, who was easily frightened, grew pale.

‘What?’ he gasped—‘what is this dreadful thing? How am I to know it and to catch it? Only counsel me and help me, and I will do all that you advise.’

‘Ah!’ replied the jogi, ‘it is indeed dreadful. It is in the shape of a beautiful girl, but it is really an evil spirit. Last evening it came to visit me, and when I looked upon it its beauty faded into hideousness, its teeth became horrible fangs, its eyes glared like coals of fire, great claws sprang from its slender fingers, and were I not what I am it might have consumed me.’

The king could hardly speak from alarm, but at last he said:

‘How am I to distinguish this awful thing when I see it?’

‘Search,’ said the jogi, ‘for a lovely girl with a lance wound in her leg, and when she is found secure her safely and come and tell me, and I will advise you what to do next.’

Away hurried the king, and soon set all his soldiers scouring the country for a girl with a lance wound in her left. For two days the search went on, and then it was somehow discovered that the only person with a lance wound in the leg was the princess herself. The king, greatly agitated, went off to tell the jogi, and to assure him that there must be some mistake. But of course the jogi was prepared for this, and had his answer ready.

‘She is not really your daughter, who was stolen away at her birth, but an evil spirit that has taken her form,’ said he solemnly. ‘You can do what you like, but if you don’t take my advice she will kill you all.’ And so solemn he appeared, and so unshaken in his confidence, that the king’s wisdom was blinded, and he declared that he would do whatever the jogi advised, and believe whatever he said. So the jogi directed him to send him secretly two carpenters; and when they arrived he set them to make a great chest, so cunningly jointed and put together that neither air nor water could penetrate it. There and then the chest was made, and, when it was ready, the jogi bade the king to bring the princess by night; and they two thrust the poor little maiden into the chest and fastened it down with long nails, and between them carried it to the river and pushed it out into the stream.

As soon as the jogi got back from this deed he called two of his pupils, and pretended that it had been revealed to him that there should be found floating on the river a chest with something of great price within it; and he bade them go and watch for it at such a place far down the stream, and when the chest came slowly along, bobbing and turning in the tide, they were to seize it and secretly and swiftly bring it to him, for he was now determined to put the princess to death himself. The pupils set off at once, wondering at the strangeness of their errand, and still more at the holiness of the jogi to whom such secrets were revealed.

It happened that, as the next morning was dawning, the gallant young prince of Dilaram was hunting by the banks of the river, with a great following of wazirs, attendants, and huntsmen, and as he rode he saw floating on the river a large chest, which came slowly along, bobbing and

turning in the tide. Raising himself in his saddle, he gave an order, and half a dozen men plunged into the water and drew the chest out on to the river bank, where every one crowded around to see what it could contain. The prince was certainly not the least curious among them; but he was a cautious young man, and, as he prepared to open the chest himself, he bade all but a few stand back, and these few to draw their swords, so as to be prepared in case the chest should hold some evil beast, or djinn, or giant. When all were ready and expectant, the prince with his dagger forced open the lid and flung it back, and there lay, living and breathing, the most lovely maiden he had ever seen in his life.

Although she was half stifled from her confinement in the chest, the princess speedily revived, and, when she was able to sit up, the prince began to question her as to who she was and how she came to be shut up in the chest and set afloat upon the water; and she, blushing and trembling to find herself in the presence of so many strangers, told him that she was the princess of Rahmatabad, and that she had been put into the chest by her own father. When he on his part told her that he was the prince of Dilaram, the astonishment of the young people was unbounded to find that they, who had been betrothed without ever having seen one another, should have actually met for the first time in such strange circumstances. In fact, the prince was so moved by her beauty and modest ways that he called up his wazirs and demanded to be married at once to this lovely lady who had so completely won his heart. And married they were then and there upon the river bank, and went home to the prince’s palace, where, when the story was told, they were welcomed by the old rajah, the prince’s father, and the remainder of the day was given over to feasting and rejoicing. But when the banquet was over, the bride told her husband that now, on the threshold of their married life, she had more to relate of her adventures than he had given her the opportunity to tell as yet; and then, without hiding anything, she informed him of all that happened to her from the time she had stolen out to visit the wicked jogi.

In the morning the prince called his chief wazir and ordered him to shut up in the chest in which the princess had been found a great monkey that lived chained up in the palace, and to take the chest back to the river and set it afloat once more and watch what became of it. So the monkey was caught and put into the chest, and some of the prince’s servants took it

down to the river and pushed it off into the water. Then they followed secretly a long way off to see what became of it.

Meanwhile the jogi's two pupils watched and watched for the chest until they were nearly tired of watching, and were beginning to wonder whether the jogi was right after all, when on the second day they spied the great chest coming floating on the river, slowly bobbing and turning in the tide; and instantly a great joy and exultation seized them, for they thought that here indeed was further proof of the wonderful wisdom of their master. With some difficulty they secured the chest, and carried it back as swiftly and secretly as possible to the jogi's house. As soon as they brought in the chest, the jogi, who had been getting very cross and impatient, told them to put it down, and to go outside whilst he opened the magic chest.

'And even if you hear cries and sounds, however alarming, you must on no account enter,' said the jogi, walking over to a closet where lay the silken cord that was to strangle the princess.

And the two pupils did as they were told, and went outside and shut close all the doors. Presently they heard a great outcry within and the jogi's voice crying aloud for help; but they dared not enter, for had they not been told that whatever the noise, they must not come in? So they sat outside, waiting and wondering; and at last all grew still and quiet, and remained so for such a long time that they determined to enter and see if all was well. No sooner had they opened the door leading into the courtyard than they were nearly upset by a huge monkey that came leaping straight to the doorway and escaped past them into the open fields. Then they stepped into the room, and there they saw the jogi's body lying torn to pieces on the threshold of his dwelling!

Very soon the story spread, as stories will, and reached the ears of the princess and her husband, and when she knew that her enemy was dead she made her peace with her father.

From Major Campbell, Feroshepore.

THE HEART OF A MONKEY

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A long time ago a little town made up of a collection of low huts stood in a tiny green valley at the foot of a cliff. Of course the people had taken great care to build their houses out of reach of the highest tide which might be driven on shore by a west wind, but on the very edge of the town there had sprung up a tree so large that half its boughs hung over the huts and the other half over the deep sea right under the cliff, where sharks loved to come and splash in the clear water. The branches of the tree itself were laden with fruit, and every day at sunrise a big grey monkey might have been seen sitting in the topmost branches having his breakfast, and chattering to himself with delight.

After he had eaten all the fruit on the town side of the tree the monkey swung himself along the branches to the part which hung over the water. While he was looking out for a nice shady place where he might perch comfortably he noticed a shark watching him from below with greedy eyes.

‘Can I do anything for you, my friend?’ asked the monkey politely.

‘Oh! if you only would thrown me down some of those delicious things, I should be so grateful,’ answered the shark. ‘After you have lived on fish for fifty years you begin to feel you would like a change. And I am so very, very tired of the taste of salt.’

‘Well, I don’t like salt myself,’ said the monkey; ‘so if you will open your mouth I will throw this beautiful juicy kuyu into it,’ and, as he spoke, he pulled one off the branch just over his head. But it was not so easy to hit the shark’s mouth as he supposed, even when the creature had turned on his back, and the first kuyu only struck one of his teeth and rolled into the water. However, the second time the monkey had better luck, and the fruit fell right in.

‘Ah, how good!’ cried the shark. ‘Send me another, please.’ And the monkey grew tired of picking the kuyu long before the shark was tired of eating them.

‘It is getting late, and I must be going home to my children,’ he said, at length, ‘but if you are here at the same time to-morrow I will give you another treat.’

‘Thank you, thank you,’ said the shark, showing all his great ugly teeth as he grinned with delight; ‘you can’t guess how happy you have made me,’ and he swam away into the shadow, hoping to sleep away the time till the monkey came again.

For weeks the monkey and the shark breakfasted together, and it was a wonder that the tree had any fruit left for them. They became fast friends, and told each other about their homes and their children, and how to teach them all they ought to know. By and bye the monkey became rather discontented with his green house in a grove of palms beyond the town, and longed to see the strange things under the sea which he had heard of from the shark. The shark perceived this very clearly, and described greater marvels, and the monkey as he listened grew more and more gloomy.

Matters were in this state when one day the shark said: ‘I really hardly know how to thank you for all your kindness to me during these weeks. Here I have nothing of my own to offer you, but if you would only consent to come home with me, how gladly would I give you anything that might happen to take your fancy.’

‘I should like nothing better,’ cried the monkey, his teeth chattering, as they always did when he was pleased. ‘But how could I get there? Not by water. Ugh! It makes me ill to think of it!’

‘Oh! don’t let that trouble you,’ replied the shark, ‘you have only to sit on my back and I will undertake that not a drop of water shall touch you.’

So it was arranged, and directly after breakfast next morning the shark swam close up under the tree and the monkey dropped neatly on his back, without even a splash. After a few minutes—for at first he felt a little frightened at his strange position—the monkey began to enjoy himself vastly, and asked the shark a thousand questions about the fish and the sea-weeds and the oddly-shaped things that floated past them, and as the shark always gave him some sort of answer, the monkey never guessed that many of the objects they saw were as new to his guide as to himself.

The sun had risen and set six times when the shark suddenly said, ‘My friend, we have now performed half our journey, and it is time that I

should tell you something.’

‘What is it?’ asked the monkey. ‘Nothing unpleasant, I hope, for you sound rather grave?’

‘Oh, no! Nothing at all. It is only that shortly before we left I heard that the sultan of my country is very ill, and that the only thing to cure him is a monkey’s heart.’

‘Poor man, I am very sorry for him,’ replied the monkey; ‘but you were unwise not to tell me till we had started.’

‘What do you mean?’ asked the shark; but the monkey, who now understood the whole plot, did not answer at once, for he was considering what he should say.

‘Why are you so silent?’ inquired the shark again.

‘I was thinking what a pity it was you did not tell me while I was still on land, and then I would have brought my heart with me.’

‘Your heart! Why isn’t your heart here?’ said the shark, with a puzzled expression.

‘Oh, no! Of course not. Is it possible you don’t know that when we leave home we always hang up our hearts on trees, to prevent their being troublesome? However, perhaps you won’t believe that, and will just think I have invented it because I am afraid, so let us go on to your country as fast as we can, and when we arrive you can look for my heart, and if you find it you can kill me.’

The monkey spoke in such a calm, indifferent way that the shark was quite deceived, and began to wish he had not been in such a hurry.

‘But there is no use going on if your heart is not with you,’ he said at last. ‘We had better turn back to the town, and then you can fetch it.’

Of course, this was just what the monkey wanted, but he was careful not to seem too pleased.

‘Well, I don’t know,’ he remarked carelessly, ‘it is such a long way; but you may be right.’

‘I am sure I am,’ answered the shark, ‘and I will swim as quickly as I can,’ and so he did, and in three days they caught sight of the kuyu tree hanging over the water.

With a sigh of relief the monkey caught hold of the nearest branch and swung himself up.

‘Wait for me here,’ he called out to the shark. ‘I am so hungry I must have a little breakfast, and then I will go and look for my heart,’ and he went further and further into the branches so that the shark could not see him. Then he curled himself up and went to sleep.

‘Are you there?’ cried the shark, who was soon tired of swimming about under the cliff, and was in haste to be gone.

The monkey awoke with a start, but did not answer.

‘Are you there?’ called the shark again, louder than before, and in a very cross voice.

‘Oh, yes. I am here,’ replied the monkey; ‘but I wish you had not wakened me up. I was having such a nice nap.’

‘Have you got it?’ asked the shark. ‘It is time we were going.’

‘Going where?’ inquired the monkey.

‘Why, to my country, of course, with your heart. You CAN’T have forgotten!’

‘My dear friend,’ answered the monkey, with a chuckle, ‘I think you must be going a little mad. Do you take me for a washerman’s donkey?’

‘Don’t talk nonsense,’ exclaimed the shark, who did not like being laughed at. ‘What do you mean about a washerman’s donkey? And I wish you would be quick, or we may be too late to save the sultan.’

‘Did you really never hear of the washerman’s donkey?’ asked the monkey, who was enjoying himself immensely. ‘Why, he is the beast who has no heart. And as I am not feeling very well, and am afraid to start while the sun is so high lest I should get a sunstroke, if you like, I will come a little nearer and tell you his story.’

‘Very well,’ said the shark sulkily, ‘if you won’t come, I suppose I may as well listen to that as do nothing.’

So the monkey began.

‘A washerman once lived in the great forest on the other side of the town, and he had a donkey to keep him company and to carry him wherever he wanted to go. For a time they got on very well, but by and bye the donkey grew lazy and ungrateful for her master’s kindness, and ran away several miles into the heart of the forest, where she did nothing but eat and eat and eat, till she grew so fat she could hardly move.

‘One day as she was tasting quite a new kind of grass and wondering if it was as good as what she had had for dinner the day before, a hare

happened to pass by.

‘“Well, that is a fat creature,” thought she, and turned out of her path to tell the news to a lion who was a friend of hers. Now the lion had been very ill, and was not strong enough to go hunting for himself, and when the hare came and told him that a very fat donkey was to be found only a few hundred yards off, tears of disappointment and weakness filled his eyes.

‘“What is the good of telling me that?” he asked, in a weepy voice; “you know I cannot even walk as far as that palm.”

‘“Never mind,” answered the hare briskly. “If you can’t go to your dinner your dinner shall come to you,” and nodding a farewell to the lion she went back to the donkey.

‘“Good morning,” said she, bowing politely to the donkey, who lifted her head in surprise. “Excuse my interrupting you, but I have come on very important business.”

‘“Indeed,” answered the donkey, “it is most kind of you to take the trouble. May I inquire what the business is?”

‘“Certainly,” replied the hare. “It is my friend the lion who has heard so much of your charms and good qualities that he has sent me to beg that you will give him your paw in marriage. He regrets deeply that he is unable to make the request in person, but he has been ill and is too weak to move.”

‘“Poor fellow! How sad!” said the donkey. “But you must tell him that I feel honoured by his proposal, and will gladly consent to be Queen of the Beasts.”

‘“Will you not come and tell him so yourself?” asked the hare.

‘Side by side they went down the road which led to the lion’s house. It took a long while, for the donkey was so fat with eating she could only walk very slowly, and the hare, who could have run the distance in about five minutes, was obliged to creep along till she almost dropped with fatigue at not being able to go at her own pace. When at last they arrived the lion was sitting up at the entrance, looking very pale and thin. The donkey suddenly grew shy and hung her head, but the lion put on his best manners and invited both his visitors to come in and make themselves comfortable.

‘Very soon the hare got up and said, “Well, as I have another engagement I will leave you to make acquaintance with your future husband,” and winking at the lion she bounded away.

‘The donkey expected that as soon as they were left alone the lion would begin to speak of their marriage, and where they should live, but as he said nothing she looked up. To her surprise and terror she saw him crouching in the corner, his eyes glaring with a red light, and with a loud roar he sprang towards her. But in that moment the donkey had had time to prepare herself, and jumping on one side dealt the lion such a hard kick that he shrieked with the pain. Again and again he struck at her with his claws, but the donkey could bite too, as well as the lion, who was very weak after his illness, and at last a well-planted kick knocked him right over, and he rolled on the floor, groaning with pain. The donkey did not wait for him to get up, but ran away as fast as she could and was lost in the forest.

‘Now the hare, who knew quite well what would happen, had not gone to do her business, but hid herself in some bushes behind the cave, where she could hear quite clearly the sounds of the battle. When all was quiet again she crept gently out, and stole round the corner.

‘“Well, lion, have you killed her?” asked she, running swiftly up the path.

‘“Killed her, indeed!” answered the lion sulkily, “it is she who has nearly killed me. I never knew a donkey could kick like that, though I took care she should carry away the marks of my claws.”

‘“Dear me! Fancy such a great fat creature being able to fight!” cried the hare. “But don’t vex yourself. Just lie still, and your wounds will soon heal,” and she bade her friend, good bye, and returned to her family.

‘Two or three weeks passed, and only bare places on the donkey’s back showed where the lion’s claws had been, while, on his side, the lion had recovered from his illness and was now as strong as ever. He was beginning to think that it was almost time for him to begin hunting again, when one morning a rustle was heard in the creepers outside, and the hare’s head peeped through.

‘“Ah! there is no need to ask how you are,” she said. “Still you mustn’t overtire yourself, you know. Shall I go and bring you your dinner?”

‘“If you will bring me that donkey I will tear it in two,” cried the lion savagely, and the hare laughed and nodded and went on her errand.

‘This time the donkey was much further than before, and it took longer to find her. At last the hare caught sight of four hoofs in the air, and ran towards them. The donkey was lying on a soft cool bed of moss near a stream, rolling herself backwards and forwards from pleasure.

‘“Good morning,” said the hare politely, and the donkey got slowly on to her legs, and looked to see who her visitor could be.

‘“Oh, it is you, is it?” she exclaimed. “Come and have a chat. What news have you got?”

‘“I mustn’t stay,” answered the hare; “but I promised the lion to beg you to pay him a visit, as he is not well enough to call on you.”

‘“Well, I don’t know,” replied the donkey gloomily, “the last time we went he scratched me very badly, and really I was quite afraid.”

‘“He was only trying to kiss you,” said the hare, “and you bit him, and of course that made him cross.”

‘“If I were sure of that,” hesitated the donkey.

‘“Oh, you may be quite sure,” laughed the hare. “I have a large acquaintance among lions. But let us be quick,” and rather unwillingly the donkey set out.

‘The lion saw them coming and hid himself behind a large tree. As the donkey went past, followed by the hare, he sprang out, and with one blow of his paw stretched the poor foolish creature dead before him.

‘“Take this meat and skin it and roast it,” he said to the hare; “but my appetite is not so good as it was, and the only part I want for myself is the heart. The rest you can either eat yourself or give away to your friends.”

‘“Thank you,” replied the hare, balancing the donkey on her back as well as she was able, and though the legs trailed along the ground she managed to drag it to an open space some distance off, where she made a fire and roasted it. As soon as it was cooked the hare took out the heart and had just finished eating it when the lion, who was tired of waiting, came up.

‘“I am hungry,” said he. “Bring me the creature’s heart; it is just what I want for supper.”

‘“But there is no heart,” answered the hare, looking up at the lion with a puzzled face.

‘“What nonsense!” said the lion. “As if every beast had not got a heart. What do you mean?”

‘“This is a washerman’s donkey,” replied the hare gravely.

‘“Well, and suppose it is?”

‘“Oh, fie!” exclaimed the hare. “You, a lion and a grown-up person, and ask questions like that. If the donkey had had a heart would she be here now? The first time she came she knew you were trying to kill her, and ran away. Yet she came back a second time. Well, if she had had a heart would she have come back a second time? Now would she?”

‘And the lion answered slowly, “No, she would not.”

‘So you think I am a washerman’s donkey?’ said the monkey to the shark, when the story was ended. ‘You are wrong; I am not. And as the sun is getting low in the sky, it is time for you to begin your homeward journey. You will have a nice cool voyage, and I hope you will find the sultan better. Farewell!’ And the monkey disappeared among the green branches, and was gone.

From ‘Swahili Tales,’ by Edward Steere, LL.D.

THE FAIRY NURSE

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There was once a little farmer and his wife living near Coolgarrow. They had three children, and my story happened while the youngest was a baby. The wife was a good wife enough, but her mind was all on her family and her farm, and she hardly ever went to her knees without falling asleep, and she thought the time spent in the chapel was twice as long as it need be. So, friends, she let her man and her two children go before her one day to Mass, while she called to consult a fairy man about a disorder one of her cows had. She was late at the chapel, and was sorry all the day after, for her husband was in grief about it, and she was very fond of him.

Late that night he was wakened up by the cries of his children calling out ‘Mother! Mother!’ When he sat up and rubbed his eyes, there was no wife by his side, and when he asked the little ones what was become of their mother, they said they saw the room full of nice little men and women, dressed in white and red and green, and their mother in the middle of them, going out by the door as if she was walking in her sleep. Out he ran, and searched everywhere round the house but, neither tale nor tidings did he get of her for many a day.

Well, the poor man was miserable enough, for he was as fond of his woman as she was of him. It used to bring the salt tears down his cheeks to see his poor children neglected and dirty, as they often were, and they’d be bad enough only for a kind neighbour that used to look in whenever she could spare time. The infant was away with a nurse.

About six weeks after—just as he was going out to his work one morning—a neighbour, that used to mind women when they were ill, came up to him, and kept step by step with him to the field, and this is what she told him.

‘Just as I was falling asleep last night, I heard a horse’s tramp on the grass and a knock at the door, and there, when I came out, was a fine-looking dark man, mounted on a black horse, and he told me to get ready in all haste, for a lady was in great want of me. As soon as I put on my

cloak and things, he took me by the hand, and I was sitting behind him before I felt myself stirring. “Where are we going, sir?” says I. “You’ll soon know,” says he; and he drew his fingers across my eyes, and not a ray could I see. I kept a tight grip of him, and I little knew whether he was going backwards or forwards, or how long we were about it, till my hand was taken again, and I felt the ground under me. The fingers went the other way across my eyes, and there we were before a castle door, and in we went through a big hall and great rooms all painted in fine green colours, with red and gold bands and ornaments, and the finest carpets and chairs and tables and window curtains, and grand ladies and gentlemen walking about. At last we came to a bedroom, with a beautiful lady in bed, with a fine bouncing boy beside her. The lady clapped her hands, and in came the Dark Man and kissed her and the baby, and praised me, and gave me a bottle of green ointment to rub the child all over.

‘Well, the child I rubbed, sure enough; but my right eye began to smart, and I put up my finger and gave it a rub, and then stared, for never in all my life was I so frightened. The beautiful room was a big, rough cave, with water oozing over the edges of the stones and through the clay; and the lady, and the lord, and the child weazened, poverty-bitten creatures —nothing but skin and bone—and the rich dresses were old rags. I didn’t let on that I found any difference, and after a bit says the Dark Man, “Go before me to the hall door, and I will be with you in a few moments, and see you safe home.” Well, just as I turned into the outside cave, who should I see watching near the door but poor Molly. She looked round all terrified, and says she to me in a whisper, “I’m brought here to nurse the child of the king and queen of the fairies; but there is one chance of saving me. All the court will pass the cross near Templeshambo next Friday night, on a visit to the fairies of Old Ross. If John can catch me by the hand or cloak when I ride by, and has courage not to let go his grip, I’ll be safe. Here’s the king. Don’t open your mouth to answer. I saw what happened with the ointment.”

‘The Dark Man didn’t once cast his eye towards Molly, and he seemed to have no suspicion of me. When we came out I looked about me, and where do you think we were but in the dyke of the Rath of Cromogue. I was on the horse again, which was nothing but a big rag-weed, and I was in dread every minute I’d fall off; but nothing happened till I found myself in

my own cabin. The king slipped five guineas into my hand as soon as I was on the ground, and thanked me, and bade me good night. I hope I'll never see his face again. I got into bed, and couldn't sleep for a long time; and when I examined my five guineas this morning, that I left in the table drawer the last thing, I found five withered leaves of oak—bad luck to the giver!'

Well, you may all think the fright, and the joy, and the grief the poor man was in when the woman finished her story. They talked and they talked, but we needn't mind what they said till Friday night came, when both were standing where the mountain road crosses the one going to Ross.

There they stood, looking towards the bridge of Thuar, in the dead of the night, with a little moonlight shining from over Kilachdiarmid. At last she gave a start, and "By this and by that," says she, "here they come, bridles jingling and feathers tossing!" He looked, but could see nothing; and she stood trembling and her eyes wide open, looking down the way to the ford of Ballinacoola. "I see your wife," says she, "riding on the outside just so as to rub against us. We'll walk on quietly, as if we suspected nothing, and when we are passing I'll give you a shove. If you don't do YOUR duty then, woe be with you!"

Well, they walked on easy, and the poor hearts beating in both their breasts; and though he could see nothing, he heard a faint jingle and trampling and rustling, and at last he got the push that she promised. He spread out his arms, and there was his wife's waist within them, and he could see her plain; but such a hullabulloo rose as if there was an earthquake, and he found himself surrounded by horrible-looking things, roaring at him and striving to pull his wife away. But he made the sign of the cross and bid them begone in God's name, and held his wife as if it was iron his arms were made of. Bedad, in one moment everything was as silent as the grave, and the poor woman lying in a faint in the arms of her husband and her good neighbour. Well, all in good time she was minding her family and her business again; and I'll go bail, after the fright she got, she spent more time on her knees, and avoided fairy men all the days of the week, and particularly on Sunday.

It is hard to have anything to do with the good people without getting a mark from them. My brave nurse didn't escape no more than another. She was one Thursday at the market of Enniscorthy, when what did she see

walking among the tubs of butter but the Dark Man, very hungry-looking, and taking a scoop out of one tub and out of another. ‘Oh, sir,’ says she, very foolish, ‘I hope your lady is well, and the baby.’ ‘Pretty well, thank you,’ says he, rather frightened like. ‘How do I look in this new suit?’ says he, getting to one side of her. ‘I can’t see you plain at all, sir,’ says she. ‘Well, now?’ says he, getting round her back to the other side. ‘Musha, indeed, sir, your coat looks no better than a withered dock-leaf.’ ‘Maybe, then,’ says he, ‘it will be different now,’ and he struck the eye next him with a switch. Friends, she never saw a glimmer after with that one till the day of her death.

‘Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts,’ by Patrick Kennedy.

A LOST PARADISE

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In the middle of a great forest there lived a long time ago a charcoal-burner and his wife. They were both young and handsome and strong, and when they got married, they thought work would never fail them. But bad times came, and they grew poorer and poorer, and the nights in which they went hungry to bed became more and more frequent.

Now one evening the king of that country was hunting near the charcoal-burner's hut. As he passed the door, he heard a sound of sobbing, and being a good-natured man he stopped to listen, thinking that perhaps he might be able to give some help.

'Were there ever two people so unhappy!' said a woman's voice. 'Here we are, ready to work like slaves the whole day long, and no work can we get. And it is all because of the curiosity of old mother Eve! If she had only been like me, who never want to know anything, we should all have been as happy as kings to-day, with plenty to eat, and warm clothes to wear. Why—' but at this point a loud knock interrupted her lamentations.

'Who is there?' asked she.

'I!' replied somebody.

'And who is "I"?'

'The king. Let me in.'

Full of surprise the woman jumped up and pulled the bar away from the door. As the king entered, he noticed that there was no furniture in the room at all, not even a chair, so he pretended to be in too great a hurry to see anything around him, and only said 'You must not let me disturb you. I have no time to stay, but you seemed to be in trouble. Tell me; are you very unhappy?'

'Oh, my lord, we can find no work and have eaten nothing for two days!' answered she. 'Nothing remains for us but to die of hunger.'

'No, no, you shan't do that,' cried the king, 'or if you do, it will be your own fault. You shall come with me into my palace, and you will feel

as if you were in Paradise, I promise you. In return, I only ask one thing of you, that you shall obey my orders exactly.'

The charcoal-burner and his wife both stared at him for a moment, as if they could hardly believe their ears; and, indeed, it was not to be wondered at! Then they found their tongues, and exclaimed together:

'Oh, yes, yes, my lord! we will do everything you tell us. How could we be so ungrateful as to disobey you, when you are so kind?'

The king smiled, and his eyes twinkled.

'Well, let us start at once,' said he. 'Lock your door, and put the key in your pocket.'

The woman looked as if she thought this was needless, seeing it was quite, quite certain they would never come back. But she dared not say so, and did as the king told her.

After walking through the forest for a couple of miles, they all three reached the palace, and by the king's orders servants led the charcoal-burner and his wife into rooms filled with beautiful things such as they had never even dreamed of. First they bathed in green marble baths where the water looked like the sea, and then they put on silken clothes that felt soft and pleasant. When they were ready, one of the king's special servants entered, and took them into a small hall, where dinner was laid, and this pleased them better than anything else.

They were just about to sit down to the table when the king walked in.

'I hope you have been attended to properly,' said he, 'and that you will enjoy your dinner. My steward will take care you have all you want, and I wish you to do exactly as you please. Oh, by the bye, there is one thing! You notice that soup-tureen in the middle of the table? Well, be careful on no account to lift the lid. If once you take off the cover, there is an end of your good fortune.' Then, bowing to his guests, he left the room.

'Did you hear what he said?' inquired the charcoal-burner in an awe-stricken voice. 'We are to have what we want, and do what we please. Only we must not touch the soup-tureen.'

'No, of course we won't,' answered the wife. 'Why should we wish to? But all the same it is rather odd, and one can't help wondering what is inside.'

For many days life went on like a beautiful dream to the charcoal-burner and his wife. Their beds were so comfortable, they could hardly

make up their minds to get up, their clothes were so lovely they could scarcely bring themselves to take them off; their dinners were so good that they found it very difficult to leave off eating. Then outside the palace were gardens filled with rare flowers and fruits and singing birds, or if they desired to go further, a golden coach, painted with wreaths of forget-me-nots and lined with blue satin, awaited their orders. Sometimes it happened that the king came to see them, and he smiled as he glanced at the man, who was getting rosier and plumper each day. But when his eyes rested on the woman, they took on a look which seemed to say 'I knew it,' though this neither the charcoal-burner nor his wife ever noticed.

'Why are you so silent?' asked the man one morning when dinner had passed before his wife had uttered one word. 'A little while ago you used to be chattering all the day long, and now I have almost forgotten the sound of your voice.'

'Oh, nothing; I did not feel inclined to talk, that was all!' She stopped, and added carelessly after a pause, 'Don't you ever wonder what is in that soup-tureen?'

'No, never,' replied the man. 'It is no affair of ours,' and the conversation dropped once more, but as time went on, the woman spoke less and less, and seemed so wretched that her husband grew quite frightened about her. As to her food, she refused one thing after another.

'My dear wife,' said the man at last, 'you really must eat something. What in the world is the matter with you? If you go on like this you will die.'

'I would rather die than not know what is in that tureen,' she burst forth so violently that the husband was quite startled.

'Is that it?' cried he; 'are you making yourself miserable because of that? Why, you know we should be turned out of the palace, and sent away to starve.'

'Oh no, we shouldn't. The king is too good-natured. Of course he didn't mean a little thing like this! Besides, there is no need to lift the lid off altogether. Just raise one corner so that I may peep. We are quite alone: nobody will ever know.'

The man hesitated: it did seem a 'little thing,' and if it was to make his wife contented and happy it was well worth the risk. So he took hold of the handle of the cover and raised it very slowly and carefully, while the

woman stooped down to peep. Suddenly she startled back with a scream, for a small mouse had sprung from the inside of the tureen, and had nearly hit her in the eye. Round and round the room it ran, round and round they both ran after it, knocking down chairs and vases in their efforts to catch the mouse and put it back in the tureen. In the middle of all the noise the door opened, and the mouse ran out between the feet of the king. In one instant both the man and his wife were hiding under the table, and to all appearance the room was empty.

‘You may as well come out,’ said the king, ‘and hear what I have to say.’

‘I know what it is,’ answered the charcoal-burner, hanging his head. The mouse has escaped.’

‘A guard of soldiers will take you back to your hut,’ said the king. ‘Your wife has the key.’

‘Weren’t they silly?’ cried the grandchildren of the charcoal-burners when they heard the story. ‘How we wish that we had had the chance! WE should never have wanted to know what was in the soup-tureen!’

From ‘Litterature Orale de l’Auvergne,’ par Paul Sebillot.

HOW BRAVE WALTER HUNTED WOLVES

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A little back from the high road there stands a house which is called ‘Hemgard.’ Perhaps you remember the two beautiful mountain ash trees by the reddish-brown palings, and the high gate, and the garden with the beautiful barberry bushes which are always the first to become grown in spring, and which in summer are weighed down with their beautiful berries.

Behind the garden there is a hedge with tall aspens which rustle in the morning wind, behind the hedge is a road, behind the road is a wood, and behind the wood the wide world.

But on the other side of the garden there is a lake, and beyond the lake is a village, and all around stretch meadows and fields, now yellow, now green.

In the pretty house, which has white window-frames, a neat porch and clean steps, which are always strewn with finely-cut juniper leaves, Walter’s parents live. His brother Frederick, his sister Lotta, old Lena, Jonah, Caro and Bravo, Putte and Murre, and Kuckeliku.

Caro lives in the dog house, Bravo in the stable, Putte with the stableman, Murre a little here and a little there, and Kuckeliku lives in the hen house, that is his kingdom.

Walter is six years old, and he must soon begin to go to school. He cannot read yet, but he can do many other things. He can turn cartwheels, stand on his head, ride see-saw, throw snowballs, play ball, crow like a cock, eat bread and butter and drink sour milk, tear his trousers, wear holes in his elbows, break the crockery in pieces, throw balls through the windowpanes, draw old men on important papers, walk over the flower-beds, eat himself sick with gooseberries, and be well after a whipping. For the rest he has a good heart but a bad memory, and forgets his father’s and his mother’s admonitions, and so often gets into trouble and meets with

adventures, as you shall hear, but first of all I must tell you how brave he was and how he hunted wolves.

Once in the spring, a little before Midsummer, Walter heard that there were a great many wolves in the wood, and that pleased him. He was wonderfully brave when he was in the midst of his companions or at home with his brothers and sister, then he used often to say ‘One wolf is nothing, there ought to be at least four.’

When he wrestled with Klas Bogenstrom or Frithiof Waderfelt and struck them in the back, he would say ‘That is what I shall do to a wolf!’ and when he shot arrows at Jonas and they rattled against his sheepskin coat he would say: ‘That is how I should shoot you if you were a wolf!’

Indeed, some thought that the brave boy boasted a little; but one must indeed believe him since he said so himself. So Jonas and Lena used to say of him ‘Look, there goes Walter, who shoots the wolves.’ And other boys and girls would say ‘Look, there goes brave Walter, who is brave enough to fight with four.’

There was no one so fully convinced of this as Walter himself, and one day he prepared himself for a real wolf hunt. He took with him his drum, which had holes in one end since the time he had climbed up on it to reach a cluster of rowan berries, and his tin sabre, which was a little broken, because he had with incredible courage fought his way through a whole unfriendly army of gooseberry bushes.

He did not forget to arm himself quite to the teeth with his pop-gun, his bow, and his air-pistol. He had a burnt cork in his pocket to blacken his moustache, and a red cock’s feather to put in his cap to make himself look fierce. He had besides in his trouser pocket a clasp knife with a bone handle, to cut off the ears of the wolves as soon as he had killed them, for he thought it would be cruel to do that while they were still living.

It was such a good thing that Jonas was going with corn to the mill, for Walter got a seat on the load, while Caro ran barking beside them. As soon as they came to the wood Walter looked cautiously around him to see perchance there was a wolf in the bushes, and he did not omit to ask Jonas if wolves were afraid of a drum. ‘Of course they are’ (that is understood) said Jonas. Thereupon Walter began to beat his drum with all his might while they were going through the wood.

When they came to the mill Walter immediately asked if there had been any wolves in the neighbourhood lately.

‘Alas! yes,’ said the miller, ‘last night the wolves have eaten our fattest ram there by the kiln not far from here.’

‘Ah!’ said Walter, ‘do you think that there were many?’

‘We don’t know,’ answered the miller.

‘Oh, it is all the same,’ said Walter. ‘I only asked so that I should know if I should take Jonas with me.

‘I could manage very well alone with three, but if there were more, I might not have time to kill them all before they ran away.’

‘In Walter’s place I should go quite alone, it is more manly,’ said Jonas.

‘No, it is better for you to come too,’ said Walter. ‘Perhaps there are many.’

‘No, I have not time,’ said Jonas, ‘and besides, there are sure not to be more than three. Walter can manage them very well alone.’

‘Yes,’ said Walter, ‘certainly I could; but, you see, Jonas, it might happen that one of them might bite me in the back, and I should have more trouble in killing them. If I only knew that there were not more than two I should not mind, for them I should take one in each hand and give them a good shaking, like Susanna once shook me.’

‘I certainly think that there will not be more than two,’ said Jonas, ‘there are never more than two when they slay children and rams; Walter can very well shake them without me.’

‘But, you see, Jonas,’ said Walter, ‘if there are two, it might still happen that one of them escapes and bites me in the leg, for you see I am not so strong in the left hand as in the right. You can very well come with me, and take a good stick in case there are really two. Look, if there is only one, I shall take him so with both my hands and thrown him living on to his back, and he can kick as much as he likes, I shall hold him fast.’

‘Now, when I really think over the thing,’ said Jonas, ‘I am almost sure there will not be more than one. What would two do with one ram? There will certainly not be more than one.’

‘But you should come with me all the same, Jonas,’ said Walter. ‘You see I can very well manage one, but I am not quite accustomed to wolves yet, and he might tear holes in my new trousers.’

‘Well, just listen,’ said Jonas, ‘I am beginning to think that Walter is not so brave as people say. First of all Walter would fight against four, and then against three, then two, and then one, and now Walter wants help with one. Such a thing must never be; what would people say? Perhaps they would think that Walter is a coward?’

‘That’s a lie,’ said Walter, ‘I am not at all frightened, but it is more amusing when there are two. I only want someone who will see how I strike the wolf and how the dust flies out of his skin.’

‘Well, then, Walter can take the miller’s little Lisa with him. She can sit on a stone and look on,’ said Jonas.

‘No, she would certainly be frightened,’ said Walter, ‘and how would it do for a girl to go wolf-hunting? Come with me, Jonas, and you shall have the skin, and I will be content with the ears and the tail.’

‘No, thank you,’ said Jonas, ‘Walter can keep the skin for himself. Now I see quite well that he is frightened. Fie, shame on him!’

This touched Walter’s pride very near. ‘I shall show that I am not frightened,’ he said; and so he took his drum, sabre, cock’s feather, clasp-knife, pop-gun and air-pistol, and went off quite alone to the wood to hunt wolves.

It was a beautiful evening, and the birds were singing in all the branches. Walter went very slowly and cautiously. At every step he looked all round him to see if perchance there was anything lurking behind the stones. He quite thought something moved away there in the ditch. Perhaps it was a wolf. ‘It is better for me to beat the drum a little before I go there,’ thought Walter.

Br-r-r, so he began to beat his drum. Then something moved again. Caw! caw! a crow flew up from the ditch. Walter immediately regained courage. ‘It was well I took my drum with me,’ he thought, and went straight on with courageous steps. Very soon he came quite close to the kiln, where the wolves had killed the ram. But the nearer he came the more dreadful he thought the kiln looked. It was so gray and old. Who knew how many wolves there might be hidden there? Perhaps the very ones which killed the ram were still sitting there in a corner. Yes, it was not at all safe here, and there were no other people to be seen in the neighbourhood. It would be horrible to be eaten up here in the daylight, thought Walter to himself; and the more he thought about it the uglier and grayer the old kiln

looked, and the more horrible and dreadful it seemed to become the food of wolves.

‘Shall I go back and say that I struck one wolf and it escaped?’ thought Walter. ‘Fie!’ said his conscience, ‘Do you not remember that a lie is one of the worst sins, both in the sight of God and man? If you tell a lie to-day and say you struck a wolf, to-morrow surely it will eat you up.’

‘No, I will go to the kiln,’ thought Walter, and so he went. But he did not go quite near. He went only so near that he could see the ram’s blood which coloured the grass red, and some tufts of wool which the wolves had torn from the back of the poor animal.

It looked so dreadful.

‘I wonder what the ram thought when they ate him up,’ thought Walter to himself; and just then a cold shiver ran through him from his collar right down to his boots.

‘It is better for me to beat the drum,’ he thought to himself again, and so he began to beat it. But it sounded horrid, and an echo came out from the kiln that seemed almost like the howl of a wolf. The drumsticks stiffened in Walter’s hands, and he thought now they are coming…!

Yes, sure enough, just then a shaggy, reddish-brown wolf’s head looked out from under the kiln!

What did Walter do now? Yes, the brave Walter who alone could manage four, threw his drum far away, took to his heels and ran, and ran as fast as he could back to the mill.

But, alas! the wolf ran after him. Walter looked back; the wolf was quicker than he and only a few steps behind him. Then Walter ran faster. But fear got the better of him, he neither heard nor saw anything more. He ran over sticks, stones and ditches; he lost drum-sticks, sabre, bow, and air-pistol, and in his terrible hurry he tripped over a tuft of grass. There he lay, and the wolf jumped on to him….

It was a gruesome tale! Now you may well believe that it was all over with Walter and all his adventures. That would have been a pity. But do not be surprised if it was not quite so bad as that, for the wolf was quite a friendly one. He certainly jumped on to Walter, but he only shook his coat and rubbed his nose against his face; and Walter shrieked. Yes, he shrieked terribly!

Happily Jonas heard his cry of distress, for Walter was quite near the mill now, and he ran and helped him up.

‘What has happened?’ he asked. ‘Why did Walter scream so terribly?’

‘A wolf! A wolf!’ cried Walter, and that was all he could say.

‘Where is the wolf?’ said Jonas. ‘I don’t see any wolf.’

‘Take care, he is here, he has bitten me to death,’ groaned Walter.

Then Jonas began to laugh; yes, he laughed so that he nearly burst his skin belt.

Well, well, was that the wolf? Was that the wolf which Walter was to take by the neck and shake and throw down on its back, no matter how much it struggled? Just look a little closer at him: he is your old friend, your own good old Caro. I quite expect he found a leg of the ram in the kiln. When Walter beat his drum, Caro crept out, and when Walter ran away, Caro ran after him, as he so often does when Walter wants to romp and play.

‘Down, Caro! you ought to be rather ashamed to have put such a great hero to flight!’

Walter got up feeling very foolish.

‘Down, Caro!’ he said, both relieved and annoyed.

‘It was only a dog, then if it had been a wolf I certainly should have killed him.…’

‘If Walter would listen to my advice, and boast a little less, and do a little more,’ said Jonas, consolingly. ‘Walter is not a coward, is he?’

‘I! You shall see, Jonas, when we next meet a bear. You see I like so much better to fight with bears.’

‘Indeed!’ laughed Jonas. ‘Are you at it again?

‘Dear Walter, remember that it is only cowards who boast; a really brave man never talks of his bravery.’

From Z. Topelius.

THE KING OF THE WATERFALLS

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When the young king of Easaidh Ruadh came into his kingdom, the first thing he thought of was how he could amuse himself best. The sports that all his life had pleased him best suddenly seemed to have grown dull, and he wanted to do something he had never done before. At last his face brightened.

‘I know!’ he said. ‘I will go and play a game with the Gruagach.’ Now the Gruagach was a kind of wicked fairy, with long curly brown hair, and his house was not very far from the king’s house.

But though the king was young and eager, he was also prudent, and his father had told him on his deathbed to be very careful in his dealings with the ‘good people,’ as the fairies were called. Therefore before going to the Gruagach the king sought out a wise man of the countryside.

‘I am wanting to play a game with the curly-haired Gruagach,’ said he.

‘Are you, indeed?’ replied the wizard. ‘If you will take my counsel, you will play with someone else.’

‘No; I will play with the Gruagach,’ persisted the king.

‘Well, if you must, you must, I suppose,’ answered the wizard; ‘but if you win that game, ask as a prize the ugly crop-headed girl that stands behind the door.’

‘I will,’ said the king.

So before the sun rose he got up and went to the house of the Gruagach, who was sitting outside.

‘O king, what has brought you here to-day?’ asked the Gruagach. ‘But right welcome you are, and more welcome will you be still if you will play a game with me.’

‘That is just what I want,’ said the king, and they played; and sometimes it seemed as if one would win, and sometimes the other, but in the end it was the king who was the winner.

‘And what is the prize that you will choose?’ inquired the Gruagach.

‘The ugly crop-headed girl that stands behind the door,’ replied the king.

‘Why, there are twenty others in the house, and each fairer than she!’ exclaimed the Gruagach.

‘Fairer they may be, but it is she whom I wish for my wife, and none other,’ and the Gruagach saw that the king’s mind was set upon her, so he entered his house, and bade all the maidens in it come out one by one, and pass before the king.

One by one they came; tall and short, dark and fair, plump and thin, and each said ‘I am she whom you want. You will be foolish indeed if you do not take me.’

But he took none of them, neither short nor tall, dark nor fair, plump nor thin, till at the last the crop-headed girl came out.

‘This is mine,’ said the king, though she was so ugly that most men would have turned from her. ‘We will be married at once, and I will carry you home.’ And married they were, and they set forth across a meadow to the king’s house. As they went, the bride stooped and picked a sprig of shamrock, which grew amongst the grass, and when she stood upright again her ugliness had all gone, and the most beautiful woman that ever was seen stood by the king’s side.

The next day, before the sun rose, the king sprang from his bed, and told his wife he must have another game with the Gruagach.

‘If my father loses that game, and you win it,’ said she, ‘accept nothing for your prize but the shaggy young horse with the stick saddle.’

‘I will do that,’ answered the king, and he went.

‘Does your bride please you?’ asked the Gruagach, who was standing at his own door.

‘Ah! does she not!’ answered the king quickly. ‘Otherwise I should be hard indeed to please. But will you play a game to-day?’

‘I will,’ replied the Gruagach, and they played, and sometimes it seemed as if one would win, and sometimes the other, but in the end the king was the winner.

‘What is the prize that you will choose?’ asked the Gruagach.

‘The shaggy young horse with the stick saddle,’ answered the king, but he noticed that the Gruagach held his peace, and his brow was dark as he led out the horse from the stable. Rough was its mane and dull was its

skin, but the king cared nothing for that, and throwing his leg over the stick saddle, rode away like the wind.

On the third morning the king got up as usual before dawn, and as soon as he had eaten food he prepared to go out, when his wife stopped him. ‘I would rather,’ she said, ‘that you did not go to play with the Gruagach, for though twice you have won yet some day he will win, and then he will put trouble upon you.’

‘Oh! I must have one more game,’ cried the king; ‘just this one.’ And he went off to the house of the Gruagach.

Joy filled the heart of the Gruagach when he saw him coming, and without waiting to talk they played their game. Somehow or other, the king’s strength and skill had departed from him, and soon the Gruagach was the victor.

‘Choose your prize,’ said the king, when the game was ended, ‘but do not be too hard on me, or ask what I cannot give.’

‘The prize I choose,’ answered the Gruagach, ‘is that the crop-headed creature should take thy head and thy neck, if thou dost not get for me the Sword of Light that hangs in the house of the king of the oak windows.’

‘I will get it,’ replied the young man bravely; but as soon as he was out of sight of the Gruagach he pretended no more, and his face grew dark and his steps lagging.

‘You have brought nothing with you to-night,’ said the queen, who was standing on the steps awaiting him. She was so beautiful that the king was fain to smile when he looked at her, but then he remembered what had happened, and his heart grew heavy again.

‘What is it? What is the matter? Tell me thy sorrow that I may bear it with thee, or, it may be, help thee!’ Then the king told her everything that had befallen him, and she stroked his hair the while.

‘That is nothing to grieve about,’ she said when the tale was finished. ‘You have the best wife in Erin, and the best horse in Erin. Only do as I bid you, and all will go well.’ And the king suffered himself to be comforted.

He was still sleeping when the queen rose and dressed herself, to make everything ready for her husband’s journey; and the first place she went to was the stable, where she fed and watered the shaggy brown horse and put the saddle on it. Most people thought this saddle was of wood, and did not see the little sparkles of gold and silver that were hidden in it. She

strapped it lightly on the horse's back, and then led it down before the house, where the king waited.

'Good luck to you, and victories in all your battles,' she said, as she kissed him before he mounted. 'I need not be telling you anything. Take the advice of the horse, and see you obey it.'

So he waved his hand and set out on his journey, and the wind was not swifter than the brown horse—no, not even the March wind which raced it and could not catch it. But the horse never stopped nor looked behind, till in the dark of the night he reached the castle of the king of the oak windows.

'We are at the end of the journey,' said the horse, 'and you will find the Sword of Light in the king's own chamber. If it comes to you without scrape or sound, the token is a good one. At this hour the king is eating his supper, and the room is empty, so none will see you. The sword has a knob at the end, and take heed that when you grasp it, you draw it softly out of its sheath. Now go! I will be under the window.'

Stealthily the young man crept along the passage, pausing now and then to make sure that no man was following him, and entered the king's chamber. A strange white line of light told him where the sword was, and crossing the room on tiptoe, he seized the knob, and drew it slowly out of the sheath. The king could hardly breathe with excitement lest it should make some noise, and bring all the people in the castle running to see what was the matter. But the sword slid swiftly and silently along the case till only the point was left touching it. Then a low sound was heard, as of the edge of a knife touching a silver plate, and the king was so startled that he nearly dropped the knob.

'Quick! quick!' cried the horse, and the king scrambled hastily through the small window, and leapt into the saddle.

'He has heard and he will follow,' said the horse; 'but we have a good start,' And on they sped, on and on, leaving the winds behind them.

At length the horse slackened its pace. 'Look and see who is behind you,' it said; and the young man looked.

'I see a swarm of brown horses racing madly after us,' he answered.

'We are swifter than those,' said the horse, and flew on again.

'Look again, O king! Is anyone coming now?'

‘A swarm of black horses, and one has a white face, and on that horse a man is seated. He is the king of the oak windows.’

‘That is my brother, and swifter still than I,’ said the horse, ‘and he will fly past me with a rush. Then you must have your sword ready, and take off the head of the man who sits on him, as he turns and looks at you. And there is no sword in the world that will cut off his head, save only that one.’

‘I will do it,’ replied the king; and he listened with all his might, till he judged that the white-faced horse was close to him. Then he sat up very straight and made ready.

The next moment there was a rushing noise as of a mighty tempest, and the young man caught a glimpse of a face turned towards him. Almost blindly he struck, not knowing whether he had killed or only wounded the rider. But the head rolled off, and was caught in the brown horse’s mouth.

‘Jump on my brother, the black horse, and go home as fast as you can, and I will follow as quickly as I may,’ cried the brown horse; and leaping forward the king alighted on the back of the black horse, but so near the tail that he almost fell off again. But he stretched out his arm and clutched wildly at the mane and pulled himself into the saddle.

Before the sky was streaked with red he was at home again, and the queen was sitting waiting till he arrived, for sleep was far from her eyes. Glad was she to see him enter, but she said little, only took her harp and sang softly the songs which he loved, till he went to bed, soothed and happy.

It was broad day when he woke, and he sprang up saying:

‘Now I must go to the Gruagach, to find out if the spells he laid on me are loose.’

‘Have a care,’ answered the queen, ‘for it is not with a smile as on the other days that he will greet you. Furiously he will meet you, and will ask you in his wrath if you have got the sword, and you will reply that you have got it. Next he will want to know how you got it, and to this you must say that but for the knob you had not got it at all. Then he will raise his head to look at the knob, and you must stab him in the mole which is on the right side of his neck; but take heed, for if you miss the mole with the point of the sword, then my death and your death are certain. He is brother to the king of the oak windows, and sure will he be that the king must be

head, or the sword would not be in your hands.' After that she kissed him, and bade him good speed.

'Didst thou get the sword?' asked the Gruagach, when they met in the usual place.

'I got the sword.'

'And how didst thou get it?'

'If it had not had a knob on the top, then I had not got it,' answered the king.

'Give me the sword to look at,' said the Gruagach, peering forward; but like a flash the king had drawn it from under his nose and pierced the mole, so that the Gruagach rolled over on the ground.

'Now I shall be at peace,' thought the king. But he was wrong, for when he reached home he found his servants tied together back to back with cloths bound round their mouths, so that they could not speak. He hastened to set them free, and he asked who had treated them in so evil a manner.

'No sooner had you gone than a great giant came, and dealt with us as you see, and carried off your wife and your two horses,' said the men.

'Then my eyes will not close nor will my head lay itself down till I fetch my wife and horses home again,' answered he, and he stopped and noted the tracks of the horses on the grass, and followed after them till he arrived at the wood, when the darkness fell.

'I will sleep here,' he said to himself, 'but first I will make a fire,' And he gathered together some twigs that were lying about, and then took two dry sticks and rubbed them together till the fire came, and he sat by it.

The twigs cracked and the flame blazed up, and a slim yellow dog pushed through the bushes and laid his head on the king's knee, and the king stroked his head.

'Wuf, wuf,' said the dog. 'Sore was the plight of thy wife and thy horses when the giant drove them last night through the forest.'

'That is why I have come,' answered the king; and suddenly his heart seemed to fail him and he felt that he could not go on.

'I cannot fight that giant,' he cried, looking at the dog with a white face. 'I am afraid, let me turn homewards.'

'No, don't do that,' replied the dog. 'Eat and sleep, and I will watch over you.' So the king ate and lay down, and slept till the sun waked him.

‘It is time for you to start on your way,’ said the dog, ‘and if danger presses, call on me, and I will help you.’

‘Farewell, then,’ answered the king; ‘I will not forget that promise,’ and on he went, and on, and on, till he reached a tall cliff with many sticks lying about.

‘It is almost night,’ he thought; ‘I will make a fire and rest,’ and thus he did, and when the flames blazed up, the hoary hawk of the grey rock flew on to a bough above him.

‘Sore was the plight of thy wife and thy horses when they passed here with the giant,’ said the hawk.

‘Never shall I find them,’ answered the king, ‘and nothing shall I get for all my trouble.’

‘Oh, take heart,’ replied the hawk; ‘things are never so bad but what they might be worse. Eat and sleep and I will watch thee,’ and the king did as he was bidden by the hawk, and by the morning he felt brave again.

‘Farewell,’ said the bird, ‘and if danger presses call to me, and I will help you.’

On he walked, and on and on, till as dusk was falling he came to a great river, and on the bank there were sticks lying about.

‘I will make myself a fire,’ he thought, and thus he did, and by and bye a smooth brown head peered at him from the water, and a long body followed it.

‘Sore was the plight of thy wife and thy horses when they passed the river last night,’ said the otter.

‘I have sought them and not found them,’ answered the king, ‘and nought shall I get for my trouble.’

‘Be not so downcast,’ replied the otter; ‘before noon to-morrow thou shalt behold thy wife. But eat and sleep and I will watch over thee.’ So the king did as the otter bid him, and when the sun rose he woke and saw the otter lying on the bank.

‘Farewell,’ cried the otter as he jumped into the water, ‘and if danger presses, call to me and I will help you.’

For many hours the king walked, and at length he reached a high rock, which was rent into two by a great earthquake. Throwing himself on the ground he looked over the side, and right at the very bottom he saw his wife and his horses. His heart gave a great bound, and all his fears left

him, but he was forced to be patient, for the sides of the rock were smooth, and not even a goat could find foothold. So he got up again, and made his way round through the wood, pushing by trees, scrambling over rocks, wading through streams, till at last he was on flat ground again, close to the mouth of the cavern.

His wife gave a shriek of joy when he came in, and then burst into tears, for she was tired and very frightened. But her husband did not understand why she wept, and he was tired and bruised from his climb, and a little cross too.

‘You give me but a sorry welcome,’ grumbled he, ‘when I have half-killed myself to get to you.’

‘Do not heed him,’ said the horses to the weeping woman; ‘put him in front of us, where he will be safe, and give him food, for he is weary.’ And she did as the horses told her, and he ate and rested, till by and bye a long shadow fell over them, and their hearts beat with fear, for they knew that the giant was coming.

‘I smell a stranger,’ cried the giant, as he entered; but it was dark inside the chasm, and he did not see the king, who was crouching down between the feet of the horses.

‘A stranger, my lord! no stranger ever comes here, not even the sun!’ and the king’s wife laughed gaily as she went up to the giant and stroked the huge hand which hung down by his side.

‘Well, I perceive nothing, certainly,’ answered he, ‘but it is very odd. However, it is time that the horses were fed;’ and he lifted down an armful of hay from a shelf of rock and held out a handful to each animal, who moved forward to meet him, leaving the king behind. As soon as the giant’s hands were near their mouths they each made a snap, and began to bit them, so that his groans and shrieks might have been heard a mile off. Then they wheeled round and kicked him till they could kick no more. At length the giant crawled away, and lay quivering in a corner, and the queen went up to him.

‘Poor thing! poor thing!’ she said, ‘they seem to have gone mad; it was awful to behold.’

‘If I had had my soul in my body they would certainly have killed me,’ groaned the giant.

‘It was lucky indeed,’ answered the queen; ‘but tell me, where is thy soul, that I may take care of it?’

‘Up there, in the Bonnach stone,’ answered the giant, pointing to a stone which was balanced loosely on an edge of rock. ‘But now leave me, that I may sleep, for I have far to go to-morrow.’

Soon snores were heard from the corner where the giant lay, and then the queen lay down too, and the horses, and the king was hidden between them, so that none could see him.

Before the dawn the giant rose and went out, and immediately the queen ran up to the Bonnach stone, and tugged and pushed at it till it was quite steady on its ledge, and could not fall over. And so it was in the evening when the giant came home; and when they saw his shadow, the king crept down in front of the horses.

‘Why, what have you done to the Bonnach stone?’ asked the giant.

‘I feared lest it should fall over, and be broken, with your soul in it,’ said the queen, ‘so I put it further back on the ledge.’

‘It is not there that my soul is,’ answered he, ‘it is on the threshold. But it is time the horses were fed;’ and he fetched the hay, and gave it to them, and they bit and kicked him as before, till he lay half dead on the ground.

Next morning he rose and went out, and the queen ran to the threshold of the cave, and washed the stones, and pulled up some moss and little flowers that were hidden in the crannies, and by and bye when dusk had fallen the giant came home.

‘You have been cleaning the threshold,’ said he.

‘And was I not right to do it, seeing that your soul is in it?’ asked the queen.

‘It is not there that my soul is,’ answered the giant. ‘Under the threshold is a stone, and under the stone is a sheep, and in the sheep’s body is a duck, and in the duck is an egg, and in the egg is my soul. But it is late, and I must feed the horses;’ and he brought them the hay, but they only bit and kicked him as before, and if his soul had been within him, they would have killed him outright.

It was still dark when the giant got up and went his way, and then the king and the queen ran forward to take up the threshold, while the horses looked on. But sure enough! just as the giant had said, underneath the

threshold was the flagstone, and they pulled and tugged till the stone gave way. Then something jumped out so suddenly, that it nearly knocked them down, and as it fled past, they saw it was a sheep.

‘If the slim yellow dog of the greenwood were only here, he would soon have that sheep,’ cried the king; and as he spoke, the slim yellow dog appeared from the forest, with the sheep in his mouth. With a blow from the king, the sheep fell dead, and they opened its body, only to be blinded by a rush of wings as the duck flew past.

‘If the hoary hawk of the rock were only here, he would soon have that duck,’ cried the king; and as he spoke the hoary hawk was seen hovering above them, with the duck in his mouth. They cut off the duck’s head with a swing of the king’s sword, and took the egg out of its body, but in his triumph the king held it carelessly, and it slipped from his hand, and rolled swiftly down the hill right into the river.

‘If the brown otter of the stream were only here, he would soon have that egg,’ cried the king; and the next minute there was the brown otter, dripping with water, holding the egg in his mouth. But beside the brown otter, a huge shadow came stealing along—the shadow of the giant.

The king stood staring at it, as if he were turned into stone, but the queen snatched the egg from the otter and crushed it between her two hands. And after that the shadow suddenly shrank and was still, and they knew that the giant was dead, because they had found his soul.

Next day they mounted the two horses and rode home again, visiting their friends the brown otter and the hoary hawk and the slim yellow dog by the way.

From ‘West Highland Tales.’

A FRENCH PUCK

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Among the mountain pastures and valleys that lie in the centre of France there dwelt a mischievous kind of spirit, whose delight it was to play tricks on everybody, and particularly on the shepherds and the cowboys. They never knew when they were safe from him, as he could change himself into a man, woman or child, a stick, a goat, a ploughshare. Indeed, there was only one thing whose shape he could not take, and that was a needle. At least, he could transform himself into a needle, but try as he might he never was able to imitate the hole, so every woman would have found him out at once, and this he knew.

Now the hour oftenest chosen by this naughty sprite (whom we will call Puck) for performing his pranks was about midnight, just when the shepherds and cowherds, tired out with their long day's work, were sound asleep. Then he would go into the cowsheds and unfasten the chains that fixed each beast in its own stall, and let them fall with a heavy clang to the ground. The noise was so loud that it was certain to awaken the cowboys, however fatigued they might be, and they dragged themselves wearily to the stable to put back the chains. But no sooner had they returned to their beds than the same thing happened again, and so on till the morning. Or perhaps Puck would spend his night in plaiting together the manes and tails of two of the horses, so that it would take the grooms hours of labour to get them right in the morning, while Puck, hidden among the hay in the loft, would peep out to watch them, enjoying himself amazingly all the time.

One evening more than eighty years ago a man named William was passing along the bank of a stream when he noticed a sheep who was bleating loudly. William thought it must have strayed from the flock, and that he had better take it home with him till he could discover its owner. So he went up to where it was standing, and as it seemed so tired that it could hardly walk, he hoisted it on his shoulders and continued on his way.

The sheep was pretty heavy, but the good man was merciful and staggered along as best he could under his load.

‘It is not much further,’ he thought to himself as he reached an avenue of walnut trees, when suddenly a voice spoke out from over his head, and made him jump.

‘Where are you?’ said the voice, and the sheep answered:

‘Here on the shoulders of a donkey.’

In another moment the sheep was standing on the ground and William was running towards home as fast as his legs would carry him. But as he went, a laugh, which yet was something of a bleat, rang in his ears, and though he tried not to hear, the words reached him, ‘Oh, dear! What fun I have had, to be sure!’

Puck was careful not always to play his tricks in the same place, but visited one village after another, so that everyone trembled lest he should be the next victim. After a bit he grew tired of cowboys and shepherds, and wondered if there was no one else to give him some sport. At length he was told of a young couple who were going to the nearest town to buy all that they needed for setting up house. Quite certain that they would forget something which they could not do without, Puck waited patiently till they were jogging along in their cart on their return journey, and changed himself into a fly in order to overhear their conversation.

For a long time it was very dull—all about their wedding day next month, and who were to be invited. This led the bride to her wedding dress, and she gave a little scream.

‘Just think! Oh! how could I be so stupid! I have forgotten to buy the different coloured reels of cotton to match my clothes!’

‘Dear, dear!’ exclaimed the young man. ‘That is unlucky; and didn’t you tell me that the dressmaker was coming in to-morrow?’

‘Yes, I did,’ and then suddenly she gave another little scream, which had quite a different sound from the first. ‘Look! Look!’

The bridegroom looked, and on one side of the road he saw a large ball of thread of all colours—of all the colours, that is, of the dresses that were tied on to the back of the cart.

‘Well, that is a wonderful piece of good fortune,’ cried he, as he sprang out to get it. ‘One would think a fairy had put it there on purpose.’

‘Perhaps she has,’ laughed the girl, and as she spoke she seemed to hear an echo of her laughter coming from the horse, but of course that was nonsense.

The dressmaker was delighted with the thread that was given her. It matched the stuffs so perfectly, and never tied itself in knots, or broke perpetually, as most thread did. She finished her work much quicker than she expected and the bride said she was to be sure to come to the church and see her in her wedding dress.

There was a great crowd assembled to witness the ceremony, for the young people were immense favourites in the neighbourhood, and their parents were very rich. The doors were open, and the bride could be seen from afar, walking under the chestnut avenue.

‘What a beautiful girl!’ exclaimed the men. ‘What a lovely dress!’ whispered the women. But just as she entered the church and took the hand of the bridegroom, who was waiting for her, a loud noise was heard.

‘Crick! crack! Crick! crack!’ and the wedding garments fell to the ground, to the great confusion of the wearer.

Not that the ceremony was put off for a little thing like that! Cloaks in profusion were instantly offered to the young bride, but she was so upset that she could hardly keep from tears. One of the guests, more curious than the rest, stayed behind to examine the dress, determined, if she could, to find out the cause of the disaster.

‘The thread must have been rotten,’ she said to herself. ‘I will see if I can break it.’ But search as she would she could find none.

The thread had vanished!

From ‘Litterature Orale de l’Auvergne,’ par Paul Sebillot.

THE THREE CROWNS

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There was once a king who had three daughters. The two eldest were very proud and quarrelsome, but the youngest was as good as they were bad. Well, three princes came to court them, and two of them were exactly like the eldest ladies, and one was just as lovable as the youngest. One day they were all walking down to a lake that lay at the bottom of the lawn when they met a poor beggar. The king wouldn't give him anything, and the eldest princesses wouldn't give him anything, nor their sweethearts; but the youngest daughter and her true love did give him something, and kind words along with it, and that was better than all.

When they got to the edge of the lake what did they find but the beautifullest boat you ever saw in your life; and says the eldest, 'I'll take a sail in this fine boat'; and says the second eldest, 'I'll take a sail in this fine boat'; and says the youngest, 'I won't take a sail in that fine boat, for I am afraid it's an enchanted one.' But the others persuaded her to go in, and her father was just going in after her, when up sprung on the deck a little man only seven inches high, and ordered him to stand back. Well, all the men put their hands to their swords; and if the same swords were only playthings, they weren't able to draw them, for all strength that was left their arms. Seven Inches loosened the silver chain that fastened the boat, and pushed away, and after grinning at the four men, says he to them. 'Bid your daughters and your brides farewell for awhile. You,' says he to the youngest, 'needn't fear, you'll recover your princess all in good time, and you and she will be as happy as the day is long. Bad people, if they were rolling stark naked in gold, would not be rich. Good-bye.' Away they sailed, and the ladies stretched out their hands, but weren't able to say a word.

Well, they weren't crossing the lake while a cat 'ud be lickin' her ear, and the poor men couldn't stir hand or foot to follow them. They saw Seven Inches handing the three princesses out of the boat, and letting them down by a basket into a draw-well, but king nor princes ever saw an

opening before in the same place. When the last lady was out of sight, the men found the strength in their arms and legs again. Round the lake they ran, and never drew rein till they came to the well and windlass; and there was the silk rope rolled on the axle, and the nice white basket hanging to it. ‘Let me down,’ says the youngest prince. ‘I’ll die or recover them again.’ ‘No,’ says the second daughter’s sweetheart, ‘it is my turn first.’ And says the other, ‘I am the eldest.’ So they gave way to him, and in he got into the basket, and down they let him. First they lost sight of him, and then, after winding off a hundred perches of the silk rope, it slackened, and they stopped turning. They waited two hours, and then they went to dinner, because there was no pull made at the rope.

Guards were set till next morning, and then down went the second prince, and sure enough, the youngest of all got himself let down on the third day. He went down perches and perches, while it was as dark about him as if he was in a big pot with a cover on. At last he saw a glimmer far down, and in a short time he felt the ground. Out he came from the big lime-kiln, and, lo! and behold you, there was a wood, and green fields, and a castle in a lawn, and a bright sky over all. ‘It’s in Tir-na-n-Oge I am,’ says he. ‘Let’s see what sort of people are in the castle.’ On he walked, across fields and lawn, and no one was there to keep him out or let him into the castle; but the big hall-door was wide open. He went from one fine room to another that was finer, and at last he reached the handsomest of all, with a table in the middle. And such a dinner as was laid upon it! The prince was hungry enough, but he was too mannerly to eat without being invited. So he sat by the fire, and he did not wait long till he heard steps, and in came Seven Inches with the youngest sister by the hand. Well, prince and princess flew into one another’s arms, and says the little man, says he, ‘Why aren’t you eating?’ ‘I think, sir,’ says the prince, ‘it was only good manner to wait to be asked.’ ‘The other princes didn’t think so,’ says he. ‘Each o’ them fell to without leave, and only gave me the rough words when I told them they were making more free than welcome. Well, I don’t think they feel much hunger now. There they are, good marble instead of flesh and blood,’ says he, pointing to two statues, one in one corner, and the other in the other corner of the room. The prince was frightened, but he was afraid to say anything, and Seven Inches made him sit down to dinner between himself and his bride; and he’d be as happy as

the day is long, only for the sight of the stone men in the corner. Well, that day went by, and when the next came, says Seven Inches to him, ‘Now, you’ll have to set out that way,’ pointing to the sun, ‘and you’ll find the second princess in a giant’s castle this evening, when you’ll be tired and hungry, and the eldest princess to-morrow evening; and you may as well bring them here with you. You need not ask leave of their masters; and perhaps if they ever get home, they’ll look on poor people as if they were flesh and blood like themselves.’

Away went the prince, and bedad! it’s tired and hungry he was when he reached the first castle, at sunset. Oh, wasn’t the second princess glad to see him! And what a good supper she gave him. But she heard the giant at the gate, and she hid the prince in a closet. Well, when he came in, he snuffed, an’ he snuffed, and says he, ‘By the life, I smell fresh meat.’ ‘Oh,’ says the princess, ‘it’s only the calf I got killed to-day.’ ‘Ay, ay,’ says he, ‘is supper ready?’ ‘It is,’ says she; and before he rose from the table he ate three-quarters of a calf, and a flask of wine. ‘I think,’ says he, when all was done, ‘I smell fresh meat still.’ ‘It’s sleepy you are,’ says she; ‘go to bed.’ ‘When will you marry me?’ says the giant. ‘You’re putting me off too long.’ ‘St. Tibb’s Eve,’ says she. ‘I wish I knew how far off that is,’ says he; and he fell asleep, with his head in the dish.

Next day, he went out after breakfast, and she sent the prince to the castle where the eldest sister was. The same thing happened there; but when the giant was snoring, the princess wakened up the prince, and they saddled two steeds in the stables and rode into the field on them. But the horses’ heels struck the stones outside the gate, and up got the giant and strode after them. He roared and he shouted, and the more he shouted, the faster ran the horses, and just as the day was breaking he was only twenty perches behind. But the prince didn’t leave the castle of Seven Inches without being provided with something good. He reined in his steed, and flung a short, sharp knife over his shoulder, and up sprung a thick wood between the giant and themselves. They caught the wind that blew before them, and the wind that blew behind them did not catch them. At last they were near the castle where the other sister lived; and there she was, waiting for them under a high hedge, and a fine steed under her.

But the giant was now in sight, roaring like a hundred lions, and the other giant was out in a moment, and the chase kept on. For every two

springs the horses gave, the giants gave three, and at last they were only seventy perches off. Then the prince stopped again, and flung the second knife behind him. Down went all the flat field, till there was a quarry between them a quarter of a mile deep, and the bottom filled with black water; and before the giants could get round it, the prince and princesses were inside the kingdom of the great magician, where the high thorny hedge opened of itself to everyone that he chose to let in. There was joy enough between the three sisters, till the two eldest saw their lovers turned into stone. But while they were shedding tears for them, Seven Inches came in, and touched them with his rod. So they were flesh, and blood, and life once more, and there was great hugging and kissing, and all sat down to breakfast, and Seven Inches sat at the head of the table.

When breakfast was over, he took them into another room, where there was nothing but heaps of gold, and silver, and diamonds, and silks, and satins; and on a table there was lying three sets of crowns: a gold crown was in a silver crown, and that was lying in a copper crown. He took up one set of crowns, and gave it to the eldest princess; and another set, and gave it to the second youngest princess; and another, and gave it to the youngest of all; and says he, ‘Now you may all go to the bottom of the pit, and you have nothing to do but stir the basket, and the people that are watching above will draw you up. But remember, ladies, you are to keep your crows safe, and be married in them, all the same day. If you be married separately, or if you be married without your crowns, a curse will follow—mind what I say.’

So they took leave of him with great respect, and walked arm-in-arm to the bottom of the draw-well. There was a sky and a sun over them, and a great high wall, covered with ivy, rose before them, and was so high they could not see to the top of it; and there was an arch in this wall, and the bottom of the draw-well was inside the arch. The youngest pair went last; and says the princess to the prince, ‘I’m sure the two princes don’t mean any good to you. Keep these crowns under your cloak, and if you are obliged to stay last, don’t get into the basket, but put a big stone, or any heavy thing inside, and see what will happen.’

As soon as they were inside the dark cave, they put in the eldest princess first, and stirred the basket, and up she went. Then the basket was let down again, and up went the second princess, and then up went the

youngest; but first she put her arms round her prince's neck, and kissed him, and cried a little. At last it came to the turn of the youngest prince, and instead of going into the basket he put in a big stone. He drew on one side and listened, and after the basket was drawn up about twenty perches, down came it and the stone like thunder, and the stone was broken into little bits.

Well, the poor prince had nothing for it but to walk back to the castle; and through it and round it he walked, and the finest of eating and drinking he got, and a bed of bog-down to sleep on, and long walks he took through gardens and lawns, but not a sight could he get, high or low, of Seven Inches. He, before a week, got tired of it, he was so lonesome for his true love; and at the end of a month he didn't know what to do with himself.

One morning he went into the treasure room, and took notice of a beautiful snuff-box on the table that he didn't remember seeing there before. He took it in his hands and opened it, and out Seven Inches walked on the table. 'I think, prince,' says he, 'you're getting a little tired of my castle?' 'Ah!' says the other, 'if I had my princess here, and could see you now and then, I'd never know a dismal day.' 'Well, you're long enough here now, and you're wanted there above. Keep your bride's crowns safe, and whenever you want my help, open this snuff-box. Now take a walk down the garden, and come back when you're tired.'

The prince was going down a gravel walk with a quickset hedge on each side, and his eyes on the ground, and he was thinking of one thing and another. At last he lifted his eyes, and there he was outside of a smith's gate that he often passed before, about a mile away from the palace of his betrothed princess. The clothes he had on him were as ragged as you please, but he had his crowns safe under his old cloak.

Then the smith came out, and says he, 'It's a shame for a strong, big fellow like you to be lazy, and so much work to be done. Are you any good with hammer and tongs? Come in and bear a hand, an I'll give you diet and lodging, and a few pence when you earn them.' 'Never say't twice,' says the prince. 'I want nothing but to be busy.' So he took the hammer, and pounded away at the red-hot bar that the smith was turning on the anvil to make into a set of horse-shoes.

They hadn't been long at work when a tailor came in, and he sat down and began to talk. 'You all heard how the two princess were loth to be

married till the youngest would be ready with her crowns and her sweetheart. But after the windlass loosened accidentally when they were pulling up her bridegroom that was to be, there was no more sign of a well, or a rope, or a windlass, than there is on the palm of your hand. So the princes that were courting the eldest ladies wouldn't give peace or ease to their lovers nor the king till they got consent to the marriage, and it was to take place this morning. Myself went down out o' curiousity, and to be sure I was delighted with the grand dresses of the two brides, and the three crowns on their heads—gold, silver, and copper, one inside the other. The youngest was standing by mournful enough, and all was ready. The two bridegrooms came in as proud and grand as you please, and up they were walking to the altar rails, when the boards opened two yards wide under their feet, and down they went among the dead men and the coffins in the vaults. Oh, such shrieks as the ladies gave! and such running and racing and peeping down as there was! but the clerk soon opened the door of the vault, and up came the two princes, their fine clothes covered an inch thick with cobwebs and mould.

So the king said they should put off the marriage. 'For,' says he, 'I see there is no use in thinking of it till the youngest gets her three crowns, and is married with the others. I'll give my youngest daughter for a wife to whoever brings three crowns to me like the others; and if he doesn't care to be married, some other one will, and I'll make his fortune.'

'I wish,' says the smith, 'I could do it; but I was looking at the crowns after the princesses got home, and I don't think there's a black or a white smith on the face of the earth that could imitate them.' 'Faint heart never won fair lady,' says the prince. 'Go to the palace and ask for a quarter of a pound of gold, a quarter of a pound of silver, and a quarter of a pound of copper. Get one crown for a pattern, and my head for a pledge, I'll give you out the very things that are wanted in the morning.' 'Are you in earnest?' says the smith. 'Faith, I am so,' says he. 'Go! you can't do worse than lose.'

To make a long story short, the smith got the quarter of a pound of gold, and the quarter of a pound of silver, and the quarter of a pound of copper, and gave them and the pattern crown to the prince. He shut the forge door at nightfall, and the neighbours all gathered in the yard, and they heard him hammering, hammering, hammering, from that to

daybreak; and every now and then he'd throw out through the window bits of gold, silver, and copper; and the idlers scrambled for them, and cursed one another, and prayed for the good luck of the workman.

Well, just as the sun was thinking to rise, he opened the door, and brought out the three crowns he got from his true love, and such shouting and huzzaing as there was! The smith asked him to go along with him to the palace, but he refused; so off set the smith, and the whole townland with him; and wasn't the king rejoiced when he saw the crowns! 'Well,' says he to the smith, 'you're a married man. What's to be done?' 'Faith, your majesty, I didn't make them crowns at all. It was a big fellow that took service with me yesterday.' 'Well, daughter, will you marry the fellow that made these crowns?' 'Let me see them first, father,' said she; but when she examined them she knew them right well, and guessed it was her true love that sent them. 'I will marry the man that these crowns came from,' says she.

'Well,' says the king to the elder of the two princes, 'go up to the smith's forge, take my best coaches, and bring home the bridegroom.' He did not like doing this, he was so proud, but he could not refuse. When he came to the forge he saw the prince standing at the door, and beckoned him over to the coach. 'Are you the fellow,' says he, 'that made these crowns?' 'Yes,' says the other. 'Then,' says he, 'maybe you'd give yourself a brushing, and get into that coach; the king wants to see you. I pity the princess.' The young prince got into the carriage, and while they were on the way he opened the snuff-box, and out walked Seven Inches, and stood on his thigh. 'Well,' says he, 'what trouble is on you now?' 'Master,' says the other, 'please let me go back to my forge, and let this carriage be filled with paving stones.' No sooner said than done. The prince was sitting in his forge, and the horses wondered what was after happening to the carriage.

When they came into the palace yard, the king himself opened the carriage door, for respect to his new son-in-law. As soon as he turned the handle, a shower of small stones fell on his powdered wig and his silk coat, and down he fell under them. There was great fright and some laughter, and the king, after he wiped the blood from his forehead, looked very cross at the eldest prince. 'My lord,' says he, 'I'm very sorry for this accident, but I'm not to blame. I saw the young smith get into the carriage,

and we never stopped a minute since.' 'It's uncivil you were to him. Go,' says he to the other prince, 'and bring the young smith here, and be polite.' 'Never fear,' says he.

But there's some people that couldn't be good-natured if they tried, and not a bit civiller was the new messenger than the old, and when the king opened the carriage door a second time, it's shower of mud that came down on him. 'There's no use,' says he, 'going on this way. The fox never got a better messenger than himself.'

So he changed his clothes, and washed himself, and out he set to the prince's forge and asked him to sit along with himself. The prince begged to be allowed to sit in the other carriage, and when they were half-way he opened his snuff-box. 'Master,' says he, 'I'd wish to be dressed now according to my rank.' 'You shall be that,' says Seven Inches. 'And now I'll bid you farewell. Continue as good and kind as you always were; love your wife; and that's all the advice I'll give you.' So Seven Inches vanished; and when the carriage door was opened in the yard, out walks the prince as fine as hands could make him, and the first thing he did was to run over to his bride and embrace her.

Every one was full of joy but the two other princes. There was not much delay about the marriages, and they were all celebrated on the one day. Soon after, the two elder couples went to their own courts, but the youngest pair stayed with the old king, and they were as happy as the happiest married couple you ever heard of in a story.

From 'West Highland Tales.'

THE STORY OF A VERY BAD BOY

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Once upon a time there lived in a little village in the very middle of France a widow and her only son, a boy about fifteen, whose name was Antoine, though no one ever called him anything but Toueno-Boueno. They were very poor indeed, and their hut shook about their ears on windy nights, till they expected the walls to fall in and crush them, but instead of going to work as a boy of his age ought to do, Toueno-Boueno did nothing but lounge along the street, his eyes fixed on the ground, seeing nothing that went on round him.

‘You are very, very stupid, my dear child,’ his mother would sometimes say to him, and then she would add with a laugh, ‘Certainly you will never catch a wolf by the tail.’

One day the old woman bade Antoine go into the forest and collect enough dry leaves to make beds for herself and him. Before he had finished it began to rain heavily, so he hid himself in the hollow trunk of a tree, where he was so dry and comfortable that he soon fell fast asleep. By and by he was awakened by a noise which sounded like a dog scratching at the door, and he suddenly felt frightened, why he did not know. Very cautiously he raised his head, and right above him he saw a big hairy animal, coming down tail foremost.

‘It is the wolf that they talk so much about,’ he said to himself, and he made himself as small as he could and shrunk into a corner.

The wolf came down the inside of the tree, slowly, slowly; Antoine felt turned to stone, so terrified was he, and hardly dared to breathe. Suddenly an idea entered his mind, which he thought might save him still. He remembered to have heard from his mother that a wolf could neither bend his back nor turn his head, so as to look behind him, and quick as lightning he stretched up his hand, and seizing the wolf’s tail, pulled it towards him.

Then he left the tree and dragged the animal to his mother’s house.

‘Mother, you have often declared that I was too stupid to catch a wolf by the tail. Now see,’ he cried triumphantly.

‘Well, well, wonders will never cease,’ answered the good woman, who took care to keep at a safe distance. ‘But as you really have got him, let us see if we can’t put him to some use. Fetch the skin of the ram which died last week out of the chest, and we will sew the wolf up in it. He will make a splendid ram, and to-morrow we will drive him to the fair and sell him.’

Very likely the wolf, who was cunning and clever, may have understood what she said, but he thought it best to give no sign, and suffered the skin to be sewn upon him.

‘I can always get away if I choose,’ thought he, ‘it is better not to be in a hurry;’ so he remained quite still while the skin was drawn over his head, which made him very hot and uncomfortable, and resisted the temptation to snap off the fingers or noses that were so close to his mouth.

The fair was at its height next day when Toueno-Boueno arrived with his wolf in ram’s clothing. All the farmers crowded round him, each offering a higher price than the last. Never had they beheld such a beautiful beast, said they, and at last, after much bargaining, he was handed over to three brothers for a good sum of money.

It happened that these three brothers owned large flocks of sheep, though none so large and fine as the one they had just bought.

‘My flock is the nearest,’ observed the eldest brother; ‘we will leave him in the fold for the night, and to-morrow we will decide which pastures will be best for him.’ And the wolf grinned as he listened, and held up his head a little higher than before.

Early next morning the young farmer began to go his rounds, and the sheep-fold was the first place he visited. To his horror, the sheep were all stretched out dead before him, except one, which the wolf had eaten, bones and all. Instantly the truth flashed upon him. It was no ram that lay curled up in the corner pretending to be asleep (for in reality he could bend back and turn his head as much as he liked), but a wolf who was watching him out of the corner of his eye, and might spring upon him at any moment. So the farmer took no notice, and only thought that here was a fine chance of revenging himself on his next brother for a trick which he had played, and merely told him that the ram would not eat the grass in that field, and it might be well to drive him to the pasture by the river, where his own flock was feeding. The second brother eagerly swallowed the bait, and that evening the wolf was driven down to the field where the young man kept

the sheep which had been left him by his father. By the next morning they also were all dead, but the second brother likewise held his peace, and allowed the sheep which belonged to the youngest to share the fate of the other two. Then they met and confessed to each other their disasters, and resolved to take the animal as fast as possible back to Toueno-Boueno, who should get a sound thrashing.

Antoine was sitting on a plum tree belonging to a neighbour, eating the ripe fruit, when he saw the three young farmers coming towards him. Swinging himself down, he flew home to the hut, crying breathlessly, ‘Mother, mother, the farmers are close by with the wolf. They have found out all about it, and will certainly kill me, and perhaps you too. But if you do as I tell you, I may be able to save us both. Lie down on the floor, and pretend to be dead, and be sure not to speak, whatever happens.

Thus when the three brothers, each armed with a whip, entered the hut a few seconds later, they found a woman extended on the floor, and Toueno kneeling at her side, whistling loudly into her ears.

‘What are you doing now, you rascal?’ asked the eldest.

‘What am I doing? Oh, my poor friends, I am the most miserable creature in the world! I have lost the best of mothers, and I don’t know what will become of me,’ and he hid his face in his hands and sobbed again.

‘But what are you whistling like that for?’

‘Well, it is the only chance. This whistle has been known to bring the dead back to life, and I hoped—’ here he buried his face in his hands again, but peeping between his fingers he saw that the brother had opened their six eyes as wide as saucers.

‘Look!’ he suddenly exclaimed with a cry, ‘Look! I am sure I felt her body move! And now her nostrils are twitching. Ah! the whistle has not lost its power after all,’ and stooping down, Toueno whistled more loudly than before, so that the old woman’s feet and hands showed signs of life, and she soon was able to life her head.

The farmers were so astonished at her restoration, that it was some time before they could speak. At length the eldest turned to the boy and said:

‘Now listen to me. There is no manner of doubt that you are a young villain. You sold us a ram knowing full well that it was a wolf, and we

came here to-day to pay you out for it. But if you will give us that whistle, we will pardon what you have done, and will leave you alone.'

'It is my only treasure, and I set great store by it,' answered the boy, pretending to hesitate. 'But as you wish for it so much, well, I suppose I can't refuse,' and he held out the whistle, which the eldest brother put in his pocket.

Armed with the precious whistle, the three brothers returned home full of joy, and as they went the youngest said to the others, 'I have such a good idea! Our wives are all lazy and grumbling, and make our lives a burden. Let us give them a lesson, and kill them as soon as we get in. Of course we can restore them to life at once, but they will have had a rare fright.'

'Ah, how clever you are,' answered the other two. 'Nobody else would have thought of that.'

So gaily the three husbands knocked down their three wives, who fell dead to the ground. Then one by one the men tried the whistle, and blew so loudly that it seemed as if their lungs would burst, but the women lay stark and stiff and never moved an eyelid. The husbands grew pale and cold, for they had never dreamed of this, nor meant any harm, and after a while they understood that their efforts were of no use, and that once more the boy had tricked them. With stern faces they rose to their feet, and taking a large sack they retraced their steps to the hut.

This time there was no escape. Toueno had been asleep, and only opened his eyes as they entered. Without a word on either side they thrust him into the sack, and tying up the mouth, the eldest threw it over his shoulder. After that they all set out to the river, where they intended to drown the boy.

But the river was a long way off, and the day was very hot, and Antoine was heavy, heavier than a whole sheaf of corn. They carried him in turns, but even so they grew very tired and thirsty, and when a little tavern came in sight on the roadside, they thankfully flung the sack down on a bench and entered to refresh themselves. They never noticed that a beggar was sitting in the shade at the end of the bench, but Toueno's sharp ears caught the sound of someone eating, and as soon as the farmers had gone into the inn he began to groan softly.

‘What is the matter?’ asked the beggar, drawing a little nearer. ‘Why have they shut you up, poor boy?’

‘Because they wanted to make me a bishop, and I would not consent,’ answered Toueno.

‘Dear me,’ exclaimed the beggar, ‘yet it isn’t such a bad thing to be a bishop.’

‘I don’t say it is,’ replied the young rascal, ‘but I should never like it. However, if you have any fancy for wearing a mitre, you need only untie the sack, and take my place.’

‘I should like nothing better,’ said the man, as he stooped to undo the big knot.

So it was the beggar and not Toueno-Boueno who was flung into the water.

The next morning the three wives were buried, and on returning from the cemetery, their husbands met Toueno-Boueno driving a magnificent flock of sheep. At the sight of him the three farmers stood still with astonishment.

‘What! you scoundrel!’ they cried at last, ‘we drowned you yesterday, and to-day we find you again, as well as ever!’

‘It does seem odd, doesn’t it?’ answered he. ‘But perhaps you don’t know that beneath this world there lies another yet more beautiful and far, far richer. Well, it was there that you sent me when you flung me into the river, and though I felt a little strange at first, yet I soon began to look about me, and to see what was happening. There I noticed that close to the place where I had fallen, a sheep fair was being held, and a bystander told me that every day horses or cattle were sold somewhere in the town. If I had only had the luck to be thrown into the river on the side of the horse fair I might have made my fortune! As it was, I had to content myself with buying these sheep, which you can get for nothing.’

‘And do you know exactly the spot in the river which lies over the horse fair?’

‘As if I did not know it, when I have seen it with my own eyes.’

‘Then if you do not want us to avenge our dead flocks and our murdered wives, you will have to throw us into the river just over the place of the horse fair.’

‘Very well; only you must get three sacks and come with me to that rock which juts into the river. I will throw you in from there, and you will fall nearly on to the horses’ backs.’

So he threw them in, and as they were never seen again, no one ever knew into which fair they had fallen.

From ‘Litterature Orale de L’Auvergne,’ par Paul Sebillot.

THE BROWN BEAR OF NORWAY

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There was once a king in Ireland, and he had three daughters, and very nice princesses they were. And one day, when they and their father were walking on the lawn, the king began to joke with them, and to ask them whom they would like to be married to. ‘I’ll have the king of Ulster for a husband,’ says one; ‘and I’ll have the king of Munster,’ says another; ‘and,’ says the youngest, ‘I’ll have no husband but the Brown Bear of Norway.’ For a nurse of hers used to be telling her of an enchanted prince that she called by that name, and she fell in love with him, and his name was the first name on her tongue, for the very night before she was dreaming of him. Well, one laughed, and another laughed, and they joked with the princess all the rest of the evening. But that very night she woke up out of her sleep in a great hall that was lighted up with a thousand lamps; the richest carpets were on the floor, and the walls were covered with cloth of gold and silver, and the place was full of grand company, and the very beautiful prince she saw in her dreams was there, and it wasn’t a moment till he was on one knee before her, and telling her how much he loved her, and asking her wouldn’t she be his queen. Well, she hadn’t the heart to refuse him, and married they were the same evening.

‘Now, my darling,’ says he, when they were left by themselves, ‘you must know that I am under enchantment. A sorceress, that had a beautiful daughter, wished me for her son-in-law; but the mother got power over me, and when I refused to wed her daughter she made me take the form of a bear by day, and I was to continue so till a lady would marry me of her own free will, and endure five years of great trials after.’

Well, when the princess woke in the morning, she missed her husband from her side, and spent the day very sadly. But as soon as the lamps were lighted in the grand hall, where she was sitting on a sofa covered with silk, the folding doors flew open, and he was sitting by her side the next minute. So they spent another happy evening, but he warned her that whenever she began to tire of him, or ceased to have faith in him, they

would be parted for ever, and he'd be obliged to marry the witch's daughter.

She got used to find him absent by day, and they spent a happy twelvemonth together, and at last a beautiful little boy was born; and happy as she was before, she was twice as happy now, for she had her child to keep her company in the day when she couldn't see her husband.

At last, one evening, when herself, and himself, and her child were sitting with a window open because it was a sultry night, in flew an eagle, took the infant's sash in his beak, and flew up in the air with him. She screamed, and was going to throw herself out the window after him, but the prince caught her, and looked at her very seriously. She bethought of what he said soon after their marriage, and she stopped the cries and complaints that were on her tongue. She spent her days very lonely for another twelvemonth, when a beautiful little girl was sent to her. Then she thought to herself she'd have a sharp eye about her this time; so she never would allow a window to be more than a few inches open.

But all her care was in vain. Another evening, when they were all so happy, and the prince dandling the baby, a beautiful greyhound stood before them, took the child out of the father's hand, and was out of the door before you could wink. This time she shouted and ran out of the room, but there were some of the servants in the next room, and all declared that neither child nor dog passed out. She felt, somehow, as if it was her husband's fault, but still she kept command over herself, and didn't once reproach him.

When the third child was born she would hardly allow a window or a door to be left open for a moment; but she wasn't the nearer to keep the child to herself. They were sitting one evening by the fire, when a lady appeared standing by them. The princess opened her eyes in a great fright and stared at her, and while she was doing so, the lady wrapped a shawl round the baby that was sitting in its father's lap, and either sank through the ground with it or went up through the wide chimney. This time the mother kept her bed for a month.

'My dear,' said she to her husband, when she was beginning to recover, 'I think I'd feel better if I was to see my father and mother and sisters once more. If you give me leave to go home for a few days I'd be glad.' 'Very well,' said he, 'I will do that, and whenever you feel inclined to

return, only mention your wish when you lie down at night.' The next morning when she awoke she found herself in her own old chamber in her father's palace. She rang the bell, and in a short time she had her mother and father and married sisters about her, and they laughed till they cried for joy at finding her safe back again.

In time she told them all that had happened to her, and they didn't know what to advise her to do. She was as fond of her husband as ever, and said she was sure that he couldn't help letting the children go; but still she was afraid beyond the world to have another child torn from her. Well, the mother and sisters consulted a wise woman that used to bring eggs to the castle, for they had great faith in her wisdom. She said the only plan was to secure the bear's skin that the prince was obliged to put on every morning, and get it burned, and then he couldn't help being a man night and day, and the enchantment would be at an end.

So they all persuaded her to do that, and she promised she would; and after eight days she felt so great a longing to see her husband again that she made the wish the same night, and when she woke three hours after, she was in her husband's palace, and he himself was watching over her. There was great joy on both sides, and they were happy for many days.

Now she began to think how she never minded her husband leaving her in the morning, and how she never found him neglecting to give her a sweet drink out of a gold cup just as she was going to bed.

One night she contrived not to drink any of it, though she pretended to do so; and she was wakeful enough in the morning, and saw her husband passing out through a panel in the wainscot, though she kept her eyelids nearly closed. The next night she got a few drops of the sleepy posset that she saved the evening before put into her husband's night drink, and that made him sleep sound enough. She got up after midnight, passed through the panel, and found a Beautiful brown bear's hide hanging in the corner. Then she stole back, and went down to the parlour fire, and put the hide into the middle of it till it was all fine ashes. She then lay down by her husband, gave him a kiss on the cheek, and fell asleep.

If she was to live a hundred years she'd never forget how she wakened next morning, and found her husband looking down on her with misery and anger in his face. 'Unhappy woman,' said he, 'you have separated us for ever! Why hadn't you patience for five years? I am now obliged,

whether I like or no, to go a three days' journey to the witch's castle, and marry her daughter. The skin that was my guard you have burned it, and the egg-wife that gave you the counsel was the witch herself. I won't reproach you: your punishment will be severe without it. Farewell for ever!'

He kissed her for the last time, and was off the next minute, walking as fast as he could. She shouted after him, and then seeing there was no use, she dressed herself and pursued him. He never stopped, nor stayed, nor looked back, and still she kept him in sight; and when he was on the hill she was in the hollow, and when he was in the hollow she was on the hill. Her life was almost leaving her, when, just as the sun was setting, he turned up a lane, and went into a little house. She crawled up after him, and when she got inside there was a beautiful little boy on his knees, and he kissing and hugging him. 'Here, my poor darling,' says he, 'is your eldest child, and there,' says he, pointing to a woman that was looking on with a smile on her face, 'is the eagle that carried him away.' She forgot all her sorrows in a moment, hugging her child, and laughing and crying over him. The woman washed their feet, and rubbed them with an ointment that took all the soreness out of their bones, and made them as fresh as a daisy. Next morning, just before sunrise, he was up, and prepared to be off, 'Here,' said he to her, 'is a thing which may be of use to you. It's a scissors, and whatever stuff you cut with it will be turned into silk. The moment the sun rises, I'll lose all memory of yourself and the children, but I'll get it at sunset again. Farewell!' But he wasn't far gone till she was in sight of him again, leaving her boy behind. It was the same to-day as yesterday: their shadows went before them in the morning and followed them in the evening. He never stopped, and she never stopped, and as the sun was setting he turned up another lane, and there they found their little daughter. It was all joy and comfort again till morning, and then the third day's journey commenced.

But before he started he gave her a comb, and told her that whenever she used it, pearls and diamonds would fall from her hair. Still he had his memory from sunset to sunrise; but from sunrise to sunset he travelled on under the charm, and never threw his eye behind. This night they came to where the youngest baby was, and the next morning, just before sunrise, the prince spoke to her for the last time. 'Here, my poor wife,' said he, 'is

a little hand-reel, with gold thread that has no end, and the half of our marriage ring. If you ever get to my house, and put your half-ring to mine, I shall recollect you. There is a wood yonder, and the moment I enter it I shall forget everything that ever happened between us, just as if I was born yesterday. Farewell, dear wife and child, for ever!' Just then the sun rose, and away he walked towards the wood. She saw it open before him and close after him, and when she came up, she could no more get in than she could break through a stone wall. She wrung her hands and shed tears, but then she recollected herself, and cried out, 'Wood, I charge you by my three magic gifts, the scissors, the comb, and the reel—to let me through'; and it opened, and she went along a walk till she came in sight of a palace, and a lawn, and a woodman's cottage on the edge of the wood where it came nearest the palace.

She went into the lodge, and asked the woodman and his wife to take her into their service. They were not willing at first; but she told them she would ask no wages, and would give them diamonds, and pearls, and silk stuffs, and gold thread whenever they wished for them, and then they agreed to let her stay.

It wasn't long till she heard how a young prince, that was just arrived, was living in the palace of the young mistress. He seldom stirred abroad, and every one that saw him remarked how silent and sorrowful he went about, like a person that was searching for some lost thing.

The servants and conceited folk at the big house began to take notice of the beautiful young woman at the lodge, and to annoy her with their impudence. The head footman was the most troublesome, and at last she invited him to come and take tea with her. Oh, how rejoiced he was, and how he bragged of it in the servants' hall! Well, the evening came, and the footman walked into the lodge, and was shown to her sitting-room; for the lodge-keeper and his wife stood in great awe of her, and gave her two nice rooms for herself. Well, he sat down as stiff as a ramrod, and was talking in a grand style about the great doings at the castle, while she was getting the tea and toast ready. 'Oh,' says she to him, 'would you put your hand out at the window and cut me off a sprig or two of honeysuckle?' He got up in great glee, and put out his hand and head; and said she, 'By the virtue of my magic gifts, let a pair of horns spring out of your head, and sing to the lodge.' Just as she wished, so it was. They sprung from the front of

each ear, and met at the back. Oh, the poor wretch! And how he bawled and roared! and the servants that he used to be boasting to were soon flocking from the castle, and grinning, and huzzaing, and beating tunes on tongs and shovels and pans; and he cursing and swearing, and the eyes ready to start out of his head, and he so black in the face, and kicking out his legs behind him like mad.

At last she pitied him, and removed the charm, and the horns dropped down on the ground, and he would have killed her on the spot, only he was as weak as water, and his fellow-servants came in and carried him up to the big house. Well, some way or other the story came to the ears of the prince, and he strolled down that way. She had only the dress of a countrywoman on her as she sat sewing at the window, but that did not hide her beauty, and he was greatly puzzled after he had a good look, just as a body is puzzled to know whether something happened to him when he was young or if he only dreamed it. Well, the witch's daughter heard about it too, and she came to see the strange girl; and what did she find her doing but cutting out the pattern of a gown from brown paper; and as she cut away, the paper became the richest silk she ever saw. The witch's daughter looked on with greedy eyes, and, says she, 'What would you be satisfied to take for that scissors?' 'I'll take nothing,' says she, 'but leave to spend one night outside the prince's chamber.' Well, the proud lady fired up, and was going to say something dreadful; but the scissors kept on cutting, and the silk growing richer and richer every inch. So she promised what the girl had asked her.

When night came on she was let into the palace and lay down till the prince was in such a dead sleep that all she did couldn't awake him. She sung this verse to him, sighing and sobbing, and kept singing it the night long, and it was all in vain:

Four long years I was married to thee; Three sweet babes I bore to thee; Brown Bear of Norway, turn to me.

At the first dawn the proud lady was in the chamber, and led her away, and the footman of the horns put out his tongue at her as she was quitting the palace.

So there was no luck so far; but the next day the prince passed by again and looked at her, and saluted her kindly, as a prince might a farmer's

daughter, and passed one; and soon the witch's daughter passed by, and found her combing her hair, and pearls and diamonds dropping from it.

Well, another bargain was made, and the princess spent another night of sorrow, and she left the castle at daybreak, and the footman was at his post and enjoyed his revenge.

The third day the prince went by, and stopped to talk with the strange woman. He asked her could he do anything to serve her, and she said he might. She asked him did he ever wake at night. He said that he often did, but that during the last two nights he was listening to a sweet song in his dreams, and could not wake, and that the voice was one that he must have known and loved in some other world long ago. Says she, 'Did you drink any sleepy posset either of these evenings before you went to bed?' 'I did,' said he. 'The two evenings my wife gave me something to drink, but I don't know whether it was a sleepy posset or not.' 'Well, prince,' said she, 'as you say you would wish to oblige me, you can do it by not tasting any drink to-night.' 'I will not,' says he, and then he went on his walk.

Well, the great lady came soon after the prince, and found the stranger using her hand-reel and winding threads of gold off it, and the third bargain was made.

That evening the prince was lying on his bed at twilight, and his mind much disturbed; and the door opened, and in his princess walked, and down she sat by his bedside and sung:

Four long years I was married to thee; Three sweet babes I bore to thee; Brown Bear of Norway, turn to me.

'Brown Bear of Norway!' said he. 'I don't understand you.' 'Don't you remember, prince, that I was your wedded wife for four years?' 'I do not,' said he, 'but I'm sure I wish it was so.' 'Don't you remember our three babes that are still alive?' 'Show me them. My mind is all a heap of confusion.' 'Look for the half of our marriage ring, that hangs at your neck, and fit it to this.' He did so, and the same moment the charm was broken. His full memory came back on him, and he flung his arms round his wife's neck, and both burst into tears.

Well, there was a great cry outside, and the castle walls were heard splitting and cracking. Everyone in the castle was alarmed, and made their way out. The prince and princess went with the rest, and by the time all were safe on the lawn, down came the building, and made the ground

tremble for miles round. No one ever saw the witch and her daughter afterwards. It was not long till the prince and princess had their children with them, and then they set out for their own palace. The kings of Ireland and of Munster and Ulster, and their wives, soon came to visit them, and may every one that deserves it be as happy as the Brown Bear of Norway and his family.

From ‘West Highland Tales.’

LITTLE LASSE

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There was once a little boy whose name was Lars, and because he was so little he was called Little Lasse; he was a brave little man, for he sailed round the world in a pea-shell boat.

It was summer time, when the pea shells grew long and green in the garden. Little Lasse crept into the pea bed where the pea stalks rose high above his cap, and he picked seventeen large shells, the longest and straightest he could find.

Little Lasse thought, perhaps, that no one saw him; but that was foolish, for God sees everywhere.

Then the gardener came with his gun over his shoulder, and he heard something rustling in the pea bed.

‘I think that must be a sparrow,’ he said. ‘Ras! Ras!’ but no sparrows flew out, for Little Lasse had no wings, only two small legs. ‘Wait! I will load my gun and shoot the sparrows,’ said the gardener.

Then Little Lasse was frightened, and crept out on to the path.

‘Forgive me, dear gardener!’ he said. ‘I wanted to get some fine boats.’

‘Well, I will this time,’ said the gardener. ‘But another time Little Lasse must ask leave to go and look for boats in the pea bed.’

‘I will,’ answered Lasse; and he went off to the shore. Then he opened the shells with a pin, split them carefully in two, and broke small little bits of sticks for the rowers’ seats. Then he took the peas which were in the shells and put them in the boats for cargo. Some of the shells got broken, some remained whole, and when all were ready Lasse had twelve boats. But they should not be boats, they should be large warships. He had three liners, three frigates, three brigs and three schooners. The largest liner was called Hercules, and the smallest schooner The Flea. Little Lasse put all the twelve into the water, and they floated as splendidly and as proudly as any great ships over the waves of the ocean.

And now the ships must sail round the world. The great island over there was Asia; that large stone Africa; the little island America; the small

stones were Polynesia; and the shore from which the ships sailed out was Europe. The whole fleet set off and sailed far away to other parts of the world. The ships of the line steered a straight course to Asia, the frigates sailed to Africa, the brigs to America, and the schooners to Polynesia. But Little Lasse remained in Europe, and threw small stones out into the great sea.

Now, there was on the shore of Europe a real boat, father's own, a beautiful white-painted boat, and Little Lasse got into it. Father and mother had forbidden this, but Little Lasse forgot. He thought he should very much like to travel to some other part of the world.

'I shall row out a little way—only a very little way,' he thought. The pea-shell boats had travelled so far that they only looked like little specks on the ocean. 'I shall seize Hercules on the coast of Asia,' said Lasse, 'and then row home again to Europe.'

He shook the rope that held the boat, and, strange to say, the rope became loose. Ditsch, ratsch, a man is a man, and so Little Lasse manned the boat.

Now he would row—and he could row, for he had rowed so often on the step sat home, when the steps pretended to be a boat and father's big stick an oar. But when Little Lasse wanted to row there were no oars to be found in the boat. The oars were locked up in the boat-house, and Little Lasse had not noticed that the boat was empty. It is not so easy as one thinks to row to Asia without oars.

What could Little Lasse do now? The boat was already some distance out on the sea, and the wind, which blew from land, was driving it still further out. Lasse was frightened and began to cry. But there was no one on the shore to hear him. Only a big crow perched alone in the birch tree; and the gardener's black cat sat under the birch tree, waiting to catch the crow. Neither of them troubled themselves in the least about Little Lasse, who was drifting out to sea.

Ah! how sorry Little Lasse was now that he had been disobedient and got into the boat, when father and mother had so often forbidden him to do so! Now it was too late, he could not get back to land. Perhaps he would be lost out on the great sea. What should he do?

When he had shouted until he was tired and no one heard him, he put his two little hands together and said, 'Good God, do not be angry with

Little Lasse.’ And then he went to sleep. For although it was daylight, old Nukku Matti was sitting on the shores of the ‘Land of Nod,’ and was fishing for little children with his long fishing rod. He heard the low words which Little Lasse said to God, and he immediately drew the boat to himself and laid Little Lasse to sleep on a bed of rose leaves.

Then Nukku Matti said to one of the Dreams, ‘Play with Little Lasse, so that he does not feel lonesome.’

It was a little dream-boy, so little, so little, that he was less than Lasse himself; he had blue eyes and fair hair, a red cap with a silver band, and white coat with pearls on the collar. He came to Little Lasse and said, ‘Would you like to sail round the world?’

‘Yes,’ said Lasse in his sleep, ‘I should like to.’

‘Come, then,’ said the dream-boy, ‘and let us sail in your pea-shell boats. You shall sail in Hercules and I shall sail in The Flea.’

So they sailed away from the ‘Land of Nod,’ and in a little while Hercules and The Flea were on the shores of Asia away at the other end of the world, where the Ice Sea flows through Behring Straits into the Pacific Ocean. A long way off in the winter mist they could see the explorer Nordenskiold with his ship Vega trying to find an opening between the ice. It was so cold, so cold; the great icebergs glittered strangely, and the huge whales now lived under the ice, for they could not make a hole through with their awkward heads. All around on the dreary shore there was snow and snow as far as the eye could see; little grey men in shaggy skins moved about, and drove in small sledges through the snow drifts, but the sledges were drawn by dogs.

‘Shall we land here?’ asked the dream-boy.

‘No,’ said Little Lasse. ‘I am so afraid that the whales would swallow us up, and the big dogs bite us. Let us sail instead to another part of the world.’

‘Very well,’ said the dream-boy with the red cap and the silver band; ‘it is not far to America’—and at the same moment they were there.

The sun was shining and it was very warm. Tall palm trees grew in long rows on the shore and bore coconuts in their top branches. Men red as copper galloped over the immense green prairies and shot their arrows at the buffaloes, who turned against them with their sharp horns. An enormous cobra which had crept up the stem of a tall palm tree threw

itself on to a little llama that was grazing at the foot. Knaps! it was all over the little llama.

‘Shall we land here?’ asked the dream-boy.

‘No,’ said Little Lasse. ‘I am so afraid that the buffaloes will butt us, and the great serpent eat us up. Let us travel to another part of the world.’

‘Very well,’ said the dream-boy with the white coat, ‘it is only a little way to Polynesia’—and then they were there.

It was very warm there, as warm as in a hot bath in Finland. Costly spices grew on the shores: the pepper plant, the cinnamon tree, ginger, saffron; the coffee plant and the tea plant. Brown people with long ears and thick lips, and hideously painted faces, hunted a yellow-spotted tiger among the high bamboos on the shore, and the tiger turned on them and stuck its claws into one of the brown men. Then all the others took to flight.

‘Shall we land here?’ asked the dream-boy.

‘No,’ said Little Lasse. ‘Don’t you see the tiger away there by the pepper plant? Let us travel to another part of the world.’

‘We can do so,’ said the dream-boy with the blue eyes. ‘We are not far from Africa’—and as he said that they were there.

They anchored at the mouth of a great river where the shores were as green as the greenest velvet. A little distance from the river an immense desert stretched away. The air was yellow; the sun shone so hot, so hot as if it would burn the earth to ashes, and the people were as black as the blackest jet. They rode across the desert on tall camels; the lions roared with thirst, and the great crocodiles with their grey lizard heads and sharp white teeth gaped up out of the river.

‘Shall we land here?’ asked the dream-boy.

‘No,’ said Little Lasse. ‘The sun would burn us, and the lions and the crocodiles would eat us up. Let us travel to another part of the world.’

‘We can travel back to Europe,’ said the dream-boy with the fair hair. And with that they were there.

They came to a shore where it was all so cool and familiar and friendly. There stood the tall birch tree with its drooping leaves; at the top sat the old crow, and at its foot crept the gardener’s black cat. Not far away was a house which Little Lasse had seen before; near the house there was a garden, and in the garden a pea bed with long pea shells. An old gardener

with a green coat walked about and wondered if the cucumbers were ripe. Fylax was barking on the steps, and when he saw Little Lasse he wagged his tail. Old Stina was milking the cows in the farmyard, and there was a very familiar lady in a check woollen shawl on her way to the bleaching green to see if the clothes were bleached. There was, too, a well-known gentleman in a yellow summer coat, with a long pipe in his mouth; he was going to see if the reapers had cut the rye. A boy and a girl were running on the shore and calling out, ‘Little Lasse! Come home for bread-and-butter!’

‘Shall we land here?’ asked the dream-boy, and he blinked his blue eyes roguishly.

‘Come with me, and I shall ask mother to give you some bread-and-butter and a glass of milk,’ said Little Lasse.

‘Wait a little,’ said the dream-boy. And now Little Lasse saw that the kitchen door was open, and from within there was heard a low, pleasant frizzling, like that which is heard when one whisks yellow batter with a wooden ladle into a hot frying-pan.

‘Perhaps we should sail back to Polynesia now?’ said the happy dream-boy.

‘No; they are frying pancakes in Europe just now,’ said Little Lasse; and he wanted to jump ashore, but he could not. The dream-boy had tied him with a chain of flowers, so that he could not move. And now all the little dreams came about him, thousands and thousands of little children, and they made a ring around him and sang a little song:

The world is very, very wide,
Little Lasse, Lasse,
And though you’ve sailed beyond the tide,
You can never tell how wide
It is on the other side,
Lasse, Little Lasse.
You have found it cold and hot,
Little Lasse, Lasse;
But in no land is God not,
Lasse, Little Lasse.
Many men live there as here,

But they all to God are dear,
Little Lasse, Lasse.
When His angel is your guide,
Little Lasse, Lasse,
Then no harm can e’er betide,
Even on the other side
Where the wild beasts wander.
But tell us now,
Whene’er you roam,
Do you not find the best is home
Of all the lands you’ve looked upon,
Lasse, Little Lasse?

When the dreams had sung their song they skipped away, and Nukku Matti carried Lasse back to the boat. He lay there for a long time quite still, and he still heard the frying-pan frizzling at home of the fire, the frizzling was very plain, Little Lasse heard it quite near him; and so he woke up and rubbed his eyes.

There he lay in the boat, where he had fallen asleep. The wind had turned, and the boat had drifted out with one wind and drifted in with another while Little Lasse slept, and what Lasse thought was frizzling in a frying-pan was the low murmur of the waves as they washed against the stones on the shore. But he was not altogether wrong, for the clear blue sea is like a great pan in which God’s sun all day makes cakes for good children.

Little Lasse rubbed the sleep out of his eyes and looked around him. Everything was the same as before; the crow in the birch tree, the cat on the grass, and the pea-shell fleet on the shore. Some of the ships had foundered, and some had drifted back to land. Hercules had come back with its cargo from Asia, The Flea had arrived from Polynesia, and the other parts of the world were just where they were before.

Little Lasse did not know what to think. He had so often been in that grotto in the ‘Land of Nod’ and did not know what tricks dreams can play. But Little Lasse did not trouble his head with such things; he gathered together his boats and walked up the shore back to the house.

His brother and sister ran to meet him, and called out from the distance, ‘Where have you been so long, Lasse? Come home and get some bread-and-butter.’ The kitchen door stood open, and inside was heard a strange frizzling.

The gardener was near the gate, watering the dill and parsley, the carrots and parsnips.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘where has Little Lasse been so long?’

Little Lasse straightened himself up stiff, and answered: ‘I have sailed round the world in a pea-shell boat.’

‘Oh!’ said the gardener.

He has forgotten Dreamland. But you have not forgotten it; you know that it exists. You know the beautiful grotto and the bright silver walls whose lustre never fades, the sparkling diamonds which never grow dim, the music which never ceases its low, soft murmur through the sweet evening twilight. The airy fairy fancies of happy Dreamland never grow old; they, like the glorious stars above us, are always young. Perhaps you have caught a glimpse of their ethereal wings as they flew around your pillow. Perhaps you have met the same dream-boy with the blue eyes and the fair hair, the one who wore the red cap with the silver band and the white coat with pearls on the collar. Perhaps he has taken you to see all the countries of the world and the peoples, the cold waste lands and the burning deserts, the many coloured men and the wild creatures in the sea and in the woods, so that you may earn many things, but come gladly home again. Yes, who knows? Perhaps you also have sailed round the wide world once in a pea-shell boat.

From Z. Topelius.

‘MOTI’

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Once upon a time there was a youth called Moti, who was very big and strong, but the clumsiest creature you can imagine. So clumsy was he that he was always putting his great feet into the bowls of sweet milk or curds which his mother set out on the floor to cool, always smashing, upsetting, breaking, until at last his father said to him:

‘Here, Moti, are fifty silver pieces which are the savings of years; take them and go and make your living or your fortune if you can.’

Then Moti started off one early spring morning with his thick staff over his shoulder, singing gaily to himself as he walked along.

In one way and another he got along very well until a hot evening when he came to a certain city where he entered the travellers’ ‘serai’ or inn to pass the night. Now a serai, you must know, is generally just a large square enclosed by a high wall with an open colonnade along the inside all round to accommodate both men and beasts, and with perhaps a few rooms in towers at the corners for those who are too rich or too proud to care about sleeping by their own camels and horses. Moti, of course, was a country lad and had lived with cattle all his life, and he wasn’t rich and he wasn’t proud, so he just borrowed a bed from the innkeeper, set it down beside an old buffalo who reminded him of home, and in five minutes was fast asleep.

In the middle of the night he woke, feeling that he had been disturbed, and putting his hand under his pillow found to his horror that his bag of money had been stolen. He jumped up quietly and began to prowl around to see whether anyone seemed to be awake, but, though he managed to arouse a few men and beasts by falling over them, he walked in the shadow of the archways round the whole serai without coming across a likely thief. He was just about to give it up when he overheard two men whispering, and one laughed softly, and peering behind a pillar, he saw two Afghan horsedealers counting out his bag of money! Then Moti went back to bed!

In the morning Moti followed the two Afghans outside the city to the horsemarket in which they horses were offered for sale. Choosing the best-looking horse amongst them he went up to it and said:

‘Is this horse for sale? may I try it?’ and, the merchants assenting, he scrambled up on its back, dug in his heels, and off they flew. Now Moti had never been on a horse in his life, and had so much ado to hold on with both hands as well as with both legs that the animal went just where it liked, and very soon broke into a break-neck gallop and made straight back to the serai where it had spent the last few nights.

‘This will do very well,’ thought Moti as they whirled in at the entrance. As soon as the horse had arrived at its table it stopped of its own accord and Moti immediately rolled off; but he jumped up at once, tied the beast up, and called for some breakfast. Presently the Afghans appeared, out of breath and furious, and claimed the horse.

‘What do you mean?’ cried Moti, with his mouth full of rice, ‘it’s my horse; I paid you fifty pieces of silver for it—quite a bargain, I’m sure!’

‘Nonsense! it is our horse,’ answered one of the Afghans beginning to untie the bridle.

‘Leave off,’ shouted Moti, seizing his staff; ‘if you don’t let my horse alone I’ll crack your skulls! you thieves! I know you! Last night you took my money, so to-day I took your horse; that’s fair enough!’

Now the Afghans began to look a little uncomfortable, but Moti seemed so determined to keep the horse that they resolved to appeal to the law, so they went off and laid a complaint before the king that Moti had stolen one of their horses and would not give it up nor pay for it.

Presently a soldier came to summon Moti to the king; and, when he arrived and made his obeisance, the king began to question him as to why he had galloped off with the horse in this fashion. But Moti declared that he had got the animal in exchange for fifty pieces of silver, whilst the horse merchants vowed that the money they had on them was what they had received for the sale of other horses; and in one way and another the dispute got so confusing that the king (who really thought that Moti had stolen the horse) said at last, ‘Well, I tell you what I will do. I will lock something into this box before me, and if he guesses what it is, the horse is his, and if he doesn’t then it is yours.’

To this Moti agreed, and the king arose and went out alone by a little door at the back of the Court, and presently came back clasping something closely wrapped up in a cloth under his robe, slipped it into the little box, locked the box, and set it up where all might see.

‘Now,’ said the king to Moti, ‘guess!’

It happened that when the king had opened the door behind him, Moti noticed that there was a garden outside: without waiting for the king’s return he began to think what could be got out of the garden small enough to be shut in the box. ‘Is it likely to be a fruit or a flower? No, not a flower this time, for he clasped it too tight. Then it must be a fruit or a stone. Yet not a stone, because he wouldn’t wrap a dirty stone in his nice clean cloth. Then it is a fruit! And a fruit without much scent, or else he would be afraid that I might smell it. Now what fruit without much scent is in season just now? When I know that I shall have guessed the riddle!’

As has been said before, Moti was a country lad, and was accustomed to work in his father’s garden. He knew all the common fruits, so he thought he ought to be able to guess right; but so as not to let it seem too easy, he gazed up at the ceiling with a puzzled expression, and looked down at the floor with an air or wisdom and his fingers pressed against his forehead, and then he said, slowly, with his eyes on the king—

‘It is freshly plucked! It is round and it is red! It is a pomegranate!’

Now the king knew nothing about fruits except that they were good to eat; and, as for seasons, he asked for whatever fruit he wanted whenever he wanted it, and saw that he got it; so to him Moti’s guess was like a miracle, and clear proof not only of his wisdom but of his innocence, for it was a pomegranate that he had put into the box. Of course when the king marvelled and praised Moti’s wisdom, everybody else did so too; and, whilst the Afghans went off crestfallen, Moti took the horse and entered the king’s service.

Very soon after this, Moti, who continued to live in the serai, came back one wet and stormy evening to find that his precious horse had strayed. Nothing remained of him but a broken halter cord, and no one knew what had become of him. After inquiring of everyone who was likely to know, Moti seized the cord and his big staff and sallied out to look for him. Away and away he tramped out of the city and into the neighbouring forest, tracking hoof-marks in the mud. Presently it grew late, but still

Moti wandered on until suddenly in the gathering darkness he came right upon a tiger who was contentedly eating his horse.

‘You thief!’ shrieked Moti, and ran up and, just as the tiger, in astonishment, dropped a bone—whack! came Moti’s staff on his head with such good will that the beast was half stunned and could hardly breathe or see. Then Moti continued to shower upon him blows and abuse until the poor tiger could hardly stand, whereupon his tormentor tied the end of the broken halter round his neck and dragged him back to the serai.

‘If you had my horse,’ he said, ‘I will at least have you, that’s fair enough!’ And he tied him up securely by the head and heels, much as he used to tie the horse; then, the night being far gone, he flung himself beside him and slept soundly.

You cannot imagine anything like the fright of the people in the serai, when they woke up and found a tiger—very battered but still a tiger—securely tethered amongst themselves and their beasts! Men gathered in groups talking and exclaiming, and finding fault with the innkeeper for allowing such a dangerous beast into the serai, and all the while the innkeeper was just as troubled as the rest, and none dared go near the place where the tiger stood blinking miserably on everyone, and where Moti lay stretched out snoring like thunder.

At last news reached the king that Moti had exchanged his horse for a live tiger; and the monarch himself came down, half disbelieving the tale, to see if it were really true. Someone at last awaked Moti with the news that his royal master was come; and he arose yawning, and was soon delightedly explaining and showing off his new possession. The king, however, did not share his pleasure at all, but called up a soldier to shoot the tiger, much to the relief of all the inmates of the serai except Moti. If the king, however, was before convinced that Moti was one of the wisest of men, he was now still more convinced that he was the bravest, and he increased his pay a hundredfold, so that our hero thought that he was the luckiest of men.

A week or two after this incident the king sent for Moti, who on arrival found his master in despair. A neighbouring monarch, he explained, who had many more soldiers than he, had declared war against him, and he was at his wits’ end, for he had neither money to buy him off nor soldiers enough to fight him—what was he to do?

‘If that is all, don’t you trouble,’ said Moti. ‘Turn out your men, and I’ll go with them, and we’ll soon bring this robber to reason.’

The king began to revive at these hopeful words, and took Moti off to his stable where he bade him choose for himself any horse he liked. There were plenty of fine horses in the stalls, but to the king’s astonishment Moti chose a poor little rat of a pony that was used to carry grass and water for the rest of the stable.

‘But why do you choose that beast?’ said the king.

‘Well, you see, your majesty,’ replied Moti, ‘there are so many chances that I may fall off, and if I choose one of your fine big horses I shall have so far to fall that I shall probably break my leg or my arm, if not my neck, but if I fall off this little beast I can’t hurt myself much.’

A very comical sight was Moti when he rode out to the war. The only weapon he carried was his staff, and to help him to keep his balance on horseback he had tied to each of his ankles a big stone that nearly touched the ground as he sat astride the little pony. The rest of the king’s cavalry were not very numerous, but they pranced along in armour on fine horses. Behind them came a great rabble of men on foot armed with all sorts of weapons, and last of all was the king with his attendants, very nervous and ill at ease. So the army started.

They had not very far to go, but Moti’s little pony, weighted with a heavy man and two big rocks, soon began to lag behind the cavalry, and would have lagged behind the infantry too, only they were not very anxious to be too early in the fight, and hung back so as to give Moti plenty of time. The young man jogged along more and more slowly for some time, until at last, getting impatient at the slowness of the pony, he gave him such a tremendous thwack with his staff that the pony completely lost his temper and bolted. First one stone became untied and rolled away in a cloud of dust to one side of the road, whilst Moti nearly rolled off too, but clasped his steed valiantly by its ragged mane, and, dropping his staff, held on for dear life. Then, fortunately the other rock broke away from his other leg and rolled thunderously down a neighbouring ravine. Meanwhile the advanced cavalry had barely time to draw to one side when Moti came dashing by, yelling bloodthirsty threats to his pony:

‘You wait till I get hold of you! I’ll skin you alive! I’ll wring your neck! I’ll break every bone in your body!’ The cavalry thought that this dreadful language was meant for the enemy, and were filled with admiration of his courage. Many of their horses too were quite upset by this whirlwind that galloped howling through their midst, and in a few minutes, after a little plunging and rearing and kicking, the whole troop were following on Moti’s heels.

Far in advance, Moti continued his wild career. Presently in his course he came to a great field of castor-oil plants, ten or twelve feet high, big and bushy, but quite green and soft. Hoping to escape from the back of his fiery steed Moti grasped one in passing, but its roots gave way, and he dashed on, with the whole plant looking like a young tree flourishing in his grip.

The enemy were in battle array, advancing over the plain, their king with them confident and cheerful, when suddenly from the front came a desperate rider at a furious gallop.

‘Sire!’ he cried, ‘save yourself! the enemy are coming!’

‘What do you mean?’ said the king.

‘Oh, sire!’ panted the messenger, ‘fly at once, there is no time to lose. Foremost of the enemy rides a mad giant at a furious gallop. He flourishes a tree for a club and is wild with anger, for as he goes he cries, “You wait till I get hold of you! I’ll skin you alive! I’ll wring your neck! I’ll break every bone in your body!” Others ride behind, and you will do well to retire before this whirlwind of destruction comes upon you.’

Just then out of a cloud of dust in the distance the king saw Moti approaching at a hard gallop, looking indeed like a giant compared with the little beast he rode, whirling his castor-oil plant, which in the distance might have been an oak tree, and the sound of his revilings and shoutings came down upon the breeze! Behind him the dust cloud moved to the sound of the thunder of hoofs, whilst here and there flashed the glitter of steel. The sight and the sound struck terror into the king, and, turning his horse, he fled at top speed, thinking that a regiment of yelling giants was upon him; and all his force followed him as fast as they might go. One fat officer alone could not keep up on foot with that mad rush, and as Moti came galloping up he flung himself on the ground in abject fear. This was too much for Moti’s excited pony, who shied so suddenly that Moti went

flying over his head like a sky rocket, and alighted right on the top of his fat foe.

Quickly regaining his feet Moti began to swing his plant round his head and to shout:

‘Where are your men? Bring them up and I’ll kill them. My regiments! Come on, the whole lot of you! Where’s your king? Bring him to me. Here are all my fine fellows coming up and we’ll each pull up a tree by the roots and lay you all flat and your houses and towns and everything else! Come on!’

But the poor fat officer could do nothing but squat on his knees with his hands together, gasping. At last, when he got his breath, Moti sent him off to bring his king, and to tell him that if he was reasonable his life should be spared. Off the poor man went, and by the time the troops of Moti’s side had come up and arranged themselves to look as formidable as possible, he returned with his king. The latter was very humble and apologetic, and promised never to make war any more, to pay a large sum of money, and altogether do whatever his conqueror wished.

So the armies on both sides went rejoicing home, and this was really the making of the fortune of clumsy Moti, who lived long and contrived always to be looked up to as a fountain of wisdom, valour, and discretion by all except his relations, who could never understand what he had done to be considered so much wiser than anyone else.

A Pushto Story.

THE ENCHANTED DEER

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A young man was out walking one day in Erin, leading a stout cart-horse by the bridle. He was thinking of his mother and how poor they were since his father, who was a fisherman, had been drowned at sea, and wondering what he should do to earn a living for both of them. Suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a voice said to him:

‘Will you sell me your horse, son of the fisherman?’ and looking up he beheld a man standing in the road with a gun in his hand, a falcon on his shoulder, and a dog by his side.

‘What will you give me for my horse?’ asked the youth. ‘Will you give me your gun, and your dog, and your falcon?’

‘I will give them,’ answered the man, and he took the horse, and the youth took the gun and the dog and the falcon, and went home with them. But when his mother heard what he had done she was very angry, and beat him with a stick which she had in her hand.

‘That will teach you to sell my property,’ said she, when her arm was quite tired, but Ian her son answered her nothing, and went off to his bed, for he was very sore.

That night he rose softly, and left the house carrying the gun with him. ‘I will not stay here to be beaten,’ thought he, and he walked and he walked and he walked, till it was day again, and he was hungry and looked about him to see if he could get anything to eat. Not very far off was a farm-house, so he went there, and knocked at the door, and the farmer and his wife begged him to come in, and share their breakfast.

‘Ah, you have a gun,’ said the farmer as the young man placed it in a corner. ‘That is well, for a deer comes every evening to eat my corn, and I cannot catch it. It is fortune that has sent you to me.’

‘I will gladly remain and shoot the deer for you,’ replied the youth, and that night he hid himself and watched till the deer came to the cornfield; then he lifted his gun to his shoulder and was just going to pull the trigger, when, behold! instead of a deer, a woman with long black hair was

standing there. At this sight his gun almost dropped from his hand in surprise, but as he looked, there was the deer eating the corn again. And thrice this happened, till the deer ran away over the moor, and the young man after her.

On they went, on and on and one, till they reached a cottage which was thatched with heather. With a bound the deer sprang on the roof, and lay down where none could see her, but as she did so she called out, ‘Go in, fisher’s son, and eat and drink while you may.’ So he entered and found food and wine on the table, but no man, for the house belonged to some robbers, who were still away at their wicked business.

After Ian, the fisher’s son, had eaten all he wanted, he hid himself behind a great cask, and very soon he heard a noise, as of men coming through the heather, and the small twigs snapping under their feet. From his dark corner he could see into the room, and he counted four and twenty of them, all big, cross-looking men.

‘Some one has been eating our dinner,’ cried they, ‘and there was hardly enough for ourselves.’

‘It is the man who is lying under the cask,’ answered the leader. ‘Go and kill him, and then come and eat your food and sleep, for we must be off betimes in the morning.’

So four of them killed the fisher’s son and left him, and then went to bed.

By sunrise they were all out of the house, for they had far to go. And when they had disappeared the deer came off the roof, to where the dead man lay, and she shook her head over him, and wax fell from her ear, and he jumped up as well as ever.

‘Trust me and eat as you did before, and no harm shall happen to you,’ said she. So Ian ate and drank, and fell sound asleep under the cask. In the evening the robbers arrived very tired, and crosser than they had been yesterday, for their luck had turned and they had brought back scarcely anything.

‘Someone has eaten our dinner again,’ cried they.

‘It is the man under the barrel,’ answered the captain. ‘Let four of you go and kill him, but first slay the other four who pretended to kill him last night and didn’t because he is still alive.’

Then Ian was killed a second time, and after the rest of the robbers had eaten, they lay down and slept till morning.

No sooner were their faces touched with the sun's rays than they were up and off. Then the deer entered and dropped the healing wax on the dead man, and he was as well as ever. By this time he did not mind what befell him, so sure was he that the deer would take care of him, and in the evening that which had happened before happened again—the four robbers were put to death and the fisher's son also, but because there was no food left for them to eat, they were nearly mad with rage, and began to quarrel. From quarrelling they went on to fighting, and fought so hard that by and bye they were all stretched dead on the floor.

Then the deer entered, and the fisher's son was restored to life, and bidding him follow her, she ran on to a little white cottage where dwelt an old woman and her son, who was thin and dark.

'Here I must leave you,' said the deer, 'but to-morrow meet me at midday in the church that is yonder.' And jumping across the stream, she vanished into a wood.

Next day he set out for the church, but the old woman of the cottage had gone before him, and had stuck an enchanted stick called 'the spike of hurt' in a crack of the door, so that he would brush against it as he stepped across the threshold. Suddenly he felt so sleepy that he could not stand up, and throwing himself on the ground he sank into a deep slumber, not knowing that the dark lad was watching him. Nothing could waken him, not even the sound of sweetest music, nor the touch of a lady who bent over him. A sad look came on her face, as she saw it was no use, and at last she gave it up, and lifting his arm, wrote her name across the side —'the daughter of the king of the town under the waves.'

'I will come to-morrow,' she whispered, though he could not hear her, and she went sorrowfully away.

Then he awoke, and the dark lad told him what had befallen him, and he was very grieved. But the dark lad did not tell him of the name that was written underneath his arm.

On the following morning the fisher's son again went to the church, determined that he would not go to sleep, whatever happened. But in his hurry to enter he touched with his hand the spike of hurt, and sank down where he stood, wrapped in slumber. A second time the air was filled with

music, and the lady came in, stepping softly, but though she laid his head on her knee, and combed his hair with a golden comb, his eyes opened not. Then she burst into tears, and placing a beautifully wrought box in his pocket she went her way.

The next day the same thing befell the fisher's son, and this time the lady wept more bitterly than before, for she said it was the last chance, and she would never be allowed to come any more, for home she must go.

As soon as the lady had departed the fisher's son awoke, and the dark lad told him of her visit, and how he would never see her as long as he lived. At this the fisher's son felt the cold creeping up to his heart, yet he knew the fault had not been his that sleep had overtaken him.

'I will search the whole world through till I find her,' cried he, and the dark lad laughed as he heard him. But the fisher's son took no heed, and off he went, following the sun day after day, till his shoes were in holes and his feet were sore from the journey. Nought did he see but the birds that made their nests in the trees, not so much as a goat or a rabbit. On and on and on he went, till suddenly he came upon a little house, with a woman standing outside it.

'All hail, fisher's son!' said she. 'I know what you are seeking; enter in and rest and eat, and to-morrow I will give you what help I can, and send you on your way.'

Gladly did Ian the fisher's son accept her offer, and all that day he rested, and the woman gave him ointment to put on his feet, which healed his sores. At daybreak he got up, ready to be gone, and the woman bade him farewell, saying:

'I have a sister who dwells on the road which you must travel. It is a long road, and it would take you a year and a day to reach it, but put on these old brown shoes with holes all over them, and you will be there before you know it. Then shake them off, and turn their toes to the known, and their heels to the unknown, and they will come home of themselves.'

The fisher's son did as the woman told him, and everything happened just as she had said. But at parting the second sister said to him, as she gave him another pair of shoes:

'Go to my third sister, for she has a son who is keeper of the birds of the air, and sends them to sleep when night comes. He is very wise, and perhaps he can help you.'

Then the young man thanked her, and went to the third sister.

The third sister was very kind, but had no counsel to give him, so he ate and drank and waited till her son came home, after he had sent all the birds to sleep. He thought a long while after his mother had told him the young man's story, and at last he said that he was hungry, and the cow must be killed, as he wanted some supper. So the cow was killed and the meat cooked, and a bag made of its red skin.

'Now get into the bag,' bade the son, and the young man got in and took his gun with him, but the dog and the falcon he left outside. The keeper of the birds drew the string at the top of the bag, and left it to finish his supper, when in flew an eagle through the open door, and picked the bag up in her claws and carried it through the air to an island. There was nothing to eat on the island, and the fisher's son thought he would die of food, when he remembered the box that the lady had put in his pocket. He opened the lid, and three tiny little birds flew out, and flapping their wings they asked,

'Good master, is there anything we can do for thee?'

'Bear me to the kingdom of the king under the waves,' he answered, and one little bird flew on to his head, and the others perched on each of his shoulders, and he shut his eyes, and in a moment there he was in the country under the sea. Then the birds flew away, and the young man looked about him, his heart beating fast at the thought that here dwelt the lady whom he had sought all the world over.

He walked on through the streets, and presently he reached the house of a weaver who was standing at his door, resting from his work.

'You are a stranger here, that is plain,' said the weaver, 'but come in, and I will give you food and drink.' And the young man was glad, for he knew not where to go, and they sat and talked till it grew late.

'Stay with me, I pray, for I love company and am lonely,' observed the weaver at last, and he pointed to a bed in a corner, where the fisher's son threw himself, and slept till dawn.

'There is to be a horse-race in the town to-day,' remarked the weaver, 'and the winner is to have the king's daughter to wife.' The young man trembled with excitement at the news, and his voice shook as he answered:

'That will be a prize indeed, I should like to see the race.'

‘Oh, that is quite easy—anyone can go,’ replied the weaver. ‘I would take you myself, but I have promised to weave this cloth for the king.’

‘That is a pity,’ returned the young man politely, but in his heart he rejoiced, for he wished to be alone.

Leaving the house, he entered a grove of trees which stood behind, and took the box from his pocket. He raised the lid, and out flew the three little birds.

‘Good master, what shall we do for thee?’ asked they, and he answered, ‘Bring me the finest horse that ever was seen, and the grandest dress, and glass shoes.’

‘They are here, master,’ said the birds, and so they were, and never had the young man seen anything so splendid.

Mounting the horse he rode into the ground where the horses were assembling for the great race, and took his place among them. Many good beasts were there which had won many races, but the horse of the fisher’s son left them all behind, and he was first at the winning post. The king’s daughter waited for him in vain to claim his prize, for he went back to the wood, and got off his horse, and put on his old clothes, and bade the box place some gold in his pockets. After that he went back to the weaver’s house, and told him that the gold had been given him by the man who had won the race, and that the weaver might have it for his kindness to him.

Now as nobody had appeared to demand the hand of the princess, the king ordered another race to be run, and the fisher’s son rode into the field still more splendidly dressed than he was before, and easily distanced everybody else. But again he left the prize unclaimed, and so it happened on the third day, when it seemed as if all the people in the kingdom were gathered to see the race, for they were filled with curiosity to know who the winner could be.

‘If he will not come of his own free will, he must be brought,’ said the king, and the messengers who had seen the face of the victor were sent to seek him in every street of the town. This took many days, and when at last they found the young man in the weaver’s cottage, he was so dirty and ugly and had such a strange appearance, that they declared he could not be the winner they had been searching for, but a wicked robber who had murdered ever so many people, but had always managed to escape.

‘Yes, it must be the robber,’ said the king, when the fisher’s son was led into his presence; ‘build a gallows at once and hang him in the sight of all my subjects, that they may behold him suffer the punishment of his crimes.’

So the gallows was built upon a high platform, and the fisher’s son mounted the steps up to it, and turned at the top to make the speech that was expected from every doomed man, innocent or guilt. As he spoke he happened to raise his arm, and the king’s daughter, who was there at her father’s side, saw the name which she had written under it. With a shriek she sprang from her seat, and the eyes of the spectators were turned towards her.

‘Stop! stop!’ she cried, hardly knowing what she said. ‘If that man is hanged there is not a soul in the kingdom but shall die also.’ And running up to where the fisher’s son was standing, she took him by the hand, saying,

‘Father, this is no robber or murderer, but the victor in the three races, and he loosed the spells that were laid upon me.’

Then, without waiting for a reply, she conducted him into the palace, and he bathed in a marble bath, and all the dirt that the fairies had put upon him disappeared like magic, and when he had dressed himself in the fine garments the princess had sent to him, he looked a match for any king’s daughter in Erin. He went down into the great hall where she was awaiting him, and they had much to tell each other but little time to tell it in, for the king her father, and the princes who were visiting him, and all the people of the kingdom were still in their places expecting her return.

‘How did you find me out?’ she whispered as they went down the passage.

‘The birds in the box told me,’ answered he, but he could say no more, as they stepped out into the open space that was crowded with people. There the princes stopped.

‘O kings!’ she said, turning towards them, ‘if one of you were killed to-day, the rest would fly; but this man put his trust in me, and had his head cut off three times. Because he has done this, I will marry him rather than one of you, who have come hither to wed me, for many kings here sought to free me from the spells, but none could do it save Ian the fisher’s son.’

From ‘Popular Tales of the West Highlands.’

A FISH STORY

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Perhaps you think that fishes were always fishes, and never lived anywhere except in the water, but if you went to Australia and talked to the black people in the sandy desert in the centre of the country, you would learn something quite different. They would tell you that long, long ago you would have met fishes on the land, wandering from place to place, and hunting all sorts of animals, and if you consider how fishes are made, you will understand how difficult this must have been and how clever they were to do it. Indeed, so clever were they that they might have been hunting still if a terrible thing had not happened.

One day the whole fish tribe came back very tired from a hunting expedition, and looked about for a nice, cool spot in which to pitch their camp. It was very hot, and they thought that they could not find a more comfortable place than under the branches of a large tree which grew by the bank of a river. So they made their fire to cook some food, right on the edge of a steep bank, which had a deep pool of water lying beneath it at the bottom. While the food was cooking they all stretched themselves lazily out under the tree, and were just dropping off to sleep when a big black cloud which they had never noticed spread over the sun, and heavy drops of rain began to fall, so that the fire was almost put out, and that, you know, is a very serious thing in savage countries where they have no matches, for it is very hard to light it again. To make matters worse, an icy wind began to blow, and the poor fishes were chilled right through their bodies.

‘This will never do,’ said Thuggai, the oldest of the fish tribe. ‘We shall die of cold unless we can light the fire again,’ and he bade his sons rub two sticks together in the hope of kindling a flame, but though they rubbed till they were tired, not a spark could they produce.

‘Let me try,’ cried Biernuga, the bony fish, but he had no better luck, and no more had Kumbal, the bream, nor any of the rest.

‘It is no use,’ exclaimed Thuggai, at last. ‘The wood is too wet. We must just sit and wait till the sun comes out again and dries it.’ Then a very little fish indeed, not more than four inches long and the youngest of the tribe, bowed himself before Thuggai, saying, ‘Ask my father, Guddhu the cod, to light the fire. He is skilled in magic more than most fishes.’ So Thuggai asked him, and Guddhu stripped some pieces of bark off a tree, and placed them on top of the smouldering ashes. Then he knelt by the side of the fire and blew at it for a long while, till slowly the feeble red glow became a little stronger and the edges of the bark showed signs of curling up. When the rest of the tribe saw this they pressed close, keeping their backs towards the piercing wind, but Guddhu told them they must go to the other side, as he wanted the wind to fan his fire. By and by the spark grew into a flame, and a merry crackling was heard.

‘More wood,’ cried Guddhi, and they all ran and gathered wood and heaped it on the flames, which leaped and roared and sputtered.

‘We shall soon be warm now,’ said the people one to another. ‘Truly Guddhu is great’; and they crowded round again, closer and closer. Suddenly, with a shriek, a blast of wind swept down from the hills and blew the fire out towards them. They sprang back hurriedly, quite forgetting where they stood, and all fell down the bank, each tumbling over the other, till they rolled into the pool that lay below. Oh, how cold it was in that dark water on which the sun never shone! Then in an instant they felt warm again, for the fire, driven by the strong wind, had followed them right down to the bottom of the pool, where it burned as brightly as ever. And the fishes gathered round it as they had done on the top of the cliff, and found the flames as hot as before, and that fire never went out, like those upon land, but kept burning for ever. So now you know why, if you dive deep down below the cold surface of the water on a frosty day, you will find it comfortable and pleasant underneath, and be quite sorry that you cannot stay there.

Australian Folk Tale.

THE WONDERFUL TUNE

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Maurice Connor was the king, and that’s no small word, of all the pipers in Munster. He could play jig and reel without end, and Ollistrum’s March, and the Eagle’s Whistle, and the Hen’s Concert, and odd tunes of every sort and kind. But he knew one far more surprising than the rest, which had in it the power to set everything dead or alive dancing.

In what way he learned it is beyond my knowledge for he was mighty cautious about telling how he came by so wonderful a tune. At the very first note of that tune the shoes began shaking upon the feet of all how heard it—old or young, it mattered not—just as if the shoes had the ague; then the feet began going, going, going from under them, and at last up and away with them, dancing like mad, whisking here, there, and everywhere, like a straw in a storm—there was no halting while the music lasted.

Not a fair, nor a wedding, nor a feast in the seven parishes round, was counted worth the speaking of without ‘blind Maurice and his pipes.’ His mother, poor woman, used to lead him about from one place to another just like a dog.

Down through Iveragh, Maurice Connor and his mother were taking their rounds. Beyond all other places Iveragh is the place for stormy coasts and steep mountains, as proper a spot it is as any in Ireland to get yourself drowned, or your neck broken on the land, should you prefer that. But, notwithstanding, in Ballinskellig Bay there is a neat bit of ground, well fitted for diversion, and down from it, towards the water, is a clean smooth piece of strand, the dead image of a calm summer’s sea on a moonlight night, with just the curl of the small waves upon it.

Here is was that Maurice’s music had brought from all parts a great gathering of the young men and the young women; for ’twas not every day the strand of Trafraska was stirred up by the voice of a bagpipe. The dance began; and as pretty a dance it was as ever was danced. ‘Brave music,’ said everybody, ‘and well done,’ when Maurice stopped.

‘More power to your elbow, Maurice, and a fair wind in the bellows,’ cried Paddy Dorman, a hump-backed dancing master, who was there to keep order. ‘’Tis a pity,’ said he, ‘if we’d let the piper run dry after such music; ’twould be a disgrace to Iveragh, that didn’t come on it since the week of the three Sundays.’ So, as well became him, for he was always a decent man, says he, ‘Did you drink, piper?’

‘I will, sir,’ said Maurice, answering the question on the safe side, for you never yet knew piper or schoolmaster who refused his drink.

‘What will you drink, Maurice?’ says Paddy.

‘I’m no ways particular,’ says Maurice; ‘I drink anything, barring raw water; but if it’s all the same to you, Mister Dorman, may be you wouldn’t lend me the loan of a glass of whisky.’

‘I’ve no glass, Maurice,’ said Paddy; ‘I’ve only the bottle.’

‘Let that be no hindrance,’ answered Maurice; ‘my mouth just holds a glass to the drop; often I’ve tried it sure.’

So Paddy Dorman trusted him with the bottle—more fool was he; and, to his cost, he found that though Maurice’s mouth might not hold more than the glass at one time, yet, owing to the hole in his throat, it took many a filling.

‘That was no bad whisky neither,’ says Maurice, handing back the empty bottle.

‘By the holy frost, then!’ says Paddy, ‘’tis but cold comfort there’s in that bottle now; and ’tis your word we must take for the strength of the whisky, for you’ve left us no sample to judge by’; and to be sure Maurice had not.

Now I need not tell any gentleman or lady that if he or she was to drink an honest bottle of whisky at one pull, it is not at all the same thing as drinking a bottle of water; and in the whole course of my life I never knew more than five men who could do so without being the worse. Of these Maurice Connor was not one, though he had a stiff head enough of his own. Don’t think I blame him for it; but true is the word that says, ‘When liquor’s in sense is out’; and puff, at a breath, out he blasted his wonderful tune.

’Twas really then beyond all belief or telling the dancing. Maurice himself could not keep quiet; staggering now on one leg, now on the other, and rolling about like a ship in a cross sea, trying to humour the tune.

There was his mother, too, moving her old bones as light as the youngest girl of them all; but her dancing, no, nor the dancing of all the rest, is not worthy the speaking about to the work that was going on down upon the strand. Every inch of it covered with all manner of fish jumping and plunging about to the music, and every moment more and more would tumble in and out of the water, charmed by the wonderful tune. Crabs of monstrous size spun round and round on one claw with the nimbleness of a dancing master, and twirled and tossed their other claws about like limbs that did not belong to them. It was a sight surprising to behold. But perhaps you may have heard of Father Florence Conry, as pleasant a man as one would wish to drink with of a hot summer's day; and he had rhymed out all about the dancing fishes so neatly that it would be a thousand pities not to give you his verses; so here they are in English:

The big seals in motion,
Like waves of the ocean,
Or gouty feet prancing,
Came heading the gay fish,
Crabs, lobsters, and cray-fish,
Determined on dancing.

The sweet sounds they followed,
The gasping cod swallow'd—
'Twas wonderful, really;
And turbot and flounder,
'Mid fish that were rounder,
Just caper'd as gaily.

John-dories came tripping;
Dull hake, by their skipping,
To frisk it seem'd given;
Bright mackrel went springing,
Like small rainbows winging
Their flight up to heaven.

The whiting and haddock

Left salt water paddock
This dance to be put in;
Where skate with flat faces
Edged out some old plaices;
But soles kept their footing.

Sprats and herrings in powers
Of silvery showers
All number out-numbered;
And great ling so lengthy
Was there in such plenty
The shore was encumber’d.

The scallop and oyster
Their two shells did roister,
Like castanets flitting;
While limpets moved clearly,
And rocks very nearly
With laughter were splitting.

Never was such a hullabaloo in this world, before or since; ’twas as if heaven and earth were coming together; and all out of Maurice Connor’s wonderful tune!

In the height of all these doings, what should there be dancing among the outlandish set of fishes but a beautiful young woman—as beautiful as the dawn of day! She had a cocked hat upon her head; from under it her long green hair—just the colour of the sea—fell down behind, without hindrance to her dancing. Her teeth were like rows of pearls; her lips for all the world looked like red coral; and she had a shining gown pale green as the hollow of the wave, with little rows of purple and red seaweeds settled out upon it; for you never yet saw a lady, under the water or over the water, who had not a good notion of dressing herself out.

Up she danced at last to Maurice, who was flinging his feet from under him as fast as hops—for nothing in this world could keep still while that tune of his was going on—and says she to him, chanting it out with a voice as sweet as honey:

I’m a lady of honour
Who live in the sea;
Come down, Maurice Connor,
And be married to me.
Silver plates and gold dishes
You shall have, and shall be
The king of the fishes,
When you’re married to me.

Drink was strong in Maurice’s head, and out he chanted in return for her great civility. It is not every lady, may be, that would be after making such an offer to a blind piper; therefore ’twas only right in him to give her as good as she gave herself, so says Maurice:

I’m obliged to you, madam:
Off a gold dish or plate,
If a king, and I had ’em,
I could dine in great state.
With your own father’s daughter
I’d be sure to agree,
But to drink the salt water
Wouldn’t do so with me!

The lady looked at him quite amazed, and swinging her head from side to side like a great scholar, ‘Well,’ says she, ‘Maurice, if you’re not a poet, where is poetry to be found?’

In this way they kept on at it, framing high compliments; one answering the other, and their feet going with the music as fast as their tongues. All the fish kept dancing, too; Maurice heard the clatter and was afraid to stop playing lest it might be displeasing to the fish, and not knowing what so many of them may take it into their heads to do to him if they got vexed.

Well, the lady with the green hair kept on coaxing Maurice with soft speeches, till at last she over persuaded him to promise to marry her, and be king over the fishes, great and small. Maurice was well fitted to be their

king, if they wanted one that could make them dance; and he surely would drink, barring the salt water, with any fish of them all.

When Maurice's mother saw him with that unnatural thing in the form of a green-haired lady as his guide, and he and she dancing down together so lovingly to the water's edge, through the thick of the fishes, she called out after him to stop and come back. 'Oh, then,' says she, 'as if I was not widow enough before, there he is going away from me to be married to that scaly woman. And who knows but 'tis grandmother I may be to a hake or a cod—Lord help and pity me, but 'tis a mighty unnatural thing! And my be 'tis boiling and eating my own grandchild I'll be, with a bit of salt butter, and I not knowing it! Oh, Maurice, Maurice, if there's any love or nature left in you, come back to your own ould mother, who reared you like a decent Christian!' Then the poor woman began to cry and sob so finely that it would do anyone good to hear her.

Maurice was not long getting to the rim of the water. There he kept playing and dancing on as if nothing was the matter, and a great thundering wave coming in towards him ready to swallow him up alive; but as he could not see it, he did not fear it. His mother it was who saw it plainly through the big tears that were rolling down her cheeks; and though she saw it, and her heart was aching as much as ever mother's heart ached for a son, she kept dancing, dancing all the time for the bare life of her. Certain it was she could not help it, for Maurice never stopped playing that wonderful tune of his.

He only turned his ear to the sound of his mother's voice, fearing it might put him out in his steps, and all the answer he made back was, 'Whisht with you mother—sure I'm going to be king over the fishes down in the sea, and for a token of luck, and a sign that I'm alive and well, I'll send you in, every twelvemonth on this day, a piece of burned wood to Trafraska.' Maurice had not the power to say a word more, for the strange lady with the green hair, seeing the wave just upon them, covered him up with herself in a thing like a cloak with a big hood to it, and the wave curling over twice as high as their heads, burst upon the strand, with a rush and a roar that might be heard as far as Cape Clear.

That day twelvemonth the piece of burned wood came ashore in Trafraska. It was a queer thing for Maurice to think of sending all the way from the bottom of the sea. A gown or a pair of shoes would have been

something like a present for his poor mother; but he had said it, and he kept his word. The bit of burned wood regularly came ashore on the appointed day for as good, ay, and better than a hundred years. The day is now forgotten, and may be that is the reason why people say how Maurice Connor has stopped sending the luck-token to his mother. Poor woman, she did not live to get as much as one of them; for what through the loss of Maurice, and the fear of eating her own grandchildren, she died in three weeks after the dance. Some say it was the fatigue that killed her, but whichever it was, Mrs. Connor was decently buried with her own people.

Seafaring people have often heard, off the coast of Kerry, on a still night, the sound of music coming up from the water; and some, who have had good ears, could plainly distinguish Maurice Connor’s voice singing these words to his pipes—

Beautiful shore, with thy spreading strand,
Thy crystal water, and diamond sand;
Never would I have parted from thee,
But for the sake of my fair ladie.

From ‘Fairy Tales and Traditions of the South of Ireland.’

THE RICH BROTHER AND THE POOR BROTHER

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There was once a rich old man who had two sons, and as his wife was dead, the elder lived with him, and helped him to look after his property. For a long time all went well; the young man got up very early in the morning, and worked hard all day, and at the end of every week his father counted up the money they had made, and rubbed his hands with delight, as he saw how big the pile of gold in the strong iron chest was becoming. ‘It will soon be full now, and I shall have to buy a larger one,’ he said to himself, and so busy was he with the thought of his money, that he did not notice how bright his son’s face had grown, nor how he sometimes started when he was spoken to, as if his mind was far away.

One day, however, the old man went to the city on business, which he had not done for three years at least. It was market day, and he met with many people he knew, and it was getting quite late when he turned into the inn yard, and bade an ostler saddle his horse, and bring it round directly. While he was waiting in the hall, the landlady came up for a gossip, and after a few remarks about the weather and the vineyards she asked him how he liked his new daughter-in-law, and whether he had been surprised at the marriage.

The old man stared as he listened to her. ‘Daughter-in-law? Marriage?’ said he. ‘I don’t know what you are talking about! I’ve got no daughter-in-law, and nobody has been married lately, that I ever heard of.’

Now this was exactly what the landlady, who was very curious, wanted to find out; but she put on a look of great alarm, and exclaimed:

‘Oh, dear! I hope I have not made mischief. I had no idea—or, of course, I would not have spoken—but’—and here she stopped and fumbled with her apron, as if she was greatly embarrassed.

‘As you have said so much you will have to say a little more,’ retorted the old man, a suspicion of what she meant darting across him; and the woman, nothing loth, answered as before.

‘Ah, it was not all for buying or selling that your handsome son has been coming to town every week these many months past. And not by the shortest way, either! No, it was over the river he rode, and across the hill and past the cottage of Miguel the vine-keeper, whose daughter, they say, is the prettiest girl in the whole country side, though she is too white for my taste,’ and then the landlady paused again, and glanced up at the farmer, to see how he was taking it. She did not learn much. He was looking straight before him, his teeth set. But as she ceased to talk, he said quietly, ‘Go on.’

‘There is not much more to tell,’ replied the landlady, for she suddenly remembered that she must prepare supper for the hungry men who always stopped at the inn on market days, before starting for home, ‘but one fine morning they both went to the little church on top of the hill, and were married. My cousin is servant to the priest, and she found out about it and told me. But good-day to you, sir; here is your horse, and I must hurry off to the kitchen.’

It was lucky that the horse was sure-footed and knew the road, for his bridle hung loose on his neck, and his master took no heed of the way he was going. When the farm-house was reached, the man led the animal to the stable, and then went to look for his son.

‘I know everything—you have deceived me. Get out of my sight at once—I have done with you,’ he stammered, choking with passion as he came up to the young man, who was cutting a stick in front of the door, whistling gaily the while.

‘But, father—’

‘You are no son of mine; I have only one now. Begone, or it will be the worse for you,’ and as he spoke he lifted up his whip.

The young man shrank back. He feared lest his father should fall down in a fit, his face was so red and his eyes seemed bursting from his head. But it was no use staying: perhaps next morning the old man might listen to reason, though in his heart the son felt that he would never take back his words. So he turned slowly away, and walked heavily along a path which ended in a cave on the side of his hill, and there he sat through the night, thinking of what had happened.

Yes, he had been wrong, there was no doubt of that, and he did not quite know how it had come about. He had meant to have told his father all

about it, and he was sure, quite sure, that if once the old man had seen his wife, he would have forgiven her poverty on account of her great beauty and goodness. But he had put it off from day to day, hoping always for a better opportunity, and now this was the end!

If the son had no sleep that night, no more had the father, and as soon as the sun rose, he sent a messenger into the great city with orders to bring back the younger brother. When he arrived the farmer did not waste words, but informed him that he was now his only heir, and would inherit all his lands and money, and that he was to come and live at home, and to help manage the property.

Though very pleased at the thought of becoming such a rich man—for the brothers had never cared much for each other—the younger would rather have stayed where he was, for he soon got tired of the country, and longed for a town life. However, this he kept to himself, and made the best of things, working hard like his brother before him.

In this way the years went on, but the crops were not so good as they had been, and the old man gave orders that some fine houses he was building in the city should be left unfinished, for it would take all the savings to complete them. As to the elder son, he would never even hear his name mentioned, and died at last without ever seeing his face, leaving to the younger, as he had promised, all his lands, as well as his money.

Meanwhile, the son whom he had disinherited had grown poorer and poorer. He and his wife were always looking out for something to do, and never spent a penny that they could help, but luck was against them, and at the time of his father's death they had hardly bread to eat or clothes to cover them. If there had been only himself, he would have managed to get on somehow, but he could not bear to watch his children becoming weaker day by day, and swallowing his pride, at length he crossed the mountains to his old home where his brother was living.

It was the first time for long that the two men had come face to face, and they looked at each other in silence. Then tears rose in the eyes of the elder, but winking them hastily away, he said:

'Brother, it is not needful that I should tell you how poor I am; you can see that for yourself. I have not come to beg for money, but only to ask if you will give me those unfinished houses of yours in the city, and I will

make them watertight, so that my wife and children can live in them, and that will save our rent. For as they are, they profit you nothing.’

And the younger brother listened and pitied him, and gave him the houses that he asked for, and the elder went away happy.

For some years things went on as they were, and then the rich brother began to feel lonely, and thought to himself that he was getting older, and it was time for him to be married. The wife he chose was very wealthy, but she was also very greedy, and however much she had, she always wanted more. She was, besides, one of those unfortunate people who invariably fancy that the possessions of other people must be better than their own. Many a time her poor husband regretted the day that he had first seen her, and often her meanness and shabby ways put him to shame. But he had not the courage to rule her, and she only got worse and worse.

After she had been married a few months the bride wanted to go into the city and buy herself some new dresses. She had never been there before, and when she had finished her shopping, she thought she would pay a visit to her unknown sister-in-law, and rest for a bit. The house she was seeking was in a broad street, and ought to have been very magnificent, but the carved stone portico enclosed a mean little door of rough wood, while a row of beautiful pillars led to nothing. The dwelling on each side were in the same unfinished condition, and water trickled down the walls. Most people would have considered it a wretched place, and turned their backs on it as soon as they could, but this lady saw that by spending some money the houses could be made as splendid as they were originally intended to be, and she instantly resolved to get them for herself.

Full of this idea she walked up the marble staircase, and entered the little room where her sister-in-law sat, making clothes for her children. The bride seemed full of interest in the houses, and asked a great many questions about them, so that her new relations liked her much better than they expected, and hoped they might be good friends. However, as soon as she reached home, she went straight to her husband, and told him that he must get back those houses from his brother, as they would exactly suit her, and she could easily make them into a palace as fine as the king’s. But her husband only told her that she might buy houses in some other part of

the town, for she could not have those, as he had long since made a gift of them to his brother, who had lived there for many years past.

At this answer the wife grew very angry. She began to cry, and made such a noise that all the neighbours heard her and put their heads out of the windows, to see what was the matter. ‘It was absurd,’ she sobbed out, ‘quite unjust. Indeed, if you came to think of it, the gift was worth nothing, as when her husband made it he was a bachelor, and since then he had been married, and she had never given her consent to any such thing.’ And so she lamented all day and all night, till the poor man was nearly worried to death; and at last he did what she wished, and summoned his brother in a court of law to give up the houses which, he said, had only been lent to him. But when the evidence on both sides had been heard, the judge decided in favour of the poor man, which made the rich lady more furious than ever, and she determined not to rest until she had gained the day. If one judge would not give her the houses another should, and so time after time the case was tried over again, till at last it came before the highest judge of all, in the city of Evora. Her husband was heartily tired and ashamed of the whole affair, but his weakness in not putting a stop to it in the beginning had got him into this difficulty, and now he was forced to go on.

On the same day the two brothers set out on their journey to the city, the rich one on horseback, with plenty of food in his knapsack, the poor one on foot with nothing but a piece of bread and four onions to eat on the way. The road was hilly and neither could go very fast, and when night fell, they were both glad to see some lights in a window a little distance in front of them.

The lights turned out to have been placed there by a farmer, who had planned to have a particularly good supper as it was his wife’s birthday, and bade the rich man enter and sit down, while he himself took the horse to the stable. The poor man asked timidly if he might spend the night in a corner, adding that he had brought his own supper with him. Another time permission might have been refused him, for the farmer was no lover of humble folk, but now he gave the elder brother leave to come in, pointing out a wooden chair where he could sit.

Supper was soon served, and very glad the younger brother was to eat it, for his long ride had made him very hungry. The farmer’s wife,

however, would touch nothing, and at last declared that the only supper she wanted was one of the onions the poor man was cooking at the fire. Of course he gave it to her, though he would gladly have eaten it himself, as three onions are not much at the end of a long day's walk, and soon after they all went to sleep, the poor man making himself as comfortable as he could in his corner.

A few hours later the farmer was aroused by the cries and groans of his wife.

'Oh, I feel so ill, I'm sure I'm going to die,' wept she. 'It was that onion, I know it was. I wish I had never eaten it. It must have been poisoned.'

'If the man has poisoned you he shall pay for it,' said her husband, and seizing a thick stick he ran downstairs and began to beat the poor man, who had been sound asleep, and had nothing to defend himself with. Luckily, the noise aroused the younger brother, who jumped up and snatched the stick from the farmer's hand, saying:

'We are both going to Evora to try a law-suit. Come too, and accuse him there if he has attempted to rob you or murder you, but don't kill him now, or you will get yourself into trouble.'

'Well, perhaps you are right,' answered the farmer, 'but the sooner that fellow has his deserts, the better I shall be pleased,' and without more words he went to the stables and brought out a horse for himself and also the black Andalusian mare ridden by the rich man, while the poor brother, fearing more ill-treatment, started at once on foot.

Now all that night it had rained heavily, and did not seem likely to stop, and in some places the road was so thick with mud that it was almost impossible to get across it. In one spot it was so very bad that a mule laden with baggage had got stuck in it, and tug as he might, his master was quite unable to pull him out. The muleteer in despair appealed to the two horseman, who were carefully skirting the swamp at some distance off, but they paid no heed to his cries, and he began to talk cheerfully to his mule, hoping to keep up his spirits, declaring that if the poor beast would only have a little patience help was sure to come.

And so it did, for very soon the poor brother reached the place, bespattered with mud from head to foot, but ready to do all he could to help with the mule and his master. First they set about finding some stout

logs of wood to lay down on the marsh so that they could reach the mule, for by this time his frantic struggles had broken his bridle, and he was deeper in than ever. Stepping cautiously along the wood, the poor man contrived to lay hold of the animal's tale, and with a desperate effort the mule managed to regain his footing on dry ground, but at the cost of leaving his tail in the poor man's hand. When he saw this the muleteer's anger knew no bounds, and forgetting that without the help given him he would have lost his mule altogether, he began to abuse the poor man, declaring that he had ruined his beast, and the law would make him pay for it. Then, jumping on the back of the mule, which was so glad to be out of the choking mud that he did not seem to mind the loss of his tail, the ungrateful wretch rode on, and that evening reached the inn at Evora, where the rich man and the farmer had already arrived for the night.

Meanwhile the poor brother walked wearily along, wondering what other dreadful adventures were in store for him.

'I shall certainly be condemned for one or other of them,' thought he sadly; 'and after all, if I have to die, I would rather choose my own death than leave it to my enemies,' and as soon as he entered Evora he looked about for a place suitable for carrying out the plan he had made. At length he found what he sought, but as it was too late and too dark for him to make sure of success, he curled himself up under a doorway, and slept till morning.

Although it was winter, the sun rose in a clear sky, and its rays felt almost warm when the poor man got up and shook himself. He intended it to be the day of his death, but in spite of that, and of the fact that he was leaving his wife and children behind him, he felt almost cheerful. He had struggled so long, and was so very, very tired; but he would not have minded that if he could have proved his innocence, and triumphed over his enemies. However, they had all been too clever for him, and he had no strength to fight any more. So he mounted the stone steps that led to the battlements of the city, and stopped for a moment to gaze about him.

It happened that an old sick man who lived near by had begged to be carried out and to be laid at the foot of the wall so that the beams of the rising sun might fall upon him, and he would be able to talk with his friends as they passed by to their work. Little did he guess that on top of the battlements, exactly over his head, stood a man who was taking his last

look at the same sun, before going to his death that awaited him. But so it was; and as the steeple opposite was touched by the golden light, the poor man shut his eyes and sprang forward. The wall was high, and he flew rapidly through the air, but it was not the ground he touched, only the body of the sick man, who rolled over and died without a groan. As for the other, he was quite unhurt, and was slowly rising to his feet when his arms were suddenly seized and held.

‘You have killed our father, do you see? do you see?’ cried two young men, ‘and you will come with us this instant before the judge, and answer for it.’

‘Your father? but I don’t know him. What do you mean?’ asked the poor man, who was quite bewildered with his sudden rush through the air, and could not think why he should be accused of this fresh crime. But he got no reply, and was only hurried through the streets to the court-house, where his brother, the muleteer, and the farmer had just arrived, all as angry as ever, all talking at once, till the judge entered and ordered them to be silent.

‘I will hear you one by one,’ he said, and motioned the younger brother to begin.

He did not take long to state his case. The unfinished houses were his, left him with the rest of the property by his father, and his brother refused to give them up. In answer, the poor man told, in a few words, how he had begged the houses from his brother, and produced the deed of gift which made him their owner.

The judge listened quietly and asked a few questions; then he gave his verdict.

‘The houses shall remain the property of the man to whom they were given, and to whom they belong. And as you,’ he added, turning to the younger brother, ‘brought this accusation knowing full well it was wicked and unjust, I order you, besides losing the houses, to pay a thousand pounds damages to your brother.’

The rich man heard the judge with rage in his heart, the poor man with surprise and gratitude. But he was not safe yet, for now it was the turn of the farmer. The judge could hardly conceal a smile at the story, and inquired if the wife was dead before the farmer left the house, and received for answer that he was in such a hurry for justice to be done that

he had not waited to see. Then the poor man told his tale, and once more judgment was given in his favour, while twelve hundred pounds was ordered to be paid him. As for the muleteer, he was informed very plainly that he had proved himself mean and ungrateful for the help that had been given him, and as a punishment he must pay to the poor man a fine of fifty pounds, and hand him over the mule till his tail had grown again.

Lastly, there came the two sons of the sick man.

‘This is the wretch who killed our father,’ they said, ‘and we demand that he should die also.’

‘How did you kill him?’ asked the judge, turning to the accused, and the poor man told how he had leaped from the wall, not knowing that anyone was beneath.

‘Well, this is my judgment,’ replied the judge, when they had all spoken: ‘Let the accused sit under the wall, and let the sons of the dead man jump from the top and fall on him and kill him, and if they will not to this, then they are condemned to pay eight hundred pounds for their false accusation.’

The young men looked at each other, and slowly shook their heads.

‘We will pay the fine,’ said they, and the judge nodded.

So the poor man rode the mule home, and brought back to his family enough money to keep them in comfort to the end of their days.

Adapted from the Portuguese.

THE ONE-HANDED GIRL

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An old couple once lived in a hut under a grove of palm trees, and they had one son and one daughter. They were all very happy together for many years, and then the father became very ill, and felt he was going to die. He called his children to the place where he lay on the floor—for no one had any beds in that country—and said to his son, ‘I have no herds of cattle to leave you—only the few things there are in the house—for I am a poor man, as you know. But choose: will you have my blessing or my property?’

‘Your property, certainly,’ answered the son, and his father nodded.

‘And you?’ asked the old man of the girl, who stood by her brother.

‘I will have blessing,’ she answered, and her father gave her much blessing.

That night he died, and his wife and son and daughter mourned for him seven days, and gave him a burial according to the custom of his people. But hardly was the time of mourning over, than the mother was attacked by a disease which was common in that country.

‘I am going away from you,’ she said to her children, in a faint voice; ‘but first, my son, choose which you will have: blessing or property.’

‘Property, certainly,’ answered the son.

‘And you, my daughter?’

‘I will have blessing,’ said the girl; and her mother gave her much blessing, and that night she died.

When the days of mourning were ended, the brother bade his sister put outside the hut all that belonged to his father and his mother. So the girl put them out, and he took them away, save only a small pot and a vessel in which she could clean her corn. But she had no corn to clean.

She sat at home, sad and hungry, when a neighbour knocked at the door.

‘My pot has cracked in the fire, lend me yours to cook my supper in, and I will give you a handful of corn in return.’

And the girl was glad, and that night she was able to have supper herself, and next day another woman borrowed her pot, and then another and another, for never were known so many accidents as befell the village pots at that time. She soon grew quite fat with all the corn she earned with the help of her pot, and then one evening she picked up a pumpkin seed in a corner, and planted it near her well, and it sprang up, and gave her many pumpkins.

At last it happened that a youth from her village passed through the place where the girl's brother was, and the two met and talked.

'What news is there of my sister?' asked the young man, with whom things had gone badly, for he was idle.

'She is fat and well-liking,' replied the youth, 'for the women borrow her mortar to clean their corn, and borrow her pot to cook it in, and for al this they give her more food than she can eat.' And he went his way.

Now the brother was filled with envy at the words of the man, and he set out at once, and before dawn he had reached the hut, and saw the pot and the mortar were standing outside. He slung them over his shoulders and departed, pleased with his own cleverness; but when his sister awoke and sought for the pot to cook her corn for breakfast, she could find it nowhere. At length she said to herself,

'Well, some thief must have stolen them while I slept. I will go and see if any of my pumpkins are ripe.' And indeed they were, and so many that the tree was almost broken by the weight of them. So she ate what she wanted and took the others to the village, and gave them in exchange for corn, and the women said that no pumpkins were as sweet as these, and that she was to bring every day all that she had. In this way she earned more than she needed for herself, and soon was able to get another mortar and cooking pot in exchange for her corn. Then she thought she was quite rich.

Unluckily someone else thought so too, and this was her brother's wife, who had heard all about the pumpkin tree, and sent her slave with a handful of grain to buy her a pumpkin. At first the girl told him that so few were left that she could not spare any; but when she found that he belonged to her brother, she changed her mind, and went out to the tree and gathered the largest and the ripest that was there.

‘Take this one,’ she said to the slave, ‘and carry it back to your mistress, but tell her to keep the corn, as the pumpkin is a gift.’

The brother’s wife was overjoyed at the sight of the fruit, and when she tasted it, she declared it was the nicest she had ever eaten. Indeed, all night she thought of nothing else, and early in the morning she called another slave (for she was a rich woman) and bade him go and ask for another pumpkin. But the girl, who had just been out to look at her tree, told him that they were all eaten, so he went back empty-handed to his mistress.

In the evening her husband returned from hunting a long way off, and found his wife in tears.

‘What is the matter?’ asked he.

‘I sent a slave with some grain to your sister to buy some pumpkins, but she would not sell me any, and told me there were none, though I know she lets other people buy them.’

‘Well, never mind now—go to sleep,’ said he, ‘and to-morrow I will go and pull up the pumpkin tree, and that will punish her for treating you so badly.’

So before sunrise he got up and set out for his sister’s house, and found her cleaning some corn.

‘Why did you refuse to sell my wife a pumpkin yesterday when she wanted one?’ he asked.

‘The old ones are finished, and the new ones are not yet come,’ answered the girl. ‘When her slave arrived two days ago, there were only four left; but I gave him one, and would take no corn for it.’

‘I do not believe you; you have sold them all to other people. I shall go and cut down the pumpkin,’ cried her brother in a rage.

‘If you cut down the pumpkin you shall cut off my hand with it,’ exclaimed the girl, running up to her tree and catching hold of it. But her brother followed, and with one blow cut off the pumpkin and her hand too.

Then he went into the house and took away everything he could find, and sold the house to a friend of his who had long wished to have it, and his sister had no home to go to.

Meanwhile she had bathed her arm carefully, and bound on it some healing leaves that grew near by, and wrapped a cloth round the leaves, and went to hide in the forest, that her brother might not find her again.

For seven days she wandered about, eating only the fruit that hung from the trees above her, and every night she climbed up and tucked herself safely among the creepers which bound together the big branches, so that neither lions nor tigers nor panthers might get at her.

When she woke up on the seventh morning she saw from her perch smoke coming up from a little town on the edge of the forest. The sight of the huts made her feel more lonely and helpless than before. She longed desperately for a draught of milk from a gourd, for there were no streams in that part, and she was very thirsty, but how was she to earn anything with only one hand? And at this thought her courage failed, and she began to cry bitterly.

It happened that the king's son had come out from the town very early to shoot birds, and when the sun grew hot he left tired.

'I will lie here and rest under this tree,' he said to his attendants. 'You can go and shoot instead, and I will just have this slave to stay with me!' Away they went, and the young man fell asleep, and slept long. Suddenly he was awakened by something wet and salt falling on his face.

'What is that? Is it raining?' he said to his slave. 'Go and look.'

'No, master, it is not raining,' answered the slave.

'Then climb up the tree and see what it is,' and the slave climbed up, and came back and told his master that a beautiful girl was sitting up there, and that it must have been her tears which had fallen on the face of the king's son.

'Why was she crying?' inquired the prince.

'I cannot tell—I did not dare to ask her; but perhaps she would tell you.' And the master, greatly wondering, climbed up the tree.

'What is the matter with you?' said he gently, and, as she only sobbed louder, he continued:

'Are you a woman, or a spirit of the woods?'

'I am a woman,' she answered slowly, wiping her eyes with a leaf of the creeper that hung about her.

'Then why do you cry?' he persisted.

'I have many things to cry for,' she replied, 'more than you could ever guess.'

'Come home with me,' said the prince; 'it is not very far. Come home to my father and mother. I am a king's son.'

‘Then why are you here?’ she said, opening her eyes and staring at him.

‘Once every month I and my friends shoot birds in the forest,’ he answered, ‘but I was tired and bade them leave me to rest. And you—what are you doing up in this tree?’

At that she began to cry again, and told the king’s son all that had befallen her since the death of her mother.

‘I cannot come down with you, for I do not like anyone to see me,’ she ended with a sob.

‘Oh! I will manage all that,’ said the king’s son, and swinging himself to a lower branch, he bade his slave go quickly into the town, and bring back with him four strong men and a curtained litter. When the man was gone, the girl climbed down, and hid herself on the ground in some bushes. Very soon the slave returned with the litter, which was placed on the ground close to the bushes where the girl lay.

‘Now go, all of you, and call my attendants, for I do not wish to say here any longer,’ he said to the men, and as soon as they were out of sight he bade the girl get into the litter, and fasten the curtains tightly. Then he got in on the other side, and waited till his attendants came up.

‘What is the matter, O son of a king?’ asked they, breathless with running.

‘I think I am ill; I am cold,’ he said, and signing to the bearers, he drew the curtains, and was carried through the forest right inside his own house.

‘Tell my father and mother that I have a fever, and want some gruel,’ said he, ‘and bid them send it quickly.’

So the slave hastened to the king’s palace and gave his message, which troubled both the king and the queen greatly. A pot of hot gruel was instantly prepared, and carried over to the sick man, and as soon as the council which was sitting was over, the king and his ministers went to pay him a visit, bearing a message from the queen that she would follow a little later.

Now the prince had pretended to be ill in order to soften his parent’s hearts, and the next day he declared he felt better, and, getting into his litter, was carried to the palace in state, drums being beaten all along the road.

He dismounted at the foot of the steps and walked up, a great parasol being held over his head by a slave. Then he entered the cool, dark room where his father and mother were sitting, and said to them:

‘I saw a girl yesterday in the forest whom I wish to marry, and, unknown to my attendants, I brought her back to my house in a litter. Give me your consent, I beg, for no other woman pleases me as well, even though she has but one hand!’

Of course the king and queen would have preferred a daughter-in-law with two hands, and one who could have brought riches with her, but they could not bear to say ‘No’ to their son, so they told him it should be as he chose, and that the wedding feast should be prepared immediately.

The girl could scarcely believe her good fortune, and, in gratitude for all the kindness shown her, was so useful and pleasant to her husband’s parents that they soon loved her.

By and bye a baby was born to her, and soon after that the prince was sent on a journey by his father to visit some of the distant towns of the kingdom, and to set right things that had gone wrong.

No sooner had he started than the girl’s brother, who had wasted all the riches his wife had brought him in recklessness and folly, and was now very poor, chanced to come into the town, and as he passed he heard a man say, ‘Do you know that the king’s son has married a woman who has lost one of her hands?’ On hearing these words the brother stopped and asked, ‘Where did he find such a woman?’

‘In the forest,’ answered the man, and the cruel brother guessed at once it must be his sister.

A great rage took possession of his soul as he thought of the girl whom he had tried to ruin being after all so much better off than himself, and he vowed that he would work her ill. Therefore that very afternoon he made his way to the palace and asked to see the king.

When he was admitted to his presence, he knelt down and touched the ground with his forehead, and the king bade him stand up and tell wherefore he had come.

‘By the kindness of your heart have you been deceived, O king,’ said he. ‘Your son has married a girl who has lost a hand. Do you know why she had lost it? She was a witch, and has wedded three husbands, and each husband she has put to death with her arts. Then the people of the town cut

off her hand, and turned her into the forest. And what I say is true, for her town is my town also.'

The king listened, and his face grew dark. Unluckily he had a hasty temper, and did not stop to reason, and, instead of sending to the town, and discovering people who knew his daughter-in-law and could have told him how hard she had worked and how poor she had been, he believed all the brother's lying words, and made the queen believe them too. Together they took counsel what they should do, and in the end they decided that they also would put her out of the town. But this did not content the brother.

'Kill her,' he said. 'It is no more than she deserves for daring to marry the king's son. Then she can do no more hurt to anyone.'

'We cannot kill her,' answered they; 'if we did, our son would assuredly kill us. Let us do as the others did, and put her out of the town. And with this the envious brother was forced to be content.

The poor girl loved her husband very much, but just then the baby was more to her than all else in the world, and as long as she had him with her, she did not very much mind anything. So, taking her son on her arm, and hanging a little earthen pot for cooking round her neck, she left her house with its great peacock fans and slaves and seats of ivory, and plunged into the forest.

For a while she walked, not knowing whither she went, then by and bye she grew tired, and sat under a tree to rest and to hush her baby to sleep. Suddenly she raised her eyes, and saw a snake wriggling from under the bushes towards her.

'I am a dead woman,' she said to herself, and stayed quite still, for indeed she was too frightened to move. In another minute the snake had reached her side, and to her surprise he spoke.

'Open your earthen pot, and let me go in. Save me from sun, and I will save you from rain,' and she opened the pot, and when the snake had slipped in, she put on the cover. Soon she beheld another snake coming after the other one, and when it had reached her it stopped and said, 'Did you see a small grey snake pass this way just now?'

'Yes,' she answered, 'it was going very quickly.'

'Ah, I must hurry and catch it up,' replied the second snake, and it hastened on.

When it was out of sight, a voice from the pot said:

‘Uncover me,’ and she lifted the lid, and the little grey snake slid rapidly to the ground.

‘I am safe now,’ he said. ‘But tell me, where are you going?’

‘I cannot tell you, for I do not know,’ she answered. ‘I am just wandering in the wood.’

‘Follow me, and let us go home together,’ said the snake, and the girl followed his through the forest and along the green paths, till they came to a great lake, where they stopped to rest.

‘The sun is hot,’ said the snake, ‘and you have walked far. Take your baby and bathe in that cool place where the boughs of the tree stretch far over the water.’

‘Yes, I will,’ answered she, and they went in. The baby splashed and crowed with delight, and then he gave a spring and fell right in, down, down, down, and his mother could not find him, though she searched all among the reeds.

Full of terror, she made her way back to the bank, and called to the snake, ‘My baby is gone!—he is drowned, and never shall I see him again.’

‘Go in once more,’ said the snake, ‘and feel everywhere, even among the trees that have their roots in the water, lest perhaps he may be held fast there.’

Swiftly she went back and felt everywhere with her whole hand, even putting her fingers into the tiniest crannies, where a crab could hardly have taken shelter.

‘No, he is not here,’ she cried. ‘How am I to live without him?’ But the snake took no notice, and only answered, ‘Put in your other arm too.’

‘What is the use of that?’ she asked, ‘when it has no hand to feel with?’ but all the same she did as she was bid, and in an instant the wounded arm touched something round and soft, lying between two stones in a clump of reeds.

‘My baby, my baby!’ she shouted, and lifted him up, merry and laughing, and not a bit hurt or frightened.

‘Have you found him this time?’ asked the snake.

‘Yes, oh, yes!’ she answered, ‘and, why—why—I have got my hand back again!’ and from sheer joy she burst into tears.

The snake let her weep for a little while, and then he said—

‘Now we will journey on to my family, and we will all repay you for the kindness you showed to me.’

‘You have done more than enough in giving me back my hand,’ replied the girl; but the snake only smiled.

‘Be quick, lest the sun should set,’ he answered, and began to wriggle along so fast that the girl could hardly follow him.

By and bye they arrived at the house in a tree where the snake lived, when he was not travelling with his father and mother. And he told them all his adventures, and how he had escaped from his enemy. The father and mother snake could not do enough to show their gratitude. They made their guest lie down on a hammock woven of the strong creepers which hung from bough to bough, till she was quite rested after her wanderings, while they watched the baby and gave him milk to drink from the cocoa-nuts which they persuaded their friends the monkeys to crack for them. They even managed to carry small fruit tied up in their tails for the baby’s mother, who felt at last that she was safe and at peace. Not that she forgot her husband, for she often thought of him and longed to show him her son, and in the night she would sometimes lie awake and wonder where he was.

In this manner many weeks passed by.

And what was the prince doing?

Well, he had fallen very ill when he was on the furthest border of the kingdom, and he was nursed by some kind people who did not know who he was, so that the king and queen heard nothing about him. When he was better he made his way home again, and into his father’s palace, where he found a strange man standing behind the throne with the peacock’s feathers. This was his wife’s brother, whom the king had taken into high favour, though, of course, the prince was quite ignorant of what had happened.

For a moment the king and queen stared at their son, as if he had been unknown to them; he had grown so thin and weak during his illness that his shoulders were bowed like those of an old man.

‘Have you forgotten me so soon?’ he asked.

At the sound of his voice they gave a cry and ran towards him, and poured out questions as to what had happened, and why he looked like that. But the prince did not answer any of them.

‘How is my wife?’ he said. There was a pause.

Then the queen replied:

‘She is dead.’

‘Dead!’ he repeated, stepping a little backwards. ‘And my child?’

‘He is dead too.’

The young man stood silent. Then he said, ‘Show me their graves.’

At these words the king, who had been feeling rather uncomfortable, took heart again, for had he not prepared two beautiful tombs for his son to see, so that he might never, never guess what had been done to his wife? All these months the king and queen had been telling each other how good and merciful they had been not to take her brother’s advice and to put her to death. But now, this somehow did not seem so certain.

Then the king led the way to the courtyard just behind the palace, and through the gate into a beautiful garden where stood two splendid tombs in a green space under the trees. The prince advanced alone, and, resting his head against the stone, he burst into tears. His father and mother stood silently behind with a curious pang in their souls which they did not quite understand. Could it be that they were ashamed of themselves?

But after a while the prince turned round, and walking past them in to the palace he bade the slaves bring him mourning. For seven days no one saw him, but at the end of them he went out hunting, and helped his father rule his people. Only no one dared to speak to him of his wife and son.

At last one morning, after the girl had been lying awake all night thinking of her husband, she said to her friend the snake:

‘You have all shown me much kindness, but now I am well again, and want to go home and hear some news of my husband, and if he still mourns for me!’ Now the heart of the snake was sad at her words, but he only said:

‘Yes, thus it must be; go and bid farewell to my father and mother, but if they offer you a present, see that you take nothing but my father’s ring and my mother’s casket.’

So she went to the parent snakes, who wept bitterly at the thought of losing her, and offered her gold and jewels as much as she could carry in remembrance of them. But the girl shook her head and pushed the shining heap away from her.

‘I shall never forget you, never,’ she said in a broken voice, ‘but the only tokens I will accept from you are that little ring and this old casket.’

The two snakes looked at each other in dismay. The ring and the casket were the only things they did not want her to have. Then after a short pause they spoke.

‘Why do you want the ring and casket so much? Who has told you of them?’

‘Oh, nobody; it is just my fancy,’ answered she. But the old snakes shook their heads and replied:

‘Not so; it is our son who told you, and, as he said, so it must be. If you need food, or clothes, or a house, tell the ring and it will find them for you. And if you are unhappy or in danger, tell the casket and it will set things right.’ Then they both gave her their blessing, and she picked up her baby and went her way.

She walked for a long time, till at length she came near the town where her husband and his father dwelt. Here she stopped under a grove of palm trees, and told the ring that she wanted a house.

‘It is ready, mistress,’ whispered a queer little voice which made her jump, and, looking behind her, she saw a lovely palace made of the finest woods, and a row of slaves with tall fans bowing before the door. Glad indeed was she to enter, for she was very tired, and, after eating a good supper of fruit and milk which she found in one of the rooms, she flung herself down on a pile of cushions and went to sleep with her baby beside her.

Here she stayed quietly, and every day the baby grew taller and stronger, and very soon he could run about and even talk. Of course the neighbours had a great deal to say about the house which had been built so quickly—so very quickly—on the outskirts of the town, and invented all kinds of stories about the rich lady who lived in it. And by and bye, when the king returned with his son from the wars, some of these tales reached his ears.

‘It is really very odd about that house under the palms,’ he said to the queen; ‘I must find out something of the lady whom no one ever sees. I daresay it is not a lady at all, but a gang of conspirators who want to get possession of my throne. To-morrow I shall take my son and my chief ministers and insist on getting inside.’

Soon after sunrise next day the prince’s wife was standing on a little hill behind the house, when she saw a cloud of dust coming through the

town. A moment afterwards she heard faintly the roll of the drums that announced the king's presence, and saw a crowd of people approaching the grove of palms. Her heart beat fast. Could her husband be among them? In any case they must not discover her there; so just bidding the ring prepare some food for them, she ran inside, and bound a veil of golden gauze round her head and face. Then, taking the child's hand, she went to the door and waited.

In a few minutes the whole procession came up, and she stepped forward and begged them to come in and rest.

'Willingly,' answered the king; 'go first, and we will follow you.'

They followed her into a long dark room, in which was a table covered with gold cups and baskets filled with dates and cocoa-nuts and all kinds of ripe yellow fruits, and the king and the prince sat upon cushions and were served by slaves, while the ministers, among whom she recognised her own brother, stood behind.

'Ah, I owe all my misery to him,' she said to herself. 'From the first he has hated me,' but outwardly she showed nothing. And when the king asked her what news there was in the town she only answered:

'You have ridden far; eat first, and drink, for you must be hungry and thirsty, and then I will tell you my news.'

'You speak sense,' answered the king, and silence prevailed for some time longer. Then he said:

'Now, lady, I have finished, and am refreshed, therefore tell me, I pray you, who you are, and whence you come? But, first, be seated.'

She bowed her head and sat down on a big scarlet cushion, drawing her little boy, who was asleep in a corner, on to her knee, and began to tell the story of her life. As her brother listened, he would fain have left the house and hidden himself in the forest, but it was his duty to wave the fan of peacock's feathers over the king's head to keep off the flies, and he knew he would be seized by the royal guards if he tried to desert his post. He must stay where he was, there was no help for it, and luckily for him the king was too much interested in the tale to notice that the fan had ceased moving, and that flies were dancing right on the top of his thick curly hair.

The story went on, but the story-teller never once looked at the prince, even through her veil, though he on his side never moved his eyes from

her. When she reached the part where she had sat weeping in the tree, the king's son could restrain himself no longer.

'It is my wife,' he cried, springing to where she sat with the sleeping child in her lap. 'They have lied to me, and you are not dead after all, nor the boy either! But what has happened? Why did they lie to me? and why did you leave my house where you were safe?' And he turned and looked fiercely at his father.

'Let me finish my tale first, and then you will know,' answered she, throwing back her veil, and she told how her brother had come to the palace and accused her of being a witch, and had tried to persuade the king to slay her. 'But he would not do that,' she continued softly, 'and after all, if I had stayed on in your house, I should never have met the snake, nor have got my hand back again. So let us forget all about it, and be happy once more, for see! our son is growing quite a big boy.'

'And what shall be done to your brother?' asked the king, who was glad to think that someone had acted in this matter worse than himself.

'Put him out of the town,' answered she.

From 'Swaheli Tales,' by E. Steere.

THE BONES OF DJULUNG

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In a beautiful island that lies in the southern seas, where chains of gay orchids bind the trees together, and the days and nights are equally long and nearly equally hot, there once lived a family of seven sisters. Their father and mother were dead, and they had no brothers, so the eldest girl ruled over the rest, and they all did as she bade them. One sister had to clean the house, a second carried water from the spring in the forest, a third cooked their food, while to the youngest fell the hardest task of all, for she had to cut and bring home the wood which was to keep the fire continually burning. This was very hot and tiring work, and when she had fed the fire and heaped up in a corner the sticks that were to supply it till the next day, she often threw herself down under a tree, and went sound asleep.

One morning, however, as she was staggering along with her bundle on her back, she thought that the river which flowed past their hut looked so cool and inviting that she determined to bathe in it, instead of taking her usual nap. Hastily piling up her load by the fire, and thrusting some sticks into the flame, she ran down to the river and jumped in. How delicious it was diving and swimming and floating in the dark forest, where the trees were so thick that you could hardly see the sun! But after a while she began to look about her, and her eyes fell on a little fish that seemed made out of a rainbow, so brilliant were the colours he flashed out.

‘I should like him for a pet,’ thought the girl, and the next time the fish swam by, she put out her hand and caught him. Then she ran along the grassy path till she came to a cave in front of which a stream fell over some rocks into a basin. Here she put her little fish, whose name was Djulung-djulung, and promising to return soon and bring him some dinner, she went away.

By the time she got home, the rice for their dinner was ready cooked, and the eldest sister gave the other six their portions in wooden bowls. But

the youngest did not finish hers, and when no one was looking, stole off to the fountain in the forest where the little fish was swimming about.

‘See! I have not forgotten you,’ she cried, and one by one she let the grains of rice fall into the water, where the fish gobbled them up greedily, for he had never tasted anything so nice.

‘That is all for to-day,’ she said at last, ‘but I will come again to-morrow,’ and biding him good-bye she went down the path.

Now the girl did not tell her sisters about the fish, but every day she saved half of her rice to give him, and called him softly in a little song she had made for herself. If she sometimes felt hungry, no one knew of it, and, indeed, she did not mind that much, when she saw how the fish enjoyed it. And the fish grew fat and big, but the girl grew thin and weak, and the loads of wood felt heavier every day, and at last her sisters noticed it.

Then they took counsel together, and watched her to see what she did, and one of them followed her to the fountain where Djulung lived, and saw her give him all the rice she had saved from her breakfast. Hastening home the sister told the others what she had witnessed, and that a lovely fat fish might be had for the catching. So the eldest sister went and caught him, and he was boiled for supper, but the youngest sister was away in the woods, and did not know anything about it.

Next morning she went as usual to the cave, and sang her little song, but no Djulung came to answer it; twice and thrice she sang, then threw herself on her knees by the edge, and peered into the dark water, but the trees cast such a deep shadow that her eyes could not pierce it.

‘Djulung cannot be dead, or his body would be floating on the surface,’ she said to herself, and rising to her feet she set out homewards, feeling all of a sudden strangely tired.

‘What is the matter with me?’ she thought, but somehow or other she managed to reach the hut, and threw herself down in a corner, where she slept so soundly that for days no one was able to wake her.

At length, one morning early, a cock began to crow so loud that she could sleep no longer and as he continued to crow she seemed to understand what he was saying, and that he was telling her that Djulung was dead, killed and eaten by her sisters, and that his bones lay buried under the kitchen fire. Very softly she got up, and took up the large stone under the fire, and creeping out carried the bones to the cave by the

fountain, where she dug a hole and buried them anew. And as she scooped out the hole with a stick she sang a song, bidding the bones grow till they became a tree—a tree that reached up so high into the heavens that its leaves would fall across the sea into another island, whose king would pick them up.

As there was no Djulung to give her rice to, the girl soon became fat again, and as she was able to do her work as of old, her sisters did not trouble about her. They never guessed that when she went into the forest to gather her sticks, she never failed to pay a visit to the tree, which grew taller and more wonderful day by day. Never was such a tree seen before. Its trunk was of iron, its leaves were of silk, its flowers of gold, and its fruit of diamonds, and one evening, though the girl did not know it, a soft breeze took one of the leaves, and blew it across the sea to the feet of one of the king's attendants.

'What a curious leaf! I have never beheld one like it before. I must show it to the king,' he said, and when the king saw it he declared he would never rest until he had found the tree which bore it, even if he had to spend the rest of his life in visiting the islands that lay all round. Happily for him, he began with the island that was nearest, and here in the forest he suddenly saw standing before him the iron tree, its boughs covered with shining leaves like the one he carried about him.

'But what sort of a tree is it, and how did it get here?' he asked of the attendants he had with him. No one could answer him, but as they were about to pass out of the forest a little boy went by, and the king stopped and inquired if there was anyone living in the neighbourhood whom he might question.

'Seven girls live in a hut down there,' replied the boy, pointing with his finger to where the sun was setting.

'Then go and bring them here, and I will wait,' said the king, and the boy ran off and told the sisters that a great chief, with strings of jewels round his neck, had sent for them.

Pleased and excited the six elder sisters at once followed the boy, but the youngest, who was busy, and who did not care about strangers, stayed behind, to finish the work she was doing. The king welcomed the girls eagerly, and asked them all manner of questions about the tree, but as they had never even heard of its existence, they could tell him nothing. 'And if

we, who live close by the forest, do not know, you may be sure no one does,' added the eldest, who was rather cross at finding this was all that the king wanted of them.

'But the boy told me there were seven of you, and there are only six here,' said the king.

'Oh, the youngest is at home, but she is always half asleep, and is of no use except to cut wood for the fire,' replied they in a breath.

'That may be, but perhaps she dreams,' answered the king. 'Anyway, I will speak to her also.' Then he signed to one of his attendants, who followed the path that the boy had taken to the hut.

Soon the man returned, with the girl walking behind him. And as soon as she reached the tree it bowed itself to the earth before her, and she stretched out her hand and picked some of its leaves and flowers and gave them to the king.

'The maiden who can work such wonders is fitted to be the wife of the greatest chief,' he said, and so he married her, and took her with him across the sea to his own home, where they lived happily for ever after.

From 'Folk Lore,' by A. F. Mackenzie.

THE SEA KING'S GIFT

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There was once a fisherman who was called Salmon, and his Christian name was Matte. He lived by the shore of the big sea; where else could he live? He had a wife called Maie; could you find a better name for her? In winter they dwelt in a little cottage by the shore, but in spring they flitted to a red rock out in the sea and stayed there the whole summer until it was autumn. The cottage on the rock was even smaller than the other; it had a wooden bolt instead of an iron lock to the door, a stone hearth, a flagstaff, and a weather-cock on the roof.

The rock was called Ahtola, and was not larger than the market-place of a town. Between the crevices there grew a little rowan tree and four alder bushes. Heaven only knows how they ever came there; perhaps they were brought by the winter storms. Besides that, there flourished some tufts of velvety grass, some scattered reeds, two plants of the yellow herb called tansy, four of a red flower, and a pretty white one; but the treasures of the rock consisted of three roots of garlic, which Maie had put in a cleft. Rock walls sheltered them on the north side, and the sun shone on them on the south. This does not seem much, but it sufficed Maie for a herb plot.

All good things go in threes, so Matte and his wife fished for salmon in spring, for herring in summer, and for cod in winter. When on Saturdays the weather was fine and the wind favourable, they sailed to the nearest town, sold their fish, and went to church on Sunday. But it often happened that for weeks at a time they were quite alone on the rock Ahtola, and had nothing to look at except their little yellow-brown dog, which bore the grand name of Prince, their grass tufts, their bushes and blooms, the sea bays and fish, a stormy sky and the blue, white-crested waves. For the rock lay far away from the land, and there were no green islets or human habitations for miles round, only here and there appeared a rock of the same red stone as Ahtola, besprinkled day and night with the ocean spray.

Matte and Maie were industrious, hard-working folk, happy and contented in their poor hut, and they thought themselves rich when they

were able to salt as many casks of fish as they required for winter and yet have some left over with which to buy tobacco for the old man, and a pound or two of coffee for his wife, with plenty of burned corn and chicory in it to give it a flavour. Besides that, they had bread, butter, fish, a beer cask, and a buttermilk jar; what more did they require? All would have gone well had not Maie been possessed with a secret longing which never let her rest; and this was, how she could manage to become the owner of a cow.

‘What would you do with a cow?’ asked Matte. ‘She could not swim so far, and our boat is not large enough to bring her over here; and even if we had her, we have nothing to feed her on.’

‘We have four alder bushes and sixteen tufts of grass,’ rejoined Maie.

‘Yes, of course,’ laughed Matte, ‘and we have also three plants of garlic. Garlic would be fine feeding for her.’

‘Every cow likes salt herring,’ rejoined his wife. ‘Even Prince is fond of fish.’

‘That may be,’ said her husband. ‘Methinks she would soon be a dear cow if we had to feed her on salt herring. All very well for Prince, who fights with the gulls over the last morsel. Put the cow out of your head, mother, we are very well off as we are.’

Maie sighed. She knew well that her husband was right, but she could not give up the idea of a cow. The buttermilk no longer tasted as good as usual in the coffee; she thought of sweet cream and fresh butter, and of how there was nothing in the world to be compared with them.

One day as Matte and his wife were cleaning herring on the shore they heard Prince barking, and soon there appeared a gaily painted boat with three young men in it, steering towards the rock. They were students, on a boating excursion, and wanted to get something to eat.

‘Bring us a junket, good mother,’ cried they to Maie.

‘Ah! if only I had such a thing!’ sighed Maie.

‘A can of fresh milk, then,’ said the students; ‘but it must not be skim.’

‘Yes, if only I had it!’ sighed the old woman, still more deeply.

‘What! haven’t you got a cow?’

Maie was silent. This question so struck her to the heart that she could not reply.

‘We have no cow,’ Matte answered; ‘but we have good smoked herring, and can cook them in a couple of hours.’

‘All right, then, that will do,’ said the students, as they flung themselves down on the rock, while fifty silvery-white herring were turning on the spit in front of the fire.

‘What’s the name of this little stone in the middle of the ocean?’ asked one of them.

‘Ahtola,’ answered the old man.

‘Well, you should want for nothing when you live in the Sea King’s dominion.’

Matte did not understand. He had never read Kalevala and knew nothing of the sea gods of old, but the students proceeded to explain to him.[FN#2: Kalevala is a collection of old Finnish songs about gods and heroes.]

‘Ahti,’ said they, ‘is a mighty king who lives in his dominion of Ahtola, and has a rock at the bottom of the sea, and possesses besides a treasury of good things. He rules over all fish and animals of the deep; he has the finest cows and the swiftest horses that ever chewed grass at the bottom of the ocean. He who stands well with Ahti is soon a rich man, but one must beware in dealing with him, for he is very changeful and touchy. Even a little stone thrown into the water might offend him, and then as he takes back his gift, he stirs up the sea into a storm and drags the sailors down into the depths. Ahti owns also the fairest maidens, who bear the train of his queen Wellamos, and at the sound of music they comb their long, flowing locks, which glisten in the water.’

‘Oh!’ cried Matte, ‘have your worships really seen all that?’

‘We have as good as seen it,’ said the students. ‘It is all printed in a book, and everything printed is true.’

‘I’m not so sure of that,’ said Matte, as he shook his head.

But the herring were now ready, and the students ate enough for six, and gave Prince some cold meat which they happened to have in the boat. Prince sat on his hind legs with delight and mewed like a pussy cat. When all was finished, the students handed Matte a shining silver coin, and allowed him to fill his pipe with a special kind of tobacco. They then thanked him for his kind hospitality and went on their journey, much

regretted by Prince, who sat with a woeful expression and whined on the shore as long as he could see a flip of the boat's white sail in the distance.

Maie had never uttered a word, but thought the more. She had good ears, and had laid to heart the story about Ahti. 'How delightful,' thought she to herself, 'to possess a fairy cow! How delicious every morning and evening to draw milk from it, and yet have no trouble about the feeding, and to keep a shelf near the window for dishes of milk and junkets! But this will never be my luck.'

'What are you thinking of?' asked Matte.

'Nothing,' said his wife; but all the time she was pondering over some magic rhymes she had heard in her childhood from an old lame man, which were supposed to bring luck in fishing.

'What if I were to try?' thought she.

Now this was Saturday, and on Saturday evenings Matte never set the herring-net, for he did not fish on Sunday. Towards evening, however, his wife said:

'Let us set the herring-net just this once.'

'No,' said her husband, 'it is a Saturday night.'

'Last night was so stormy, and we caught so little,' urged his wife; 'to-night the sea is like a mirror, and with the wind in this direction the herring are drawing towards land.'

'But there are streaks in the north-western sky, and Prince was eating grass this evening,' said the old man.

'Surely he has not eaten my garlic,' exclaimed the old woman.

'No; but there will be rough weather by to-morrow at sunset,' rejoined Matte.

'Listen to me,' said his wife, 'we will set only one net close to the shore, and then we shall be able to finish up our half-filled cask, which will spoil if it stands open so long.'

The old man allowed himself to be talked over, and so they rowed out with the net. When they reached the deepest part of the water, she began to hum the words of the magic rhyme, altering the words to suit the longing of her heart:

Oh, Ahti, with the long, long beard,
Who dwellest in the deep blue sea,

Finest treasures have I heard,
And glittering fish belong to thee.
The richest pearls beyond compare
Are stored up in thy realm below,
And Ocean's cows so sleek and fair
Feed on the grass in thy green meadow.

King of the waters, far and near,
I ask not of thy golden store,
I wish not jewels of pearl to wear,
Nor silver either, ask I for,
But one is odd and even is two,
So give me a cow, sea-king so bold,
And in return I'll give to you
A slice of the moon, and the sun's gold.

'What's that you're humming?' asked the old man.

'Oh, only the words of an old rhyme that keeps running in my head,' answered the old woman; and she raised her voice and went on:

Oh, Ahti, with the long, long beard,
Who dwellest in the deep blue sea,
A thousand cows are in thy herd,
I pray thee give one onto me.

'That's a stupid sort of song,' said Matte. 'What else should one beg of the sea-king but fish? But such songs are not for Sunday.'

His wife pretended not to hear him, and sang and sang the same tune all the time they were on the water. Matte heard nothing more as he sat and rowed the heavy boat, while thinking of his cracked pipe and the fine tobacco. Then they returned to the island, and soon after went to bed.

But neither Matte nor Maie could sleep a wink; the one thought of how he had profaned Sunday, and the other of Ahti's cow.

About midnight the fisherman sat up, and said to his wife:

'Dost thou hear anything?'

'No,' said she.

‘I think the twirling of the weathercock on the roof bodes ill,’ said he; ‘we shall have a storm.’

‘Oh, it is nothing but your fancy,’ said his wife.

Matte lay down, but soon rose again.

‘The weathercock is squeaking now,’ said he.

‘Just fancy! Go to sleep,’ said his wife; and the old man tried to.

For the third time he jumped out of bed.

‘Ho! how the weather-cock is roaring at the pitch of its voice, as if it had a fire inside it! We are going to have a tempest, and must bring in the net.’

Both rose. The summer night was as dark as if it had been October, the weather-cock creaked, and the storm was raging in every direction. As they went out the sea lay around them as white as now, and the spray was dashing right over the fisher-hut. In all his life Matte had never remembered such a night. To launch the boat and put to sea to rescue the net was a thing not to be thought of. The fisherman and his wife stood aghast on the doorstep, holding on fast by the doorpost, while the foam splashed over their faces.

‘Did I not tell thee that there is no luck in Sunday fishing?’ said Matte sulkily; and his wife was so frightened that she never even once thought of Ahti’s cows.

As there was nothing to be done, they went in. Their eyes were heavy for lack of slumber, and they slept as soundly as if there had not been such a thing as an angry sea roaring furiously around their lonely dwelling. When they awoke, the sun was high in the heavens, the tempest had cased, and only the swell of the sea rose in silvery heavings against the red rock.

‘What can that be?’ said the old woman, as she peeped out of the door.

‘It looks like a big seal,’ said Matte.

‘As sure as I live, it’s a cow!’ exclaimed Maie. And certainly it was a cow, a fine red cow, fat and flourishing, and looking as if it had been fed all its days on spinach. It wandered peacefully up and down the shore, and never so much as even looked at the poor little tufts of grass, as if it despised such fare.

Matte could not believe his eyes. But a cow she seemed, and a cow she was found to be; and when the old woman began to milk her, every pitcher and pan, even to the baler, was soon filled with the most delicious milk.

The old man troubled his head in vain as to how she came there, and sallied forth to seek for his lost net. He had not proceeded far when he found it cast up on the shore, and so full of fish that not a mesh was visible.

‘It is all very fine to possess a cow,’ said Matte, as he cleaned the fish; ‘but what are we going to feed her on?’

‘We shall find some means,’ said his wife; and the cow found the means herself. She went out and cropped the seaweed which grew in great abundance near the shore, and always kept in good condition. Every one Prince alone excepted, thought she was a clever beast; but Prince barked at her, for he had now got a rival.

From that day the red rock overflowed with milk and junkets, and every net was filled with fish. Matte and Maie grew fat on this fine living, and daily became richer. She churned quantities of butter, and he hired two men to help him in his fishing. The sea lay before him like a big fish tank, out of which he hauled as many as he required; and the cow continued to fend for herself. In autumn, when Matte and Maie went ashore, the cow went to sea, and in spring, when they returned to the rock, there she stood awaiting them.

‘We shall require a better house,’ said Maie the following summer; ‘the old one is too small for ourselves and the men.’

‘Yes,’ said Matte. So he built a large cottage, with a real lock to the door, and a store-house for fish as well; and he and his men caught such quantities of fish that they sent tons of salmon, herring, and cod to Russian and Sweden.

‘I am quite overworked with so many folk,’ said Maie; ‘a girl to help me would not come amiss.’

‘Get one, then,’ said her husband; and so they hired a girl.

Then Maie said: ‘We have too little milk for all these folk. Now that I have a servant, with the same amount of trouble she could look after three cows.’

‘All right, then,’ said her husband, somewhat provoked, ‘you can sing a song to the fairies.’

This annoyed Maie, but nevertheless she rowed out to sea on Sunday night and sang as before:

Oh, Ahti, with the long, long beard,
Who dwellest in the deep blue sea,
A thousand cows are in thy herd,
I pray thee give three unto me.

The following morning, instead of one, three cows stood on the island, and they all ate seaweed and fended for themselves like the first one.

‘Art thou satisfied now?’ said Matte to his wife.

‘I should be quite satisfied,’ said his wife, ‘if only I had two servants to help, and if I had some finer clothes. Don’t you know that I am addressed as Madam?’

‘Well, well,’ said her husband. So Maie got several servants and clothes fit for a great lady.

‘Everything would now be perfect if only we had a little better dwelling for summer. You might build us a two-storey house, and fetch soil to make a garden. Then you might make a little arbour up there to let us have a sea-view; and we might have a fiddler to fiddle to us of an evening, and a little steamer to take us to church in stormy weather.’

‘Anything more?’ asked Matte; but he did everything that his wife wished. The rock Ahtola became so grand and Maie so grand that all the sea-urchins and herring were lost in wonderment. Even Prince was fed on beefsteaks and cream scones till at last he was as round as a butter jar.

‘Are you satisfied now?’ asked Matte.

‘I should be quite satisfied,’ said Maie, ‘if only I had thirty cows. At least that number is required for such a household.’

‘Go to the fairies,’ said Matte.

His wife set out in the new steamer and sang to the sea-king. Next morning thirty cows stood on the shore, all finding food for themselves.

‘Know’st thou, good man, that we are far too cramped on this wretched rock, and where am I to find room for so many cows?’

‘There is nothing to be done but to pump out the sea.’

‘Rubbish!’ said his wife. ‘Who can pump out the sea?’

‘Try with thy new steamer, there is a pump in it.’

Maie knew well that her husband was only making fun of her, but still her mind was set upon the same subject. ‘I never could pump the sea out,’

thought she, ‘but perhaps I might fill it up, if I were to make a big dam. I might heap up sand and stones, and make our island as big again.’

Maie loaded her boat with stones and went out to sea. The fiddler was with her, and fiddled so finely that Ahti and Wellamos and all the sea’s daughters rose to the surface of the water to listen to the music.

‘What is that shining so brightly in the waves?’ asked Maie.

‘That is sea foam glinting in the sunshine,’ answered the fiddler.

‘Throw out the stones,’ said Maie.

The people in the boat began to throw out the stones, splash, splash, right and left, into the foam. One stone hit the nose of Wellamos’s chief lady-in-waiting, another scratched the sea queen herself on the cheek, a third plumped close to Ahti’s head and tore off half of the sea-king’s beard; then there was a commotion in the sea, the waves bubbled and bubbled like boiling water in a pot.

‘Whence comes this gust of wind?’ said Maie; and as she spoke the sea opened and swallowed up the steamer. Maie sank to the bottom like a stone, but, stretching out her arms and legs, she rose to the surface, where she found the fiddler’s fiddle, and used it as a float. At the same moment she saw close beside her the terrible head of Ahti, and he had only half a beard!’

‘Why did you throw stones at me?’ roared the sea-king.

‘Oh, your majesty, it was a mistake! Put some bear’s grease on your beard and that will soon make it grow again.’

‘Dame, did I not give you all you asked for—nay, even more?’

‘Truly, truly, your majesty. Many thanks for the cows.’

‘Well, where is the gold from the sun and the silver from the moon that you promised me?’

‘Ah, your majesty, they have been scattered day and night upon the sea, except when the sky was overcast,’ slyly answered Maie.

‘I’ll teach you!’ roared the sea-king; and with that he gave the fiddle such a ‘puff’ that it sent the old woman up like a sky-rocket on to her island. There Prince lay, as famished as ever, gnawing the carcase of a crow. There sat Matte in his ragged grey jacket, quite alone, on the steps of the old hut, mending a net.

‘Heavens, mother,’ said he, ‘where are you coming from at such a whirlwind pace, and what makes you in such a dripping condition?’

Maie looked around her amazed, and said, ‘Where is our two-storey house?’

‘What house?’ asked her husband.

‘Our big house, and the flower garden, and the men and the maids, and the thirty beautiful cows, and the steamer, and everything else?’

‘You are talking nonsense, mother,’ said he. ‘The students have quite turned your head, for you sang silly songs last evening while we were rowing, and then you could not sleep till early morning. We had stormy weather during the night, and when it was past I did not wish to waken you, so rowed out alone to rescue the net.’

‘But I’ve seen Ahti,’ rejoined Maie.

‘You’ve been lying in bed, dreaming foolish fancies, mother, and then in your sleep you walked into the water.’

‘But there is the fiddle,’ said Maie.

‘A fine fiddle! It is only an old stick. No, no, old woman, another time we will be more careful. Good luck never attends fishing on a Sunday.’

From Z. Topelius.

THE RASPBERRY WORM

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‘Phew!’ cried Lisa.

‘Ugh!’ cried Aina.

‘What now?’ cried the big sister.

‘A worm!’ cried Lisa.

‘On the raspberry!’ cried Aina.

‘Kill it!’ cried Otto.

‘What a fuss over a poor little worm!’ said the big sister scornfully.

‘Yes, when we had cleaned the raspberries so carefully,’ said Lisa.

‘It crept out from that very large one,’ put in Aina.

‘And supposing someone had eaten the raspberry,’ said Lisa.

‘Then they would have eaten the worm, too,’ said Aina.

‘Well, what harm?’ said Otto.

‘Eat a worm!’ cried Lisa.

‘And kill him with one bite!’ murmured Aina.

‘Just think of it!’ said Otto laughing.

‘Now it is crawling on the table,’ cried Aina again.

‘Blow it away!’ said the big sister.

‘Tramp on it!’ laughed Otto.

But Lisa took a raspberry leaf, swept the worm carefully on to the leaf and carried it out into the yard. Then Aina noticed that a sparrow sitting on the fence was just ready to pounce on the poor little worm, so she took up the leaf, carried it out into the wood and hid it under a raspberry bush where the greedy sparrow could not find it. Yes, and what more is there to tell about a raspberry worm? Who would give three straws for such a miserable little thing? Yes, but who would not like to live in such a pretty home as it lives in; in such a fresh fragrant dark-red cottage, far away in the quiet wood among flowers and green leaves!

Now it was just dinner time, so they all had a dinner of raspberries and cream. ‘Be careful with the sugar, Otto,’ said the big sister; but Otto’s plate was like a snowdrift in winter, with just a little red under the snow.

Soon after dinner the big sister said: ‘Now we have eaten up the raspberries and we have none left to make preserve for the winter; it would be fine if we could get two baskets full of berries, then we could clean them this evening, and to-morrow we could cook them in the big preserving pan, and then we should have raspberry jam to eat on our bread!’

‘Come, let us go to the wood and pick,’ said Lisa.

‘Yes, let us,’ said Aina. ‘You take the yellow basket and I will take the green one.’

‘Don’t get lost, and come back safely in the evening,’ said the big sister.

‘Greetings to the raspberry worm,’ said Otto, mockingly. ‘Next time I meet him I shall do him the honour of eating him up.’

So Aina and Lisa went off to the wood. Ah! how delightful it was there, how beautiful! It was certainly tiresome sometimes climbing over the fallen trees, and getting caught in the branches, and waging war with the juniper bushes and the midges, but what did that matter? The girls climbed well in their short dresses, and soon they were deep in the wood.

There were plenty of bilberries and elder berries, but no raspberries. They wandered on and on, and at last they came… No, it could not be true!… they came to a large raspberry wood. The wood had been on fire once, and now raspberry bushes had grown up, and there were raspberry bushes and raspberry bushes as far as the eye could see. Every bush was weighted to the ground with the largest, dark red, ripe raspberries, such a wealth of berries as two little berry pickers had never found before!

Lisa picked, Aina picked. Lisa ate, Aina ate, and in a little while their baskets were full.

‘Now we shall go home,’ said Aina. ‘No, let us gather a few more,’ said Lisa. So they put the baskets down on the ground and began to fill their pinafores, and it was not long before their pinafores were full, too.

‘Now we shall go home,’ said Lina. ‘Yes, now we shall go home,’ said Aina. Both girls took a basket in one hand and held up her apron in the other and then turned to go home. But that was easier said than done. They had never been so far in the great wood before, they could not find any road nor path, and soon the girls noticed that they had lost their way.

The worst of it was that the shadows of the tress were becoming so long in the evening sunlight, the birds were beginning to fly home, and the day was closing in. At last the sun went down behind the pine tops, and it was cool and dusky in the great wood.

The girls became anxious but went steadily on, expecting that the wood would soon end, and that they would see the smoke from the chimneys of their home.

After they had wandered on for a long time it began to grow dark. At last they reached a great plain overgrown with bushes, and when they looked around them, they saw, as much as they could in the darkness, that they were among the same beautiful raspberry bushes from which they had picked their baskets and their aprons full. Then they were so tired that they sat down on a stone and began to cry.

‘I am so hungry,’ said Lisa.

‘Yes,’ said Aina, ‘if we had only two good meat sandwiches now.’

As she said that, she felt something in her hand, and when she looked down, she saw a large sandwich of bread and chicken, and at the same time Lisa said: ‘How very queer! I have a sandwich in my hand.’

‘And I, too,’ said Aina. ‘Will you dare to eat it?’

‘Of course I will,’ said Lisa. ‘Ah, if we only had a good glass of milk now!’

Just as she said that she felt a large glass of milk between her fingers, and at the same time Aina cried out, ‘Lisa! Lisa! I have a glass of milk in my hand! Isn’t it queer?’

The girls, however, were very hungry, so they ate and drank with a good appetite. When they had finished Aina yawned, stretched out her arms and said: ‘Oh, if only we had a nice soft bed to sleep on now!’

Scarcely had she spoken before she felt a nice soft bed by her side, and there beside Lisa was one too. This seemed to the girls more and more wonderful, but tired and sleepy as they were, they thought no more about it, but crept into the little beds, drew the coverlets over their heads and were soon asleep.

When they awoke the sun was high in the heavens, the wood was beautiful in the summer morning, and the birds were flying about in the branches and the tree tops.

At first the girls were filled with wonder when they saw that they had slept in the wood among the raspberry bushes. They looked at each other, they looked at their beds, which were of the finest flax covered over with leaves and moss. At last Lisa said: ‘Are you awake, Aina?’

‘Yes,’ said Aina.

‘But I am still dreaming,’ said Lisa.

‘No,’ said Aina, ‘but there is certainly some good fairy living among these raspberry bushes. Ah, if we had only a hot cup of coffee now, and a nice piece of white bread to dip into it!’

Scarcely had she finished speaking when she saw beside her a little silver tray with a gilt coffee-pot, two cups of rare porcelain, a sugar basin of fine crystal, silver sugar tongs, and some good fresh white bread. The girls poured out the beautiful coffee, put in the cream and sugar, and tasted it; never in their lives had they drunk such beautiful coffee.

‘Now I should like to know very much who has given us all this,’ said Lisa gratefully.

‘I have, my little girls,’ said a voice just then from the bushes.

The children looked round wonderingly, and saw a little kind-looking old man, in a white coat and a red cap, limping out from among the bushes, for he was lame in his left foot; neither Lisa nor Aina could utter a word, they were so filled with surprise.

‘Don’t be afraid, little girls,’ he said smiling kindly at them; he could not laugh properly because his mouth was crooked. ‘Welcome to my kingdom! Have you slept well and eaten well and drunk well?’ he asked.

‘Yes, indeed we have,’ said both the girls, ‘but tell us…’ and they wanted to ask who the old man was, but were afraid to.

‘I will tell you who I am,’ said the old man; ‘I am the raspberry king, who reigns over all this kingdom of raspberry bushes, and I have lived here for more than a thousand years. But the great spirit who rules over the woods, and the sea, and the sky, did not want me to become proud of my royal power and my long life. Therefore he decreed that one day in every hundred years I should change into a little raspberry worm, and live in that weak and helpless form from sunrise to sunset. During that time my life is dependent on the little worm’s life, so that a bird can eat me, a child can pick me with the berries and trample under foot my thousand years of life. Now yesterday was just my transformation day, and I was taken with the

raspberry and would have been trampled to death if you had not saved my life. Until sunset I lay helpless in the grass, and when I was swept away from your table I twisted one of my feet, and my mouth became crooked with terror; but when evening came and I could take my own form again, I looked for you to thank you and reward you. Then I found you both here in my kingdom, and tried to meet you both as well as I could without frightening you. Now I will send a bird from my wood to show you the way home. Good-bye, little children, thank you for your kind hearts; the raspberry king can show that he is not ungrateful.' The children shook hands with the old man and thanked him, feeling very glad that they had saved the little raspberry worm. They were just going when the old man turned round, smiled mischievously with his crooked mouth, and said: 'Greetings to Otto from me, and tell him when I meet him again I shall do him the honour of eating him up.'

'Oh, please don't do that,' cried both the girls, very frightened.

'Well, for your sake I will forgive him,' said the old man, 'I am not revengeful. Greetings to Otto and tell him that he may expect a gift from me, too. Good-bye.'

The two girls, light of heart, now took their berries and ran off through the wood after the bird; and soon it began to get lighter in the wood and they wondered how they could have lost their way yesterday, it seemed so easy and plain now.

One can imagine what joy there was when the two reached home. Everyone had been looking for them, and the big sister had not been able to sleep, for she thought the wolves had eaten them up.

Otto met them; he had a basket in his hand and said: 'Look, here is something that an old man has just left for you.'

When the girls looked into the basket they saw a pair of most beautiful bracelets of precious stones, dark red, and made in the shape of a ripe raspberry and with an inscription: 'To Lisa and Aina'; beside them there was a diamond breast pin in the shape of a raspberry worm: on it was inscribed 'Otto, never destroy the helpless!'

Otto felt rather ashamed: he quite understood what it meant, but he thought that the old man's revenge was a noble one.

The raspberry king had also remembered the big sister, for when she went in to set the table for dinner, she found eleven big baskets of most

beautiful raspberries, and no one knew how they had come there, but everyone guessed.

And so there was such a jam-making as had never been seen before, and if you like to go and help in it, you might perhaps get a little, for they must surely be making jam still to this very day.

From Z. Topelius.

THE STONES OF PLOUHINEC

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Perhaps some of you may have read a book called ‘Kenneth; or the Rear-Guard of the Grand Army’ of Napoleon. If so, you will remember how the two Scotch children found in Russia were taken care of by the French soldiers and prevented as far as possible from suffering from the horrors of the terrible Retreat. One of the soldiers, a Breton, often tried to make them forget how cold and hungry they were by telling them tales of his native country, Brittany, which is full of wonderful things. The best and warmest place round the camp fire was always given to the children, but even so the bitter frost would cause them to shiver. It was then that the Breton would begin: ‘Plouhinec is a small town near Hennebonne by the sea,’ and would continue until Kenneth or Effie would interrupt him with an eager question. Then he forgot how his mother had told him the tale, and was obliged to begin all over again, so the story lasted a long while, and by the time it was ended the children were ready to be rolled up in what ever coverings could be found, and go to sleep. It is this story that I am going to tell to you.

Plouhinec is a small town near Hennebonne by the sea. Around it stretches a desolate moor, where no corn can be grown, and the grass is so coarse that no beast grows fat on it. Here and there are scattered groves of fir trees, and small pebbles are so thick on the ground that you might almost take it for a beach. On the further side, the fairies, or korigans, as the people called them, had set up long long ago two rows of huge stones; indeed, so tall and heavy were they, that it seemed as if all the fairies in the world could not have placed them upright.

Not far off them this great stone avenue, and on the banks of the little river Intel, there lived a man named Marzinne and his sister Rozennik. They always had enough black bread to eat, and wooden shoes or sabots to wear, and a pig to fatten, so the neighbours thought them quite rich; and what was still better, they thought themselves rich also.

Rozennik was a pretty girl, who knew how to make the best of everything, and she could, if she wished, have chosen a husband from the young men of Plouhinec, but she cared for none of them except Bernez, whom she had played with all her life, and Bernez, though he worked hard, was so very very poor that Marzinne told him roughly he must look elsewhere for a wife. But whatever Marzinne might say Rozennik smiled and nodded to him as before, and would often turn her head as she passed, and sing snatches of old songs over her shoulder.

Christmas Eve had come, and all the men who worked under Marzinne or on the farms round about were gathered in the large kitchen to eat the soup flavoured with honey followed by rich puddings, to which they were always invited on this particular night. In the middle of the table was a large wooden bowl, with wooden spoons placed in a circle round it, so that each might dip in his turn. The benches were filled, and Marzinne was about to give the signal, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and an old man came in, wishing the guests a good appetite for their supper. There was a pause, and some of the faces looked a little frightened; for the new-comer was well known to them as a beggar, who was also said to be a wizard who cast spells over the cattle, and caused the corn to grow black, and old people to die, of what, nobody knew. Still, it was Christmas Eve, and besides it was as well not to offend him, so the farmer invited him in, and gave him a seat at the table and a wooden spoon like the rest.

There was not much talk after the beggar's entrance, and everyone was glad when the meal came to an end, and the beggar asked if he might sleep in the stable, as he should die of cold if he were left outside. Rather unwillingly Marzinne gave him leave, and bade Bernez take the key and unlock the door. There was certainly plenty of room for a dozen beggars, for the only occupants of the stable were an old donkey and a thin ox; and as the night was bitter, the wizard lay down between them for warmth, with a sack of reeds for a pillow.

He had walked far that day, and even wizards get tired sometimes, so in spite of the hard floor he was just dropping off to sleep, when midnight struck from the church tower of Plouhinec. At this sound the donkey raised her head and shook her ears, and turned towards the ox.

'Well, my dear cousin,' said she, 'and how have you fared since last Christmas Eve, when we had a conversation together?'

Instead of answering at once, the ox eyed the beggar with a long look of disgust.

‘What is the use of talking,’ he replied roughly, ‘when a good-for-nothing creature like that can hear all we say?’

‘Oh, you mustn’t lose time in grumbling,’ rejoined the donkey gaily, ‘and don’t you see that the wizard is asleep?’

‘His wicked pranks do not make him rich, certainly,’ said the ox, ‘and he isn’t even clever enough to have found out what a piece of luck might befall him a week hence.’

‘What piece of luck?’ asked the donkey.

‘Why, don’t you know,’ inquired the ox, ‘that once very hundred years the stones on Plouhinec heath go down to drink at the river, and that while they are away the treasures underneath them are uncovered?’

‘Ah, I remember now,’ replied the donkey, ‘but the stones return so quickly to their places, that you certainly would be crushed to death unless you have in your hands a bunch of crowsfoot and of five-leaved trefoil.’

‘Yes, but that is not enough,’ said the ox; ‘even supposing you get safely by, the treasure you have brought with you will crumble into dust if you do not give in exchange a baptised soul. It is needful that a Christian should die before you can enjoy the wealth of Plouhinec.’

The donkey was about to ask some further questions, when she suddenly found herself unable to speak: the time allowed them for conversation was over.

‘Ah, my dear creatures,’ thought the beggar, who had of course heard everything, ‘you are going to make me richer than the richest men of Vannes or Lorient. But I have no time to lose; to-morrow I must begin to hunt for the precious plants.’

He did not dare to seek too near Plouhinec, lest somebody who knew the story might guess what he was doing, so he went away further towards the south, where the air was softer and the plants are always green. From the instant it was light, till the last rays had faded out of the sky, he searched every inch of ground where the magic plants might grow; he scarcely gave himself a minute to eat and drink, but at length he found the crowsfoot in a little hollow! Well, that was certainly a great deal, but after all, the crowsfoot was of no use without the trefoil, and there was so little time left.

He had almost give up hope, when on the very last day before it was necessary that he should start of Plouhinec, he came upon a little clump of trefoil, half hidden under a rock. Hardly able to breathe from excitement, he sat down and hunted eagerly through the plant which he had torn up. Leaf after leaf he threw aside in disgust, and he had nearly reached the end when he gave a cry of joy—the five-leaved trefoil was in his hand.

The beggar scrambled to his feet, and without a pause walked quickly down the road that led northwards. The moon was bright, and for some hours he kept steadily on, not knowing how many miles he had gone, nor even feeling tired. By and bye the sun rose, and the world began to stir, and stopping at a farmhouse door, he asked for a cup of milk and slice of bread and permission to rest for a while in the porch. Then he continued his journey, and so, towards sunset on New Year's Eve, he came back to Plouhinec.

As he was passing the long line of stones, he saw Bernez working with a chisel on the tallest of them all.

'What are you doing there?' called the wizard, 'do you mean to hollow out for yourself a bed in that huge column?'

'No,' replied Bernez quietly, 'but as I happened to have no work to do to-day, I thought I would just carve a cross on this stone. The holy sign can never come amiss.'

'I believe you think it will help you to win Rozennik,' laughed the old man.

Bernez ceased his task for a moment to look at him.

'Ah, so you know about that,' replied he; 'unluckily Marzinne wants a brother-in-law who has more pounds than I have pence.'

'And suppose I were to give you more pounds than Marzinne ever dreamed of?' whispered the sorcerer glancing round to make sure that no one overheard him.

'You?'

'Yes, I.'

'And what am I to do to gain the money,' inquired Bernez, who knew quite well that the Breton peasant gives nothing for nothing.

'What I want of you only needs a little courage,' answered the old man.

‘If that is all, tell me what I have got to do, and I will do it,’ cried Bernez, letting fall his chisel. ‘If I have to risk thirty deaths, I am ready.’

When the beggar knew that Bernez would give him no trouble, he told him how, during that very night, the treasures under the stones would be uncovered, and how in a very few minutes they could take enough to make them both rich for life. But he kept silence as to the fate that awaited the man who was without the crowsfoot and the trefoil, and Bernez thought that nothing but boldness and quickness were necessary. So he said:

‘Old man, I am grateful, indeed, for the chance you have given me, and there will always be a pint of my blood at your service. Just let me finish carving this cross. It is nearly done, and I will join you in the fir wood at whatever hour you please.’

‘You must be there without fail an hour before midnight,’ answered the wizard, and went on his way.

As the hour struck from the great church at Plouhinec, Bernez entered the wood. He found the beggar already there with a bag in each hand, and a third slung round his neck.

‘You are punctual,’ said the old man, ‘but we need not start just yet. You had better sit down and think what you will do when your pockets are filled with gold and silver and jewels.’

‘Oh, it won’t take me long to plan out that,’ returned Bernez with a laugh. ‘I shall give Rozennik everything she can desire, dresses of all sorts, from cotton to silk, and good things of all kinds to eat, from white bread to oranges.’

‘The silver you find will pay for all that, and what about the gold?’

‘With the gold I shall make rich Rozennik’s relations and every friend of hers in the parish,’ replied he.

‘So much for the gold; and the jewels?’

‘Then,’ cried Bernez, ‘I will divide the jewels amongst everybody in the world, so that they may be wealthy and happy; and I will tell them that it is Rozennik who would have it so.’

‘Hush! it is close on midnight—we must go,’ whispered the wizard, and together they crept to the edge of the wood.

With the first stroke of twelve a great noise arose over the silent heath, and the earth seemed to rock under the feet of the two watchers. The next moment by the light of the moon they beheld the huge stones near them

leave their places and go down the slope leading to the river, knocking against each other in their haste. Passing the spot where stood Bernez and the beggar, they were lost in the darkness. It seemed as if a procession of giants had gone by.

‘Quick,’ said the wizard, in a low voice, and he rushed towards the empty holes, which even in the night shone brightly from the treasures within them. Flinging himself on his knees, the old man began filling the wallets he had brought, listening intently all the time for the return of the stones up the hill, while Bernez more slowly put handfuls of all he could see into his pockets.

The sorcerer had just closed his third wallet, and was beginning to wonder if he could carry away any more treasures when a low murmur as of a distant storm broke upon his ears.

The stones had finished drinking, and were hastening back to their places.

On they came, bent a little forward, the tallest of them all at their head, breaking everything that stood in their way. At the sight Bernez stood transfixed with horror, and said,

‘We are lost! They will crush us to death.’

‘Not me!’ answered the sorcerer, holding up the crowsfoot and the five-leaved trefoil, ‘for these will preserve me. But in order to keep my riches, I was obliged to sacrifice a Christian to the stones, and an evil fate threw you in my way.’ And as he spoke he stretched out the magic herbs to the stones, which were advancing rapidly. As if acknowledging a power greater than theirs, the monstrous things instantly parted to the right and left of the wizard, but closed their ranks again as they approached Bernez.

The young man did not try to escape, he knew it was useless, and sank on his knees and closed his eyes. But suddenly the tall stone that was leading stopped straight in front of Bernez, so that no other could get past.

It was the stone on which Bernez had carved the cross, and it was now a baptized stone, and had power to save him.

So the stone remained before the young man till the rest had taken their places, and then, darting like a bird to its own hole, came upon the beggar, who, thinking himself quite safe, was staggering along under the weight of his treasures.

Seeing the stone approaching, he held out the magic herbs which he carried, but the baptized stone was no longer subject to the spells that bound the rest, and passed straight on its way, leaving the wizard crushed into powder in the heather.

Then Bernez went home, and showed his wealth to Marzinne, who this time did not refuse him as a brother-in-law, and he and Rozennik were married, and lived happy for ever after.

From ‘Le Royer Breton,’ par Emile Souvestre.

THE CASTLE OF KERGLAS

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Peronnik was a poor idiot who belonged to nobody, and he would have died of starvation if it had not been for the kindness of the village people, who gave him food whenever he chose to ask for it. And as for a bed, when night came, and he grew sleepy, he looked about for a heap of straw, and making a hole in it, crept in, like a lizard. Idiot though he was, he was never unhappy, but always thanked gratefully those who fed him, and sometimes would stop for a little and sing to them. For he could imitate a lark so well, that no one knew which was Peronnik and which was the bird.

He had been wandering in a forest one day for several hours, and when evening approached, he suddenly felt very hungry. Luckily, just at that place the trees grew thinner, and he could see a small farmhouse a little way off. Peronnik went straight towards it, and found the farmer's wife standing at the door holding in her hands the large bowl out of which her children had eaten their supper.

'I am hungry, will you give me something to eat?' asked the boy.

'If you can find anything here, you are welcome to it,' answered she, and, indeed, there was not much left, as everybody's spoon had dipped in. But Peronnik ate what was there with a hearty appetite, and thought that he had never tasted better food.

'It is made of the finest flour and mixed with the richest milk and stirred by the best cook in all the countryside,' and though he said it to himself, the woman heard him.

'Poor innocent,' she murmured, 'he does not know what he is saying, but I will cut him a slice of that new wheaten loaf,' and so she did, and Peronnik ate up every crumb, and declared that nobody less than the bishop's baker could have baked it. This flattered the farmer's wife so much that she gave him some butter to spread on it, and Peronnik was still eating it on the doorstep when an armed knight rode up.

'Can you tell me the way to the castle of Kerglas?' asked he.

‘To Kerglas? are you really going to Kerglas?’ cried the woman, turning pale.

‘Yes; and in order to get there I have come from a country so far off that it has taken me three months’ hard riding to travel as far as this.’

‘And why do you want to go to Kerglas?’ said she.

‘I am seeking the basin of gold and the lance of diamonds which are in the castle,’ he answered. Then Peronnik looked up.

‘The basin and the lance are very costly things,’ he said suddenly.

‘More costly and precious than all the crowns in the world,’ replied the stranger, ‘for not only will the basin furnish you with the best food that you can dream of, but if you drink of it, it will cure you of any illness however dangerous, and will even bring the dead back to life, if it touches their mouths. As to the diamond lance, that will cut through any stone or metal.’

‘And to whom do these wonders belong?’ asked Peronnik in amazement.

‘To a magician named Rogear who lives in the castle,’ answered the woman. ‘Every day he passes along here, mounted on a black mare, with a colt thirteen months old trotting behind. But no one dares to attack him, as he always carries his lance.’

‘That is true,’ said the knight, ‘but there is a spell laid upon him which forbids his using it within the castle of Kerglas. The moment he enters, the basin and lance are put away in a dark cellar which no key but one can open. And that is the place where I wish to fight the magician.’

‘You will never overcome him, Sir Knight,’ replied the woman, shaking her head. ‘More than a hundred gentlemen have ridden past this house bent on the same errand, and not one has ever come back.’

‘I know that, good woman,’ returned the knight, ‘but then they did not have, like me, instructions from the hermit of Blavet.’

‘And what did the hermit tell you?’ asked Peronnik.

‘He told me that I should have to pass through a wood full of all sorts of enchantments and voices, which would try to frighten me and make me lose my way. Most of those who have gone before me have wandered they know not where, and perished from cold, hunger, or fatigue.’

‘Well, suppose you get through safely?’ said the idiot.

‘If I do,’ continued the knight, ‘I shall then meet a sort of fairy armed with a needle of fire which burns to ashes all it touches. This dwarf stands guarding an apple-tree, from which I am bound to pluck an apple.’

‘And next?’ inquired Peronnik.

‘Next I shall find the flower that laughs, protected by a lion whose mane is formed of vipers. I must pluck that flower, and go on to the lake of the dragons and fight the black man who holds in his hand the iron ball which never misses its mark and returns of its own accord to its master. After that, I enter the valley of pleasure, where some who conquered all the other obstacles have left their bones. If I can win through this, I shall reach a river with only one ford, where a lady in black will be seated. She will mount my horse behind me, and tell me what I am to do next.’

He paused, and the woman shook her head.

‘You will never be able to do all that,’ said she, but he bade her remembered that these were only matters for men, and galloped away down the path she pointed out.

The farmer’s wife sighed and, giving Peronnik some more food, bade him good-night. The idiot rose and was opening the gate which led into the forest when the farmer himself came up.

‘I want a boy to tend my cattle,’ he said abruptly, ‘as the one I had has run away. Will you stay and do it?’ and Peronnik, though he loved his liberty and hated work, recollected the good food he had eaten, and agreed to stop.

At sunrise he collected his herd carefully and led them to the rich pasture which lay along the borders of the forest, cutting himself a hazel wand with which to keep them in order.

His task was not quite so easy as it looked, for the cows had a way of straying into the wood, and by the time he had brought one back another was off. He had gone some distance into the trees, after a naughty black cow which gave him more trouble than all the rest, when he heard the noise of horse’s feet, and peeping through the leaves he beheld the giant Rogear seated on his mare, with the colt trotting behind. Round the giant’s neck hung the golden bowl suspended from a chain, and in his hand he grasped the diamond lance, which gleamed like fire. But as soon as he was out of sight the idiot sought in vain for traces of the path he had taken.

This happened not only once but many times, till Peronnik grew so used to him that he never troubled to hide. But on each occasion he saw him the desire to possess the bowl and the lance became stronger.

One evening the boy was sitting alone on the edge of the forest, when a man with a white beard stopped beside him. ‘Do you want to know the way to Kerglas?’ asked the idiot, and the man answered ‘I know it well.’

‘You have been there without being killed by the magician?’ cried Peronnik.

‘Oh! he had nothing to fear from me,’ replied the white-bearded man, ‘I am Rogear’s elder brother, the wizard Bryak. When I wish to visit him I always pass this way, and as even I cannot go through the enchanted wood without losing myself, I call the colt to guide me.’ Stooping down as he spoke he traced three circles on the ground and murmured some words very low, which Peronnik could not hear. Then he added aloud:

Colt, free to run and free to eat.
Colt, gallop fast until we meet,

and instantly the colt appeared, frisking and jumping to the wizard, who threw a halter over his neck and leapt on his back.

Peronnik kept silence at the farm about this adventure, but he understood very well that if he was ever to get to Kerglas he must first catch the colt which knew the way. Unhappily he had not heard the magic words uttered by the wizard, and he could not manage to draw the three circles, so if he was to summon the colt at all he must invent some other means of doing it.

All day long, while he was herding the cows, he thought and thought how he was to call the colt, for he felt sure that once on its back he could overcome the other dangers. Meantime he must be ready in case a chance should come, and he made his preparations at night, when everyone was asleep. Remembering what he had seen the wizard do, he patched up an old halter that was hanging in a corner of the stable, twisted a rope of hemp to catch the colt’s feet, and a net such as is used for snaring birds. Next he sewed roughly together some bits of cloth to serve as a pocket, and this he filled with glue and lark’s feathers, a string of beads, a whistle of elder wood, and a slice of bread rubbed over with bacon fat. Then he

went out to the path down which Rogear, his mare, and the colt always rode, and crumbled the bread on one side of it.

Punctual to their hour all three appeared, eagerly watched by Peronnik, who lay hid in the bushes close by. Suppose it was useless; suppose the mare, and not the colt, ate the crumbs? Suppose—but no! the mare and her rider went safely by, vanishing round a corner, while the colt, trotting along with its head on the ground, smelt the bread, and began greedily to lick up the pieces. Oh, how good it was! Why had no one ever given it that before, and so absorbed was the little beast, sniffing about after a few more crumbs, that it never heard Peronnik creep up till it felt the halter on its neck and the rope round its feet, and—in another moment—some one on its back.

Going as fast as the hobbles would allow, the colt turned into one of the wildest parts of the forest, while its rider sat trembling at the strange sights he saw. Sometimes the earth seemed to open in front of them and he was looking into a bottomless pit; sometimes the trees burst into flames and he found himself in the midst of a fire; often in the act of crossing a stream the water rose and threatened to sweep him away; and again, at the foot of a mountain, great rocks would roll towards him, as if they would crush him and his colt beneath their weight. To his dying day Peronnik never knew whether these things were real or if he only imagined them, but he pulled down his knitted cap so as to cover his eyes, and trusted the colt to carry him down the right road.

At last the forest was left behind, and they came out on a wide plain where the air blew fresh and strong. The idiot ventured to peep out, and found to his relief that the enchantments seemed to have ended, though a thrill of horror shot through him as he noticed the skeletons of men scattered over the plain, beside the skeletons of their horses. And what were those grey forms trotting away in the distance? Were they—could they be—wolves?

But vast through the plain seemed, it did not take long to cross, and very soon the colt entered a sort of shady park in which was standing a single apple-tree, its branches bowed down to the ground with the weight of its fruit. In front was the korigan—the little fairy man—holding in his hand the fiery sword, which reduced to ashes everything it touched. At the sight of Peronnik he uttered a piercing scream, and raised his sword, but

without appearing surprised the youth only lifted his cap, though he took care to remain at a little distance.

‘Do not be alarmed, my prince,’ said Peronnik, ‘I am just on my way to Kerglas, as the noble Rogear has begged me to come to him on business.’

‘Begged you to come!’ repeated the dwarf, ‘and who, then, are you?’

‘I am the new servant he has engaged, as you know very well,’ answered Peronnik.

‘I do not know at all,’ rejoined the korigan sulkily, ‘and you may be a robber for all I can tell.’

‘I am so sorry,’ replied Peronnik, ‘but I may be wrong in calling myself a servant, for I am only a bird-catcher. But do not delay me, I pray, for his highness the magician expects me, and, as you see, has lent me his colt so that I may reach the castle all the quicker.’

At these words the korigan cast his eyes for the first time on the colt, which he knew to be the one belonging to the magician, and began to think that the young man was speaking the truth. After examining the horse, he studied the rider, who had such an innocent, and indeed vacant, air that he appeared incapable of inventing a story. Still, the dwarf did not feel quite sure that all was right, and asked what the magician wanted with a bird-catcher.

‘From what he says, he wants one very badly,’ replied Peronnik, ‘as he declares that all his grain and all the fruit in his garden at Kerglas are eaten up by the birds.’

‘And how are you going to stop that, my fine fellow?’ inquired the korigan; and Peronnik showed him the snare he had prepared, and remarked that no bird could possible escape from it.

‘That is just what I should like to be sure of,’ answered the korigan. ‘My apples are completely eaten up by blackbirds and thrushes. Lay your snare, and if you can manage to catch them, I will let you pass.’

‘That is a fair bargain,’ and as he spoke Peronnik jumped down and fastened his colt to a tree; then, stopping, he fixed one end of the net to the trunk of the apple tree, and called to the korigan to hold the other while he took out the pegs. The dwarf did as he was bid, when suddenly Peronnik threw the noose over his neck and drew it close, and the korigan was held as fast as any of the birds he wished to snare.

Shrieking with rage, he tried to undo the cord, but he only pulled the knot tighter. He had put down the sword on the grass, and Peronnik had been careful to fix the net on the other side of the tree, so that it was now easy for him to pluck an apple and to mount his horse, without being hindered by the dwarf, whom he left to his fate.

When they had left the plain behind them, Peronnik and his steed found themselves in a narrow valley in which was a grove of trees, full of all sorts of sweet-smelling things—roses of every colour, yellow broom, pink honeysuckle—while above them all towered a wonderful scarlet pansy whose face bore a strange expression. This was the flower that laughs, and no one who looked at it could help laughing too. Peronnik's heart beat high at the thought that he had reached safely the second trial, and he gazed quite calmly at the lion with the mane of vipers twisting and twirling, who walked up and down in front of the grove.

The young man pulled up and removed his cap, for, idiot though he was, he knew that when you have to do with people greater than yourself, a cap is more useful in the hand than on the head. Then, after wishing all kinds of good fortune to the lion and his family, he inquired if he was on the right road to Kerglas.

'And what is your business at Kerglas?' asked the lion with a growl, and showing his teeth.

'With all respect,' answered Peronnik, pretending to be very frightened, 'I am the servant of a lady who is a friend of the noble Rogear and sends him some larks for a pasty.'

'Larks?' cried the lion, licking his long whiskers. 'Why, it must be a century since I have had any! Have you a large quantity with you?'

'As many as this bag will hold,' replied Peronnik, opening, as he spoke, the bag which he had filled with feathers and glue; and to prove what he said, he turned his back on the lion and began to imitate the song of a lark.

'Come,' exclaimed the lion, whose mouth watered, 'show me the birds! I should like to see if they are fat enough for my master.'

'I would do it with pleasure,' answered the idiot, 'but if I once open the bag they will all fly away.'

'Well, open it wide enough for me to look in,' said the lion, drawing a little nearer.

Now this was just what Peronnik had been hoping for, so he held the bag while the lion opened it carefully and put his head right inside, so that he might get a good mouthful of larks. But the mass of feathers and glue stuck to him, and before he could pull his head out again Peronnik had drawn tight the cord, and tied it in a knot that no man could untie. Then, quickly gathering the flower that laughs, he rode off as fast as the colt could take him.

The path soon led to the lake of the dragons, which he had to swim across. The colt, who was accustomed to it, plunged into the water without hesitation; but as soon as the dragons caught sight of Peronnik they approached from all parts of the lake in order to devour him.

This time Peronnik did not trouble to take off his cap, but he threw the beads he carried with him into the water, as you throw black corn to a duck, and with each bead that he swallowed a dragon turned on his back and died, so that the idiot reached the other side without further trouble.

The valley guarded by the black man now lay before him, and from afar Peronnik beheld him, chained by one foot to a rock at the entrance, and holding the iron ball which never missed its mark and always returned to its master’s hand. In his head the black man had six eyes that were never all shut at once, but kept watch one after the other. At this moment they were all open, and Peronnik knew well that if the black man caught a glimpse of him he would cast his ball. So, hiding the colt behind a thicket of bushes, he crawled along a ditch and crouched close to the very rock to which the black man was chained.

The day was hot, and after a while the man began to grow sleepy. Two of his eyes closed, and Peronnik sang gently. In a moment a third eye shut, and Peronnik sang on. The lid of a fourth eye dropped heavily, and then those of the fifth and the sixth. The black man was asleep altogether.

Then, on tiptoe, the idiot crept back to the colt which he led over soft moss past the black man into the vale of pleasure, a delicious garden full of fruits that dangled before your mouth, fountains running with wine, and flowers chanting in soft little voices. Further on, tables were spread with food, and girls dancing on the grass called to him to join them.

Peronnik heard, and, scarcely knowing what he did drew the colt into a slower pace. He sniffed greedily the smell of the dishes, and raised his head the better to see the dancers. Another instant and he would have

stopped altogether and been lost, like others before him, when suddenly there came to him like a vision the golden bowl and the diamond lance. Drawing his whistle from his pocket, he blew it loudly, so as to drown the sweet sounds about him, and ate what was left of his bread and bacon to still the craving of the magic fruits. His eyes he fixed steadily on the ears of the colt, that he might not see the dancers.

In this way he was able to reach the end of the garden, and at length perceived the castle of Kerglas, with the river between them which had only one ford. Would the lady be there, as the old man had told him? Yes, surely that was she, sitting on a rock, in a black satin dress, and her face the colour of a Moorish woman's. The idiot rode up, and took off his cap more politely than ever, and asked if she did not wish to cross the river.

'I was waiting for you to help me do so,' answered she. 'Come near, that I may get up behind you.'

Peronnik did as she bade him, and by the help of his arm she jumped nimbly on to the back of the colt.

'Do you know how to kill the magician?' asked the lady, as they were crossing the ford.

'I thought that, being a magician, he was immortal, and that no one could kill him,' replied Peronnik.

'Persuade him to taste that apple, and he will die, and if that is not enough I will touch him with my finger, for I am the plague,' answered she.

'But if I kill him, how am I to get the golden bowl and the diamond lance that are hidden in the cellar without a key?' rejoined Peronnik.

'The flower that laughs opens all doors and lightens all darkness,' said the lady; and as she spoke, they reached the further bank, and advanced towards the castle.

In front of the entrance was a sort of tent supported on poles, and under it the giant was sitting, basking in the sun. As soon as he noticed the colt bearing Peronnik and the lady, he lifted his head, and cried in a voice of thunder:

'Why, it is surely the idiot, riding my colt thirteen months old!'

'Greatest of magicians, you are right,' answered Peronnik.

'And how did you manage to catch him?' asked the giant.

‘By repeating what I learnt from your brother Bryak on the edge of the forest,’ replied the idiot. ‘I just said—

Colt, free to run and free to eat,
Colt, gallop fast until we meet,

and it came directly.’

‘You know my brother, then?’ inquired the giant. ‘Tell me why he sent you here.’

‘To bring you two gifts which he has just received from the country of the Moors,’ answered Peronnik: ‘the apple of delight and the woman of submission. If you eat the apple you will not desire anything else, and if you take the woman as your servant you will never wish for another.’

‘Well, give me the apple, and bid the woman get down,’ answered Rogear.

The idiot obeyed, but at the first taste of the apple the giant staggered, and as the long yellow finger of the woman touched him he fell dead.

Leaving the magician where he lay, Peronnik entered the palace, bearing with him the flower that laughs. Fifty doors flew open before him, and at length he reached a long flight of steps which seemed to lead into the bowels of the earth. Down these he went till he came to a silver door without a bar or key. Then he held up high the flower that laughs, and the door slowly swung back, displaying a deep cavern, which was as bright as the day from the shining of the golden bowl and the diamond lance. The idiot hastily ran forward and hung the bowl round his neck from the chain which was attached to it, and took the lance in his hand. As he did so, the ground shook beneath him, and with an awful rumbling the palace disappeared, and Peronnik found himself standing close to the forest where he led the cattle to graze.

Though darkness was coming on, Peronnik never thought of entering the farm, but followed the road which led to the court of the duke of Brittany. As he passed through the town of Vannes he stopped at a tailor’s shop, and bought a beautiful costume of brown velvet and a white horse, which he paid for with a handful of gold that he had picked up in the corridor of the castle of Kerglas. Thus he made his way to the city of Nantes, which at that moment was besieged by the French.

A little way off, Peronnik stopped and looked about him. For miles round the country was bare, for the enemy had cut down every tree and burnt every blade of corn; and, idiot though he might be, Peronnik was able to grasp that inside the gates men were dying of famine. He was still gazing with horror, when a trumpeter appeared on the walls, and, after blowing a loud blast, announced that the duke would adopt as his heir the man who could drive the French out of the country.

On the four sides of the city the trumpeter blew his blast, and the last time Peronnik, who had ridden up as close as he might, answered him.

‘You need blow no more,’ said he, ‘for I myself will free the town from her enemies.’ And turning to a soldier who came running up, waving his sword, he touched him with the magic lance, and he fell dead on the spot. The men who were following stood still, amazed. Their comrade’s armour had not been pierced, of that they were sure, yet he was dead, as if he had been struck to the heart. But before they had time to recover from their astonishment, Peronnik cried out:

‘You see how my foes will fare; now behold what I can do for my friends,’ and, stooping down, he laid the golden bowl against the mouth of the soldier, who sat up as well as ever. Then, jumping his horse across the trench, he entered the gate of the city, which had opened wide enough to receive him.

The news of these marvels quickly spread through the town, and put fresh spirit into the garrison, so that they declared themselves able to fight under the command of the young stranger. And as the bowl restored all the dead Bretons to life, Peronnik soon had an army large enough to drive away the French, and fulfilled his promise of delivering his country.

As to the bowl and the lance, no one knows what became of them, but some say that Bryak the sorcerer managed to steal them again, and that any one who wishes to possess them must seek them as Peronnik did.

From ‘Le Foyer Breton,’ par Emile Souvestre.

THE BATTLE OF THE BIRDS

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There was to be a great battle between all the creatures of the earth and the birds of the air. News of it went abroad, and the son of the king of Tethertown said that when the battle was fought he would be there to see it, and would bring back word who was to be king. But in spite of that, he was almost too late, and every fight had been fought save the last, which was between a snake and a great black raven. Both struck hard, but in the end the snake proved the stronger, and would have twisted himself round the neck of the raven till he died had not the king's son drawn his sword, and cut off the head of the snake at a single blow. And when the raven beheld that his enemy was dead, he was grateful, and said:

'For thy kindness to me this day, I will show thee a sight. So come up now on the root of my two wings.' The king's son did as he was bid, and before the raven stopped flying, they had passed over seven bens and seven glens and seven mountain moors.

'Do you see that house yonder?' said the raven at last. 'Go straight for it, for a sister of mine dwells there, and she will make you right welcome. And if she asks, "Wert thou at the battle of the birds?" answer that thou wert, and if she asks, "Didst thou see my likeness?" answer that thou sawest it, but be sure thou meetest me in the morning at this place.'

The king's son followed what the raven told him and that night he had meat of each meat, and drink of each drink, warm water for his feet, and a soft bed to lie in.

Thus it happened the next day, and the next, but on the fourth meeting, instead of meeting the raven, in his place the king's son found waiting for him the handsomest youth that ever was seen, with a bundle in his hand.

'Is there a raven hereabouts?' asked the king's son, and the youth answered:

'I am that raven, and I was delivered by thee from the spells that bound me, and in reward thou wilt get this bundle. Go back by the road thou camest, and lie as before, a night in each house, but be careful not to

unloose the bundle till thou art in the place wherein thou wouldst most wish to dwell.’

Then the king’s son set out, and thus it happened as it had happened before, till he entered a thick wood near his father’s house. He had walked a long way and suddenly the bundle seemed to grow heavier; first he put it down under a tree, and next he thought he would look at it.

The string was easy to untie, and the king’s son soon unfastened the bundle. What was it he saw there? Why, a great castle with an orchard all about it, and in the orchard fruit and flowers and birds of very kind. It was all ready for him to dwell in, but instead of being in the midst of the forest, he did wish he had left the bundle unloosed till he had reached the green valley close to his father’s palace. Well, it was no use wishing, and with a sigh he glanced up, and beheld a huge giant coming towards him.

‘Bad is the place where thou hast built thy house, king’s son,’ said the giant.

‘True; it is not here that I wish to be,’ answered the king’s son.

‘What reward wilt thou give me if I put it back in the bundle?’ asked the giant.

‘What reward dost thou ask?’ answered the king’s son.

‘The first boy thou hast when he is seven years old,’ said the giant.

‘If I have a boy thou shalt get him,’ answered the king’s son, and as he spoke the castle and the orchard were tied up in the bundle again.

‘Now take thy road, and I will take mine,’ said the giant. ‘And if thou forgettest thy promise, I will remember it.’

Light of heart the king’s son went on his road, till he came to the green valley near his father’s palace. Slowly he unloosed the bundle, fearing lest he should find nothing but a heap of stones or rags. But no! all was as it had been before, and as he opened the castle door there stood within the most beautiful maiden that ever was seen.

‘Enter, king’s son,’ said she, ‘all is ready, and we will be married at once,’ and so they were.

The maiden proved a good wife, and the king’s son, now himself a king, was so happy that he forgot all about the giant. Seven years and a day had gone by, when one morning, while standing on the ramparts, he beheld the giant striding towards the castle. Then he remembered his promise,

and remembered, too, that he had told the queen nothing about it. Now he must tell her, and perhaps she might help him in his trouble.

The queen listened in silence to his tale, and after he had finished, she only said:

‘Leave thou the matter between me and the giant,’ and as she spoke, the giant entered the hall and stood before them.

‘Bring out your son,’ cried he to the king, ‘as you promised me seven years and a day since.’

The king glanced at his wife, who nodded, so he answered:

‘Let his mother first put him in order,’ and the queen left the hall, and took the cook’s son and dressed him in the prince’s clothes, and led him up to the giant, who held his hand, and together they went out along the road. They had not walked far when the giant stopped and stretched out a stick to the boy.

‘If your father had that stick, what would he do with it?’ asked he.

‘If my father had that stick, he would beat the dogs and cats that steal the king’s meat,’ replied the boy.

‘Thou art the cook’s son!’ cried the giant. ‘Go home to thy mother’; and turning his back he strode straight to the castle.

‘If you seek to trick me this time, the highest stone will soon be the lowest,’ said he, and the king and queen trembled, but they could not bear to give up their boy.

‘The butler’s son is the same age as ours,’ whispered the queen; ‘he will not know the difference,’ and she took the child and dressed him in the prince’s clothes, and the giant let him away along the road. Before they had gone far he stopped, and held out a stick.

‘If thy father had that rod, what would he do with it?’ asked the giant.

‘He would beat the dogs and cats that break the king’s glasses,’ answered the boy.

‘Thou art the son of the butler!’ cried the giant. ‘Go home to thy mother’; and turning round he strode back angrily to the castle.

‘Bring out thy son at once,’ roared he, ‘or the stone that is highest will be lowest,’ and this time the real prince was brought.

But though his parents wept bitterly and fancied the child was suffering all kinds of dreadful things, the giant treated him like his own son, though he never allowed him to see his daughters. The boy grew to be

a big boy, and one day the giant told him that he would have to amuse himself alone for many hours, as he had a journey to make. So the boy wandered to the top of the castle, where he had never been before. There he paused, for the sound of music broke upon his ears, and opening a door near him, he beheld a girl sitting by the window, holding a harp.

‘Haste and begone, I see the giant close at hand,’ she whispered hurriedly, ‘but when he is asleep, return hither, for I would speak with thee.’ And the prince did as he was bid, and when midnight struck he crept back to the top of the castle.

‘To-morrow,’ said the girl, who was the giant’s daughter, ‘to-morrow thou wilt get the choice of my two sisters to marry, but thou must answer that thou wilt not take either, but only me. This will anger him greatly, for he wishes to betroth me to the son of the king of the Green City, whom I like not at all.’

Then they parted, and on the morrow, as the girl had said, the giant called his three daughters to him, and likewise the young prince to whom he spoke.

‘Now, O son of the king of Tethertown, the time has come for us to part. Choose one of my two elder daughters to wife, and thou shalt take her to your father’s house the day after the wedding.’

‘Give me the youngest instead,’ replied the youth, and the giant’s face darkened as he heard him.

‘Three things must thou do first,’ said he.

‘Say on, I will do them,’ replied the prince, and the giant left the house, and bade him follow to the byre, where the cows were kept.

‘For a hundred years no man has swept this byre,’ said the giant, ‘but if by nightfall, when I reach home, thou has not cleaned it so that a golden apple can roll through it from end to end, thy blood shall pay for it.’

All day long the youth toiled, but he might as well have tried to empty the ocean. At length, when he was so tired he could hardly move, the giant’s youngest daughter stood in the doorway.

‘Lay down thy weariness,’ said she, and the king’s son, thinking he could only die once, sank on the floor at her bidding, and fell sound asleep. When he woke the girl had disappeared, and the byre was so clean that a golden apple could roll from end to end of it. He jumped up in surprise, and at that moment in came the giant.

‘Hast thou cleaned the byre, king’s son?’ asked he.

‘I have cleaned it,’ answered he.

‘Well, since thou wert so active to-day, to-morrow thou wilt thatch this byre with a feather from every different bird, or else thy blood shall pay for it,’ and he went out.

Before the sun was up, the youth took his bow and his quiver and set off to kill the birds. Off to the moor he went, but never a bird was to be seen that day. At last he got so tired with running to and fro that he gave up heart.

‘There is but one death I can die,’ thought he. Then at midday came the giant’s daughter.

‘Thou art tired, king’s son?’ asked she.

‘I am,’ answered he; ‘all these hours have I wandered, and there fell but these two blackbirds, both of one colour.’

‘Lay down thy weariness on the grass,’ said she, and he did as she bade him, and fell fast asleep.

When he woke the girl had disappeared, and he got up, and returned to the byre. As he drew near, he rubbed his eyes hard, thinking he was dreaming, for there it was, beautifully thatched, just as the giant had wished. At the door of the house he met the giant.

‘Hast thou thatched the byre, king’s son?’

‘I have thatched it.’

‘Well, since thou hast been so active to-day, I have something else for thee! Beside the loch thou seest over yonder there grows a fir tree. On the top of the fir tree is a magpie’s nest, and in the nest are five eggs. Thou wilt bring me those eggs for breakfast, and if one is cracked or broken, thy blood shall pay for it.’

Before it was light next day, the king’s son jumped out of bed and ran down to the loch. The tree was not hard to find, for the rising sun shone red on the trunk, which was five hundred feet from the ground to its first branch. Time after time he walked round it, trying to find some knots, however small, where he could put his feet, but the bark was quite smooth, and he soon saw that if he was to reach the top at all, it must be by climbing up with his knees like a sailor. But then he was a king’s son and not a sailor, which made all the difference.

However, it was no use standing there staring at the fir, at least he must try to do his best, and try he did till his hands and knees were sore, for as soon as he had struggled up a few feet, he slid back again. Once he climbed a little higher than before, and hope rose in his heart, then down he came with such force that his hands and knees smarted worse than ever.

‘This is no time for stopping,’ said the voice of the giant’s daughter, as he leant against the trunk to recover his breath.

‘Alas! I am no sooner up than down,’ answered he.

‘Try once more,’ said she, and she laid a finger against the tree and bade him put his foot on it. Then she placed another finger a little higher up, and so on till he reached the top, where the magpie had built her nest.

‘Make haste now with the nest,’ she cried, ‘for my father’s breath is burning my back,’ and down he scrambled as fast as he could, but the girl’s little finger had caught in a branch at the top, and she was obliged to leave it there. But she was too busy to pay heed to this, for the sun was getting high over the hills.

‘Listen to me,’ she said. ‘This night my two sisters and I will be dressed in the same garments, and you will not know me. But when my father says ‘Go to thy wife, king’s son,’ come to the one whose right hand has no little finger.’

So he went and gave the eggs to the giant, who nodded his head.

‘Make ready for thy marriage,’ cried he, ‘for the wedding shall take place this very night, and I will summon thy bride to greet thee.’ Then his three daughters were sent for, and they all entered dressed in green silk of the same fashion, and with golden circlets round their heads. The king’s son looked from one to another. Which was the youngest? Suddenly his eyes fell on the hand of the middle one, and there was no little finger.

‘Thou hast aimed well this time too,’ said the giant, as the king’s son laid his hand on her shoulder, ‘but perhaps we may meet some other way’; and though he pretended to laugh, the bride saw a gleam in his eye which warned her of danger.

The wedding took place that very night, and the hall was filled with giants and gentlemen, and they danced till the house shook from top to bottom. At last everyone grew tired, and the guests went away, and the king’s son and his bride were left alone.

‘If we stay here till dawn my father will kill thee,’ she whispered, ‘but thou art my husband and I will save thee, as I did before,’ and she cut an apple into nine pieces, and put two pieces at the head of the bed, and two pieces at the foot, and two pieces at the door of the kitchen, and two at the big door, and one outside the house. And when this was done, and she heard the giant snoring, she and the king’s son crept out softly and stole across to the stable, where she led out the blue-grey mare and jumped on its back, and her husband mounted behind her. Not long after, the giant awoke.

‘Are you asleep?’ asked he.

‘Not yet,’ answered the apple at the head of the bed, and the giant turned over, and soon was snoring as loudly as before. By and bye he called again.

‘Are you asleep?’

‘Not yet,’ said the apple at the foot of the bed, and the giant was satisfied. After a while, he called a third time, ‘Are you asleep?’

‘Not yet,’ replied the apple in the kitchen, but when in a few minutes, he put the question for the fourth time and received an answer from the apple outside the house door, he guessed what had happened, and ran to the room to look for himself.

The bed was cold and empty!

‘My father’s breath is burning my back,’ cried the girl, ‘put thy hand into the ear of the mare, and whatever thou findest there, throw it behind thee.’ And in the mare’s ear there was a twig of sloe tree, and as he threw it behind him there sprung up twenty miles of thornwood so thick that scarce a weasel could go through it. And the giant, who was striding headlong forwards, got caught in it, and it pulled his hair and beard.

‘This is one of my daughter’s tricks,’ he said to himself, ‘but if I had my big axe and my wood-knife, I would not be long making a way through this,’ and off he went home and brought back the axe and the wood-knife.

It took him but a short time to cut a road through the blackthorn, and then he laid the axe and the knife under a tree.

‘I will leave them there till I return,’ he murmured to himself, but a hoodie crow, which was sitting on a branch above, heard him.

‘If thou leavest them,’ said the hoodie, ‘we will steal them.’

‘You will,’ answered the giant, ‘and I must take them home.’ So he took them home, and started afresh on his journey.

‘My father’s breath is burning my back,’ cried the girl at midday. ‘Put thy finger in the mare’s ear and throw behind thee whatever thou findest in it,’ and the king’s son found a splinter of grey stone, and threw it behind him, and in a twinkling twenty miles of solid rock lay between them and the giant.

‘My daughter’s tricks are the hardest things that ever met me,’ said the giant, ‘but if I had my lever and my crowbar, I would not be long in making my way through this rock also,’ but as he had got them, he had to go home and fetch them. Then it took him but a short time to hew his way through the rock.

‘I will leave the tools here,’ he murmured aloud when he had finished.

‘If thou leavest them, we will steal them,’ said a hoodie who was perched on a stone above him, and the giant answered:

‘Steal them if thou wilt; there is no time to go back.’

‘My father’s breath is burning my back,’ cried the girl; ‘look in the mare’s ear, king’s son, or we are lost,’ and he looked, and found a tiny bladder full of water, which he threw behind him, and it became a great lock. And the giant, who was striding on so fast, could not stop himself, and he walked right into the middle and was drowned.

The blue-grey mare galloped on like the wind, and the next day the king’s son came in sight of his father’s house.

‘Get down and go in,’ said the bride, ‘and tell them that thou hast married me. But take heed that neither man nor beast kiss thee, for then thou wilt cease to remember me at all.’

‘I will do thy bidding,’ answered he, and left her at the gate. All who met him bade him welcome, and he charged his father and mother not to kiss him, but as he greeted them his old greyhound leapt on his neck, and kissed him on the mouth. And after that he did not remember the giant’s daughter.

All that day she sat on a well which was near the gate, waiting, waiting, but the king’s son never came. In the darkness she climbed up into an oak tree that shadowed the well, and there she lay all night, waiting, waiting.

On the morrow, at midday, the wife of a shoemaker who dwelt near the well went to draw water for her husband to drink, and she saw the shadow of the girl in the tree, and thought it was her own shadow.

‘How handsome I am, to be sure,’ said she, gazing into the well, and as she stopped to behold herself better, the jug struck against the stones and broke in pieces, and she was forced to return to her husband without the water, and this angered him.

‘Thou hast turned crazy,’ said he in wrath. ‘Go thou, my daughter, and fetch me a drink,’ and the girl went, and the same thing befell her as had befallen her mother.

‘Where is the water?’ asked the shoemaker, when she came back, and as she held nothing save the handle of the jug he went to the well himself. He too saw the reflection of the woman in the tree, but looked up to discover whence it came, and there above him sat the most beautiful woman in the world.

‘Come down,’ he said, ‘for a while thou canst stay in my house,’ and glad enough the girl was to come.

Now the king of the country was about to marry, and the young men about the court thronged the shoemaker’s shop to buy fine shoes to wear at the wedding.

‘Thou hast a pretty daughter,’ said they when they beheld the girl sitting at work.

‘Pretty she is,’ answered the shoemaker, ‘but no daughter of mine.’

‘I would give a hundred pounds to marry her,’ said one.

‘And I,’ ‘And I,’ cried the others.

‘That is no business of mine,’ answered the shoemaker, and the young men bade him ask her if she would choose one of them for a husband, and to tell them on the morrow. Then the shoemaker asked her, and the girl said that she would marry the one who would bring his purse with him. So the shoemaker hurried to the youth who had first spoken, and he came back, and after giving the shoemaker a hundred pounds for his news, he sought the girl, who was waiting for him.

‘Is it thou?’ inquired she. ‘I am thirsty, give me a drink from the well that is yonder.’ And he poured out the water, but he could not move from the place where he was; and there he stayed till many hours had passed by.

‘Take away that foolish boy,’ cried the girl to the shoemaker at last, ‘I am tired of him,’ and then suddenly he was able to walk, and betook himself to his home, but he did not tell the others what had happened to him.

Next day there arrived one of the other young men, and in the evening, when the shoemaker had gone out and they were alone, she said to him, ‘See if the latch is on the door.’ The young man hastened to do her bidding, but as soon as he touched the latch, his fingers stuck to it, and there he had to stay for many hours, till the shoemaker came back, and the girl let him go. Hanging his head, he went home, but he told no one what had befallen him.

Then was the turn of the third man, and his foot remained fastened to the floor, till the girl unloosed it. And thankfully, he ran off, and was not seen looking behind him.

‘Take the purse of gold,’ said the girl to the shoemaker, ‘I have no need of it, and it will better thee.’ And the shoemaker took it and told the girl he must carry the shoes for the wedding up to the castle.

‘I would fain get a sight of the king’s son before he marries,’ sighed she.

‘Come with me, then,’ answered he; ‘the servants are all my friends, and they will let you stand in the passage down which the king’s son will pass, and all the company too.’

Up they went to the castle, and when the young men saw the girl standing there, they led her into the hall where the banquet was laid out and poured her out some wine. She was just raising the glass to drink when a flame went up out of it, and out of the flame sprang two pigeons, one of gold and one of silver. They flew round and round the head of the girl, when three grains of barley fell on the floor, and the silver pigeon dived down, and swallowed them.

‘If thou hadst remembered how I cleaned the byre, thou wouldst have given me my share,’ cooed the golden pigeon, and as he spoke three more grains fell, and the silver pigeon ate them as before.

‘If thou hadst remembered how I thatched the byre, thou wouldst have given me my share,’ cooed the golden pigeon again; and as he spoke three more grains fell, and for the third time they were eaten by the silver pigeon.

‘If thou hadst remembered how I got the magpie’s nest, thou wouldst have given me my share,’ cooed the golden pigeon.

Then the king’s son understood that they had come to remind him of what he had forgotten, and his lost memory came back, and he knew his wife, and kissed her. But as the preparations had been made, it seemed a pity to waste them, so they were married a second time, and sat down to the wedding feast.

From ‘Tales of the West Highlands.’

THE LADY OF THE FOUNTAIN

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In the centre of the great hall in the castle of Caerleon upon Usk, king Arthur sat on a seat of green rushes, over which was thrown a covering of flame-coloured silk, and a cushion of red satin lay under his elbow. With him were his knights Owen and Kynon and Kai, while at the far end, close to the window, were Guenevere the queen and her maidens embroidering white garments with strange devices of gold.

‘I am weary,’ said Arthur, ‘and till my food is prepared I would fain sleep. You yourselves can tell each other tales, and Kai will fetch you from the kitchen a flagon of mean and some meat.’

And when they had eaten and drunk, Kynon, the oldest among them, began his story.

‘I was the only son of my father and mother, and much store they set by me, but I was not content to stay with them at home, for I thought no deed in all the world was too mighty for me. None could hold me back, and after I had won many adventures in my own land, I bade farewell to my parents and set out to see the world. Over mountains, through deserts, across rivers I went, till I reached a fair valley full of trees, with a path running by the side of a stream. I walked along that path all the day, and in the evening I came to a castle in front of which stood two youths clothed in yellow, each grasping an ivory bow, with arrows made of the bones of the whale, and winged with peacock’s feathers. By their sides hung golden daggers with hilts of the bones of the whale.

‘Near these young men was a man richly dressed, who turned and went with me towards the castle, where all the dwellers were gathered in the hall. In one window I beheld four and twenty damsels, and the least fair of them was fairer than Guenevere at her fairest. Some took my horse, and others unbuckled my armour, and washed it, with my sword and spear, till it all shone like silver. Then I washed myself and put on a vest and doublet which they brought me, and I and the man that entered with me sat down before a table of silver, and a goodlier feast I never had.

‘All this time neither the man nor the damsels had spoken one word, but when our dinner was half over, and my hunger was stilled, the man began to ask who I was. Then I told him my name and my father’s name, and why I came there, for indeed I had grown weary of gaining the mastery over all men at home, and sought if perchance there was one who could gain the mastery over me. And at this the man smiled and answered:

‘“If I did not fear to distress thee too much, I would show thee what thou seekest.” His words made me sorrowful and fearful of myself, which the man perceived, and added, “If thou meanest truly what thou sayest, and desirest earnestly to prove thy valour, and not to boast vainly that none can overcome thee, I have somewhat to show thee. But to-night thou must sleep in the this castle, and in the morning see that thou rise early and follow the road upwards through the valley, until thou reachest a wood. In the wood is a path branching to the right; go along this path until thou comest to a space of grass with a mound in the middle of it. On the top of the mound stands a black man, larger than any two white men; his eye is in the centre of his forehead and he has only one foot. He carries a club of iron, and two white men could hardly lift it. Around him graze a thousand beasts, all of different kinds, for he is the guardian of that wood, and it is he who will tell thee which way to go in order to find the adventure thou art in quest of.”

‘So spake the man, and long did that night seem to me, and before dawn I rose and put on my armour, and mounted my horse and rode on till I reached the grassy space of which he had told me. There was the black man on top of the mound, as he had said, and in truth he was mightier in all ways than I had thought him to be. As for the club, Kai, it would have been a burden for four of our warriors. He waited for me to speak, and I asked him what power he held over the beasts that thronged so close about him.

‘“I will show thee, little man,” he answered, and with his club he struck a stag on the head till he brayed loudly. And at his braying the animals came running, numerous as the stars in the sky, so that scarce was I able to stand among them. Serpents were there also, and dragons, and beasts of strange shapes, with horns in places where never saw I horns before. And the black man only looked at them and bade them go and feed. And they bowed themselves before him, as vassals before their lord.

‘“Now, little man, I have answered thy question and showed thee my power,” said he. “Is there anything else thou wouldest know?” Then I inquired of him my way, but he grew angry, and, as I perceived, would fain have hindered me; but at the last, after I had told him who I was, his anger passed from him.

‘“Take that path,” said he, “that leads to the head of this grassy glade, and go up the wood till thou reachest the top. There thou wilt find an open space, and in the midst of it a tall tree. Under the tree is a fountain, and by the fountain a marble slab, and on the slab a bowl of silver, with a silver chain. Dip the bowl in the fountain, and throw the water on the slab, and thou wilt hear a might peal of thunder, till heaven and earth seem trembling with the noise. After the thunder will come hail, so fierce that scarcely canst thou endure it and live, for the hailstones are both large and thick. Then the sun will shine again, but every leaf of the tree will by lying on the ground. Next a flight of birds will come and alight on the tree, and never didst thou hear a strain so sweet as that which they will sing. And at the moment in which their song sounds sweetest thou wilt hear a murmuring and complaining coming towards thee along the valley, and thou wilt see a knight in black velvet bestriding a black horse, bearing a lance with a black pennon, and he will spur his steed so as to fight thee. If thou turnest to flee, he will overtake thee. And if thou abidest were thou art, he will unhorse thee. And if thou dost not find trouble in that adventure, thou needest not to seek it during the rest of thy life.”

‘So I bade the black man farewell, and took my way to the top of the wood, and there I found everything just as I had been told. I went up to the tree beneath which stood the fountain, and filling the silver bowl with water, emptied it on the marble slab. Thereupon the thunder came, louder by far than I had expected to hear it, and after the thunder came the shower, but heavier by far than I had expected to feel it, for, of a truth I tell thee, Kai, not one of those hailstones would be stopped by skin or by flesh till it had reached the bone. I turned my horse’s flank towards the shower, and, bending over his neck, held my shield so that it might cover his head and my own. When the hail had passed, I looked on the tree and not a single leaf was left on it, and the sky was blue and the sun shining, while on the branches were perched birds of very kind, who sang a song sweeter than any that has come to my ears, either before or since.

‘Thus, Kai, I stood listening to the birds, when lo, a murmuring voice approached me, saying:

‘ “O knight, what has brought thee hither? What evil have I done to thee, that thou shouldest do so much to me, for in all my lands neither man nor beast that met that shower has escaped alive.” Then from the valley appeared the knight on the black horse, grasping the lance with the black pennon. Straightway we charged each other, and though I fought my best, he soon overcame me, and I was thrown to the ground, while the knight seized the bridle of my horse, and rode away with it, leaving me where I was, without even despoiling me of my armour.

‘Sadly did I go down the hill again, and when I reached the glade where the black man was, I confess to thee, Kai, it was a marvel that I did not melt into a liquid pool, so great was my shame. That night I slept at the castle where I had been before, and I was bathed and feasted, and none asked me how I had fared. The next morning when I arose I found a bay horse saddled for me, and, girdling on my armour, I returned to my own court. The horse is still in the stable, and I would not part with it for any in Britain.

‘But of a truth, Kai, no man ever confessed an adventure so much to his own dishonour, and strange indeed it seems that none other man have I ever met that knew of the black man, and the knight and the shower.’

‘Would it not be well,’ said Owen, ‘to go and discover the place?’

‘By the hand of my friend,’ answered Kai, ‘often dost thou utter that with thy tongue which thou wouldest not make good with thy deeds.’

‘In truth,’ said Guenevere the queen, who had listened to the tale, ‘thou wert better hanged, Kai, than use such speech towards a man like Owen.’

‘I meant nothing, lady,’ replied Kai; ‘thy praise of Owen is not greater than mine.’ And as he spoke Arthur awoke, and asked if he had not slept for a little.

‘Yes, lord,’ answered Owen, ‘certainly thou hast slept.’

‘Is it time for us to go to meat?’

‘It is, lord,’ answered Owen.

Then the horn for washing themselves was sounded, and after that the king and his household sat down to eat. And when they had finished, Owen left them, and made ready his horse and his arms.

With the first rays of the sun he set forth, and travelled through deserts and over mountains and across rivers, and all befell him which had befallen Kynon, till he stood under the leafless tree listening to the song of the birds. Then he heard the voice, and turning to look found the knight galloping to meet him. Fiercely they fought till their lances were broken, and then they drew their swords, and a blow from Owen cut through the knight's helmet, and pierced his skull.

Feeling himself wounded unto death the knight fled, and Owen pursued him till they came to a splendid castle. Here the knight dashed across the bridge that spanned the moat, and entered the gate, but as soon as he was safe inside, the drawbridge was pulled up and caught Owen's horse in the middle, so that half of him was inside and half out, and Owen could not dismount and knew not what to do.

While he was in this sore plight a little door in the castle gate opened, and he could see a street facing him, with tall houses. Then a maiden with curling hair of gold looked through the little door and bade Owen open the gate.

'By my troth!' cried Owen, 'I can no more open it from here than thou art able to set me free.'

'Well,' said she, 'I will do my best to release thee if thou wilt do as I tell thee. Take this ring and put it on with the stone inside thy hand, and close thy fingers tight, for as long as thou dost conceal it, it will conceal thee. When the men inside have held counsel together, they will come to fetch thee to thy death, and they will be much grieved not to find thee. I will stand on the horse block yonder and thou canst see me though I cannot see thee. Therefore draw near and place thy hand on my shoulder and follow me wheresoever I go.'

Upon that she went away from Owen, and when the men came out from the castle to seek him and did not find him they were sorely grieved, and they returned to the castle.

Then Owen went to the maiden and placed his hand on her shoulder, and she guided him to a large room, painted all over with rich colours, and adorned with images of gold. Here she gave him meat and drink, and water to wash with and garments to wear, and he lay down upon a soft bed, with scarlet and fur to cover him, and slept gladly.

In the middle of the night he woke hearing a great outcry, and he jumped up and clothed himself and went into the hall, where the maiden was standing.

‘What is it?’ he asked, and she answered that the knight who owned the castle was dead, and they were bearing his body to the church. Never had Owen beheld such vast crowds, and following the dead knight was the most beautiful lady in the world, whose cry was louder than the shout of the men, or the braying of the trumpets. And Owen looked on her and loved her.

‘Who is she?’ he asked the damsel. ‘That is my mistress, the countess of the fountain, and the wife of him whom thou didst slay yesterday.’

‘Verily,’ said Owen, ‘she is the woman that I love best.’

‘She shall also love thee not a little,’ said the maiden.

Then she left Owen, and after a while went into the chamber of her mistress, and spoke to her, but the countess answered her nothing.

‘What aileth thee, mistress?’ inquired the maiden.

‘Why hast thou kept far from me in my grief, Luned?’ answered the countess, and in her turn the damsel asked:

‘Is it well for thee to mourn so bitterly for the dead, or for anything that is gone from thee?’

‘There is no man in the world equal to him,’ replied the countess, her cheeks growing red with anger. ‘I would fain banish thee for such words.’

‘Be not angry, lady,’ said Luned, ‘but listen to my counsel. Thou knowest well that alone thou canst not preserve thy lands, therefore seek some one to help thee.’

‘And how can I do that?’ asked the countess.

‘I will tell thee,’ answered Luned. ‘Unless thou canst defend the fountain all will be lost, and none can defend the fountain except a knight of Arthur’s court. There will I go to seek him, and woe betide me if I return without a warrior that can guard the fountain, as well as he who kept it before.’

‘Go then,’ said the countess, ‘and make proof of that which thou hast promised.’

So Luned set out, riding on a white palfrey, on pretence of journeying to King Arthur’s court, but instead of doing that she hid herself for as

many days as it would have taken her to go and come, and then she left her hiding-place, and went into the countess.

‘What news from the court?’ asked her mistress, when she had given Luned a warm greeting.

‘The best of news,’ answered the maiden, ‘for I have gained the object of my mission. When wilt thou that I present to thee the knight who has returned with me?’

‘To-morrow at midday,’ said the countess, ‘and I will cause all the people in the town to come together.’

Therefore the next day at noon Owen put on his coat of mail, and over it he wore a splendid mantle, while on his feet were leather shoes fastened with clasps of gold. And he followed Luned to the chamber of her mistress.

Right glad was the countess to see them, but she looked closely at Owen and said:

‘Luned, this knight has scarcely the air of a traveller.’

‘What harm is there in that, lady?’ answered Luned.

‘I am persuaded,’ said the countess, ‘that this man and no other chased the soul from the body of my lord.’

‘Had he not been stronger than thy lord,’ replied the damsel, ‘he could not have taken his life, and for that, and for all things that are past, there is no remedy.’

‘Leave me, both of you,’ said the countess, ‘and I will take counsel.’

Then they went out.

The next morning the countess summoned her subjects to meet in the courtyard of the castle, and told them that now that her husband was dead there was none to defend her lands.

‘So choose you which it shall be,’ she said. ‘Either let one of you take me for a wife, or give me your consent to take a new lord for myself, that my lands be not without a master.’

At her words the chief men of the city withdrew into one corner and took counsel together, and after a while the leader came forward and said that they had decided that it was best, for the peace and safety of all, that she should choose a husband for herself. Thereupon Owen was summoned to her presence, and he accepted with joy the hand that she offered him,

and they were married forthwith, and the men of the earldom did him homage.

From that day Owen defended the fountain as the earl before him had done, and every knight that came by was overthrown by him, and his ransom divided among his barons. In this way three years passed, and no man in the world was more beloved than Owen.

Now at the end of the three years it happened that Gwalchmai the knight was with Arthur, and he perceived the king to be very sad.

‘My lord, has anything befallen thee?’ he asked.

‘Oh, Gwalchmai, I am grieved concerning Owen, whom I have lost these three years, and if a fourth year passes without him I can live no longer. And sure am I that the tale told by Kynon the son of Clydno caused me to lose him. I will go myself with the men of my household to avenge him if he is dead, to free him if he is in prison, to bring him back if he is alive.’

Then Arthur and three thousand men of his household set out in quest of Owen, and took Kynon for their guide. When Arthur reached the castle, the youths were shooting in the same place, and the same yellow man was standing by, and as soon as he beheld Arthur he greeted him and invited him in, and they entered together. So vast was the castle that the king’s three thousand men were of no more account than if they had been twenty.

At sunrise Arthur departed thence, with Kynon for his guide, and reached the black man first, and afterwards the top of the wooded hill, with the fountain and the bowl and the tree.

‘My lord,’ said Kai, ‘let me throw the water on the slab, and receive the first adventure that may befall.’

‘Thou mayest do so,’ answered Arthur, and Kai threw the water.

Immediately all happened as before; the thunder and the shower of hail which killed many of Arthur’s men; the song of the birds and the appearance of the black knight. And Kai met him and fought him, and was overthrown by him. Then the knight rode away, and Arthur and his men encamped where they stood.

In the morning Kai again asked leave to meet the knight and to try to overcome him, which Arthur granted. But once more he was unhorsed, and the black knight’s lance broke his helmet and pierced the skin even to the bone, and humbled in spirit he returned to the camp.

After this every one of the knights gave battle, but none came out victor, and at length there only remained Arthur himself and Gwalchmai.

‘Oh, let me fight him, my lord,’ cried Gwalchmai, as he saw Arthur taking up his arms.

‘Well, fight then,’ answered Arthur, and Gwalchmai threw a robe over himself and his horse, so that none knew him. All that day they fought, and neither was able to throw the other, and so it was on the next day. On the third day the combat was so fierce that they fell both to the ground at once, and fought on their feet, and at last the black knight gave his foe such a blow on his head that his helmet fell from his face.

‘I did not know it was thee, Gwalchmai,’ said the black knight. ‘Take my sword and my arms.’

‘No,’ answered Gwalchmai, ‘it is thou, Owen, who art the victor, take thou my sword’; but Owen would not.

‘Give me your swords,’ said Arthur from behind them, ‘for neither of you has vanquished the other,’ and Owen turned and put his arms round Arthur’s neck.

The next day Arthur would have given orders to his men to make ready to go back whence they came, but Owen stopped him.

‘My lord,’ he said, ‘during the three years that I have been absent from thee I have been preparing a banquet for thee, knowing full well that thou wouldst come to seek me. Tarry with me, therefore, for a while, thou and thy men.’

So they rode to the castle of the countess of the fountain, and spent three months in resting and feasting. And when it was time for them to depart Arthur besought the countess that she would allow Owen to go with him to Britain for the space of three months. With a sore heart she granted permission, and so content was Owen to be once more with his old companions that three years instead of three months passed away like a dream.

One day Owen sat at meat in the castle of Caerleon upon Usk, when a damsel on a bay horse entered the hall, and riding straight up to the place where Owen sat she stooped and drew the ring from off his hand.

‘Thus shall be treated the traitor and the faithless,’ said she, and turning her horse’s head she rode out of the hall.

At her words Owen remembered all that he had forgotten, and sorrowful and ashamed he went to his own chamber and made ready to depart. At the dawn he set out, but he did not go back to the castle, for his heart was heavy, but he wandered far into wild places till his body was weak and thin, and his hair was long. The wild beasts were his friends, and he slept by their side, but in the end he longed to see the face of a man again, and he came down into a valley and fell asleep by a lake in the lands of a widowed countess.

Now it was the time when the countess took her walk, attended by her maidens, and when they saw a man lying by the lake they shrank back in terror, for he lay so still that they thought he was dead. But when they had overcome their fright, they drew near him, and touched him, and saw that there was life in him. Then the countess hastened to the castle, and brought from it a flask full of precious ointment and gave it to one of her maidens.

‘Take that horse which is grazing yonder,’ she said, ‘and a suit of men’s garments, and place them near the man, and pour some of this ointment near his heart. If there is any life in him that will bring it back. But if he moves, hide thyself in the bushes near by, and see what he does.’

The damsel took the flask and did her mistress’ bidding. Soon the man began to move his arms, and then rose slowly to his feet. Creeping forward step by step he took the garments from off the saddle and put them on him, and painfully he mounted the horse. When he was seated the damsel came forth and greeted him, and glad was he when he saw her and inquired what castle that was before him.

‘It belongs to a widowed countess,’ answered the maiden. ‘Her husband left her two earldoms, but it is all that remains of her broad lands, for they have been torn from her by a young earl, because she would not marry him.’

‘That is a pity,’ replied Owen, but he said no more, for he was too weak to talk much. Then the maiden guided him to the castle, and kindled a fire, and brought him food. And there he stayed and was tended for three months, till he was handsomer than ever he was.

At noon one day Owen heard a sound of arms outside the castle, and he asked of the maiden what it was.

‘It is the earl of whom I spoke to thee,’ she answered, ‘who has come with a great host to carry off my mistress.’

‘Beg of her to lend me a horse and armour,’ said Owen, and the maiden did so, but the countess laughed somewhat bitterly as she answered:

‘Nay, but I will give them to him, and such a horse and armour and weapons as he has never had yet, though I know not what use they will be to him. Yet mayhap it will save them from falling into the hands of my enemies.’

The horse was brought out and Owen rode forth with two pages behind him, and they saw the great host encamped before them.

‘Where is the earl?’ said he, and the pages answered:

‘In yonder troop where are four yellow standards.’

‘Await me,’ said Owen, ‘at the gate of the castle, and he cried a challenge to the earl, who came to meet him. Hard did they fight, but Owen overthrew his enemy and drove him in front to the castle gate and into the hall.

‘Behold the reward of thy blessed balsam,’ said he, as he bade the earl kneel down before her, and made him swear that he would restore all that he had taken from her.

After that he departed, and went into the deserts, and as he was passing through a wood he heard a loud yelling. Pushing aside the bushes he beheld a lion standing on a great mound, and by it a rock. Near the rock was a lion seeking to reach the mound, and each time he moved out darted a serpent from the rock to prevent him. Then Owen unsheathed his sword, and cut off the serpent’s head and went on his way, and the lion followed and played about him, as if he had been a greyhound. And much more useful was he than a greyhound, for in the evening he brought large logs in his mouth to kindle a fire, and killed a fat buck for dinner.

Owen made his fire and skinned the buck, and put some of it to roast, and gave the rest to the lion for supper. While he was waiting for the meat to cook he heard a sound of deep sighing close to him, and he said:

‘Who are thou?’

‘I am Luned,’ replied a voice from a cave so hidden by bushes and green hanging plants that Owen had not seen it.

‘And what dost thou here?’ cried he.

‘I am held captive in this cave on account of the knight who married the countess and left her, for the pages spoke ill of him, and because I told them that no man living was his equal they dragged me here and said I

should die unless he should come to deliver me by a certain day, and that is no further than the day after to-morrow. His name is Owen the son of Urien, but I have none to send to tell him of my danger, or of a surety he would deliver me.'

Owen held his peace, but gave the maiden some of the meat, and bade her be of good cheer. Then, followed by the lion, he set out for a great castle on the other side of the plain, and men came and took his horse and placed it in a manger, and the lion went after and lay down on the straw. Hospitable and kind were all within the castle, but so full of sorrow that it might have been thought death was upon them. At length, when they had eaten and drunk, Owen prayed the earl to tell him the reason of their grief.

'Yesterday,' answered the earl, 'my two sons were seized, while thy were hunting, by a monster who dwells on those mountains yonder, and he vows that he will not let them go unless I give him my daughter to wife.'

'That shall never be,' said Owen; 'but what form hath this monster?'

'In shape he is a man, but in stature he is a giant,' replied the earl, 'and it were better by far that he should slay my sons than that I should give up my daughter.'

Early next morning the dwellers in the castle were awakened by a great clamour, and they found that the giant had arrived with the two young men. Swiftly Owen put on his armour and went forth to meet the giant, and the lion followed at his heels. And when the great beast beheld the hard blows which the giant dealt his master he flew at his throat, and much trouble had the monster in beating him off.

'Truly,' said the giant, 'I should find no difficulty in fighting thee, if it were not for that lion.' When he heard that Owen felt shame that he could not overcome the giant with his own sword, so he took the lion and shut him up in one of the towers of the castle, and returned to the fight. But from the sound of the blows the lion knew that the combat was going ill for Owen, so he climbed up till he reached the top of the tower, where there was a door on to the roof, and from the tower he sprang on to the walls, and from the walls to the ground. Then with a loud roar he leaped upon the giant, who fell dead under the blow of his paw.

Now the gloom of the castle was turned into rejoicing, and the earl begged Owen to stay with him till he could make him a feast, but the knight said he had other work to do, and rode back to the place where he

had left Luned, and the lion followed at his heels. When he came there he saw a great fire kindled, and two youths leading out the maiden to cast her upon the pile.

‘Stop!’ he cried, dashing up to them. ‘What charge have you against her?’

‘She boasted that no man in the world was equal to Owen,’ said they, ‘and we shut her in a cave, and agreed that none should deliver her but Owen himself, and that if he did not come by a certain day she should die. And now the time has past and there is no sign of him.’

‘In truth he is a good knight, and had he but known that the maid was in peril he would have come to save her,’ said Owen; ‘but accept me in his stead, I entreat you.’

‘We will,’ replied they, and the fight began.

The youths fought well and pressed hard on Owen, and when the lion saw that he came to help his master. But the youths made a sign for the fight to stop, and said:

‘Chieftain, it was agreed we should give battle to thee alone, and it is harder for us to contend with yonder beast than with thee.’

Then Owen shut up the lion in the cave where the maiden had been in prison, and blocked up the front with stones. But the fight with the giant had sorely tried him, and the youths fought well, and pressed him harder than before. And when the lion saw that he gave a loud roar, and burst through the stones, and sprang upon the youths and slew them. And so Luned was delivered at the last.

Then the maiden rode back with Owen to the lands of the lady of the fountain. And he took the lady with him to Arthur’s court, where they lived happily till they died.

From the ‘Mabinogion.’

THE FOUR GIFTS

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In the old land of Brittany, once called Cornwall, there lived a woman named Barbaik Bourhis, who spent all her days in looking after her farm with the help of her niece Tephany. Early and late the two might be seen in the fields or in the dairy, milking cows, making butter, feeding fowls; working hard themselves and taking care that others worked too. Perhaps it might have been better for Barbaik if she had left herself a little time to rest and to think about other things, for soon she grew to love money for its own sake, and only gave herself and Tephany the food and clothes they absolutely needed. And as for poor people she positively hated them, and declared that such lazy creatures had no business in the world.

Well, this being the sort of person Barbaik was, it is easy to guess at her anger when one day she found Tephany talking outside the cowhouse to young Denis, who was nothing more than a day labourer from the village of Plover. Seizing her niece by the arm, she pulled her sharply away, exclaiming:

‘Are you not ashamed, girl, to waste your time over a man who is as poor as a rat, when there are a dozen more who would be only too happy to buy you rings of silver, if you would let them?’

‘Denis is a good workman, as you know very well,’ answered Tephany, red with anger, ‘and he puts by money too, and soon he will be able to take a farm for himself.’

‘Nonsense,’ cried Barbaik, ‘he will never save enough for a farm till he is a hundred. I would sooner see you in your grave than the wife of a man who carries his whole fortune on his back.’

‘What does fortune matter when one is young and strong?’ asked Tephany, but her aunt, amazed at such words, would hardly let her finish.

‘What does fortune matter?’ repeated Barbaik, in a shocked voice. ‘Is it possible that you are really so foolish as to despise money? If this is what you learn from Denis, I forbid you to speak to him, and I will have

him turned out of the farm if he dares to show his face here again. Now go and wash the clothes and spread them out to dry.'

Tephany did not dare to disobey, but with a heavy heart went down the path to the river.

'She is harder than these rocks,' said the girl to herself, 'yes, a thousand times harder. For the rain at least can at last wear away the stone, but you might cry for ever, and she would never care. Talking to Denis is the only pleasure I have, and if I am not to see him I may as well enter a convent.'

Thinking these thoughts she reached the bank, and began to unfold the large packet of linen that had to be washed. The tap of a stick made her look up, and standing before her she saw a little old woman, whose face was strange to her.

'You would like to sit down and rest, granny?' asked Tephany, pushing aside her bundle.

'When the sky is all the roof you have, you rest where you will,' replied the old woman in trembling tones.

'Are you so lonely, then?' inquired Tephany, full of pity. 'Have you no friends who would welcome you into their houses?'

The old woman shook her head.

'They all died long, long ago,' she answered, 'and the only friends I have are strangers with kind hearts.'

The girl did not speak for a moment, then held out the small loaf and some bacon intended for her dinner.

'Take this,' she said; 'to-day at any rate you shall dine well,' and the old woman took it, gazing at Tephany the while.

'Those who help others deserve to be helped,' she answered; 'your eyes are still red because that miser Barbaik has forbidden you to speak to the young man from Plover. But cheer up, you are a good girl, and I will give you something that will enable you to see him once every day.'

'You?' cried Tephany, stupefied at discovering that the beggar knew all about her affairs, but the old woman did not hear her.

'Take this long copper pin,' she went on, 'and every time you stick it in your dress Mother Bourhis will be obliged to leave the house in order to go and count her cabbages. As long as the pin is in your dress you will be

free, and your aunt will not come back until you have put it in its case again.’ Then, rising, she nodded to Tephany and vanished.

The girl stood where she was, as still as a stone. If it had not been for the pin in her hands she would have thought she was dreaming. But by that token she knew it was no common old woman who had given it to her, but a fairy, wise in telling what would happen in the days to come. Then suddenly Tephany’s eyes fell on the clothes, and to make up for lost time she began to wash them with great vigour.

Next evening, at the moment when Denis was accustomed to wait for her in the shadow of the cowhouse, Tephany stuck the pin in her dress, and at the very same instant Barbaik took up her sabots or wooden shoes and went through the orchard and past to the fields, to the plot where the cabbages grew. With a heart as light as her footsteps, the girl ran from the house, and spent her evening happily with Denis. And so it was for many days after that. Then, at last, Tephany began to notice something, and the something made her very sad.

At first, Denis seemed to find the hours that they were together fly as quickly as she did, but when he had taught her all the songs he knew, and told her all the plans he had made for growing rich and a great man, he had nothing more to say to her, for he, like a great many other people, was fond of talking himself, but not of listening to any one else. Sometimes, indeed, he never came at all, and the next evening he would tell Tephany that he had been forced to go into the town on business, but though she never reproached him she was not deceived and saw plainly that he no longer cared for her as he used to do.

Day by day her heart grew heavier and her cheeks paler, and one evening, when she had waited for him in vain, she put her water-pot on her shoulder and went slowly down to the spring. On the path in front of her stood the fairy who had given her the pin, and as she glanced at Tephany she gave a little mischievous laugh and said:

‘Why, my pretty maiden hardly looks happier than she did before, in spite of meeting her lover whenever she pleases.’

‘He has grown tired of me,’ answered Tephany in a trembling voice, ‘and he makes excuses to stay away. Ah! granny dear, it is not enough to be able to see him, I must be able to amuse him and to keep him with me. He is so clever, you know. Help me to be clever too.’

‘Is that what you want?’ cried the old woman. ‘Well, take this feather and stick it in your hair, and you will be as wise as Solomon himself.’

Blushing with pleasure Tephany went home and stuck the feather into the blue ribbon which girls always wear in that part of the country. In a moment she heard Denis whistling gaily, and as her aunt was safely counting her cabbages, she hurried out to meet him. The young man was struck dumb by her talk. There was nothing that she did not seem to know, and as for songs she not only could sing those from every part of Brittany, but could compose them herself. Was this really the quiet girl who had been so anxious to learn all he could teach her, or was it somebody else? Perhaps she had gone suddenly mad, and there was an evil spirit inside her. But in any case, night after night he came back, only to find her growing wiser and wiser. Soon the neighbours whispered their surprise among themselves, for Tephany had not been able to resist the pleasure of putting the feather in her hair for some of the people who despised her for her poor clothes, and many were the jokes she made about them. Of course they heard of her jests, and shook their heads saying:

‘She is an ill-natured little cat, and the man that marries her will find that it is she who will hold the reins and drive the horse.’

It was not long before Denis began to agree with them, and as he always liked to be master wherever he went, he became afraid of Tephany’s sharp tongue, and instead of laughing as before when she made fun of other people he grew red and uncomfortable, thinking that his turn would come next.

So matters went on till one evening Denis told Tephany that he really could not stay a moment, as he had promised to go to a dance that was to be held in the next village.

Tephany’s face fell; she had worked hard all day, and had been counting on a quiet hour with Denis. She did her best to persuade him to remain with her, but he would not listen, and at last she grew angry.

‘Oh, I know why you are so anxious not to miss the dance,’ she said; ‘it is because Aziliez of Pennenru will be there.’

Now Aziliez was the loveliest girl for miles round, and she and Denis had known each other from childhood.

‘Oh yes, Aziliez will be there,’ answered Denis, who was quite pleased to see her jealous, ‘and naturally one would go a long way to watch her

dance.’

‘Go then!’ cried Tephany, and entering the house she slammed the door behind her.

Lonely and miserable she sat down by the fire and stared into the red embers. Then, flinging the feather from her hair, she put her head on her hands, and sobbed passionately.

‘What is the use of being clever when it is beauty that men want? That is what I ought to have asked for. But it is too late, Denis will never come back.’

‘Since you wish it so much you shall have beauty,’ said a voice at her side, and looking round she beheld the old woman leaning on her stick.

‘Fasten this necklace round your neck, and as long as you wear it you will be the most beautiful woman in the world,’ continued the fairy. With a little shriek of joy Tephany took the necklace, and snapping the clasp ran to the mirror which hung in the corner. Ah, this time she was not afraid of Aziliez or of any other girl, for surely none could be as fair and white as she. And with the sight of her face a thought came to her, and putting on hastily her best dress and her buckled shoes she hurried off to the dance.

On the way she met a beautiful carriage with a young man seated in it.

‘What a lovely maiden!’ he exclaimed, as Tephany approached. ‘Why, there is not a girl in my own country that can be compared to her. She, and no other, shall be my bride.’

The carriage was large and barred the narrow road, so Tephany was forced, much against her will, to remain where she was. But she looked the young man full in the face as she answered:

‘Go your way, noble lord, and let me go mine. I am only a poor peasant girl, accustomed to milk, and make hay and spin.’

‘Peasant you may be, but I will make you a great lady,’ said he, taking her hand and trying to lead her to the carriage.

‘I don’t want to be a great lady, I only want to be the wife of Denis,’ she replied, throwing off his hand and running to the ditch which divided the road from the cornfield, where he hoped to hide. Unluckily the young man guessed what she was doing, and signed to his attendants, who seized her and put her in the coach. The door was banged, and the horses whipped up into a gallop.

At the end of an hour they arrived at a splendid castle, and Tephany, who would not move, was lifted out and carried into the hall, while a priest was sent for to perform the marriage ceremony. The young man tried to win a smile from her by telling of all the beautiful things she should have as his wife, but Tephany did not listen to him, and looked about to see if there was any means by which she could escape. It did not seem easy. The three great doors were closely barred, and the one through which she had entered shut with a spring, but her feather was still in her hair, and by its aid she detected a crack in the wooden panelling, through which a streak of light could be dimly seen. Touching the copper pin which fastened her dress, the girl sent every one in the hall to count the cabbages, while she herself passed through the little door, not knowing whither she was going.

By this time night had fallen, and Tephany was very tired. Thankfully she found herself at the gate of a convent, and asked if she might stay there till morning. But the portress answered roughly that it was no place for beggars, and bade her begone, so the poor girl dragged herself slowly along the road, till a light and the bark of a dog told her that she was near a farm.

In front of the house was a group of people; two or three women and the sons of the farmer. When their mother heard Tephany's request to be given a bed the good wife's heart softened, and she was just going to invite her inside, when the young men, whose heads were turned by the girl's beauty, began to quarrel as to which should do most for her. From words they came to blows, and the women, frightened at the disturbance, pelted Tephany with insulting names. She quickly ran down the nearest path, hoping to escape them in the darkness of the trees, but in an instant she heard their footsteps behind her. Wild with fear her legs trembled under her, when suddenly she bethought herself of her necklace. With a violent effort she burst the clasp and flung it round the neck of a pig which was grunting in a ditch, and as she did so she heard the footsteps cease from pursuing her and run after the pig, for her charm had vanished.

On she went, scarcely knowing where she was going, till she found herself, to her surprise and joy, close to her aunt's house. For several days she felt so tired and unhappy that she could hardly get through her work, and to make matters worse Denis scarcely ever came near her.

‘He was too busy,’ he said, ‘and really it was only rich people who could afford to waste time in talking.’

As the days went on Tephany grew paler and paler, till everybody noticed it except her aunt. The water-pot was almost too heavy for her now, but morning and evening she carried it to the spring, though the effort to lift it to her shoulder was often too much for her.

‘How could I have been so foolish,’ she whispered to herself, when she went down as usual at sunset. ‘It was not freedom to see Denis that I should have asked for, for he was soon weary of me, nor a quick tongue, for he was afraid of it, nor beauty, for that brought me nothing but trouble, but riches which make life easy both for oneself and others. Ah! if I only dared to beg this gift from the fairy, I should be wiser than before and know how to choose better.’

‘Be satisfied,’ said the voice of the old woman, who seemed to be standing unseen at Tephany’s elbow. ‘If you look in your right-hand pocket when you go home you will find a small box. Rub your eyes with the ointment it contains, and you will see that you yourself contain a priceless treasure.’

Tephany did not in the least understand what she meant, but ran back to the farm as fast as she could, and began to fumble joyfully in her right-hand pocket. Sure enough, there was the little box with the precious ointment. She was in the act of rubbing her eyes with it when Barbaik Bourhis entered the room. Ever since she had been obliged to leave her work and pass her time, she did not know why, in counting cabbages, everything had gone wrong, and she could not get a labourer to stay with her because of her bad temper. When, therefore, she saw her niece standing quietly before her mirror, Barbaik broke out:

‘So this is what you do when I am out in the fields! Ah! it is no wonder if the farm is ruined. Are you not ashamed, girl, to behave so?’

Tephany tried to stammer some excuse, but her aunt was half mad with rage, and a box on the ears was her only answer. At this Tephany, hurt, bewildered and excited, could control herself no longer, and turning away burst into tears. But what was her surprise when she saw that each tear-drop was a round and shining pearl. Barbaik, who also beheld this marvel, uttered a cry of astonishment, and threw herself on her knees to pick them up from the floor.

She was still gathering them when the door opened and in came Denis.

‘Pearls! Are they really pearls?’ he asked, falling on his knees also, and looking up at Tephany he perceived others still more beautiful rolling down the girl’s cheeks.

‘Take care not to let any of the neighbours hear of it, Denis,’ said Barbaik. ‘Of course you shall have your share, but nobody else shall get a single one. Cry on, my dear, cry on,’ she continued to Tephany. It is for your good as well as ours,’ and she held out her apron to catch them, and Denis his hat.

But Tephany could hardly bear any more. She felt half choked at the sight of their greediness, and wanted to rush from the hall, and though Barbaik caught her arm to prevent this, and said all sorts of tender words which she thought would make the girl weep the more, Tephany with a violent effort forced back her tears, and wiped her eyes.

‘Is she finished already?’ cried Barbaik, in a tone of disappointment. ‘Oh, try again, my dear. Do you think it would do any good to beat her a little?’ she added to Denis, who shook his head.

‘That is enough for the first time. I will go into the town and find out the value of each pearl.’

‘Then I will go with you,’ said Barbaik, who never trusted anyone and was afraid of being cheated. So the two went out, leaving Tephany behind them.

She sat quite still on her chair, her hands clasped tightly together, as if she was forcing something back. At last she raised her eyes, which had been fixed on the ground, and beheld the fairy standing in a dark corner by the hearth, observing her with a mocking look. The girl trembled and jumped up, then, taking the feather, the pin, and the box, she held them out to the old woman.

‘Here they are, all of them,’ she cried; ‘they belong to you. Let me never see them again, but I have learned the lesson that they taught me. Others may have riches, beauty and wit, but as for me I desire nothing but to be the poor peasant girl I always was, working hard for those she loves.’

‘Yes, you have learned your lesson,’ answered the fairy, ‘and now you shall lead a peaceful life and marry the man you love. For after all it was not yourself you thought of but him.’

Never again did Tephany see the old woman, but she forgave Denis for selling her tears, and in time he grew to be a good husband, who did his own share of work.

From ‘Le Foyer Breton,’ par E. Souvestre.

THE GROAC’H OF THE ISLE OF LOK

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In old times, when all kinds of wonderful things happened in Brittany, there lived in the village of Lanillis, a young man named Houarn Pogamm and a girl called Bellah Postik. They were cousins, and as their mothers were great friends, and constantly in and out of each other’s houses, they had often been laid in the same cradle, and had played and fought over their games.

‘When they are grown up they will marry,’ said the mothers; but just as every one was beginning to think of wedding bells, the two mothers died, and the cousins, who had no money, went as servants in the same house. This was better than being parted, of course, but not so good as having a little cottage of their own, where they could do as they liked, and soon they might have been heard bewailing to each other the hardness of their lots.

‘If we could only manage to buy a cow and get a pig to fatten,’ grumbled Houarn, ‘I would rent a bit of ground from the master, and then we could be married.’

‘Yes,’ answered Bellah, with a deep sigh; ‘but we live in such hard times, and at the last fair the price of pigs had risen again.’

‘We shall have long to wait, that is quite clear,’ replied Houarn, turning away to his work.

Whenever they met they repeated their grievances, and at length Houarn’s patience was exhausted, and one morning he came to Bellah and told her that he was going away to seek his fortune.

The girl was very unhappy as she listened to this, and felt sorry that she had not tried to make the best of things. She implored Houarn not to leave her, but he would listen to nothing.

‘The birds,’ he said, ‘continue flying until they reach a field of corn, and the bees do not stop unless they find the honey-giving flowers, and why should a man have less sense than they? Like them, I shall seek till I get what I want—that is, money to buy a cow and a pig to fatten. And if

you love me, Bellah, you won't attempt to hinder a plan which will hasten our marriage.'

The girl saw it was useless to say more, so she answered sadly:

'Well, go then, since you must. But first I will divide with you all that my parents left me,' and going to her room, she opened a small chest, and took from it a bell, a knife, and a little stick.

'This bell,' she said, 'can be heard at any distance, however far, but it only rings to warn us that our friends are in great danger. The knife frees all it touches from the spells that have been laid on them; while the stick will carry you wherever you want to go. I will give you the knife to guard you against the enchantments of wizards, and the bell to tell me of your perils. The stick I shall keep for myself, so that I can fly to you if ever you have need of me.'

Then they cried for a little on each other's necks, and Houarn started for the mountains.

But in those days, as in these, beggars abounded, and through every village he passed they followed Houarn in crowds, mistaking him for a gentleman, because there were no holes in his clothes.

'There is no fortune to be made here,' he thought to himself; 'it is a place for spending, and not earning. I see I must go further,' and he walked on to Pont-aven, a pretty little town built on the bank of a river.

He was sitting on a bench outside an inn, when he heard two men who were loading their mules talking about the Groac'h of the island of Lok.

'What is a Groac'h?' asked he. 'I have never come across one.' And the men answered that it was the name given to the fairy that dwelt in the lake, and that she was rich—oh! richer than all the kings in the world put together. Many had gone to the island to try and get possession of her treasures, but no one had ever come back.

As he listened Houarn's mind was made up.

'I will go, and return too,' he said to the muleteers. They stared at him in astonishment, and besought him not to be so mad and to throw away his life in such a foolish manner; but he only laughed, and answered that if they could tell him of any other way in which to procure a cow and a pig to fatten, he would think no more about it. But the men did not know how this was to be done, and, shaking their heads over his obstinacy, left him to his fate.

So Houarn went down to the sea, and found a boatman who engaged to take him to the isle of Lok.

The island was large, and lying almost across it was a lake, with a narrow opening to the sea. Houarn paid the boatman and sent him away, and then proceeded to walk round the lake. At one end he perceived a small skiff, painted blue and shaped like a swan, lying under a clump of yellow broom. As far as he could see, the swan's head was tucked under its wing, and Houarn, who had never beheld a boat of the sort, went quickly towards it and stepped in, so as to examine it the better. But no sooner was he on board than the swan woke suddenly up; his head emerged from under his wing, his feet began to move in the water, and in another moment they were in the middle of the lake.

As soon as the young man had recovered from his surprise, he prepared to jump into the lake and swim to shore. But the bird had guessed his intentions, and plunged beneath the water, carrying Houarn with him to the palace of the Groac'h.

Now, unless you have been under the sea and beheld all the wonders that lie there, you can never have an idea what the Groac'h's palace was like. It was all made of shells, blue and green and pink and lilac and white, shading into each other till you could not tell where one colour ended and the other began. The staircases were of crystal, and every separate stair sang like a woodland bird as you put your foot on it. Round the palace were great gardens full of all the plants that grow in the sea, with diamonds for flowers.

In a large hall the Groac'h was lying on a couch of gold. The pink and white of her face reminded you of the shells of her palace, while her long black hair was intertwined with strings of coral, and her dress of green silk seemed formed out of the sea. At the sight of her Houarn stopped, dazzled by her beauty.

'Come in,' said the Groac'h, rising to her feet. 'Strangers and handsome youths are always welcome here. Do not be shy, but tell me how you found your way, and what you want.'

'My name is Houarn,' he answered, 'Lanillis is my home, and I am trying to earn enough money to buy a little cow and a pig to fatten.'

'Well, you can easily get that,' replied she; 'it is nothing to worry about. Come in and enjoy yourself.' And she beckoned him to follow her

into a second hall whose floors and walls were formed of pearls, while down the sides there were tables laden with fruit and wines of all kinds; and as he ate and drank, the Groac'h talked to him and told him how the treasures he saw came from shipwrecked vessels, and were brought to her palace by a magic current of water.

'I do not wonder,' exclaimed Houarn, who now felt quite at home—'I do not wonder that the people on the earth have so much to say about you.'

'The rich are always envied.'

'For myself,' he added, with a laugh, 'I only ask for the half of your wealth.'

'You can have it, if you will, Houarn,' answered the fairy.

'What do you mean?' cried he.

'My husband, Korandon, is dead,' she replied, 'and if you wish it, I will marry you.'

The young man gazed at her in surprise. Could any one so rich and so beautiful really wish to be his wife? He looked at her again, and Bellah was forgotten as he answered:

'A man would be mad indeed to refuse such an offer. I can only accept it with joy.'

'Then the sooner it is done the better,' said the Groac'h, and gave orders to her servants. After that was finished, she begged Houarn to accompany her to a fish-pond at the bottom of the garden.

'Come lawyer, come miller, come tailor, come singer!' cried she, holding out a net of steel; and at each summons a fish appeared and jumped into the net. When it was full she went into a large kitchen and threw them all into a golden pot; but above the bubbling of the water Houarn seemed to hear the whispering of little voices.

'Who is it whispering in the golden pot, Groac'h?' he inquired at last.

'It is nothing but the noise of the wood sparkling,' she answered; but it did not sound the least like that to Houarn.

'There it is again,' he said, after a short pause.

'The water is getting hot, and it makes the fish jump,' she replied; but soon the noise grew louder and like cries.

'What is it?' asked Houarn, beginning to feel uncomfortable.

'Just the crickets on the hearth,' said she, and broke into a song which drowned the cries from the pot.

But though Houarn held his peace, he was not as happy as before. Something seemed to have gone wrong, and then he suddenly remembered Bellah.

‘Is it possible I can have forgotten her so soon? What a wretch I am!’ he thought to himself; and he remained apart and watched the Groac’h while she emptied the fish into a plate, and bade him eat his dinner while she fetched wine from her cellar in a cave.

Houarn sat down and took out the knife which Bellah had given him, but as soon as the blade touched the fish the enchantment ceased, and four men stood before him.

‘Houarn, save us, we entreat you, and save yourself too!’ murmured they, not daring to raise their voices.

‘Why, it must have been you who were crying out in the pot just now!’ exclaimed Houarn.

‘Yes, it was us,’ they answered. ‘Like you, we came to the isle of Lok to seek our fortunes, and like you we consented to marry the Groac’h, and no sooner was the ceremony over than she turned us into fishes, as she had done to all our forerunners, who are in the fish-pond still, where you will shortly join them.’

On hearing this Houarn leaped into the air, as if he already felt himself frizzling in the golden pot. He rushed to the door, hoping to escape that way; but the Groac’h, who had heard everything, met him on the threshold. Instantly she threw the steel net over his head, and the eyes of a little green frog peeped through the meshes.

‘You shall go and play with the rest,’ she said, carrying him off to the fish-pond.

It was at this very moment that Bellah, who was skimming the milk in the farm dairy, heard the fairy bell tinkle violently.

At the sound she grew pale, for she knew it meant that Houarn was in danger; and, hastily, changing the rough dress she wore for her work, she left the farm with the magic stick in her hand.

Her knees were trembling under her, but she ran as fast as she could to the cross roads, where she drove her stick into the ground, murmuring as she did so a verse her mother had taught her:

Little staff of apple-tree,
Over the earth and over the sea,
Up in the air be guide to me,
Everywhere to wander free,

and immediately the stick became a smart little horse, with a rosette at each ear and a feather on his forehead. He stood quite still while Bellah scrambled up, then he started off, his pace growing quicker and quicker, till at length the girl could hardly see the trees and houses as they flashed past. But, rapid as the pace was, it was not rapid enough for Bellah, who stooped and said:

‘The swallow is less swift than the wind, the wind is less swift than the lightning. But you, my horse, if you love me, must be swifter than them all, for there is a part of my heart that suffers—the best part of my heart that is in danger.’

And the horse heard her, and galloped like a straw carried along by a tempest till they reached the foot of a rock called the Leap of the Deer. There he stopped, for no horse or mule that ever was born could climb that rock, and Bellah knew it, so she began to sing again:

Horse of Leon, given to me,
Over the earth and over the sea,
Up in the air be guide to me,
Everywhere to wander free,

and when she had finished, the horse’s fore legs grew shorter and spread into wings, his hind legs became claws, feathers sprouted all over his body, and she sat on the back of a great bird, which bore her to the summit of the rock. Here she found a nest made of clay and lined with dried moss, and in the centre a tiny man, black and wrinkled, who gave a cry of surprise at the sight of Bellah.

‘Ah! you are the pretty girl who was to come and save me!’

‘To save you!’ repeated Bellah. ‘But who are you, my little friend?’

‘I am the husband of the Groac’h of the isle of Lok, and it is owing to her that I am here.’

‘But what are you doing in this nest?’

‘I am sitting on six eggs of stone, and I shall not be set free till they are hatched.’

On hearing this Bellah began to laugh.

‘Poor little cock!’ she said, ‘and how am I to deliver you?’

‘By delivering Houarn, who is in the power of the Groac’h.’

‘Ah! tell me how I can manage that, and if I have to walk round the whole of Brittany on my bended knees I will do it!’

‘Well, first you must dress yourself as a young man, and then go and seek the Groac’h. When you have found her you must contrive to get hold of the net of steel that hangs from her waist, and shut her up in it for ever.’

‘But where am I to find a young man’s clothes?’ asked she.

‘I will show you,’ he replied, and as he spoke he pulled out three of his red hairs and blew them away, muttering something the while. In the twinkling of an eye the four hairs changed into four tailors, of whom the first carried a cabbage, the second a pair of scissors, the third a needle, and the fourth an iron. Without waiting for orders, they sat down in the nest and, crossing their legs comfortably, began to prepare the suit of clothes for Bellah.

With one of the leaves of the cabbage they made her a coat, and another served for a waistcoat; but it took two for the wide breeches which were then in fashion. The hat was cut from the heart of the cabbage, and a pair of shoes from the thick stem. And when Bellah had put them all on you would have taken her for a gentleman dressed in green velvet, lined with white satin.

She thanked the little men gratefully, and after a few more instructions, jumped on the back of her great bird, and was borne away to the isle of Lok. Once there, she bade him transform himself back into a stick, and with it in her hand she stepped into the blue boat, which conducted her to the palace of shells.

The Groac’h seemed overjoyed to see her, and told her that never before had she beheld such a handsome young man. Very soon she led her visitor into the great hall, where wine and fruit were always waiting, and on the table lay the magic knife, left there by Houarn. Unseen by the Groac’h, Bellah hid it in a pocket of her green coat, and then followed her hostess into the garden, and to the pond which contained the fish, their sides shining with a thousand different colours.

‘Oh! what beautiful, beautiful creatures!’ said she. ‘I’m sure I should never be tired of watching them.’ And she sat down on the bank, with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands, her eyes fixed on the fishes as they flashed past.

‘Would you not like to stay here always?’ asked the Groac’h; and Bellah answered that she desired nothing better.

‘Then you have only to marry me,’ said the Groac’h. ‘Oh! don’t say no, for I have fallen deeply in love with you.’

‘Well, I won’t say “No,”’ replied Bellah, with a laugh, ‘but you must promise first to let me catch one of those lovely fish in your net.’

‘It is not so easy as it looks,’ rejoined the Groac’h, smiling, ‘but take it, and try your luck.’

Bellah took the net which the Groac’h held out, and, turning rapidly, flung it over the witch’s head.

‘Become in body what you are in soul!’ cried she, and in an instant the lovely fairy of the sea was a toad, horrible to look upon. She struggled hard to tear the net asunder, but it was no use. Bellah only drew it the tighter, and, flinging the sorceress into a pit, she rolled a great stone across the mouth, and left her.

As she drew near the pond she saw a great procession of fishes advancing to meet her, crying in hoarse tones:

‘This is our lord and master, who has saved us from the net of steel and the pot of gold!’

‘And who will restore you to your proper shapes,’ said Bellah, drawing the knife from her pocket. But just as she was going to touch the foremost fish, her eyes fell on a green frog on his knees beside her, his little paws crossed over his little heart. Bellah felt as if fingers were tightening round her throat, but she managed to cry:

‘Is this you, my Houarn? Is this you?’

‘It is I,’ croaked the little frog; and as the knife touched him he was a man again, and, springing up, he clasped her in his arms.

‘But we must not forget the others,’ she said at last, and began to transform the fishes to their proper shapes. There were so many of them that it took quite a long time. Just as she had finished there arrived the little dwarf from the Deer’s Leap in a car drawn by six cockchafers, which once had been the six stone eggs.

‘Here I am!’ he exclaimed. ‘You have broken the spell that held me, and now come and get your reward,’ and, dismounting from his chariot, he led them down into the caves filled with gold and jewels, and bade Bellah and Houarn take as much as they wanted.

When their pockets were full, Bellah ordered her stick to become a winged carriage, large enough to bear them and the men they had rescued back to Lanillis.

There they were married the next day, but instead of setting up housekeeping with the little cow and pig to fatten that they had so long wished for, they were able to buy lands for miles round for themselves, and gave each man who had been delivered from the Groac’h a small farm, where he lived happily to the end of his days.

From ‘Le Foyer Breton,’ par E. Souvestre.

THE ESCAPE OF THE MOUSE

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Manawyddan the prince and his friend Pryderi were wanderers, for the brother of Manawyddan had been slain, and his throne taken from him. Very sorrowful was Manawyddan, but Pryderi was stout of heart, and bade him be of good cheer, as he knew a way out of his trouble.

‘And what may that be?’ asked Manawyddan.

‘It is that thou marry my mother Rhiannon and become lord of the fair lands that I will give her for dowry. Never did any lady have more wit than she, and in her youth none was more lovely; even yet she is good to look upon.’

‘Thou art the best friend that ever a man had,’ said Manawyddan. ‘Let us go now to seek Rhiannon, and the lands where she dwells.’

Then they set forth, but the news of their coming ran swifter still, and Rhiannon and Kieva, wife of Pryderi, made haste to prepare a feast for them. And Manawyddan found that Pryderi had spoken the truth concerning his mother, and asked if she would take him for her husband. Right gladly did she consent, and without delay they were married, and rode away to the hunt, Rhiannon and Manawyddan, Kieva and Pryderi, and they would not be parted from each other by night or by day, so great was the love between them.

One day, when they were returned, they were sitting out in a green place, and suddenly the crash of thunder struck loudly on their ears, and a wall of mist fell between them, so that they were hidden one from the other. Trembling they sat till the darkness fled and the light shone again upon them, but in the place where they were wont to see cattle, and herds, and dwellings, they beheld neither house nor beast, nor man nor smoke; neither was any one remaining in the green place save these four only.

‘Whither have they gone, and my host also?’ cried Manawyddan, and they searched the hall, and there was no man, and the castle, and there was none, and in the dwellings that were left was nothing save wild beasts. For a year these four fed on the meat that Manawyddan and Pryderi killed out

hunting, and the honey of the bees that sucked the mountain heather. For a time they desired nothing more, but when the next year began they grew weary.

‘We cannot spend our lives thus,’ said Manawyddan at last, ‘let us go into England and learn some trade by which we may live.’ So they left Wales, and went to Hereford, and there they made saddles, while Manawyddan fashioned blue enamel ornaments to put on their trappings. And so greatly did the townsfolk love these saddles, that no others were bought throughout the whole of Hereford, till the saddlers banded together and resolved to slay Manawyddan and his companions.

When Pryderi heard of it, he was very wroth, and wished to stay and fight. But the counsels of Manawyddan prevailed, and they moved by night to another city.

‘What craft shall we follow?’ asked Pryderi.

‘We will make shields,’ answered Manawyddan.

‘But do we know anything of that craft?’ answered Pryderi.

‘We will try it,’ said Manawyddan, and they began to make shields, and fashioned them after the shape of the shields they had seen; and these likewise they enamelled. And so greatly did they prosper that no man in the town bought a shield except they had made it, till at length the shield-makers banded together as the saddlers had done, and resolved to slay them. But of this they had warning, and by night betook themselves to another town.

‘Let us take to making shoes,’ said Manawyddan, ‘for there are not any among the shoemakers bold enough to fight us.’

‘I know nothing of making shoes,’ answered Pryderi, who in truth despised so peaceful a craft.

‘But I know,’ replied Manawyddan, ‘and I will teach thee to stitch. We will buy the leather ready dressed, and will make the shoes from it.

Then straightway he sought the town for the best leather, and for a goldsmith to fashion the clasps, and he himself watched till it was done, so that he might learn for himself. Soon he became known as ‘The Maker of Gold Shoes,’ and prospered so greatly, that as long as one could be bought from him not a shoe was purchased from the shoemakers of the town. And the craftsmen were wroth, and banded together to slay them.

‘Pryderi,’ said Manawyddan, when he had received news of it, ‘we will not remain in England any longer. Let us set forth to Dyved.’

So they journeyed until they came to their lands at Narberth. There they gathered their dogs round them, and hunted for a year as before.

After that a strange thing happened. One morning Pryderi and Manawyddan rose up to hunt, and loosened their dogs, which ran before them, till they came to a small bush. At the bush, the dogs shrank away as if frightened, and returned to their masters, their hair brisling on their backs.

‘We must see what is in that bush,’ said Pryderi, and what was in it was a boar, with a skin as white as the snow on the mountains. And he came out, and made a stand as the dogs rushed on him, driven on by the men. Long he stood at bay; then at last he betook himself to flight, and fled to a castle which was newly built, in a place where no building had ever been known. Into the castle he ran, and the dogs after him, and long though their masters looked and listened, they neither saw nor heard aught concerning dogs or boar.

‘I will go into the castle and get tidings of the dogs,’ said Pryderi at last.

‘Truly,’ answered Manawyddan, ‘thou wouldst do unwisely, for whosoever has cast a spell over this land has set this castle here.’

‘I cannot give up my dogs,’ replied Pryderi, and to the castle he went.

But within was neither man nor beast; neither boar nor dogs, but only a fountain with marble round it, and on the edge a golden bowl, richly wrought, which pleased Pryderi greatly. In a moment he forgot about his dogs, and went up to the bowl and took hold of it, and his hands stuck to the bowl, and his feet to the marble slab, and despair took possession of him.

Till the close of day Manawyddan waited for him, and when the sun was fast sinking, he went home, thinking that he had strayed far.

‘Where are thy friend and thy dogs?’ said Rhiannon, and he told her what had befallen Pryderi.

‘A good friend hast thou lost,’ answered Rhiannon, and she went up to the castle and through the gate, which was open. There, in the centre of the courtyard, she beheld Pryderi standing, and hastened towards him.

‘What dost thou here?’ she asked, laying her hand on the bowl, and as she spoke she too stuck fast, and was not able to utter a word. Then thunder was heard and a veil of darkness descended upon them, and the castle vanished and they with it.

When Kieva, the wife of Pryderi, found that neither her husband nor his mother returned to her, she was in such sorrow that she cared not whether she lived or died. Manawyddan was grieved also in his heart, and said to her:

‘It is not fitting that we should stay here, for he have lost our dogs and cannot get food. Let us go into England—it is easier for us to live there.’ So they set forth.

‘What craft wilt thou follow?’ asked Kieva as they went along.

‘I shall make shoes as once I did,’ replied he; and he got all the finest leather in the town and caused gilded clasps to be made for the shoes, till everyone flocked to buy, and all the shoemakers in the town were idle and banded together in anger to kill him. But luckily Manawyddan got word of it, and he and Kieva left the town one night and proceeded to Narberth, taking with him a sheaf of wheat, which he sowed in three plots of ground. And while the wheat was growing up, he hunted and fished, and they had food enough and to spare. Thus the months passed until the harvest; and one evening Manawyddan visited the furthest of his fields of wheat; and saw that it was ripe.

‘To-morrow I will reap this,’ said he; but on the morrow when he went to reap the wheat he found nothing but the bare straw.

Filled with dismay he hastened to the second field, and there the corn was ripe and golden.

‘To-morrow I will reap this,’ he said, but on the morrow the ears had gone, and there was nothing but the bare straw.

‘Well, there is still one field left,’ he said, and when he looked at it, it was still fairer than the other two. ‘To-night I will watch here,’ thought he, ‘for whosoever carried off the other corn will in like manner take this, and I will know who it is.’ So he hid himself and waited.

The hours slid by, and all was still, so still that Manawyddan well-nigh dropped asleep. But at midnight there arose the loudest tumult in the world, and peeping out he beheld a mighty host of mice, which could neither be numbered nor measured. Each mouse climbed up a straw till it

bent down with its weight, and then it bit off one of the ears, and carried it away, and there was not one of the straws that had not got a mouse to it.

Full of wrath he rushed at the mice, but he could no more come up with them than if they had been gnats, or birds of the air, save one only which lingered behind the rest, and this mouse Manawyddan came up with. Stooping down he seized it by the tail, and put it in his glove, and tied a piece of string across the opening of the glove, so that the mouse could not escape. When he entered the hall where Kieva was sitting, he lighted a fire, and hung the glove up on a peg.

‘What hast thou there?’ asked she.

‘A thief,’ he answered, ‘that I caught robbing me.’

‘What kind of a thief may it be which thou couldst put in thy glove?’ said Kieva.

‘That I will tell thee,’ he replied, and then he showed her how his fields of corn had been wasted, and how he had watched for the mice.

‘And one was less nimble than the rest, and is now in my glove. To-morrow I will hang it, and I only wish I had them all.’

‘It is a marvel, truly,’ said she, ‘yet it would be unseemly for a man of thy dignity to hang a reptile such as this. Do not meddle with it, but let it go.’

‘Woe betide me,’ he cried, ‘if I would not hang them all if I could catch them, and such as I have I will hang.’

‘Verily,’ said she, ‘there is no reason I should succour this reptile, except to prevent discredit unto thee.’

‘If I knew any cause that I should succour it, I would take thy counsel,’ answered Manawyddan, ‘but as I know of none, I am minded to destroy it.’

‘Do so then,’ said Kieva.

So he went up a hill and set up two forks on the top, and while he was doing this he saw a scholar coming towards him, whose clothes were tattered. Now it was seven years since Manawyddan had seen man or beast in that place, and the sight amazed him.

‘Good day to thee, my lord,’ said the scholar.

‘Good greeting to thee, scholar. Whence dost thou come?’

‘From singing in England; but wherefore dost thou ask?’

‘Because for seven years no man hath visited this place.’

‘I wander where I will,’ answered the scholar. ‘And what work art thou upon?’

‘I am about to hang a thief that I caught robbing me!’

‘What manner of thief is that?’ inquired the scholar. ‘I see a creature in thy hand like upon a mouse, and ill does it become a man of thy rank to touch a reptile like this. Let it go free.’

‘I will not let it go free,’ cried Manawyddan. ‘I caught it robbing me, and it shall suffer the doom of a thief.’

‘Lord!’ said the scholar, ‘sooner than see a man like thee at such a work, I would give thee a pound which I have received as alms to let it go free.’

‘I will not let it go free, neither will I sell it.’

‘As thou wilt, lord,’ answered the scholar, and he went his way.

Manawyddan was placing the cross-beam on the two forked sticks, where the mouse was to hang, when a priest rode past.

‘Good-day to thee, lord; and what art thou doing?’

‘I am hanging a thief that I caught robbing me.’

‘What manner of thief, lord?’

‘A creature in the form of a mouse. It has been robbing me, and it shall suffer the doom of a thief.’

‘Lord,’ said the priest, ‘sooner than see thee touch this reptile, I would purchase its freedom.’

‘I will neither sell it nor set it free.’

‘It is true that a mouse is worth nothing, but rather than see thee defile thyself with touching such a reptile as this, I will give thee three pounds for it.’

‘I will not take any price for it. It shall be hanged as it deserves.’

‘Willingly, my lord, if it is thy pleasure.’ And the priest went his way.

Then Manawyddan noosed the string about the mouse’s neck, and was about to draw it tight when a bishop, with a great following and horses bearing huge packs, came by.

‘What work art thou upon?’ asked the bishop, drawing rein.

‘Hanging a thief that I caught robbing me.’

‘But is not that a mouse that I see in thine hand?’ asked the bishop.

‘Yes; that is the thief,’ answered Manawyddan.

‘Well, since I have come at the doom of this reptile, I will ransom it of thee for seven pounds, rather than see a man of thy rank touch it. Loose it, and let it go.’

‘I will not let it loose.’

‘I will give thee four and twenty pounds to set it free,’ said the bishop.

‘I will not set it free for as much again.’

‘If thou wilt not set it free for this, I will give thee all the horses thou seest and the seven loads of baggage.’

‘I will not set it free.’

‘Then tell me at what price thou wilt loose it, and I will give it.’

‘The spell must be taken off Rhiannon and Pryderi,’ said Manawyddan.

‘That shall be done.’

‘But not yet will I loose the mouse. The charm that has been cast over all my lands must be taken off likewise.’

‘This shall be done also.’

‘But not yet will I loose the mouse till I know who she is.’

‘She is my wife,’ answered the bishop.

‘And wherefore came she to me?’ asked Manawyddan.

‘To despoil thee,’ replied the bishop, ‘for it is I who cast the charm over thy lands, to avenge Gwawl the son of Clud my friend. And it was I who threw the spell upon Pryderi to avenge Gwawl for the trick that had been played on him in the game of Badger in the Bag. And not only was I wroth, but my people likewise, and when it was known that thou wast come to dwell in the land, they besought me much to change them into mice, that they might eat thy corn. The first and the second nights it was the men of my own house that destroyed thy two fields, but on the third night my wife and her ladies came to me and begged me to change them also into the shape of mice, that they might take part in avenging Gwawl. Therefore I changed them. Yet had she not been ill and slow of foot, thou couldst not have overtaken her. Still, since she was caught, I will restore thee Pryderi and Rhiannon, and will take the charm from off thy lands. I have told thee who she is; so now set her free.’

‘I will not set her free,’ answered Manawyddan, ‘till thou swear that no vengeance shall be taken for his, either upon Pryderi, or upon Rhiannon, or on me.’

‘I will grant thee this boon; and thou hast done wisely to ask it, for on thy head would have lit all the trouble. Set now my wife free.’

‘I will not set her free till Pryderi and Rhiannon are with me.’

‘Behold, here they come,’ said the bishop.

Then Manawyddan held out his hands and greeted Pryderi and Rhiannon, and they seated themselves joyfully on the grass.

‘Ah, lord, hast thou not received all thou didst ask?’ said the bishop. ‘Set now my wife free!’

‘That I will gladly,’ answered Manawyddan, unloosing the cord from her neck, and as he did so the bishop struck her with his staff, and she turned into a young woman, the fairest that ever was seen.

‘Look around upon thy land,’ said he, ‘and thou wilt see it all tilled and peopled, as it was long ago.’ And Manawyddan looked, and saw corn growing in the fields, and cows and sheep grazing on the hill-side, and huts for the people to dwell in. And he was satisfied in his soul, but one more question he put to the bishop.

‘What spell didst thou lay upon Pryderi and Rhiannon?’

‘Pryderi has had the knockers of the gate of my palace hung about him, and Rhiannon has carried the collars of my asses around her neck,’ said the bishop with a smile.

From the ‘Mabinogion.’

THE BELIEVING HUSBANDS

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Once upon a time there dwelt in the land of Erin a young man who was seeking a wife, and of all the maidens round about none pleased him as well as the only daughter of a farmer. The girl was willing and the father was willing, and very soon they were married and went to live at the farm. By and bye the season came when they must cut the peats and pile them up to dry, so that they might have fires in the winter. So on a fine day the girl and her husband, and the father and his wife all went out upon the moor.

They worked hard for many hours, and at length grew hungry, so the young woman was sent home to bring them food, and also to give the horses their dinner. When she went into the stables, she suddenly saw the heavy pack-saddle of the speckled mare just over her head, and she jumped and said to herself:

‘Suppose that pack-saddle were to fall and kill me, how dreadful it would be!’ and she sat down just under the pack-saddle she was so much afraid of, and began to cry.

Now the others out on the moor grew hungrier and hungrier.

‘What can have become of her?’ asked they, and at length the mother declared that she would wait no longer, and must go and see what had happened.

As the bride was nowhere in the kitchen or the dairy, the old woman went into the stable, where she found her daughter weeping bitterly.

‘What is the matter, my dove?’ and the girl answered, between her sobs:

‘When I came in and saw the pack-saddle over my head, I thought how dreadful it would be if it fell and killed me,’ and she cried louder than before.

The old woman struck her hands together: ‘Ah, to think of it! if that were to be, what should I do?’ and she sat down by her daughter, and they both wrung their hands and let their tears flow.

‘Something strange must have occurred,’ exclaimed the old farmer on the moor, who by this time was not only hungry, but cross. ‘I must go after them.’ And he went and found them in the stable.

‘What is the matter?’ asked he.

‘Oh!’ replied his wife, ‘when our daughter came home, did she not see the pack-saddle over her head, and she thought how dreadful it would be if it were to fall and kill her.’

‘Ah, to think of it!’ exclaimed he, striking his hands together, and he sat down beside them and wept too.

As soon as night fell the young man returned full of hunger, and there they were, all crying together in the stable.

‘What is the matter?’ asked he.

‘When thy wife came home,’ answered the farmer, ‘she saw the pack-saddle over her head, and she thought how dreadful it would be if it were to fall and kill her.’

‘Well, but it didn’t fall,’ replied the young man, and he went off to the kitchen to get some supper, leaving them to cry as long as they liked.

The next morning he got up with the sun, and said to the old man and to the old woman and to his wife:

‘Farewell: my foot shall not return to the house till I have found other three people as silly as you,’ and he walked away till he came to the town, and seeing the door of a cottage standing open wide, he entered. No man was present, but only some women spinning at their wheels.

‘You do not belong to this town,’ said he.

‘You speak truth,’ they answered, ‘nor you either?’

‘I do not,’ replied he, ‘but is it a good place to live in?’

The women looked at each other.

‘The men of the town are so silly that we can make them believe anything we please,’ said they.

‘Well, here is a gold ring,’ replied he, ‘and I will give it to the one amongst you who can make her husband believe the most impossible thing,’ and he left them.

As soon as the first husband came home his wife said to him:

‘Thou art sick!’

‘Am I?’ asked he.

‘Yes, thou art,’ she answered; ‘take off thy clothes and lie down.’

So he did, and when he was in his bed his wife went to him and said:

‘Thou art dead.’

‘Oh, am I?’ asked he.

‘Thou art,’ said she; ‘shut thine eyes and stir neither hand nor foot.’

And dead he felt sure he was.

Soon the second man came home, and his wife said to him:

‘You are not my husband!’

‘Oh, am I not?’ asked he.

‘No, it is not you,’ answered she, so he went away and slept in the wood.

When the third man arrived his wife gave him his supper, and after that he went to bed, just as usual. The next morning a boy knocked at the door, bidding him attend the burial of the man who was dead, and he was just going to get up when his wife stopped him.

‘Time enough,’ said she, and he lay still till he heard the funeral passing the window.

‘Now rise, and be quick,’ called the wife, and the man jumped out of bed in a great hurry, and began to look about him.

‘Why, where are my clothes?’ asked he.

‘Silly that you are, they are on your back, of course,’ answered the woman.

‘Are they?’ said he.

‘They are,’ said she, ‘and make haste lest the burying be ended before you get there.’

Then off he went, running hard, and when the mourners saw a man coming towards them with nothing on but his nightshirt, they forgot in their fright what they were there for, and fled to hide themselves. And the naked man stood alone at the head of the coffin.

Very soon a man came out of the wood and spoke to him.

‘Do you know me?’

‘Not I,’ answered the naked man. ‘I do not know you.’

‘But why are you naked?’ asked the first man.

‘Am I naked? My wife told me that I had all my clothes on,’ answered he.

‘And my wife told me that I myself was dead,’ said the man in the coffin.

But at the sound of his voice the two men were so terrified that they ran straight home, and the man in the coffin got up and followed them, and it was his wife that gained the gold ring, as he had been sillier than the other two.

From ‘West Highland Tales.’

THE HOODIE-CROW

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Once there lived a farmer who had three daughters, and good useful girls they were, up with the sun, and doing all the work of the house. One morning they all ran down to the river to wash their clothes, when a hoodie came round and sat on a tree close by.

‘Wilt thou wed me, thou farmer’s daughter?’ he said to the eldest.

‘Indeed I won’t wed thee,’ she answered, ‘an ugly brute is the hoodie.’ And the bird, much offended, spread his wings and flew away. But the following day he came back again, and said to the second girl:

‘Wilt thou wed me, farmer’s daughter?’

‘Indeed I will not,’ answered she, ‘an ugly brute is the hoodie.’ And the hoodie was more angry than before, and went away in a rage. However, after a night’s rest he was in a better temper, and thought that he might be more lucky the third time, so back he went to the old place.

‘Wilt thou wed me, farmer’s daughter?’ he said to the youngest.

‘Indeed I will wed thee; a pretty creature is the hoodie,’ answered she, and on the morrow they were married.

‘I have something to ask thee,’ said the hoodie when they were far away in his own house. ‘Wouldst thou rather I should be a hoodie by day and a man by night, or a man by day and a hoodie by night?’

The girl was surprised at his words, for she did not know that he could be anything but a hoodie at all times.

Still she said nothing of this, and only replied, ‘I would rather thou wert a man by day and a hoodie by night,’ And so he was; and a handsomer man or a more beautiful hoodie never was seen. The girl loved them both, and never wished for things to be different.

By and bye they had a son, and very pleased they both were. But in the night soft music was heard stealing close towards the house, and every man slept, and the mother slept also. When they woke again it was morning, and the baby was gone. High and low they looked for it, but nowhere could they find it, and the farmer, who had come to see his

daughter, was greatly grieved, as he feared it might be thought that he had stolen it, because he did not want the hoodie for a son-in-law.

The next year the hoodie's wife had another son, and this time a watch was set at every door. But it was no use. In vain they determined that, come what might, they would not close their eyes; at the first note of music they all fell asleep, and when the farmer arrived in the morning to see his grandson, he found them all weeping, for while they had slept the baby had vanished.

Well, the next year it all happened again, and the hoodie's wife was so unhappy that her husband resolved to take her away to another house he had, and her sisters with her for company. So they set out in a coach which was big enough to hold them, and had not gone very far when the hoodie suddenly said:

'You are sure you have not forgotten anything?'

'I have forgotten my coarse comb,' answered the wife, feeling in her pocket, and as she spoke the coach changed into a withered faggot, and the man became a hoodie again, and flew away.

The two sisters returned home, but the wife followed the hoodie. Sometimes she would see him on a hill-top, and then would hasten after him, hoping to catch him. But by the time she had got to the top of the hill, he would be in the valley on the other side. When night came, and she was tired, she looked about for some place to rest, and glad she was to see a little house full of light straight in front of her, and she hurried towards it as fast as she could.

At the door stood a little boy, and the sight of him filled her heart with pleasure, she did not know why. A woman came out, and bade her welcome, and set before her food, and gave her a soft bed to lie on. And the hoodie's wife lay down, and so tired was she, that it seemed to her but a moment before the sun rose, and she awoke again. From hill to hill she went after the hoodie, and sometimes she saw him on the top; but when she got to the top, he had flown into the valley, and when she reached the valley he was on the top of another hill—and so it happened till night came round again. Then she looked round for some place to rest in, and she beheld a little house of light before her, and fast she hurried towards it. At the door stood a little boy, and her heart was filled with pleasure at the sight of him, she did not know why. After that a woman bade her enter, and

set food before her, and gave her a soft bed to lie in. And when the sun rose she got up, and left the house, in search of the hoodie. This day everything befell as on the two other days, but when she reached the small house, the woman bade her keep awake, and if the hoodie flew into the room, to try to seize him.

But the wife had walked far, and was very tired, and strive as she would, she fell sound asleep.

Many hours she slept, and the hoodie entered through a window, and let fall a ring on her hand. The girl awoke with a start, and leant forward to grasp him, but he was already flying off, and she only seized a feather from his wing. And when dawn came, she got up and told the woman.

‘He has gone over the hill of poison,’ said she, ‘and there you cannot follow him without horse-shoes on your hands and feet. But I will help you. Put on this suit of men’s clothes, and go down this road till you come to the smithy, and there you can learn to make horse-shoes for yourself.’

The girl thanked her, and put on the cloths and went down the road to do her bidding. So hard did she work, that in a few days she was able to make the horse-shoes. Early one morning she set out for the hill of poison. On her hands and feet she went, but even with the horse-shoes on she had to be very careful not to stumble, lest some poisoned thorns should enter into her flesh, and she should die. But when at last she was over, it was only to hear that her husband was to be married that day to the daughter of a great lord.

Now there was to be a race in the town, and everyone meant to be there, except the stranger who had come over the hill of poison—everyone, that is, but the cook, who was to make the bridal supper. Greatly he loved races, and sore was his heart to think that one should be run without his seeing it, so when he beheld a woman whom he did not know coming along the street, hope sprang up in him.

‘Will you cook the wedding feast in place of me?’ he said, ‘and I will pay you well when I return from the race.’

Gladly she agreed, and cooked the feast in a kitchen that looked into the great hall, where the company were to eat it. After that she watched the seat where the bridegroom was sitting, and taking a plateful of the broth, she dropped the ring and the feather into it, and set if herself before him.

With the first spoonful he took up the ring, and a thrill ran through him; in the second he beheld the feather and rose from his chair.

‘Who has cooked this feast?’ asked he, and the real cook, who had come back from the race, was brought before him.

‘He may be the cook, but he did not cook this feast,’ said the bridegroom, and then inquiry was made, and the girl was summoned to the great hall.

‘That is my married wife,’ he declared, ‘and no one else will I have,’ and at that very moment the spells fell off him, and never more would he be a hoodie. Happy indeed were they to be together again, and little did they mind that the hill of poison took long to cross, for she had to go some way forwards, and then throw the horse-shoes back for him to put on. Still, at last they were over, and they went back the way she had come, and stopped at the three houses in order to take their little sons to their own home.

But the story never says who had stolen them, nor what the coarse comb had to do with it.

From ‘West Highland Tales.’

THE BROWNIE OF THE LAKE

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Once upon a time there lived in France a man whose name was Jalm Riou. You might have walked a whole day without meeting anyone happier or more contented, for he had a large farm, plenty of money, and above all, a daughter called Barbaik, the most graceful dancer and the best-dressed girl in the whole country side. When she appeared on holidays in her embroidered cap, five petticoats, each one a little shorter than the other, and shoes with silver buckles, the women were all filled with envy, but little cared Barbaik what they might whisper behind her back as long as she knew that her clothes were finer than anyone else's and that she had more partners than any other girl.

Now amongst all the young men who wanted to marry Barbaik, the one whose heart was most set on her was her father's head man, but as his manners were rough and he was exceedingly ugly she would have nothing to say to him, and, what was worse, often made fun of him with the rest.

Jegu, for that was his name, of course heard of this, and it made him very unhappy. Still he would not leave the farm, and look for work elsewhere, as he might have done, for then he would never see Barbaik at all, and what was life worth to him without that?

One evening he was bringing back his horses from the fields, and stopped at a little lake on the way home to let them drink. He was tired with a long day's work, and stood with his hand on the mane of one of the animals, waiting till they had done, and thinking all the while of Barbaik, when a voice came out of the gorse close by.

'What is the matter, Jegu? You mustn't despair yet.'

The young man glanced up in surprise, and asked who was there.

'It is I, the brownie of the lake,' replied the voice.

'But where are you?' inquired Jegu.

'Look close, and you will see me among the reeds in the form of a little green frog. I can take,' he added proudly, 'any shape I choose, and even, which is much harder, be invisible if I want to.'

‘Then show yourself to me in the shape in which your family generally appear,’ replied Jegu.

‘Certainly, if you wish,’ and the frog jumped on the back of one of the horses, and changed into a little dwarf, all dressed in green.

This transformation rather frightened Jegu, but the brownie bade him have no fears, for he would not do him any harm; indeed, he hoped that Jegu might find him of some use.

‘But why should you take all this interest in me?’ asked the peasant suspiciously.

‘Because of a service you did me last winter, which I have never forgotten,’ answered the little fellow. ‘You know, I am sure, that the korigans[FN#3: The spiteful fairies.] who dwell in the White Corn country have declared war on my people, because they say that they are the friends of man. We were therefore obliged to take refuge in distant lands, and to hide ourselves at first under different animal shapes. Since that time, partly from habit and partly to amuse ourselves, we have continued to transform ourselves, and it was in this way that I got to know you.’

‘How?’ exclaimed Jegu, filled with astonishment.

‘Do you remember when you were digging in the field near the river, three months ago, you found a robin redbreast caught in a net?

‘Yes,’ answered Jegu, ‘I remember it very well, and I opened the net and let him go.’

‘Well, I was that robin redbreast, and ever since I have vowed to be your friend, and as you want to marry Barbaik, I will prove the truth of what I say by helping you to do so.’

‘Ah! my little brownie, if you can do that, there is nothing I won’t give you, except my soul.’

‘Then let me alone,’ rejoined the dwarf, ‘and I promise you that in a very few months you shall be master of the farm and of Barbaik.’

‘But how are you going to do it?’ exclaimed Jegu wonderingly.

‘That is my affair. Perhaps I may tell you later. Meanwhile you just eat and sleep, and don’t worry yourself about anything.’

Jegu declared that nothing could be easier, and then taking off his hat, he thanked the dwarf heartily, and led his horses back to the farm.

Next morning was a holiday, and Barbaik was awake earlier than usual, as she wished to get through her work as soon as possible, and be ready to

start for a dance which was to be held some distance off. She went first to the cow-house, which it was her duty to keep clean, but to her amazement she found fresh straw put down, the racks filled with hay, the cows milked, and the pails standing neatly in a row.

‘Of course, Jegu must have done this in the hope of my giving him a dance,’ she thought to herself, and when she met him outside the door she stopped and thanked him for his help. To be sure, Jegu only replied roughly that he didn’t know what she was talking about, but this answer made her feel all the more certain that it was he and nobody else.

The same thing took place every day, and never had the cow-house been so clean nor the cows so fat. Morning and evening Barbaik found her earthen pots full of milk and a pound of butter freshly churned, ornamented with leaves. At the end of a few weeks she grew so used to this state of affairs that she only got up just in time to prepare breakfast.

Soon even this grew to be unnecessary, for a day arrived when, coming downstairs, she discovered that the house was swept, the furniture polished, the fire lit, and the food ready, so that she had nothing to do except to ring the great bell which summoned the labourers from the fields to come and eat it. This, also, she thought was the work of Jegu, and she could not help feeling that a husband of this sort would be very useful to a girl who liked to lie in bed and to amuse herself.

Indeed, Barbaik had only to express a wish for it to be satisfied. If the wind was cold or the sun was hot and she was afraid to go out lest her complexion should be spoilt, she need only to run down to the spring close by and say softly, ‘I should like my churns to be full, and my wet linen to be stretched on the hedge to dry,’ and she need never give another thought to the matter.

If she found the rye bread too hard to bake, or the oven taking too long to heat, she just murmured, ‘I should like to see my six loaves on the shelf above the bread box,’ and two hours after there they were.

If she was too lazy to walk all the way to market along a dirty road, she would say out loud the night before, ‘Why am I not already back from Morlaix with my milk pot empty, my butter bowl inside it, a pound of wild cherries on my wooden plate, and the money I have gained in my apron pocket?’ and in the morning when she got up, lo and behold! there were standing at the foot of her bed the empty milk pot with the butter bowl

inside, the black cherries on the wooden plate, and six new pieces of silver in the pocket of her apron. And she believed that all this was owing to Jegu, and she could no longer do without him, even in her thoughts.

When things had reached this pass, the brownie told the young man that he had better ask Barbaik to marry him, and this time the girl did not turn rudely away, but listened patiently to the end. In her eyes he was as ugly and awkward as ever, but he would certainly make a most useful husband, and she could sleep every morning till breakfast time, just like a young lady, and as for the rest of the day, it would not be half long enough for all she meant to do. She would wear the beautiful dresses that came when she wished for them, and visit her neighbours, who would be dying of envy all the while, and she would be able to dance as much as she wished. Jegu would always be there to work for her and save for her, and watch over her. So, like a well-brought-up girl, Barbaik answered that it should be as her father pleased, knowing quite well that old Riou had often said that after he was dead there was no one so capable of carrying on the farm.

The marriage took place the following month, and a few days later the old man died quite suddenly. Now Jegu had everything to see to himself, and somehow it did not seem so easy as when the farmer was alive. But once more the brownie stepped in, and was better than ten labourers. It was he who ploughed and sowed and reaped, and if, as happened, occasionally, it was needful to get the work done quickly, the brownie called in some of his friends, and as soon as it was light a host of little dwarfs might have been seen in the fields, busy with hoe, fork or sickle. But by the time the people were about all was finished, and the little fellows had disappeared.

And all the payment the brownie ever asked for was a bowl of broth. From the very day of her marriage Barbaik had noted with surprise and rage that things ceased to be done for her as they had been done all the weeks and months before. She complained to Jegu of his laziness, and he only stared at her, not understanding what she was talking about. But the brownie, who was standing by, burst out laughing, and confessed that all the good offices she spoke of had been performed by him, for the sake of Jegu, but that now he had other business to do, and it was high time that she looked after her house herself.

Barbaik was furious. Each morning when she was obliged to get up before dawn to milk the cows and go to market, and each evening when she had to sit up till midnight in order to churn the butter, her heart was filled with rage against the brownie who had caused her to expect a life of ease and pleasure. But when she looked at Jegu and beheld his red face, squinting eyes, and untidy hair, her anger was doubled.

‘If it had not been for you, you miserable dwarf!’ she would say between her teeth, ‘if it had not been for you I should never have married that man, and I should still have been going to dances, where the young men would have brought me present of nuts and cherries, and told me that I was the prettiest girl in the parish. While now I can receive no presents except from my husband. I can never dance, except with my husband. Oh, you wretched dwarf, I will never, never forgive you!’

In spite of her fierce words, no one knew better than Barbaik how to put her pride in her pocket when it suited her, and after receiving an invitation to a wedding, she begged the brownie to get her a horse to ride there. To her great joy he consented, bidding her set out for the city of the dwarfs and to tell them exactly what she wanted. Full of excitement, Barbaik started on her journey. It was not long, and when she reached the town she went straight to the dwarfs, who were holding counsel in a wide green place, and said to them, ‘Listen, my friends! I have come to beg you to lend me a black horse, with eyes, a mouth, ears, bridle and saddle.’

She had hardly spoken when the horse appeared, and mounting on his back she started for the village where the wedding was to be held.

At first she was so delighted with the chance of a holiday from the work which she hated, that she noticed nothing, but very soon it struck her as odd that as she passed along the roads full of people they all laughed as they looked at her horse. At length she caught some words uttered by one man to another. ‘Why, the farmer’s wife has sold her horse’s tail!’ and turned in her saddle. Yes; it was true. Her horse had no tail! She had forgotten to ask for one, and the wicked dwarfs had carried out her orders to the letter!

‘Well, at any rate, I shall soon be there,’ she thought, and shaking the reins, tried to urge the horse to a gallop. But it was of no use; he declined to move out of a walk; and she was forced to hear all the jokes that were made upon her.

In the evening she returned to the farm more angry than ever, and quite determined to revenge herself on the brownie whenever she had the chance, which happened to be very soon.

It was the spring, and just the time of year when the dwarfs held their fete, so one day the brownie asked Jegu if he might bring his friends to have supper in the great barn, and whether he would allow them to dance there. Of course, Jegu was only too pleased to be able to do anything for the brownie, and he ordered Barbaik to spread her best table-cloths in the barn, and to make a quantity of little loaves and pancakes, and, besides, to keep all the milk given by the cows that morning. He expected she would refuse, as he knew she hated the dwarfs, but she said nothing, and prepared the supper as he had bidden her.

When all was ready, the dwarfs, in new green suits, came bustling in, very happy and merry, and took their seats at the table. But in a moment they all sprang up with a cry, and ran away screaming, for Barbaik had placed pans of hot coals under their feet, and all their poor little toes were burnt.

‘You won’t forget that in a hurry,’ she said, smiling grimly to herself, but in a moment they were back again with large pots of water, which they poured on the fire. Then they joined hands and danced round it, singing:

Wicked traitress, Barne Riou,
Our poor toes are burned by you;
Now we hurry from your hall—
Bad luck light upon you all.

That evening they left the country for ever, and Jegu, without their help, grew poorer and poorer, and at last died of misery, while Barbaik was glad to find work in the market of Morlaix.

From ‘Le Foyer Breton,’ par E. Souvestre.

THE WINNING OF OLWEN

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There was once a king and queen who had a little boy, and they called his name Kilweh. The queen, his mother, fell ill soon after his birth, and as she could not take care of him herself she sent him to a woman she knew up in the mountains, so that he might learn to go out in all weathers, and bear heat and cold, and grow tall and strong. Kilweh was quite happy with his nurse, and ran races and climbed hills with the children who were his playfellows, and in the winter, when the snow lay on the ground, sometimes a man with a harp would stop and beg for shelter, and in return would sing them songs of strange things that had happened in the years gone by.

But long before this changes had taken place in the court of Kilweh's father. Soon after she had sent her baby away the queen became much worse, and at length, seeing that she was going to die, she called her husband to her and said:

'Never again shall I rise from this bed, and by and bye thou wilt take another wife. But lest she should make thee forget thy son, I charge thee that thou take not a wife until thou see a briar with two blossoms upon my grave.' And this he promised her. Then she further bade him to see to her grave that nothing might grow thereon. This likewise he promised her, and soon she died, and for seven years the king sent a man every morning to see that nothing was growing on the queen's grave, but at the end of seven years he forgot.

One day when the king was out hunting he rode past the place where the queen lay buried, and there he saw a briar growing with two blossoms on it.

'It is time that I took a wife,' said he, and after long looking he found one. But he did not tell her about his son; indeed he hardly remembered that he had one till she heard it at last from an old woman whom she had gone to visit. And the new queen was very pleased, and sent messengers to fetch the boy, and in his father's court he stayed, while the years went by

till one day the queen told him that a prophecy had foretold that he was to win for his wife Olwen the daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr.

When he heard this Kilweh felt proud and happy. Surely he must be a man now, he thought, or there would be no talk of a wife for him, and his mind dwelt all day upon his promised bride, and what she would be like when he beheld her.

‘What aileth thee, my son?’ asked his father at last, when Kilweh had forgotten something he had been bidden to do, and Kilweh blushed red as he answered:

‘My stepmother says that none but Olwen, the daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr, shall be my wife.’

‘That will be easily fulfilled,’ replied his father. ‘Arthur the king is thy cousin. Go therefore unto him and beg him to cut thy hair, and to grant thee this boon.’

Then the youth pricked forth upon a dapple grey horse of four years old, with a bridle of linked gold, and gold upon his saddle. In his hand he bore two spears of silver with heads of steel; a war-horn of ivory was slung round his shoulder, and by his side hung a golden sword. Before him were two brindled white-breasted greyhounds with collars of rubies round their necks, and the one that was on the left side bounded across to the right side, and the one on the right to the left, and like two sea-swallows sported round him. And his horse cast up four sods with his four hoofs, like four swallows in the air about his head, now above, now below. About him was a robe of purple, and an apple of gold was at each corner, and every one of the apples was of the value of a hundred cows. And the blades of grass bent not beneath him, so light were his horse’s feet as he journeyed toward the gate of Arthur’s palace.

‘Is there a porter?’ cried Kilweh, looking round for someone to open the gate.

‘There is; and I am Arthur’s porter every first day of January,’ answered a man coming out to him. ‘The rest of the year there are other porters, and among them Pennpingyon, who goes upon his head to save his feet.’

‘Well, open the portal, I say.’

‘No, that I may not do, for none can enter save the son of a king or a pedlar who has goods to sell. But elsewhere there will be food for thy dogs

and hay for thy horse, and for thee collops cooked and peppered, and sweet wine shall be served in the guest chamber.'

'That will not do for me,' answered Kilweh. 'If thou wilt not open the gate I will send up three shouts that shall be heard from Cornwall unto the north, and yet again to Ireland.'

'Whatsoever clamour thou mayest make,' spake Glewlwyd the porter, 'thou shalt not enter until I first go and speak with Arthur.'

Then Glewlwyd went into the hall, and Arthur said to him:

'Hast thou news from the gate?' and the porter answered:

'Far have I travelled, both in this island and elsewhere, and many kingly men have I seen; but never yet have I beheld one equal in majesty to him who now stands at the door.'

'If walking thou didst enter here, return thou running,' replied Arthur, 'and let everyone that opens and shuts the eye show him respect and serve him, for it is not meet to keep such a man in the wind and rain.' So Glewlwyd unbarred the gate and Kilweh rode in upon his charger.

'Greeting unto thee, O ruler of this land,' cried he, 'and greeting no less to the lowest than to the highest.'

'Greeting to thee also,' answered Arthur. 'Sit thou between two of my warriors, and thou shalt have minstrels before thee and all that belongs to one born to be a king, while thou remainest in my palace.'

'I am not come,' replied Kilweh, 'for meat and drink, but to obtain a boon, and if thou grant it me I will pay it back, and will carry thy praise to the four winds of heaven. But if thou wilt not grant it to me, then I will proclaim thy discourtesy wherever thy name is known.'

'What thou askest that shalt thou receive,' said Arthur, 'as far as the wind dries and the rain moistens, and the sun revolves and the sea encircles and the earth extends. Save only my ship and my mantle, my word and my lance, my shield and my dagger, and Guinevere my wife.'

'I would that thou bless my hair,' spake Kilweh, and Arthur answered:

'That shall be granted thee.'

Forthwith he bade his men fetch him a comb of gold and a scissors with loops of silver, and he combed the hair of Kilweh his guest.

'Tell me who thou art,' he said, 'for my heart warms to thee, and I feel thou art come of my blood.'

'I am Kilweh, son of Kilydd,' replied the youth.

‘Then my cousin thou art in truth,’ replied Arthur, ‘and whatsoever boon thou mayest ask thou shalt receive.’

‘The boon I crave is that thou mayest win for me Olwen, the daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr, and this boon I seek likewise at the hands of thy warriors. From Sol, who can stand all day upon one foot; from Ossol, who, if he were to find himself on the top of the highest mountain in the world, could make it into a level plain in the beat of a bird’s wing; from Cluse, who, though he were buried under the earth, could yet hear the ant leave her nest fifty miles away: from these and from Kai and from Bedwyr and from all thy mighty men I crave this boon.’

‘O Kilweh,’ said Arthur, ‘never have I heard of the maiden of whom thou speakest, nor of her kindred, but I will send messengers to seek her if thou wilt give me time.’

‘From this night to the end of the year right willingly will I grant thee,’ replied Kilweh; but when the end of the year came and the messengers returned Kilweh was wroth, and spoke rough words to Arthur.

It was Kai, the boldest of the warriors and the swiftest of foot—he would could pass nine nights without sleep, and nine days beneath the water—that answered him:

‘Rash youth that thou art, darest thou speak thus to Arthur? Come with us, and we will not part company till we have won that maiden, or till thou confess that there is none such in the world.’

Then Arthur summoned his five best men and bade them go with Kilweh. There was Bedwyr the one-handed, Kai’s comrade and brother in arms, the swiftest man in Britain save Arthur; there was Kynddelig, who knew the paths in a land where he had never been as surely as he did those of his own country; there was Gwrhyr, that could speak all tongues; and Gwalchmai the son of Gwyar, who never returned till he had gained what he sought; and last of all there was Menw, who could weave a spell over them so that none might see them, while they could see everyone.

So these seven journeyed together till they reached a vast open plain in which was a fair castle. But though it seemed so close it was not until the evening of the third day that they really drew near to it, and in front of it a flock of sheep was spread, so many in number that there seemed no end to them. A shepherd stood on a mound watching over them, and by his side was a dog, as large as a horse nine winters old.

‘Whose is this castle, O herdsmen?’ asked the knights.

‘Stupid are ye truly,’ answered the herdsman. ‘All the world knows that this is the castle of Yspaddaden Penkawr.’

‘And who art thou?’

‘I am called Custennin, brother of Yspaddaden, and ill has he treated me. And who are you, and what do you here?’

‘We come from Arthur the king, to seek Olwen the daughter of Yspaddaden,’ but at this news the shepherd gave a cry:

‘O men, be warned and turn back while there is yet time. Others have gone on that quest, but none have escaped to tell the tale,’ and he rose to his feet as if to leave them. Then Kilweh held out to him a ring of gold, and he tried to put it on his finger, but it was too small, so he placed it in his glove, and went home and gave it to his wife.

‘Whence came this ring?’ asked she, ‘for such good luck is not wont to befall thee.’

‘The man to whom this ring belonged thou shalt see here in the evening,’ answered the shepherd; ‘he is Kilweh, son of Kilydd, cousin to king Arthur, and he has come to seek Olwen.’ And when the wife heard that she knew that Kilweh was her nephew, and her heart yearned after him, half with joy at the thought of seeing him, and half with sorrow for the doom she feared.

Soon they heard steps approaching, and Kai and the rest entered into the house and ate and drank. After that the woman opened a chest, and out of it came a youth with curling yellow hair.

‘It is a pity to hid him thus,’ said Gwrhyr, ‘for well I know that he has done no evil.’

‘Three and twenty of my sons has Yspaddaden slain, and I have no more hope of saving this one,’ replied she, and Kai was full of sorrow and answered:

‘Let him come with me and be my comrade, and he shall never be slain unless I am slain also.’ And so it was agreed.

‘What is your errand here?’ asked the woman.

‘We seek Olwen the maiden for this youth,’ answered Kai; ‘does she ever come hither so that she may be seen?’

‘She comes every Saturday to wash her hair, and in the vessel where she washes she leaves all her rings, and never does she so much as send a

messenger to fetch them.’

‘Will she come if she is bidden?’ asked Kai, pondering.

‘She will come; but unless you pledge me your faith that you will not harm her I will not fetch her.’

‘We pledge it,’ said they, and the maiden came.

A fair sight was she in a robe of flame-coloured silk, with a collar of ruddy gold about her neck, bright with emeralds and rubies. More yellow was her head than the flower of the broom, and her skin was whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer were her hands than the blossoms of the wood anemone. Four white trefoils sprang up where she trod, and therefore was she called Olwen.

She entered, and sat down on a bench beside Kilweh, and he spake to her:

‘Ah, maiden, since first I heard thy name I have loved thee—wilt thou not come away with me from this evil place?’

‘That I cannot do,’ answered she, ‘for I have given my word to my father not to go without his knowledge, for his life will only last till I am betrothed. Whatever is, must be, but this counsel I will give you. Go, and ask me of my father, and whatsoever he shall required of thee grant it, and thou shalt win me; but if thou deny him anything thou wilt not obtain me, and it will be well for thee if thou escape with thy life.’

‘All this I promise,’ said he.

So she returned to the castle, and all Arthur’s men went after her, and entered the hall.

‘Greeting to thee, Yspaddaden Penkawr,’ said they. ‘We come to ask thy daughter Olwen for Kilweh, son of Kilydd.’

‘Come hither to-morrow and I will answer you,’ replied Yspaddaden Penkawr, and as they rose to leave the hall he caught up one of the three poisoned darts that lay beside him and flung it in their midst. But Bedwyr saw and caught it, and flung it back so hard that it pierced the knee of Yspaddaden.

‘A gentle son-in-law, truly!’ he cried, writhing with pain. ‘I shall ever walk the worse for this rudeness. Cursed be the smith who forged it, and the anvil on which it was wrought!’

That night the men slept in the house of Custennin the herdsman, and the next day they proceeded to the castle, and entered the hall, and said:

‘Yspaddaden Penkawr, give us thy daughter and thou shalt keep her dower. And unless thou wilt do this we will slay thee.’

‘Her four great grandmothers and her four great grandfathers yet live,’ answered Yspaddaden Penkawr; ‘it is needful that I take counsel with them.’

‘Be it so; we will go to meat,’ but as they turned he took up the second dart that lay by his side and cast it after them. And Menw caught it, and flung it at him, and wounded him in the chest, so that it came out at his back.

‘A gentle son-in-law, truly!’ cried Yspaddaden, ‘the iron pains me like the bite of a horse-leech. Cursed be the hearth whereon it was heated, and the smith who formed it!’ The third day Arthur’s men returned to the palace into the presence of Yspaddaden.

‘Shoot not at me again,’ said he, ‘unless you desire death. But lift up my eyebrows, which have fallen over my eyes, that I may see my son-in-law.’ Then they arose, and as they did so Yspaddaden Penkawr took the third poisoned dart and cast it at them. And Kilweh caught it, and flung it back, and it passed through his eyeball, and came out on the other side of his head.

‘A gentle son-in-law, truly! Cursed be the fire in which it was forged and the man who fashioned it!’

The next day Arthur’s men came again to the palace and said:

‘Shoot not at us any more unless thou desirest more pain than even now thou hast, but give us thy daughter without more words.’

‘Where is he that seeks my daughter? Let him come hither so that I may see him.’ And Kilweh sat himself in a chair and spoke face to face with him.

‘Is it thou that seekest my daughter?’

‘It is I,’ answered Kilweh.

‘First give me thy word that thou wilt do nothing towards me that is not just, and when thou hast won for me that which I shall ask, then thou shalt wed my daughter.’

‘I promise right willingly,’ said Kilweh. ‘Name what thou wilt.’

‘Seest thou yonder hill? Well, in one day it shall be rooted up and ploughed and sown, and the grain shall ripen, and of that wheat I will bake the cakes for my daughter’s wedding.’

‘It will be easy for me to compass this, although thou mayest deem it will not be easy,’ answered Kilweh, thinking of Ossol, under whose feet the highest mountain became straightway a plain, but Yspaddaden paid no heed, and continued:

‘Seest thou that field yonder? When my daughter was born nine bushels of flax were sown therein, and not one blade has sprung up. I require thee to sow fresh flax in the ground that my daughter may wear a veil spun from it on the day of her wedding.’

‘It will be easy for me to compass this.’

‘Though thou compass this there is that which thou wilt not compass. For thou must bring me the basket of Gwyddneu Garanhir which will give meat to the whole world. It is for thy wedding feast. Thou must also fetch me the drinking-horn that is never empty, and the harp that never ceases to play until it is bidden. Also the comb and scissors and razor that lie between the two ears of Trwyth the boar, so that I may arrange my hair for the wedding. And though thou get this yet there is that which thou wilt not get, for Trwyth the boar will not let any man take from him the comb and the scissors, unless Drudwyn the whelp hunt him. But no leash in the world can hold Drudwyn save the leash of Cant Ewin, and no collar will hold the leash except the collar of Canhastyr.’

‘It will be easy for me to compass this, though thou mayest think it will not be easy,’ Kilweh answered him.

‘Though thou get all these things yet there is that which thou wilt not get. Throughout the world there is none that can hunt with this dog save Mabon the son of Modron. He was taken from his mother when three nights old, and it is not know where he now is, nor whether he is living or dead, and though thou find him yet the boar will never be slain save only with the sword of Gwrnach the giant, and if thou obtain it not neither shalt thou obtain my daughter.’

‘Horses shall I have, and knights from my lord Arthur. And I shall gain thy daughter, and thou shalt lose thy life.’

The speech of Kilweh the son of Kilydd with Yspaddaden Penkawr was ended.

Then Arthur’s men set forth, and Kilweh with them, and journeyed till they reached the largest castle in the world, and a black man came out to meet them.

‘Whence comest thou, O man?’ asked they, ‘and whose is that castle?’

‘That is the castle of Gwrnach the giant, as all the world knows,’ answered the man, ‘but no guest ever returned thence alive, and none may enter the gate except a craftsman, who brings his trade.’ But little did Arthur’s men heed his warning, and they went straight to the gate.

‘Open!’ cried Gwrhyr.

‘I will not open,’ replied the porter.

‘And wherefore?’ asked Kai.

‘The knife is in the meat, and the drink is in the horn, and there is revelry in the hall of Gwrnach the giant, and save for a craftsman who brings his trade the gate will not be opened to-night.’

‘Verily, then, I may enter,’ said Kai, ‘for there is no better burnisher of swords than I.’

‘This will I tell Gwrnach the giant, and I will bring thee his answer.’

‘Bid the man come before me,’ cried Gwrnach, when the porter had told his tale, ‘for my sword stands much in need of polishing,’ so Kai passed in and saluted Gwrnach the giant.

‘Is it true what I hear of thee, that thou canst burnish swords?’

‘It is true,’ answered Kai. Then was the sword of Gwrnach brought to him.

‘Shall it be burnished white or blue?’ said Kai, taking a whetstone from under his arm.

‘As thou wilt,’ answered the giant, and speedily did Kai polish half the sword. The giant marvelled at his skill, and said:

‘It is a wonder that such a man as thou shouldst be without a companion.’

‘I have a companion, noble sir, but he has no skill in this art.’

‘What is his name?’ asked the giant.

‘Let the porter go forth, and I will tell him how he may know him. The head of his lance will leave its shaft, and draw blood from the wind, and descend upon its shaft again.’ So the porter opened the gate and Bedwyr entered.

Now there was much talk amongst those who remained without when the gate closed upon Bedwyr, and Goreu, son of Custennin, prevailed with the porter, and he and his companions got in also and hid themselves.

By this time the whole of the sword was polished, and Kai gave it into the hand of Gwrnach the giant, who felt it and said:

‘Thy work is good; I am content.’

Then said Kai:

‘It is thy scabbard that hath rusted thy sword; give it to me that I may take out the wooden sides of it and put in new ones.’ And he took the scabbard in one hand and the sword in the other, and came and stood behind the giant, as if he would have sheathed the sword in the scabbard. But with it he struck a blow at the head of the giant, and it rolled from his body. After that they despoiled the castle of its gold and jewels, and returned, bearing the sword of the giant, to Arthur’s court.

They told Arthur how they had sped, and they all took counsel together, and agreed that they must set out on the quest for Mabon the son of Modron, and Gwrhyr, who knew the languages of beasts and of birds, went with them. SO they journeyed until they came to the nest of an ousel, and Gwrhyr spoke to her.

‘Tell me if thou knowest aught of Mabon the son of Modron, who was taken when three nights old from between his mother and the wall.’

And the ousel answered:

‘When I first came here I was a young bird, and there was a smith’s anvil in this place. But from that time no work has been done upon it, save that every evening I have pecked at it, till now there is not so much as the size of a nut remaining thereof. Yet all that time I have never once heard of the man you name. Still, there is a race of beasts older than I, and I will guide you to them.’

So the ousel flew before them, till she reached the stag of Redynvre; but when they inquired of the stag whether he knew aught of Mabon he shook his head.

‘When first I came hither,’ said he, ‘the plain was bare save for one oak sapling, which grew up to be an oak with a hundred branches. All that is left of that oak is a withered stump, but never once have I heard of the man you name. Nevertheless, as you are Arthur’s men, I will guide you to the place where there is an animal older than I’; and the stag ran before them till he reached the owl of Cwm Cawlwyd. But when they inquired of the owl if he knew aught of Mabon he shook his head.

‘When first I came hither,’ said he, ‘the valley was a wooded glen; then a race of men came and rooted it up. After that there grew a second wood, and then a third, which you see. Look at my wings also—are they not withered stumps? Yet until to-day I have never heard of the man you name. Still, I will guide you to the oldest animal in the world, and the one that has travelled most, the eagle of Gwern Abbey.’ And he flew before them, as fast as his old wings would carry him, till he reached the eagle of Gwern Abbey, but when they inquired of the eagle whether he knew aught of Mabon he shook his head.

‘When I first came hither,’ said the eagle, ‘there was a rock here, and every evening I pecked at the stars from the top of it. Now, behold, it is not even a span high! But only once have I heard of the man you name, and that was when I went in search of food as far as Llyn Llyw. I swooped down upon a salmon, and struck my claws into him, but he drew me down under water till scarcely could I escape him. Then I summoned all my kindred to destroy him, but he made peace with me, and I took fifty fish spears from his back. Unless he may know something of the man whom you seek I cannot tell who may. But I will guide you to the place where he is.’

So they followed the eagle, who flew before them, though so high was he in the sky, it was often hard to mark his flight. At length he stopped above a deep pool in a river.

‘Salmon of Llyn Llyw,’ he called, ‘I have come to thee with an embassy from Arthur to inquire if thou knowest aught concerning Mabon the son of Modron.’ And the salmon answered:

‘As much as I know I will tell thee. With every tide I go up the river, till I reach the walls of Gloucester, and there have I found such wrong as I never found elsewhere. And that you may see that what I say is true let two of you go thither on my shoulders.’ So Kai and Gwrhyr went upon the shoulders of the salmon, and were carried under the walls of the prison, from which proceeded the sound of great weeping.

‘Who is it that thus laments in this house of stone?’

‘It is I, Mabon the son of Modron.’

‘Will silver or gold bring thy freedom, or only battle and fighting?’ asked Gwrhyr again.

‘By fighting alone shall I be set free,’ said Mabon.

Then they sent a messenger to Arthur to tell him that Mabon was found, and he brought all his warriors to the castle of Gloucester and fell fiercely upon it; while Kai and Bedwyr went on the shoulders of the salmon to the gate of the dungeon, and broke it down and carried away Mabon. And he now being free returned home with Arthur.

After this, on a certain day, as Gwythyr was walking across a mountain he heard a grievous cry, and he hastened towards it. In a little valley he saw the heather burning and the fire spreading fast towards the anthill, and all the ants were hurrying to and fro, not knowing whither to go. Gwythyr had pity on them, and put out the fire, and in gratitude the ants brought him the nine bushels of flax seed which Yspaddaden Penkawr required of Kilweh. And many of the other marvels were done likewise by Arthur and his knights, and at last it came to the fight with Trwyth the board, to obtain the comb and the scissors and the razor that lay between his ears. But hard was the boar to catch, and fiercely did he fight when Arthur's men gave him battle, so that many of them were slain.

Up and down the country went Trwyth the boar, and Arthur followed after him, till they came to the Severn sea. There three knights caught his feet unawares and plunged him into the water, while one snatched the razor from him, and another seized the scissors. But before they laid hold of the comb he had shaken them all off, and neither man nor horse nor dog could reach him till he came to Cornwall, whither Arthur had sworn he should not go. Thither Arthur followed after him with his knights, and if it had been hard to win the razor and the scissors, the struggle for the comb was fiercer still, but at length Arthur prevailed, and the boar was driven into the sea. And whether he was drowned or where he went no man knows to this day.

In the end all the marvels were done, and Kilweh set forward, and with him Goreu, the son of Custennin, to Yspaddaden Penkawr, bearing in their hands the razor, the scissors and the comb, and Yspaddaden Penkawr was shaved by Kaw.

'Is thy daughter mine now?' asked Kilweh.

'She is thine,' answered Yspaddaden, 'but it is Arthur and none other who has won her for thee. Of my own free will thou shouldst never have had her, for now I must lose my life.' And as he spake Goreu the son of

Custennin cut off his head, as if had been ordained, and Arthur’s hosts returned each man to his own country.

From the ‘Mabinogion.’